

Attachment 2: Community Consultation Comments

	Do you support the proposed amendments to the Community Funding Policy	Please provide any comments about the Community Funding Policy	Would you like to be kept updated on this Policy?
1	Yes	No	No

I strongly object to the removal of the Heritage Assistance Fund Policy. I also have concerns with the move to water down the funding policy so that is nothing more than a wishy-washy list of areas for dishing out money to community groups, with very little detail as to what will be funded and what won't be funded, and providing very little oversight by the council.

Policies exist provide guidance to the community, staff and decision makers about how the City will deal with various situations. The reason for having policies include ensuring that people are treated fairly, equally and consistently. It aids the staff by giving guidance about what is acceptable and what is not acceptable.

Ratepayers and residents elect council members to represent their interests, and one of the roles is to develop and maintain policy in the best interests of the community.

Over time the council has been abrogating this responsibility and leaving it up to the administration to manage areas without providing any clear policy guidance. Unfortunately, this funding policy, and the proposal to remove the heritage funding policy, and simply go to a system of 'guidelines' that are developed by the administration without council input or review, are classic examples.

The policies should explicitly state what criteria will be used when deciding who will get ratepayers' money and how much they will get. If you read through the draft policy you see that the bulk of it is made up of vague 'overviews' that give very little detail. For example: what can you tell from *"Funding for programs, projects and services that demonstrate outcomes that will build a strong and resilient community as well as initiatives that ensure the ongoing sustainability of community organisations."* That is as vague as all hell. And there isn't even an indication if we are talking about \$1,000 projects or \$100,000 projects!

The staff are continually using the argument that "this is an administrative matter" to remove the council from the process. While the actual processing of requests, making payments, and reviewing acquittals is administrative, the criteria used should be policy based and should be decided by the community's representatives.

One of the reasons for having policies that I previously mentioned is for consistency. By that I mean consistency within a funding round, but also across years. Without having publicly available policies there is a risk that different groups will be treated in an inconsistent manner. When you have inconsistent treatment it raises questions of fairness, favouritism and possible conflicts of interest.

There have been suggestions that amounts to be paid may vary over time depending upon how much money is available, which is a polite way of saying how much money is left over. It is a common 'public service' practice to have an end-of-year spendathon to spend unallocated funds. I expect that this happens in Vincent, or will happen in

Vincent if it is left to the administration to be able to modify guidelines at the drop of a hat. I think there have even been suggestions that this may happen in the heritage funding area (i.e. we didn't get as many applicants, so we decided to raise the maximum funding from \$5,000 to \$10,000).

Of course, there will be denials but I'd suggest looking back at Town Team Grants over the last few years and seeing how many were made at the end of the financial year, for uses that looked questionable.

By having exact criteria and stipulating maximum levels for each individual grant the community can see that everybody is treated the same. In previous policies a maximum was set with the proviso that it be adjusted to reflect CPI changes. While this resulted in odd figures it seemed to work. The alternative is for the budget to specify a total for a funding stream with a maximum for any one claim (i.e. \$65,000 with a maximum payment to any one application of \$5,000).

So I totally reject the direction the administration is leading the council.

As to the heritage funding grants: I believe the policy should be retained and modified and that funding grants be restricted to Category 1 properties; or possibly Category 1 and Category 2. These were properties which were previously identified as 'conservation essential'. I believe that the payments should only be made on the basis of repairs that are essential to retain heritage elements. They should not be used for maintenance payments that are just the result of the age of the building.

A lot of payments have been made for work that has nothing to do with heritage elements/characteristics. In many cases they have just been a form of middle-class welfare. Owners of buildings on the list (albeit as old category B or in 'heritage areas') have received grants to do works whereas owners in the immediate area who have had similar properties, but which were not listed, have received no assistance to do similar work. The fact that one property was listed and another was not reflects the poor listing process and not the actual state of the properties.

So I think the Heritage Assistance Funding policy should be retained but it should be modified so that only true heritage work is funded.