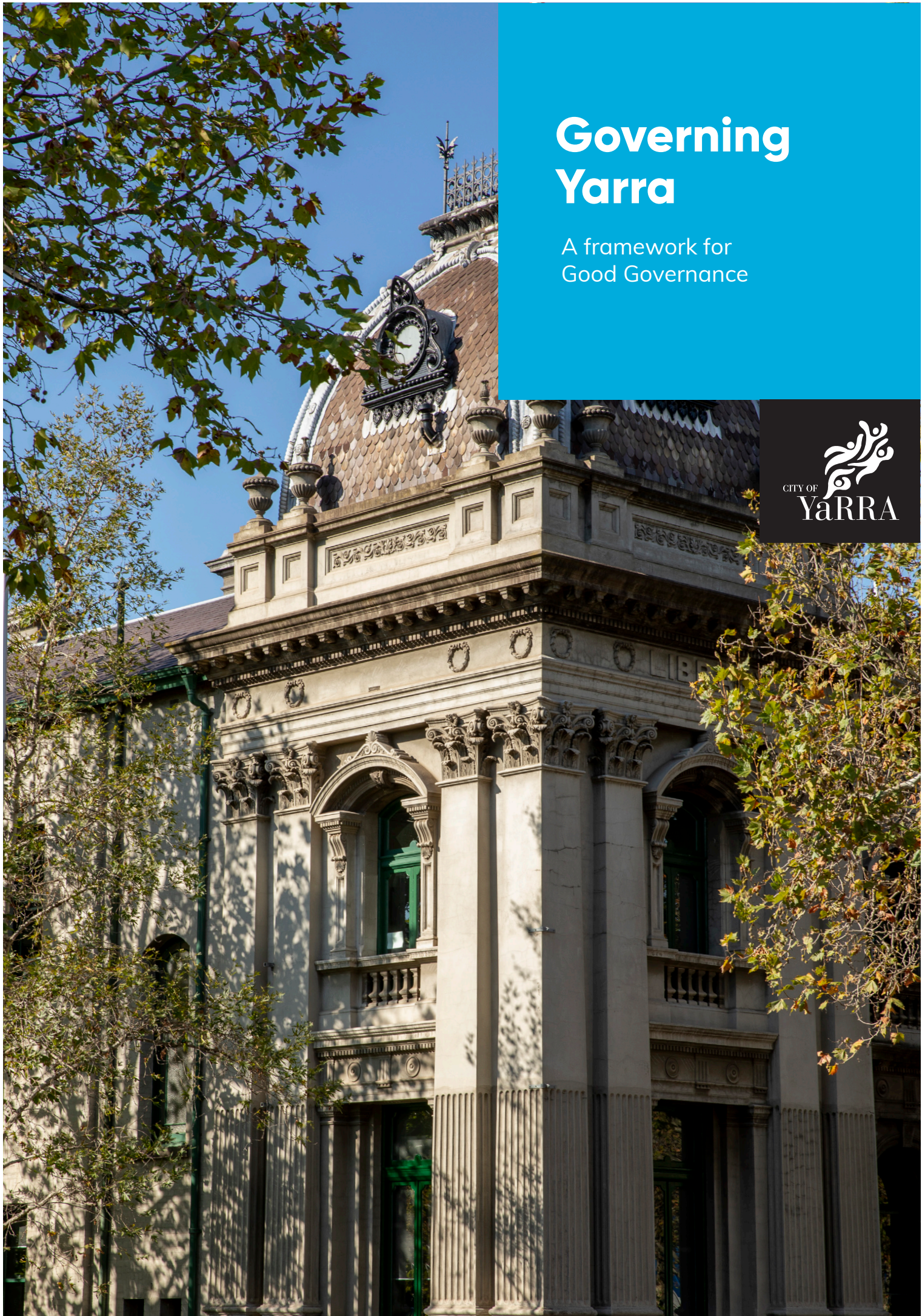


Governing Yarra

A framework for
Good Governance



Yarra City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as the Traditional Owners and true sovereigns of the land now known as Yarra. We acknowledge their creator spirit Bunjil, their ancestors and their Elders. We acknowledge the strength and resilience of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, who have never ceded sovereignty and retain their strong connections to family, clan and country despite the impacts of European invasion. We also acknowledge the significant contributions made by other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to life in Yarra. We pay our respects to Elders from all nations — and to their Elders past, present and future.

This publication is available in alternative accessible formats on request.

