Local Government Policy Platform Report

An LGPro Emerging Leaders Development Project

Local PolicyHub

December 2025

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Executive Summary

The Local Policy Hub is an online platform for Victorian councils to share, access, and adapt local government policies. It aims to reduce duplicated effort, improve consistency, and foster collaboration across councils. The platform will centralise policy documents, streamline development, and support best practices, with a subscription-based funding model. Key benefits include efficiency gains, cost savings, and better support for smaller councils. The project is supported by sector stakeholders and aligns with broader goals of improving policy development and knowledge sharing in local government.

Introduction

As part of the LG Pro Emerging Leaders Program, our team developed the concept of a Local Policy Hub (the Hub), a centralised online repository designed to store, share, and access local government policies across Victoria.

The idea emerged from the recognition that councils often face challenges in locating, comparing, and adapting policies, which can lead to duplication of effort and inconsistencies across the sector. Our project aims to address this gap by creating a single, accessible platform that enables councils to collaborate more effectively, streamline policy development, and promote sectorwide best practice. To ensure the long-term viability and sustainability of the Hub, we engaged with key sector stakeholders to identify potential hosts, partners, and supporters for the initiative.

The key outcome of this project has been to develop a centralised policy sharing platform which will enable Victorian Councils to access, share, and adapt policy content based on common legislative requirements.

The benefits of this will be:

Improved Efficiency

Reduction in duplicated effort across Councils by streamlining policy development and updates.

Consistency and Compliance

Enhanced consistency in policy interpretation and application across local government authorities, supporting better alignment with state legislation.

Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing

Increased opportunities for collaboration between Councils, fostering innovation and continuous improvement in policy development.
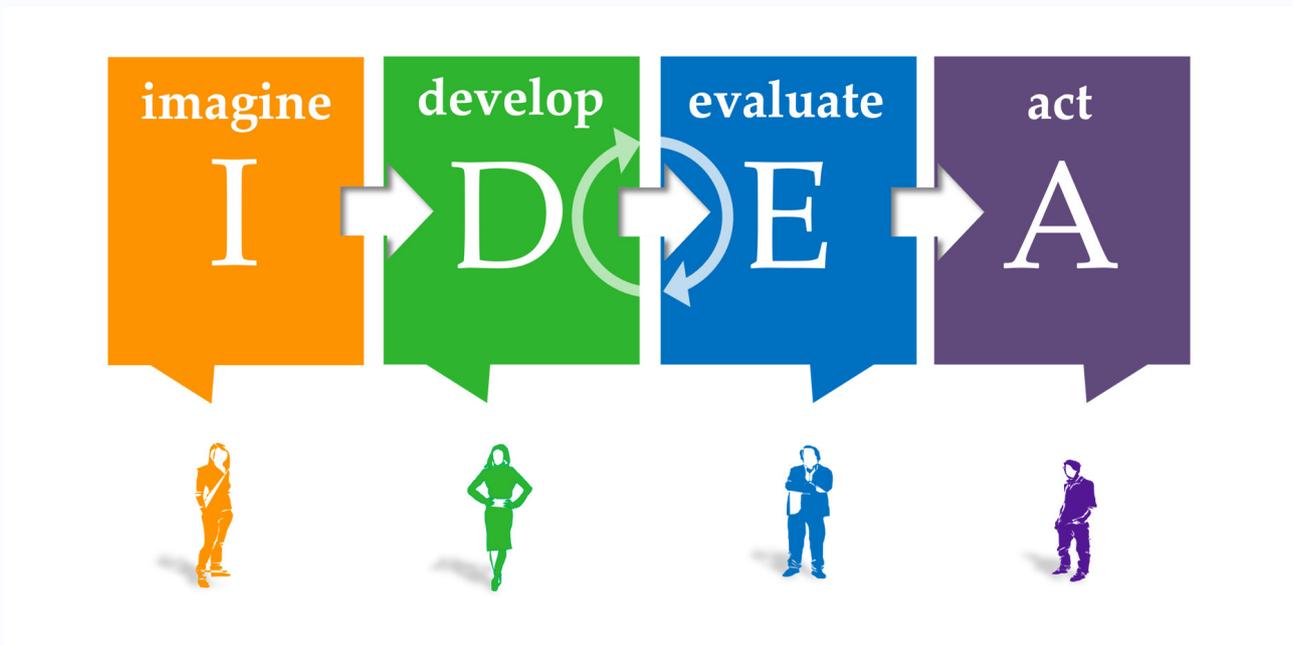
The scope of the proposal includes:

- **Platform Development**

  Design and build a centralised digital platform for policy sharing among Victorian Councils.

- **Content Integration**

  Upload and categorise existing policy documents from participating Councils, focusing on those based on common legislative requirements.

