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| Victorian Veterans Council – engagement strategy |
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# Purpose

This strategy outlines the ways the Victorian Veterans Council (VVC) will engage with:

* Victorian veterans
* families of Victorian veterans
* the ex-service organisation (ESO) sector
* individuals and groups that form part of the broader veteran community in Victoria.

The *Engagement strategy* will guide the VVC in its work with the Victorian veteran community and ESOs. This will ensure our stakeholders have a meaningful role in the work we do and improve the VVC’s ability to deliver on its functions.

# The VVC’s commitment

We commit to engaging with the Victorian veteran and ex-service community and stakeholders of the VVC. We will pass on advice from the veteran community to the government and the Minister for Veterans.

The *Veterans Act 2005* (the Act) sets:

* the role of the VVC
* the VVC’s objectives
* the VVC’s functions.

To fulfill its responsibilities, the VVC must engage with:

* the veteran and ex-service community
* Victoria’s ex-service and veteran support organisations
* its other stakeholders.

## VVC objectives

The objectives of the VVC are to:

* promote cooperation and collaboration across organisations dealing with
	+ veterans’ welfare
	+ other ex-service community issues
* develop a better understanding among Victorians of
	+ the participation and sacrifice of Victoria’s veterans in war and peacekeeping operations
	+ the contributions and value of Victoria’s ex-service community.

## VVC functions

The full list of VVC functions is in the Act. It includes:

* track and speak with the minister about issues affecting Victoria’s ex-service community
* speak with the ex-service community before giving advice to the minister
* promote the service of veterans and their contribution to our society
* support the welfare activities of ESOs through the ANZAC Day Proceeds Fund.

## Engagement objectives

The VVC wants to engage with ESOs and Victoria’s veteran community to:

* better understand and serve the Victorian veteran and ex-service community
* provide trustworthy and meaningful advice to the Victorian Government on veterans’ issues
* increase sector-wide awareness of trends, issues, insights and opportunities
* connect the sector to improve collaboration and coordination
* contribute to increased sector efficiency and effectiveness by delivering on the above objectives.

Effective engagement allows the VVC to understand the views and priorities of the Victorian veteran and ex-service community. This helps in executing our functions under the Act.

The VVC promises to use the approach outlined in this strategy to engage as widely and effectively as possible. We want to know the views of the people, groups and organisations affected by decisions about veterans’ wellbeing and commemoration.

## Our main stakeholders

* Victorian veterans and the Victorian ex-service community
* Families of Victorian veterans
* Current Australian Defence Force personnel and representatives of Army, Navy, Air Force
* Veteran groups in Victoria
* Victorian ESOs
* Veterans support organisations that operate in Victoria
* Commonwealth Department of Veterans’ Affairs
* Commonwealth Minister for Veterans’ Affairs
* Victorian Minister for Veterans
* Victorian Minister for Consumer Affairs
* Director of Consumer Affairs Victoria
* Consumer Affairs Victoria
* Shrine of Remembrance and the Shrine of Remembrance Trustees
* Office for Veterans within the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
* Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
* Victorian state government
* Victorian local governments
* Austin Health Repatriation Hospital
* Victorian Multicultural Commission
* Ethnic Communities’ Council of Victoria
* Veteran specific businesses and businesses who primarily employ veterans

The VVC recognises veterans are part of a broader, very diverse Victorian community that has hundreds of different ancestries, languages and religions.

## Engagement approach

1. Our engagement is planned, purposeful, meaningful and inclusive.
2. Our engagement brings together all stakeholders attached to Victoria’s veteran and ex-service community.
3. We use the knowledge of existing ESOs.
4. Our engagement helps us make decisions.

## Outcomes

1. VVC is known as an effective means to raise veterans’ issues to the Victorian Government.
2. Ex-service and veteran support organisations use our channels to give feedback and ask questions.
3. We connect veteran community stakeholders to increase efficiency and effectiveness of services.
4. Our grant programs are co-designed with and get input from:
	* veterans
	* their dependants
	* veteran ESOs.
5. We commit to representing the voice of the veteran community.
6. Although many veterans’ organisations speak with the government, we are independent of any particular body.

# Principles of VVC’s engagement

The VVC’s engagement will be **meaningful**, **inclusive**, **transparent, timely, tailored** and **informed**.

1. **Meaningful**: Those affected by a decision have a right to be part of the decision-making process. Engagement is genuine and informs the actions and decisions of the VVC.
2. **Inclusive**: Engagement is human-centred, respectful, inclusive and accessible. Engagement ensures the design, organisation and implementation serve a clear purpose and the needs of those taking part.
3. **Transparent**: Engagement is representative and our position as an independent statutory body remains clearly impartial. Engagement includes those possibly affected by or interested in a decision. The process is clear and open about what stakeholders can and cannot influence.
4. **Timely**: Engagement respects stakeholders’ time and availability. We will aim to be proactive in our communication during decision-making stages and seek out key opportunities and initiatives to advance the VVC’s objectives.
5. **Tailored:** Our content and methods are customised to fit the needs of the veteran community and recognises that veterans are not a homogenous group. We will consider factors like language, race, age, technology access, service history and communication preferences to ensure relevance and effectiveness.
6. **Informed**: Engagement gives participants the information and support they need to meaningfully take part.

Our engagement principles are based on:

* the International Association for Public Participation’s (IAP2) ‘Core Values’
* the United States-based National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation’s (NCDD) ‘Core Principles for Public Engagement’
* the [Victorian Government’s *Public engagement framework* (2021–25)](https://www.vic.gov.au/public-engagement-framework-2021-2025/principles-public-engagement) <https://www.vic.gov.au/public-engagement-framework-2021-2025/principles-public-engagement>.

# Ways to get our messages out

We use the following channels to plan and engage with the veteran and ex-service community and our stakeholders:

* **Direct engagement**
	+ Meetings with individuals and groups
	+ Commemorative activities
	+ Launches
	+ Phone calls and videoconferencing
	+ Summits, forums and conferences
	+ Direct email communications
	+ Communities of Practice
	+ Working parties
	+ Open invitation for community members to collaborate with VVC on specific activities
* **Digital**
	+ [Our website](https://www.victorianveteranscouncil.org.au/) <https://www.victorianveteranscouncil.org.au/>
	+ Social media
	+ The [Engage Victoria website](https://engage.vic.gov.au/) <https://engage.vic.gov.au/>
* **Our relationships**
	+ We use our relationships with our stakeholders to engage with their communities. We do this through their established channels and relationships. These channels include forums, meetings and conferences.
* **Marketing**
	+ We advertise about:
	+ grants
	+ activities
	+ opportunities to provide input/feedback
	+ events.
* **Media**
	+ We will work with mainstream and veterans’ media to:
	+ pass on information
	+ promote opportunities to get involved.
* **Third-party support**
	+ We will support the activities of third parties doing work on our behalf.

# Ways for you to connect with us

The following channels are open constantly to our stakeholders to connect with us:

Email: vicvetcouncil@dffh.vic.gov.au

Website: [www.victorianveteranscouncil.org.au/contact](http://www.victorianveteranscouncil.org.au/contact)

Facebook: [Victorian Veterans Council – VVC Facebook Page](https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100064455382099)

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