Electronic copy

PDF versions of this report can be downloaded from yarracity.vic.gov.au

National Relay service

TTY 133 677 then (03) 9205 5555 or relayservice.gov.au

Yarra Council language line

العربية 9280 1930

中文 9280 1937

Ελληνικά 9280 1934

Italiano 9280 1931

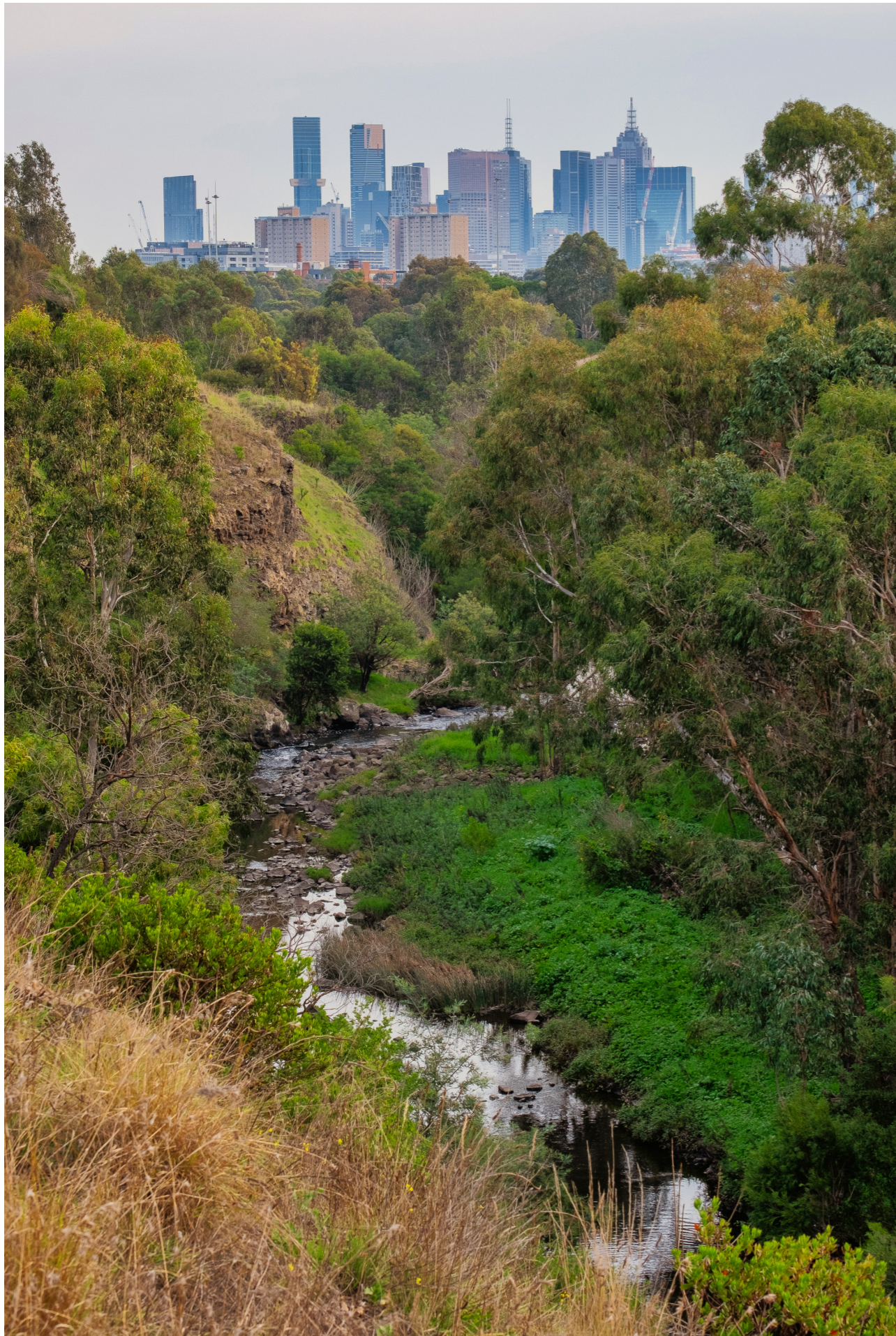
Español 9280 1935

Tiếng Việt 9280 1939

Other 9280 1940

Contents

Executive Summary	
What is a governance framework and why do we need one?	5
The local government context	6
Governance at Yarra	6
The Governance Standards	7
The local government context	8
An essential tier of government	8
A principles-based act	10
Governance at Yarra	14
Understanding governance	14
The governance standards	15
Standard one – Meaningful relationships	16
The Council	16
Management	18
Community	19
Standard two – Leading with purpose	20
A strategic focus	20
A community partnership	21
Standard three – Effective decision making	26
Informed decision making	26
Effective decisions	28
Exercising the powers of Council	30
Standard four – Organisational stewardship	32
The meaning of stewardship	32
The strategic levers	33
Standard five – Transparency and accountability	36
Public information and registers	36
Holding ourselves to account	40
Independent oversight agencies	41



Executive Summary

What is a governance framework and why do we need one?

A governance framework provides the context for decision making and enables a deeper understanding of the relevant governance obligations and the policies and processes that support them.

Good governance is about more than just our processes and systems – it is about our culture and the values we hold that underpin the decision-making process. It is only with good governance that we can make decisions that are truly in the best interests of our community.

The existence of a governance framework for supporting Council's decision making is what enables our promises to be kept, and the community's vision to be realised.

What is our vision for Yarra?
A community vision is developed by Yarra's community and presented to the Council where it is endorsed and forms the building block for Council's strategic direction.

How are we making it a reality?
Council's strategic objectives are developed by Council after a deliberative engagement process and set out in the adopted Council Plan.

How will we achieve our goals?
The way that Council operates and makes its decisions is set out in Governing Yarra – a framework for good governance of the municipality.



The local government context

An essential tier of government

Local government is a distinct and essential tier of government consisting of democratically-elected councils with the powers necessary to act in the interest of local communities.

Councils have powers and obligations under legislation, as well as the ability to make local laws.

Councils must act in accordance with the overarching principles of the Local Government Act 2020, as well as the supporting principles in the areas of community engagement, public transparency, strategic planning, financial management and service performance.

Governance at Yarra

Understanding governance

At its heart, good governance is delivered when the Council and community work in partnership to make decisions in the interests of the local community.

The Governance Standards

Five Governance Standards provide a foundation for good governance at Yarra City Council. Described in detail in this document, these five standards underpin our decision-making processes and are further bolstered by the supporting policies and processes described in each section.

1

Meaningful relationships
Collaborative decision making where all participants clearly understand their role.

2

Leading with purpose
Collaborative decision making where all participants clearly understand their role.

3

Effective decision making
Evidence-based decision making which is underpinned by a structured process.

4

Organisational stewardship
A process that considers the impact of the decisions over the long term.

5

Transparency and accountability
A decision-making process which can be clearly understood and scrutinised.



The local government context

An essential tier of government

Good governance is about more than a governance framework provides the context for decision making and enables a deeper understanding of the relevant governance obligations and the policies and processes that support them.

Good governance is about more than just our processes and systems – it is about our culture and the values we hold that underpin the decision-making process. It is only with good governance that we can make decisions that are truly in the best interests of our community.

The existence of a governance framework for supporting Council's decision making is what enables our promises to be kept, and the community's vision to be realised.

1. The Victorian Constitution

The Victorian Constitution provides that local government is a distinct and essential tier of government consisting of democratically-elected councils having the functions and powers that the Parliament considers are necessary to ensure the peace, order and good government of each municipal district.

In order to give effect to this provision, the Parliament has provided councils with a broad range of powers under various legislative instruments.

2. The Local Government Acts

Local government in Victoria primarily derives powers from two pieces of legislation – the Local Government Act 2020 and the Local Government Act 1989.

The Local Government Act 2020 establishes Yarra City Council as a body corporate, with the powers necessary to do all things necessary or convenient to be done in connection with the performance of our role.

The Local Government Act 1989, which was largely replaced upon the making of the 2020 Act, still provides our powers regarding the levying of rates and charges, management of municipal roads and the appointment of authorised officers, among other things.

3. Other legislation

While the Local Government Acts provide the bulk of our powers, further powers have been provided to Council in more than 90 other Acts and Regulations.

4. Local Laws

One specific power provided to councils by the Local Government Act 2020 is the power at Section 71 to make local laws for or with respect to any act, matter or thing in respect of which the council has a function or power.

Local laws are created to enhance and protect the health, safety and amenity of its residents, businesses, visitors, and municipality. We use local laws to respond to issues and community needs. The local laws complement the responsibilities and powers under both state and federal laws.

Our General Local Law (consolidated) has been made for the purposes of:

- providing for the peace, order and good government of the City of Yarra

- promoting a physical and social environment that is accessible inclusive and free from hazards to health, in which the residents of the municipal district can enjoy a quality of life that meets the general expectations of the community
- preventing and suppressing nuisances which may adversely affect the enjoyment of life within the municipal district or the health, safety and welfare of persons within the City of Yarra
- prohibiting, regulating and controlling activities which may be dangerous or unsafe or detrimental to the quality of life and the environment of the City of Yarra.



A principles-based Act

The Local Government Act 2020 is a principles-based Act which is less prescriptive and more enabling than previous legislation. It provides flexibility to enable us to respond to the needs of our local community in the design of our programs and services.

The legislation sets out nine overarching governance principles, which must be given effect to by every council in the performance of its role.

These governance principles are further underpinned by supporting principles, as follows:

- community engagement principles
- public transparency principles
- strategic planning principles
- financial management principles
- service performance principles

5. The overarching governance principles

The roles and powers of Council are broad. By not losing sight of the overarching governance principles, we can ensure that we continue to meet community expectations and deliver on our mandate.

The overarching governance principles are:

- Council decisions are to be made and actions taken in accordance with the relevant law.
- Priority is to be given to achieving the best outcomes for the municipal community, including future generations.
- The economic, social and environmental sustainability of the municipal district, including mitigation and planning for climate change risks, is to be promoted.
- The municipal community is to be engaged in strategic planning and strategic decision making.
- Innovation and continuous improvement are to be pursued.
- Collaboration with other councils, governments and statutory bodies is to be sought.
- The ongoing financial viability of the council is to be ensured.
- Regional, state and national plans and policies are to be taken into account in strategic planning and decision making.
- The transparency of council decisions, actions and information is to be ensured.

6. The community engagement principles

Our commitment to involving our community in decision making is rooted in the belief that decisions are best made by the people affected by them.

The community engagement principles are:

- 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.

7. The public transparency principles

Council decisions are made in a way that enables the community to understand how the decision was reached and what information was relied on.

The public transparency principles are:

- Council decision-making processes must be transparent except when the council is dealing with information that is confidential by virtue of this Act or any other Act.
- Council information must be publicly available unless the information is confidential by virtue of the Local Government Act 2020 or any other Act; or public availability of the information would be contrary to the public interest.
- Council information must be understandable and accessible to members of the municipal community.
- Public awareness of the availability of Council information must be facilitated.

8. The strategic planning principles

Careful planning is required to ensure that Council's decisions achieve the intended outcomes.