- **User Access and Permissions**

  Implement role-based access controls to manage content contribution, editing, and viewing.

- **Governance Framework**

  Establish a governance model to oversee platform use, content quality, and future enhancements.

- **Stakeholder Engagement**

  Engage with Councils, state government representatives, and other relevant stakeholders throughout the project lifecycle.

The following is out of scope:

- **Custom Policy Development**

  The platform will not provide bespoke policy writing services for individual Councils.

- **Integration with Internal Council Systems**

  Direct integration with existing Council document management systems is not included in the initial phase.
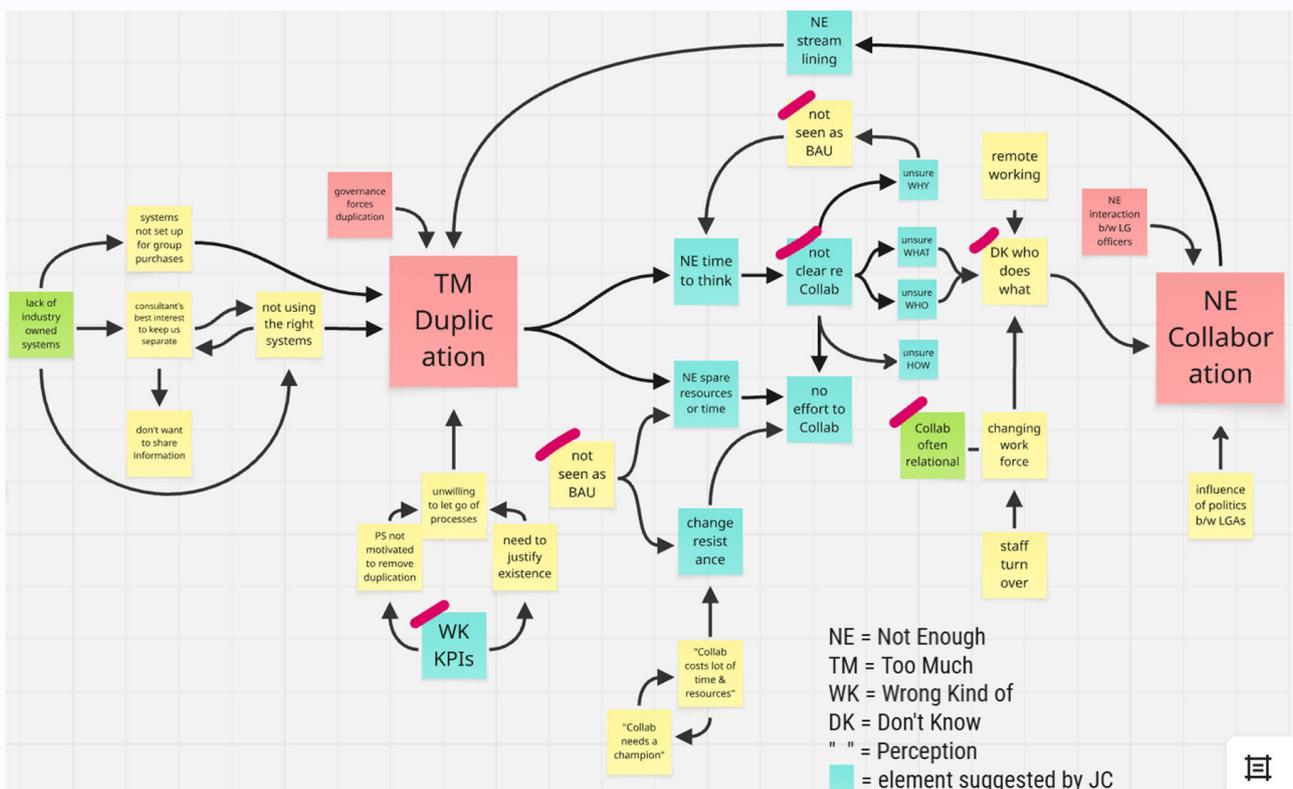
Methodology

Using the IDEA model, introduced by Minds at Work, the solution to the problem was developed

Using the Cat's Claw model, introduced by Minds at Work, the team determined the best solution to solve the identified problem:

NE = Not Enough
TM = Too Much
WK = Wrong Kind of
DK = Don't Know
" " = Perception
= element suggested by JC

Findings/Results

To determine the potential benefits to Councils in subscribing to the platform a business case was undertaken.

