

Title:	Advocacy Policy
Type of policy:	Council
Adopted:	27 March 2024
Record No:	24/45953
Attachments:	Nil

Acknowledgement of Country

Murrindindi Shire Council is proud to acknowledge the Taungurung and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as the traditional owners of the land we now call Murrindindi Shire.

We pay our respects to First Nations leaders and elders, past, present and emerging, who are the keepers of history, traditions, knowledge and culture of this land.

We commit to working in collaboration with traditional owners of this land in a spirit of reconciliation and partnership.

1. Purpose

To provide direction and guidance for Council's advocacy efforts ensuring Council works in partnership with the community to influence public policy and resource allocation for the benefit of the Murrindindi Shire.

2. Rationale

Council plays an important role in advocating on behalf of the community to other levels of government and a variety of external entities and decision-makers to secure influence, policy reform, financial contributions, and other resources and support for its communities, region and the broader sector.

The strategic priorities outlined in the Council Plan 2021-2025 and other key strategies contain a range of initiatives which require support from government partners to ensure they can be effectively delivered to the community.

The Council Plan 2021-2025 also outlines a range of commitments Council has made to improve outcomes through effective and targeted advocacy over its four-year term.

This policy supports the achievement of those commitments, describing the approach Council will take to ensuring advocacy efforts are strategic, coordinated and effective.

Council also collaborates with other groups, Councils, the Community and agencies in collaboration on behalf of our community.

3. Scope

This policy applies to Council and its Officers in relation to planning and delivering the advocacy platform.

4. Definitions

Reference Term	Definition
Advocacy	Where Council speaks or acts for and on behalf of the community to influence, raise awareness and/ or seek support from politicians, various tiers of government, policy makers and other decision makers.
Advocacy Activities	Refer to the development and implementation of advocacy strategies and campaigns. This may include making submissions, issuing policy position statements, seeking grants, communications strategies, and direct lobbying.
Advocacy Platform	A set of clear and well-defined positions, priorities, and goals that Council adopts and uses to advocate for the interests and needs of its community. It creates a unified front, promoting a cohesive approach to advocacy.
Collaboration	Refers to where Council partners or collaborates with other agencies, associations or groups for a shared outcome. This includes, Regional Partnerships, the MAV, etc.

5. Policy

- 5.1. Council proactively advocates for priorities directly aligned to the strategic goals and directions outlined in the Community Vision, Council Plan and other key strategies, as well as utilising its advocacy platform to respond to emerging and unforeseen issues that impact the community.
- 5.2. Council advocacy focuses on influencing external parties that have an authority or significant influence on public policy and/or public funding to assist in delivering on plans and strategies to meet the needs and aspirations of our community.
- 5.3. Council develops and publishes an advocacy platform highlighting the priority issues, projects and initiatives it intends to seek support on
- 5.4. Council will maintain a copy of the priority advocacy areas on its web page in a precis form.
- 5.5. Council uses the following criteria to provide guidance for Officers in terms of the level of investment, focus and resources which will be allocated to advocacy activities.

Category	Description
1	Advocacy initiatives that require considerable resources and a coordinated educational campaign to build support. These initiatives link directly to Council's highest strategic priorities.
2	Advocacy initiatives that require a more targeted, behind the scenes approach such as writing and meeting with politicians and other stakeholder groups. These initiatives also link directly to Council's strategic priorities
3	Advocacy initiatives that are miscellaneous and/ or opportunistic in nature – while still aligning to Council's strategic directions.
4	Advocacy initiatives that may appeal to philanthropic interests that add value to the services, events and facilities provided by Council.

Category	Description
General	Advocacy priorities which sit outside of the other categories at an operational level.

5.6 In some cases advocacy opportunities will arise which may not have been identified in the annual advocacy priorities outlined under section 5.2. The following principles will be used to assess any such opportunities:

- Alignment to Council’s strategic priorities
- Alignment to Council’s values
- Relevance to Council’s adopted long term financial plan
- Transparency of funding arrangements
- To address emerging or current risks to our community
- Appropriate governance of funding partners
- Relevance to Council’s asset management plans
- Identified as a future aspiration or ‘wish’ and will enable faster progression of a project or program

5.7 Occasionally an advocacy opportunity will arise that is ‘out of the box’ and does not align easily with the principles listed in 5.6 but is still worthy of consideration. In such cases the opportunity will be brought to the attention of Council for consideration.

5.8 Council recognises that its advocacy activities are optimised by working in collaboration with appropriate organisations and bodies at a local, regional, state and federal level.

5.9 Council will communicate its advocacy priorities through effective messaging which provides the background, rationale and vision for those projects. Clear and consistent messaging will help ensure potential partners and stakeholders understand the context and strategy behind each advocacy effort increasing the likelihood of positive outcomes.

5.10 Council has established roles and responsibilities to guide its advocacy efforts. The table below outlines the roles and responsibility for Council’s advocacy program:

Roles and Responsibility for Council’s Advocacy Program

Role	Responsibility	Action	When
Mayor	Primary advocacy spokesperson	Present at Council functions, meetings and interviews and signatory to all communications	Ongoing
Councillors	Targeted advocacy spokespeople on issues aligned with portfolio roles and at the request of the Mayor	Participate in networking functions and stakeholder meetings	As required by particular initiatives and via portfolio roles

Role	Responsibility	Action	When
Chief Executive Officer (CEO)	Secondary advocacy spokesperson	Present at Council functions, meetings and interviews and signatory to key communications	Ongoing
Executive	Provision of expertise for briefings, materials, research and factual data as required. Backup spokespeople on targeted issues as required and directed by the CEO.	Input and presence at meetings, to planning and the development of materials for initiatives that align to area of executive responsibility.	As required by area of Executive function.
Office of the CEO	Coordination of the advocacy program including all ongoing initiatives, messages, materials along with reporting on progress, providing analysis and evaluation.	Materials, messages, annual planning, reporting, analysis and evaluation.	Ongoing
Manager Customer Experience	Alignment of communication and engagement tools and materials to Council's overall branding and communications principles and practices	Provision of tailored communication and engagement materials and support for overarching advocacy goals and initiatives.	Ongoing
Managers	Develop the need, business case and supporting evidence to support the ask.	Identification of stakeholders to be engaged. Develop background material to support advocacy. Report on advocacy outcomes and responses.	Ongoing

In some cases, there may be benefit in engaging specialist external expertise (such as lobbyists) to supplement Council's efforts by managing relationships with specific target audiences.

- 5.11 Council will regularly review and confirm advocacy themes and priorities and consider changes in the broader social-political environment to ensure advocacy activities are positioned for success. Any changes in public policy or government priorities can directly impact on stakeholder sentiment and funding availability.

- 5.12 An annual review of advocacy priorities will be undertaken in line with the development of the budget and annual action plan for the Council Plan and other key strategies and ongoing community engagement. An annual report detailing advocacy performance will be published summarising advocacy activities undertaken and achievements as a result.

6. Related Policies, Strategies and Legislation

Local Government Act 2020

7. Council Plan

Council Plan 2021-2025

8. Management and Review

This Policy will be reviewed in February 2027 by Manager Customer Experience.

9. Consultation

Whilst community consultation was not undertaken in developing this policy, Council's advocacy platform is developed in recognition of community needs and priorities.

10. Human Rights Charter

This policy has been developed with consideration of the requirements under the [Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities](#).

11. Gender Impact Assessment

This policy has been developed/reviewed with consideration of the criteria which inspires equality under the *Gender Equality Act 2020*.