The strategic planning principles are:

- An integrated approach to planning, monitoring and performance reporting is to be adopted.
- Strategic planning must address the Community Vision.
- Strategic planning must take into account the resources needed for effective implementation.
- Strategic planning must identify and address the risks to effective implementation.
- Strategic planning must provide for ongoing monitoring of progress and regular reviews to identify and address changing circumstances.

9. The financial management principles

Sound financial management is fundamental to our ability to deliver on our promises.

The financial management principles are:

- Revenue, expenses, assets, liabilities, investments and financial transactions must be managed in accordance with a council's financial policies and strategic plans.
- Financial risks must be monitored and managed prudently having regard to economic circumstances.
- Financial policies and strategic plans, including the Revenue and Rating Plan, must seek to provide stability and predictability in the financial impact on the municipal community.
- Accounts and records that explain the financial operations and financial position of the council must be kept.

10. The service performance principles

The design of services by government is fundamentally different to the private sector. We ensure our services are responsive, accessible and wherever possible, delivered at the lowest cost.

The service performance principles are:

- Services should be provided in an equitable manner and be responsive to the diverse needs of the municipal community.
- Services should be accessible to the members of the municipal community for whom the services are intended.
- Quality and costs standards for services set by council should provide good value to the municipal community.
- A council should seek to continuously improve service delivery to the municipal community in response to performance monitoring.
- Service delivery must include a fair and effective process for considering and responding to complaints about service provision.



Governance at Yarra

Understanding governance

11. Governance defined

Governance is the process by which:

- decisions are made and implemented
 - an organisation achieves its goals and produces its outputs
 - organisations are directed, controlled and held to account
- Democratic governance exists when a government governs for and on behalf of its community. Good democratic governance occurs when governments govern as a result of being elected providing the democratic basis, which is essential to an understanding of good governance in the local government sector.

Good governance involves providing:

- clarity of roles and responsibilities
- robust systems which support both internal and external accountability
- transparent access to information and decision-making processes

12. Good governance in local government

Good governance in local government combines the characteristics of governance and the definitions and roles of local government. For us, this means:

- The Council being elected by, representative of, and accountable to the community.
- Councillors collectively making decisions in the best interests of the municipality as a whole, including future communities.
- The Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Councillors providing leadership to the community and reflecting the community's collective aspirations.
- Communities participating in the decision-making process.
- Policy enactment arising from our Community Vision and Council Plan with appropriate performance management and reporting to assess Council's progress.
- A management structure which implements our goals in accordance with our agreed priorities and adopted budget.
- Provision of services which meet our community's needs (sometimes in partnership with other levels of government, business or community organisations).
- Local government being well placed to facilitate coordination and integration at a local level.
- Cooperation between us and other local governments.

The Governance Standards

We are committed to operating in accordance with five Governance Standards which provide a foundation for good governance at Yarra City Council.

1

Meaningful relationships
Collaborative decision making where all participants clearly understand their role.

2

Leading with purpose
Collaborative decision making where all participants clearly understand their role.

3

Effective decision making
Evidence-based decision making which is underpinned by a structured process.

4

Organisational stewardship
A process that considers the impact of the decisions over the long term.

5

Transparency and accountability
A decision-making process which can be clearly understood and scrutinised.

Standard one – Meaningful relationships

The Council

13. The role of Council

Council is a collective decision-making body, which works together in the interests of the municipal community.

The Local Government Act 2020 grants the Council with wide-ranging powers, empowering it to do all things necessary or convenient to be done in connection with the performance of its role.

Legally, the Council consists of its nine Councillors, who are democratically elected in accordance with the Local Government Act. Council decisions are either made by the Council at a Council Meeting, or by a committee or person to whom the Council has delegated its powers.

All Council decisions, whether made by the Council itself or by a delegated body or person, must be made fairly and on their merits; and any person whose rights will be directly affected by that decision is entitled to communicate their views and have their interests considered.

14. The Mayor and Deputy Mayor

The Mayor of the Council is the first among equals – a Councillor chosen by their colleagues to provide leadership both to the community and Councillor group.

The role of the Mayor is to:

- chair Council Meetings
- be the principal spokesperson for the Council
- lead engagement with the municipal community on the development of the Council Plan
- report to the municipal community, at least once each year, on the implementation of the Council Plan
- promote behaviour among Councillors that meets the standards of conduct set out in the Councillor Code of Conduct
- assist Councillors to understand their role
- take a leadership role in ensuring the regular review of the performance of the Chief Executive Officer
- provide advice to the Chief Executive Officer when the Chief Executive Officer is setting the agenda for Council Meetings
- perform civic and ceremonial duties on behalf of the Council

The Deputy Mayor supports the Mayor in the performance of their role, as well as fulfilling the Mayor's obligations when they are absent or unable to do so.

15. Councillors

Yarra's Council comprises nine Councillors, each elected by the voters in a different ward using a preferential voting system, which sees the candidate with the largest community support in each ward elected for a four-year Council term. Together, these nine Councillors constitute the Yarra City Council.

Yarra's nine wards are:

- Boulevard Ward
- Curtain Ward
- Hoddle Ward
- Langridge Ward
- Lennox Ward
- MacKillop Ward
- Melba Ward
- Nicholls Ward
- Yarra Bend Ward

Each Councillor plays an equal and important role in the governance of the City of Yarra.

Their role is:

- to participate in the decision making of the Council
- to represent the interests of the municipal community in that decision making
- 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

In performing their role, Councillors must:

- consider the diversity of interests and needs of the municipal community
- support the role of the Council
- acknowledge and support the role of the Mayor
- act lawfully and in accordance with the oath or affirmation of office
- act in accordance with the standards of conduct
- comply with Council procedures required for good governance

Notwithstanding the election of candidates on an individual ward basis, each Councillor takes an oath or affirmation of office to act in the interests of the entire municipal community, not just the ward that saw them elected.

Related documents

[Councillor Code of Conduct](#)

[Councillor Interactions Protocol](#)

Management

16. Chief Executive Officer

Council's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is employed by the Council itself, and is the only member of staff the Council is empowered to appoint.

The role of the CEO is to:

- support the Mayor and the Councillors in the performance of their roles
- ensure the effective and efficient management of the day-to-day operations of the Council

Without limiting the generality of the role of the CEO, it includes:

- ensuring that the decisions of the Council are implemented without undue delay
- ensuring that the Council receives timely and reliable advice about its obligations
- supporting the Mayor in the performance of their role
- setting the agenda for Council Meetings after consulting the Mayor
- when requested by the Mayor, reporting to the Council in respect of the implementation of a Council decision
- carrying out the Council's responsibilities with respect to Councillors, under or with respect to the Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2013

Related documents

[CEO Employment and Remuneration Policy](#)

17. Senior Management

In addition to the Chief Executive Officer, the organisation is led by an Executive Team of five General Managers, as well as a Senior Management Team with a diverse range of responsibilities across the organisation.

These senior managers have a responsibility to support the Chief Executive Officer to implement the decisions of the elected Council and to provide leadership and management of Yarra City Council staff.

Related documents

[Workforce Plan](#)

18. Staff

With almost 1,000 staff, Yarra City Council has a significant workforce, delivering programs and services to the Yarra community.

Ranging in responsibilities across more than 70 different services, Yarra's workforce is as diverse as the community it serves. Despite these differences, Council's staff operate according to a consistent set of values and commitment to service excellence and customer service.

Related documents

[Staff Code of Conduct](#)

Community

19. The municipal community

Fundamental to the role of a local Council, the Mayor and Councillors is the requirement to work in the interests of the municipal community.

The Local Government Act 2020 defines a 'municipal community' as:

- traditional owners of land in the municipal district of the Council
- people who live in the municipal district of the Council
- people and bodies who are ratepayers of the Council
- people and bodies who conduct activities in the municipal district of the Council

By this definition, Council's role extends beyond just those who are able to participate in local government elections. It is important that the organisation engage meaningfully with the municipal community in its decision-making processes, and that Councillors balance the need to represent the interests of their constituents, with the need to consider the interests of the municipal community as a whole.

