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fitzroy residents' association

Established in 1969 to promote, protect and enhance residential amenity

Yarra City Council Draft Engagement Policy & Four-Year Action Plan 2020-2024

The Fitzroy Residents' Association (FRA) welcomes the opportunity to provide input to the Community Engagement Policy and Action Plan 2020-2024.

The FRA believes that the Community Engagement Policy can better reflect the role that local government plays as a participatory sphere of government by affirming the integral role of councillors elected democratically through the electoral process.

The Community Engagement Action Plan can be strengthened by incorporating measures to achieve community-driven action across the City's neighbourhoods and empower citizens.

We therefore propose that the Policy include the following under the heading 'Community Engagement':

"The Yarra City Council is committed to community-based governance and will seek opportunities for participatory and deliberative democracy. The Yarra City Council recognizes the need to refresh its political legitimacy and to ensure managerial competence in all aspects of its work."

The Community Engagement Action Plan 2020 – 2024 should be strengthened through the inclusion of community advisory boards, neighbourhood committees, community budgeting and citizen juries as a means of achieving joined-up planning and services. *These are best enacted before the current Council term ends in October to lay the groundwork for future engagement with the community.*

The FRA believes that the Community Engagement Action Plan should prioritise 'Participatory Decision-making' and identify 'Actions, Timing and Measures' including the importance of place-based leadership, a localist agenda, resilience to shocks and stresses, and collaboration at a regional scale.

The FRA believes that deliberative community engagement can help to create better council services, promote social cohesion and foster a thriving democracy.

The FRA therefore commends the Action Plan for identifying compliance and best practice and providing resources to the community in the form of guides and

templates, deliberative engagements, social media campaigns to engage with a broader audience, exploring new on-line methods (we would encourage a new platform for feedback and complaints), new place-based online engagement methods and a representative and meaningful consultation process.

We also recommend that 'Diverse communities such as LGBTIQ+' be included in the Community Engagement Policy (Table page 5).

Martin Brennan
Chair

Greg Chenhall
Deputy Chair

2 July 2020