The community, in turn, has an opportunity to inform Council's decisions by involving itself in the community engagement opportunities, participating in good faith and contributing its local knowledge and lived experience to the process.

Related documents

[Commitment to Respectful Community Relationships](#)

20. The Victorian community

When exercising powers under the Planning and Environment Act 1987, Council has a different role, acting as it is as a responsible authority.

The duties of a responsible authority, as set out in the Planning and Environment Act 1987 are to:

- efficiently administer and enforce the planning scheme
- enforce any enforcement order or interim enforcement order relating to land covered by a planning scheme for which it is the responsible authority
- implement the objectives of the planning scheme
- comply with the Planning and Environment Act and the planning scheme
- provide information and reports as required by the Minister for Planning

The Council, acting as a responsible authority, must act in accordance with the purpose of the Planning and Environment Act itself, by planning the use, development and protection of land in Victoria in the present and long-term interests of all Victorians.

Challenging as it is, in exercising its land use planning powers, Council is obligated to place the interests of Victorians as a whole ahead of the interests of the municipal community.

Standard two – Leading with purpose

A strategic focus

21. Community Vision

The Yarra 2036 Community Vision is Yarra's long-term vision. It sets out our community's hopes, aspirations and priorities for the next 15 years.

The Local Government Act 2020 requires all Victorian councils to develop and adopt a community vision.

They also have important benefits, including:

- helping us understand our community's long-term aspirations
- providing a tool for future planning and decision making in Yarra
- helping guide our community's future priorities

The Vision is the product of a two-staged engagement approach, which started with broad community engagement, and was finalised with a community panel.

The Vision informs all planning and decision making for Council and our community, including the development of a Council Plan.

Progress in achieving our Vision is reported in our Annual Report.

Related documents

[Yarra 2036 Community Vision](#)

22. Council Plan

Our Council Plan 2021-2025 sets our priorities and direction for the next four years.

It outlines a range of strategies and initiatives that we will implement to achieve the community's vision for Yarra. It also incorporates our Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan.

To ensure it reflects what's important to our community, the plan was developed after seeking community ideas and feedback over two rounds of community consultation.

The Council Plan 2021-2025 includes six Strategic Objectives that describe Council's Strategic Direction for the next four years. They are:

- Climate and environment
- Social equity and health
- Local economy
- Place and nature
- Transport and movement
- Democracy and governance

Related documents

[Council Plan 2021-2025](#)

A community partnership

23. Community engagement

Community engagement provides opportunities for the community to be involved in planning and decision making because understanding the needs, aspirations, concerns and ideas of the community improves Council's planning and delivery of services.

Good community engagement supports the building of respectful relationships it can also result in community strengthening and capacity building. Hearing from a range of perspectives leads to sustainable decisions and encourages ownership and belonging from all sections of our community.

Importantly, meaningful community engagement ensures transparency, integrity and trust in Council processes.

Council's community engagement projects are guided by nine principles:

- **Representative:** We identify people and groups likely to be affected by our decision, and ensure they have the chance to participate.
- **Accessible:** We use methods that empower underrepresented groups to get involved. We use a variety of online, print and face-to-face methods to maximise our reach and remove potential barriers and ensure culturally safe spaces for engagement.

- **Meaningful:** We empower stakeholders with relevant, objective and plain English information and resources to allow informed participation.
- **Transparent:** We explain which elements the community can influence, to what level and how we will use our community's input.
- **Accountable:** We report back to the community, explaining what we asked, what we heard, and what we did.
- **Respectful:** We value and respect our community's time, engaging closely when their influence is high and scaling back when it is more limited.
- **Flexible:** We adapt to evolving circumstances, including allowing for newly identified stakeholders to engage as necessary throughout the process.
- **Supportive:** We advocate on behalf of the Yarra community where the work of external agencies (including other tiers of government) impacts our community.
- **Prepared:** We ensure our engagement practitioners and decision makers have the appropriate training, guidance and resources.

Related documents

[Community Engagement Strategy](#)
[Community Engagement Action Plan](#)

24. Advocacy

Council's role in influencing other levels of government to support policy change and positive outcomes, and investment in our city, is crucial. To enable this, we need clear advocacy priorities and a planned, coordinated, evidence-based and resourced approach to advocacy that facilitates action and results.

Successful strategic advocacy involves:

- telling the “Yarra story” to government and community
- influencing policy and decision makers
- attracting and securing investment
- enabling and supporting strategic partnerships
- building Council and community capacity for advocacy
- researching information to inform decisions and funding applications
- strengthening our reputation as a leader in local government, an advocate for our community and experts in our field

Related documents

[Advocacy Strategic Framework](#)

25. Electoral participation

The right to vote in Council elections is enshrined in the Local Government Act 2020, and includes a broader range of people than can vote in state and federal elections.

In order to vote in Yarra City Council elections, a person must be aged 18 years or older and fit one of the following categories:

State-enrolled voters

- Listed on the State electoral roll at an address in the City of Yarra

Council-enrolled voters

- Own and pay rates on a property in the City of Yarra.
- Occupy and pay rates on a property in the City of Yarra.
- A director or company secretary of a corporation that pays rates (either as an owner or occupier) on a property in the City of Yarra.

State-enrolled voters are automatically included on the electoral roll, while Council-enrolled voters must apply to Council to be included. Once included, voting at Council elections is compulsory.

Council also plays a role in fostering electoral participation at a State and Federal level, by conferring Australian Citizenship on eligible Yarra residents in accordance with the Australian Citizenship Act 2007.

26. Human Rights

Council has an important (and legally required) role to play in upholding and protecting its diverse population's human rights. Council actively works to reduce barriers so that all residents can participate in community and access services and information regardless of age, gender, sex, sexuality, income, education, cultural background, language skills, religion or disability.

Council also recognises that the community continues to evolve, and the strengths and barriers of diverse groups continue to change. Council is committed continue to understand these changes and to respond accordingly.

Council's strong commitment to achieving social justice is articulated by our being signatories to a number of international human rights treaties. Further, we are bound by the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic) to act compatibly with human rights, and to consider human rights when developing policies, making laws, delivering services and making decisions.

Related documents

[Social Justice Charter](#)

27. Media

Interaction with the media requires careful attention to a range of factors including audience, political sensitivity, reputation and public interest.

Positive and sensitive management of this interaction is in the interests of all stakeholders.

The interface between Council and the media is managed carefully to minimise the risks of adverse publicity due to inaccurate or inappropriate sharing of information.

Media management requires specific skills and awareness. Council has clear protocols and approvals for authorising a spokesperson and/or statements for distribution.

It is important that all information disseminated to the media is:

- accurate
- consistent
- appropriate
- timely

Related documents

[Media Policy](#)

[Councillor Media Policy](#)



28. Social Media

Council supports and encourages appropriate use of social media for engaging and communicating with the community.

By engaging with social media Council is:

- **Discoverable:** When people search for Yarra City Council on Facebook or Instagram, they are able to find an official page.
- **Connected:** Council can have one-on-one conversations with residents, using social media as a major communications channel.
- **Timely:** Social media allows Council to reach large groups of people frequently, with messages tailored to a wide range of needs and interests.
- **Insightful:** Analytics provide a deeper understanding of residents, helping shape Council's communications and marketing activities.

Related documents

[Social Media Policy](#)

[Councillor Social Media Policy](#)

Standard three – Effective decision making

Informed decision-making

29. Advisory committees

Council has established a series of advisory committees to assist the Council in fulfilling its obligations. While these committees do not make decisions or form policy on behalf of Council, they assist Council in the delivery of the Council Plan by providing specialist advice regarding policy development and implementation, programs and services.

The appointment of members of advisory committees follows a public expression of interest process, with the appointments made by the Council itself. Advisory committee members are typically appointed for a period of three to four years.

Where advisory committee advice cannot be acted on within the delegated power of Council officers, it must be referred to Council for formal resolution before being acted on. Advisory Committees are supported by a formal structure and support mechanisms.

Councillors provide reports on the activities of advisory committees at Council Meetings, and minutes of advisory committee meetings are published on Council's website.

Related documents

[Council Committees Policy](#)

30. Councillor Workshops

Councillor Workshops support Councillors to fulfil their legislative obligation to “diligently use Council processes to become informed about matters which are subject to Council decisions”.

Councillor Workshops are an opportunity for the presentation of information to Councillors, responding to questions they might have and the provision of professional development and training.

Councillor Workshops cannot be used to make decisions, negotiate agreed positions or otherwise canvass, lobby or seek to influence the outcome of a decision to be made by an officer under delegation or by Council at a future meeting.

Councillor Workshop confidentiality is important. It encourages open and frank discussion, helps facilitate the development of vision and the implementation of an effective strategy to achieve that vision, and protects information that is confidential, personal, or relates to employment, commercial or legal matters.

Related documents

[Councillor Workshop Transparency Policy](#)

31. Council officer reports

Reports prepared by Council officers in Council Meeting agendas represent the organisation's formal advice to the Council.

Council officer reports present the background to a decision the Council is being asked to make, the relevant factors to be taken into account in reaching a decision, and a recommendation from the organisation as to the decision to be made. These reports are prepared by subject matter experts and are based on the best available information at the time of completion. Report authors take into account all of Council's relevant policy positions and any previous Council resolutions on the matter and present a report that balances any competing interests in arriving at a conclusion.

Report authors, as subject matter experts, are required to present 'frank and fearless' advice in their reports, with a recommendation that, in the officer's opinion is in the best interests of the municipal community, rather than something they think might have the Council's support.

The Council, in considering the officer report, is free to either make a decision in line with the officer recommendation, or depart from the recommendation and make a different decision. This process takes place at the Council Meeting itself.

32. Councillor right to information

A Councillor is entitled to inspect information held by Council that is relevant to an issue before, or concerning, Council and the representative functions of the Councillor, unless access is restricted for privacy, confidentiality or legal reasons.

Examples of these restrictions include, but are not limited to:

- Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014
- Health Records Act 2001
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
- confidential business information provided by other organisations
- material related to current enforcement investigations

Councillors must at all times adhere to the provisions of the Local Government Act 2020 relating to confidentiality and/or inappropriate use of information. Section 125 of the Local Government Act makes it unlawful for a Councillor or staff member (or former Councillor or staff member) to release information that they know, or should reasonably know, is confidential information.

Councillors do not have the authority to release documents on behalf of Council.

Effective decisions

33. Governance rules

Section 60 of the Local Government Act 2020 requires each Council to adopt governance rules. These rules must provide for:

- the conduct of Council Meetings (including holding Council Meetings by electronic means of communication)
- the conduct of meetings of delegated committees (including holding meetings of delegated committees by electronic means of communication)
- requesting and approval of attendance at Council Meetings and meetings of delegated committees by electronic means of communication
- the form and availability of meeting records
- the election of the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor
- the appointment of an Acting Mayor
- an election period policy in accordance with Section 69
- the procedures for the disclosure of a conflict of interest by a Councillor or a member of a delegated committee under Section 130
- the procedure for the disclosure of a conflict of interest by a Councillor under Section 131
- the disclosure of a conflict of interest by a member of Council staff when providing information in respect of a matter within the meaning of Section 126(1)
- any other matters prescribed by the regulations

The Yarra City Council Governance Rules were first adopted in 2020, and are periodically reviewed to ensure they respond to legislative change and continue to meet the needs of Council and the community. A community engagement process is undertaken before any adjustment to the rules is made.

The Governance Rules set out provisions for the conduct of all of Council's formal meetings, both for Councillors and members of the public. They also explain the conflict-of-interest obligations of Councillors and staff and the process to be followed to ensure transparency and compliance with the law.

Section 69 of the Local Government Act requires Council to adopt an election period policy which prohibits any Council decision during the period in the lead-up to a general Council election that:

- relates to the appointment or remuneration of the Chief Executive Officer
- commits the Council to expenditure exceeding 1% of the Council's income from rates and charges in the preceding financial year
- the Council considers could be reasonably deferred until the next Council is in place
- the Council considers should not be made during an election period

The election period policy forms a part of the governance rules.

Related documents

[Governance Rules](#)

34. Council Meetings

A regular program of Council Meetings are held throughout the year, with the details of each meeting published on Council's website. The meeting agendas and all supporting documents are also available in advance of the meeting at which they will be considered.

Council Meetings are the Council's main opportunity to make decisions on strategic matters, such as strategies and policies affecting the community, budgets and financial plans, service standards and expectations, and advocacy and lobbying priorities.

The Local Government Act 2020 requires the CEO to set the agendas for Council Meetings in consultation with the Mayor, but all Councillors have an opportunity to contribute to the business of the Council through a variety of mechanisms set out in the governance rules.

Members of the public can register and attend Council Meetings to ask a question of the Council, or address the Council about a matter to be considered at the meeting.

All Council Meetings are open to the public and livestreamed on Council's website. On rare occasions, parts of Council Meetings are closed to public to enable consideration of confidential information.

Council's website also contains the meeting agendas and minutes for meetings dating back to the City of Yarra's first meeting in 1994.

35. Planning Decisions Committee

The Planning Decisions Committee comprises three Councillors who are appointed on a rotational basis to make planning decisions on behalf of Council.

A regular program of Planning Decisions Committee meetings are held throughout the year, with the details of each meeting published on Council's website. The meeting agendas and all supporting documents are also available in advance of the meeting at which they will be considered.

Items are presented to the Planning Decisions Committee when they meet the criteria set out by the Council in its instrument of delegation to the committee. A further mechanism exists for Councillors to request that matters of municipal wide significance be heard instead at a Council Meeting.

Parties to planning applications being considered (both the applicant and objectors) can register and attend Planning Decisions Committee meetings to address the Council about a matter to be considered at the meeting.

All Planning Decisions Committee meetings are open to the public and livestreamed on Council's website. On rare occasions, parts of Planning Decisions Committee meetings are closed to public to enable consideration of confidential information.

Council's website also contains the meeting agendas and minutes for meetings of the Planning Decisions Committee (and its predecessor the Internal Development Approvals Committee) dating back to its first meeting in 2000.

36. Qualified privilege

Councillors are not protected in the same manner as members of the Victorian or Commonwealth Parliament for statements they make in the Council Chamber.

In a Council Meeting, a Councillor fulfils a public duty and is therefore given limited legal protection. However, unlike parliamentarians, a Councillor's privilege is qualified. This means that protection is only provided as long as the statements are made in good faith.

Statements made with malice or made recklessly are not protected by qualified privilege. Statements made by Councillors outside Council and delegated committee meetings are unlikely to attract qualified privilege.

While Council indemnifies Councillors and Council staff against actions or claims arising during or after their term of office in respect the performance of their duties, this indemnification does not extend to actions done in bad faith.

Exercising the powers of Council

37. The delegations framework

On a day-to-day basis, it is not practical for the Council alone to exercise the many statutory powers bestowed upon it, so in order to effectively and efficiently use these powers, Council delegates its powers to various staff and committees.

Delegations are an effective means of streamlining decision making and enables Council to concentrate on the broader strategic issues rather than administrative and routine matters.

Maintaining current and relevant instruments of delegation allow decisions and action to be undertaken by delegated officers on behalf of Council to ensure the business of Council is efficiently performed and conducted.

Delegations are made by way of legal instruments that are updated periodically in response to legislative and regulatory changes. The instruments are authorised by Council and set out to whom each of the powers are delegated, and any conditions or limitations on the use of these powers that apply.

Related documents

[Delegations Register](#)

38. Delegations to the CEO

By instrument of delegation, Council has delegated all of its powers to the CEO, with some exceptions. The CEO cannot:

- spend more than \$1 million for a single transaction or \$750,000 per annum for a multi-year contract
- appoint an Acting Chief Executive Officer for a period exceeding 28 days
- elect a Mayor or Deputy Mayor
- grant a reasonable request for leave under s35 of the Act
- make a decision in relation to the employment of the CEO
- approve or amend the Council Plan
- adopt or amend any policy that Council must adopt under the Act
- adopt or amend the Governance Rules
- appoint the chair or the members to a delegated committee
- make, amend or revoke a local law
- approve the Budget or revised Budget
- approve the borrowing of money
- declare rates and charges
- do anything that is required by law to be done by Council resolution
- do anything which Council has previously designated must be the subject of a resolution of Council
- do anything which would be inconsistent with a policy or strategy adopted by Council
- do anything which cannot be lawfully delegated

The Chief Executive Officer has further delegated many of Council's powers to Council staff via a written instrument of sub-delegation.

39. Delegations to Council staff

By instrument of delegation, Council has delegated selected powers under 10 Acts of Parliament to specific Council staff other than the CEO.

These relate to powers that cannot be sub-delegated by the CEO and must be delegated directly to the staff responsible for them.

40. Delegations to Committees

By instrument of delegation, Council has delegated many of its powers under the Planning and Environment Act 1987 to the Planning Decisions Committee. The Planning Decisions Committee consists of a group of three Councillors who meet on a rotational basis.

41. Delegations on specific matters

Throughout the year, the Council will delegate specific responsibilities to officers in a Council resolution. In most cases, this involves the delegation of administrative powers to an officer so that they can give effect to a decision made by the Council (such as signing a contract).

42. Authorised officers

Many Council officers are also what is known as an 'authorised officer' – a special designation that gives the officer the authority to take specific actions under legislation and local laws, such as issuing infringement notices, giving lawful direction, requesting access to property and taking enforcement action.

Standard four – Organisational stewardship

The meaning of stewardship

43. Future focused

The Local Government Act 2020 requires that Council consider not just the needs of the current community, but also to ensure that the interests of future generations be secured. By necessity, Councillors are required to look beyond the four-year electoral term and make decisions to ensure the ongoing sustainability of the Council.

Just as any current Council builds on the work of previous Councils, it in turn lays the foundation for Councils of the future. Each elected Council acts as the custodian of the organisation, providing stewardship during its time in office.

44. Financial sustainability

One of Council's primary obligations is to be financially sustainable and make effective use of the public funds entrusted to us; and ensure the responsible management and planning of community assets, so that future ratepayers are not burdened unnecessarily.

Long-term financial sustainability is essential to ensuring that Council can continue providing the services and programs our community relies on. Towards this, it is crucial that decisions made today are forward-thinking and consider the evolving needs of our current and future community.

With rising cost pressures, a tightening fiscal environment and a growing population, Council must establish a robust and forward-thinking financial strategy that extends beyond short-term budgeting cycles.

Addressing these challenges requires continuous effort.

Related documents

[Financial Sustainability Strategy](#)

The strategic levers

45. Strategic Lever 1: Sustainable cash reserves and responsible borrowing

One of the key indicators of assessing Council's financial sustainability is the ability to generate sufficient cash flows and the level of unrestricted cash held.

Council must maintain a reasonable amount of cash to meet the requirements of Council business and ensure timely payment of all liabilities. Maintaining a healthy cash balance is important for financial sustainability. It can provide Council a 'financial cushion' to meet unforeseen or emergency expenses or to strategically fund priority projects and/or invest in infrastructure improvements without the need to borrow or disrupt essential services.

Council typically views loan funding as a last resort. The use of borrowings must ensure intergenerational equity by aligning asset consumption with the future generations benefiting from those assets.

Strategic Lever 2: Optimise revenue

As populations grow, local governments face increasing pressure from community and business to improve service delivery performance. Yarra revenue is highly constrained threatening service delivery and quality to meet a growing community.

Rates, charges, user fees, statutory fees, and fines are Council's largest revenue source.

As our population grows, more properties mean more infrastructure and services are needed. As inflation and the cost of living continue to rise, so too will the challenge to minimise rate increases. As a part of our overall financial strategy, Council must consider other opportunities to generate income and reduce the reliance on traditional revenue sources.

46. Strategic Level 3: Well-planned assets

Council manages \$2 billion in assets: from land and buildings to roads, drains, footpaths, parks and open space. Our asset base is largely the product of investment by prior generations of residents. As custodians, Council has the responsibility to ensure these assets are available to future generations.

Integration with the Asset Plan is a key principle of Council's strategic financial planning principles. The Asset Plan is designed to inform the 10-year Long-Term Financial Plan by identifying the amount of capital renewal, backlog and maintenance funding that is required over the life of each asset category. The level of funding incorporates knowledge of asset condition, risk assessment, as well as setting intervention and service levels for each asset class.

47. Strategic Level 4: Review the service landscape

Over time, the needs and expectations of the Yarra community change, meaning Council's service mix, service levels and operating models also need to respond and change.

Redefining the service mix, service level and service delivery options through a comprehensive service planning and review program is central to Council's financial sustainability. A robust service planning and review framework ensures all services are relevant, financially sustainable and can meet future community needs.

48. Strategic Level 5: Invest in transformation

Council has embarked on a comprehensive digital transformation program to modernise operations and enhance service delivery to the community. This program encompasses initiatives and strategies designed to leverage technology and digital solutions to integrate systems, streamline processes, improve efficiency and service innovation, and provide better accessibility and convenience for residents and staff.

The digital transformation program focuses on leveraging data and enhancing analytics capabilities to ensure evidence-based service and asset planning and decision making. A data-driven approach helps Council use resources more effectively, identify areas for improvement, and tailor services to meet the evolving demands of the community.

Strategic Level 6: Robust financial management

Mitigating financial risks, effective financial planning and responsible budgeting are essential for long term sustainability. Management undertakes a rigorous and robust budget setting process each year, including a line-by-line review of operating budgets and proposed projects to ensure alignment with strategic priorities and value.

Performance is monitored closely throughout the year with forecasts updated monthly and reported to Council and the community quarterly.

49. Strategic Level 7: Prioritise advocacy and partnerships

Communities face uncertainty and financial pressures due to their reliance on other levels of government for funding support. This dependence leads to various challenges for Council.

For many years, cost-shifting has placed pressure on library services and school crossing supervision. More recently, Council has experienced cost pressures arising from cost shifting in a much wider range of areas of responsibility.

In a declining funding environment, Council needs to maintain strong strategic partnerships, leverage regional networks, and proactively advocate for policy changes and investment in Yarra.

To enhance the effectiveness of grants, Council needs a strategic approach, proactively identifying and targeting high value funding opportunities that directly support the Council Plan.



Standard five – Transparency and accountability

Public information and registers

50. Public transparency

Section 57 of the Local Government Act 2020 requires each Council to adopt a public transparency policy. The policy must:

- give effect to the public transparency principles
- describe the ways in which Council information is to be made publicly available
- specify which Council information must be publicly available, including all policies, plans and reports required by legislation
- include any other matters prescribed by the regulations

Council is transparent in its decision-making processes and provides access to Council information in accordance with its Public Transparency Policy and relevant legislation.

In fulfilling this commitment, Council ensures that information is publicly available unless the information is confidential, or the public availability of the information would be contrary to the public interest.

Further, ensures that information is understandable and accessible to members of the municipal community and facilitates the public awareness of the availability of Council information.

Related documents

[Public Transparency Policy](#)

51. Public registers

Council has an obligation to maintain a number of registers or similar records of information which are available to members of the public. Access to this information is governed by the relevant legislative or regulatory provisions and in some cases, is restricted to certain persons or is subject to payment of a fee. There may be limitations on what information can be made available, which will differ in each case, and be determined in accordance with the relevant enabling laws.

This information includes, but is not limited to:

- **Planning register:** Section 49 of the Planning and Environment Act 1987 requires Council to keep a register containing the prescribed information in respect of all applications for permits and all decisions and determinations relating to permits and make it available for inspection.
- **Planning permit applications:** Section 51 of the Planning and Environment Act 1987 requires Council to make a copy of every application for planning permit available for inspection until the end of the latest period during which an application for review may be made or, if an application to the Tribunal is made, until the application is determined by the Tribunal or withdrawn.
- **Planning permits:** Section 70 of the Planning and Environment Act 1987 requires Council to make a copy of every planning permit that it has issued available for inspection.

- **Planning scheme amendments:** Section 18 of the Planning and Environment Act 1987 requires Council to make the amendment, the explanatory report, any document applied, adopted or incorporated in the amendment and any accompanying agreement available for inspection until the amendment is approved or lapses.
- **Building register:** Section 31 of the Building Act 1993 requires Council to keep a register of all building permits given to it and make it available for inspection.
- **Swimming pool register:** Section 216D of the Building Act 1993 requires Council to maintain a register of swimming pools and spas and make it available to certain persons including owners and occupiers of properties appearing on the register.
- **Occupancy permit register:** Section 74 of the Building Act 1993 requires Council to keep a register of all occupancy permits and temporary approvals and amendments given to it and make it available for inspection.
- **Register of orders:** Section 126 of the Building Act 1993 requires Council to keep a register of all emergency orders, building notices or building orders given to it and make it available for inspection.
- **Domestic animals register:** Section 18 of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 requires Council to keep a register of all registered dogs and cats and make it available for inspection.
- **Land information certificates:** Section 121 of the Local Government Act 2020 requires Council to provide a land information certificate containing valuations of the property, rates chargeable and any rate arrears or interest to any person upon application.
- **Staff gift register:** Section 49 of the Local Government Act 2020 requires Council to maintain a register of gifts to record gifts disclosed by Council staff. A summary of the register for the current financial year is available on application.
- **Councillor gift register:** Section 138 of the Local Government Act 2020 requires Council to maintain a register of gifts to record gifts disclosed by Councillors. A summary of the register for the current financial year is available on application.
- **Delegations by Council:** Section 11 of the Local Government Act 2020 requires Council to maintain a register of delegations made by the Council to the Chief Executive Officer or members of a delegated committee. This register is available on request.
- **Delegations by the Chief Executive Officer:** Section 11 of the Local Government Act 2020 requires Council to maintain a register of delegations made by the Chief Executive Officer to staff. This register is available on request.
- **Register of public roads:** Section 19 of the Road Management Act 2004 requires Council to maintain a register of public roads and make it available for inspection.

52. Councillor expenses

Section 41 of the Local Government Act 2020 requires each Council to adopt a policy in relation to the reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses for Councillors. The policy must:

- specify procedures to be followed in applying for expense reimbursement
- comply with any requirements prescribed by the regulations
- provide for the reimbursement of childcare costs where required for a Councillor to perform their role
- have particular regard to expenses incurred by a Councillor who is a carer

It is Council's policy to provide all Councillors with the necessary support and resources to effectively fulfil their duties of office. Council meets all expenses or reimburses Councillors for out-of-pocket expenses which:

- are bona fide expenses
- have been reasonably incurred in the performance of the role of Councillor or member of a delegated committee
- are reasonably necessary for the Councillor or member of a delegated committee to perform that role

The cost to Council of all payments, charges and reimbursements made to Councillors is publicly reported on a quarterly basis by means of a report on Council's website. An annual total for each Councillor is included in Council's Annual Report.

Related documents

[Councillor Support Policy](#)

53. Gifts and hospitality

Section 138 of the Local Government Act 2020 requires each Council to adopt a Councillor gift policy. Section 49 requires each Council to include provisions relating to gifts to staff in the staff code of conduct.

Both of these requirements require the disclosure of gifts in a register.

The recording of gifts ensures transparency in relation to the potential for conflicts of interest to arise, and reminds Councillors and staff of their obligations to ensure that their personal interests do not affect the discharge of their official duties.

While it is not a legal requirement, Council publishes a register providing the details of gifts disclosed by Councillors and Council staff and makes it available on Council's website.

Related documents

[Councillor Gifts and Hospitality Policy](#)

[Staff Gifts and Hospitality Policy](#)

54. Conflicts of Interest

Section 60 of the Local Government Act 2020 requires each Council's governance rules to set out particular requirements regarding the disclosure of conflicts of interest at Council and delegated committee meetings, as well as the disclosure by staff in a range of other circumstances. In addition, Council has adopted a Conflict of Interest Policy, which requires staff to make disclosures over and above those provided for in the Governance Rules.

While it is not a legal requirement, Council publishes a summary of all conflicts of interest declared at Council and Planning Decisions Committee meetings and makes it available on Council's website.

Related documents

[Conflict of Interest Policy](#)

55. Personal Interest Returns

Councillors, the Chief Executive Officer and selected senior members of Council staff are required by Sections 133 and 134 to submit personal interests returns which disclose their financial, business, employment and property interests. These returns are submitted when a staff member commences, and every six months thereafter.

A summary of the most recent personal interests return submitted by each person is published on Council's website.

56. Freedom of information

The Freedom of Information Act 1982 sets out which documents are available, how applications are processed, and what privacy and other restrictions apply before documents can be released.

The general principle of freedom of information is that all documents in Council's possession are available to the public, subject to certain limitations. Freedom of information does not give applicants unlimited access to documents.

There are several important restrictions on the types of documents available under freedom of information. For example, documents which may not be available include:

- 'exempt documents' such as internal working documents, law enforcement documents, documents relating to legal proceedings, or documents affecting the personal privacy of other people.
- documents which are already publicly available or available by paying a fee under another Act.
- documents which were created before 1 January 1989.

Council endeavours to respond to freedom of information requests in a timely manner, and assist applicants to lodge a request where required.

Related documents

[Freedom of Information Statements](#)

Holding ourselves to account

57. Customer Complaints Policy

Council is committed to working for the Yarra community to deliver high quality services and a great customer experience.

Feedback and complaints are important to us, and we encourage persons who are dissatisfied with a decision, the quality of our services or the behaviour of a Council employee or contractor to let us know.

We endeavour to engage with all complaints in a meaningful and respectful way and ask that they do the same. We do not engage or respond to feedback or complaints containing abusive, demeaning or inappropriate language or remarks that are discriminatory.

Complaints may be lodged with Council in any of the following ways:

- Online at www.yarracity.vic.gov.au
- By email to info@yarracity.vic.gov.au
- By telephone to 9205 5555
- In person at one of our customer service centres
- By mail to PO Box 168 Richmond Vic 3121

Related documents

[Customer Complaints Policy](#)

58. Audit and Risk Committee

The Audit and Risk Committee is established under Section 53 of the Local Government Act 2020.

The Audit and Risk Committee provides independent and objective assurance and assistance to Council and its chief executive officer on Council's risk management, control and compliance framework, and its external financial and performance responsibilities. In addition, the committee provides advice to Council that assists Council to fulfil its corporate governance and oversight responsibilities.

The Committee is required to:

- Section 49 of the Planning and Environment Act 1987 requires Council to keep a register containing the prescribed information in respect of all applications for permits and all decisions and determinations relating to permits and make it available for inspection.
- **Planning permit applications:** Section 51 of the Planning and Environment Act 1987 requires Council to make a copy of every application for planning permit available for inspection until the end of the latest period during which an application for review may be made or, if an application to the Tribunal is made, until the application is determined by the Tribunal or withdrawn.
- **Planning permits:** Section 70 of the Planning and Environment Act 1987 requires Council to make a copy of every planning permit that it has issued available for inspection.

Related documents

[Audit and Risk Committee](#)

59. Council as a model litigant

In the event that alternative dispute resolution mechanisms have failed and litigation is necessary, Council is committed to behave as a model litigant. This means that Council will:

- act fairly
- act consistently
- deal with claims promptly and not cause unnecessary delay
- make an early assessment of the prospects of success and potential liability
- pay legitimate claims without litigation
- consider seeking to avoid and limit the scope of legal proceedings, including participating in dispute resolution processes or settlement negotiations
- where possible, keep the costs of any litigation to a minimum
- when participating in dispute resolution or settlement negotiations, ensure that as far as practicable the Council representatives have authority to settle the matter and participate fully and effectively
- not rely on technical arguments unless the Council's interests would be prejudiced
- not take advantage of a claimant who lacks the resources to litigate
- not undertake and pursue appeals unless the Council believes that it has reasonable prospects for success or the appeal is otherwise justified in the public interest
- consider apologising where the Council is aware that it or its representatives have acted wrongly or improperly

Independent oversight agencies

60. Independent Broad-based Anti corruption Commission

The Independent Broad-based Anti corruption Commission (IBAC) is Victoria's anti-corruption agency and is responsible for preventing and exposing public sector corruption. IBAC accepts complaints about suspected corruption in the public sector, including about Councillors and members of Council staff.

The IBAC will also accept protected disclosure complaints alleging improper conduct.

61. Local Government Inspectorate

The Local Government Inspectorate is responsible for investigating alleged serious breaches of the Local Government Act 2020, including:

- misuse of position
- conflict of interest
- disclosure of confidential information
- council election offences
- nomination of someone not qualified to be a council election candidate
- authorisation of electoral material

The Chief Municipal Inspector, the head of the Local Government Inspectorate, is also responsible for investigating and making applications to VCAT for findings of gross misconduct against Councillors and has power to investigate and initiate applications for councillor conduct panels to be established to determine allegations of serious misconduct by Councillors.

62. Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner

The Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner (OVIC) is the primary regulator and source of independent advice to the community and government about how the public sector (including local Councils) collects, uses and discloses information.

Complaints about any of the following matters can be made to OVIC:

- breaches of privacy or misuse of personal information
- freedom of information
- data protection and information security

63. Principal Councillor Conduct Registrar

The Principal Councillor Conduct Registrar administers Councillor conduct panel processes under the Councillor conduct framework of the Local Government Act 2020.

The registrar is also responsible for appointing an arbiter to a Council where an application alleging misconduct is made under the Council's internal arbitration process. Before appointing an arbiter, the registrar must be satisfied that the application is not frivolous, vexatious, misconceived or lacking in substance, and that there is sufficient evidence to support the allegation.

Applications to the Principal Councillor Conduct Registrar can only be made by a Councillor, group of Councillors or by a Council. Members of the public or Council staff cannot make applications.

64. Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal

The Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) provides fair, efficient and affordable justice by making decisions about a wide range of cases or by helping people to resolve disputes.

The majority of matters involving Council at VCAT relate to Council's powers under the Planning and Environment Act 1987. Where parties to a planning application have a right to seek a VCAT review of a Council decision, Council informs them of that right, and the application deadline.

65. Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights and Commission

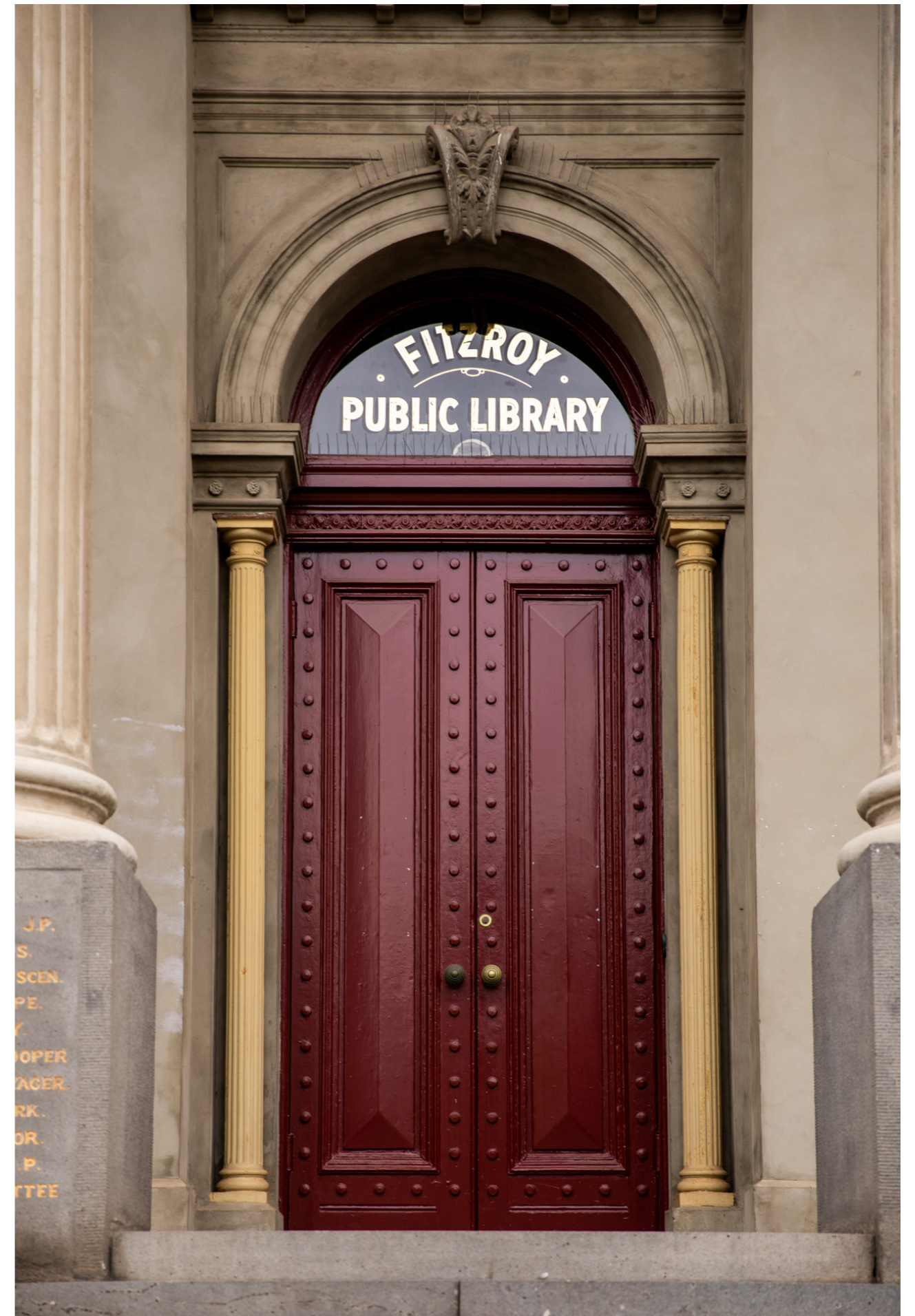
The role of the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC) is to protect human rights, to promote fair treatment for all Victorians, and advocate for a diverse and inclusive state.

Complaints about discrimination or an alleged breach of a person's human rights can be made to VEOHRC.

66. Victorian Ombudsman

The Victorian Ombudsman deals with complaints about actions or decisions made by Victorian public organisations, including Councils.

Complaints about Council services, communication, complaint handling, unreasonable actions or decisions can be made to the ombudsman.





Yarra City Council

PO Box 168, Richmond, VIC 3121

9205 5555

info@yarracity.vic.gov.au

yarracity.vic.gov.au

Customer service centres

Richmond Town Hall

333 Bridge Road, Richmond

Collingwood Town Hall

140 Hoddle Street, Abbotsford