Cost Benefit Analysis

Current costs for local government policy development - (refer appendix 2)

- **New minor policy:**
  Between $8,000 - $14,000 per policy
- **New major policy:**
  Between $28,000 - $56,000 per policy
- **Policy review:**
  Approximately $85,000 for policy review
  Some Councils have a dedicated policy writer, costing over $120,000 annually. (These figures include officer & senior management hours, graphic design, legal review & community consultation)

Estimated Cost for Local Policy Hub- (refer appendix 2)

- **Initial Platform Development Cost:**
  Approx. $100,000 - $150, 000
- **Ongoing Maintenance and Support:**
  Annual cost of $287,500 for platform hosting,updates, and user support.
- **Funding Model:**
  Proposed cost-sharing among participating Councils via a subscription model which would be a $15,000 per Council annual subscription fee.

Local Councils across Victoria invest significant time and resources into the development and ongoing review of policies. Many of these policies are driven by legislative requirements that apply uniformly across all Councils, resulting in substantial overlap in content and intent. Despite this commonality, policy development is often undertaken independently by each Council, leading to duplication of effort and inefficiencies. There is opportunity to streamline this process by establishing a centralised platform that enables the sharing of policy content among local government authorities. Such a platform would support collaboration, reduce duplication, and improve the efficiency and consistency of policy development across the sector.

Lack of Efficiency

Councils are undertaking Policy creation and review in silo's, duplicating spending across 79 Local Government Councils.

Inconsistency

Compliance risks are created when legislated Policies are interpreted differently across Council.

Lack of Collaboration

Policies such as AI, are being created without a unified approach, leading to reduced possibility of future collaboration.

Lack of Scalability for Future Growth

There is no possibility to significantly scale the current process of Policy creation and review without an agreed approach.

Lack of support for Smaller Councils

Smaller Councils often lack direct resources to create and review Policies, leaving them at risk of not meeting optimal timelines.

Key Benefits

Efficiency Gains
Councils will save time and resources by accessing existing policy templates and content, reducing the need to start from scratch or duplicate work already completed by other authorities/local government agencies.

Improved Consistency
Shared access to policies based on common legislation/interests will promote greater consistency in interpretation and application across Councils, supporting better alignment with state requirements.

Enhanced Collaboration
The platform will foster a culture of collaboration and knowledge sharing among Councils, enabling the exchange of best practices and innovative approaches to policy development.

Cost Savings
By reducing duplication and streamlining processes, Councils can achieve cost savings in staff time, legal review, and external consultancy fees.

Scalability and Future Growth
The platform can be expanded over time to include additional content types (e.g. procedures, guidelines, strategies) and integrate with other sector-wide initiatives, increasing its long-term value.

Support for Smaller Councils
Councils with limited resources will benefit from access to high-quality policy content, helping to level the playing field and improve governance outcomes across the sector.

Bench Marking

A review of standard policies across a representative sample of Victorian LGAs was conducted to identify common themes and shared practices (refer to Appendix 1).

Stakeholder Consultation

A cross section of local governments was contacted to better understand whether the platform would be useful and assist with efficiency and compliance. Feedback confirmed there was a strong need for shared resources and that there was interest in consistent, high-quality policy templates. There was support for a centralised platform that is accessible and easy to use.

We presented the model to the Executive Leadership Team at Yarra Ranges Council on the 12 of November 2025, in a 'shark tank' model of presentation. The response was overwhelmingly positive, highlighting the value of access to all policies, ability of a consistent approach, and the willingness of Local Government to pay a subscription for a platform that really adds value.

"The problem is clear; Councils are each spending large amounts of money working on Policies in Silo's across Victoria. This solution is well worth spending $15,000 to get off the ground."

Implementation

The implementation of the Local Policy Hub platform will follow a phased approach to ensure effective delivery, stakeholder engagement, and long-term sustainability.

Phase 1: Project Initiation

- Finalise project scope, objectives, and governance structure
- Identify and engage key stakeholders across participating Councils
- Establish project team and assign roles and responsibilities

Phase 2: Research and Requirements Gathering

- Conduct workshops and interviews with Council representatives to understand user needs
- Review existing policy content and identify common legislative themes
- Define functional and technical requirements for the platform

Phase 3: Platform Design and Development

- Engage a vendor or internal development team to build the platform
- Develop core features including content repository, search functionality, access controls, and user interface
- Conduct usability testing with a sample group of Council staff

Phase 4: Content Integration and Governance Setup

- Upload initial set of shared policies and templates
- Develop content standards and guidelines
- Establish governance framework for content management and platform oversight

Phase 5: Training and Launch

- Deliver training sessions and onboarding materials to participating Councils
- Launch platform with initial users and monitor performance
- Provide helpdesk support and feedback channels

Ongoing

- The Local Policy Hub platform will be managed and maintained by LGPro
- Councils will pay a subscription fee for access of approximately $15,000 per annum
- The service will be delivered via website, mobile app, and chatbot, administered by a full-time policy expert with legal support
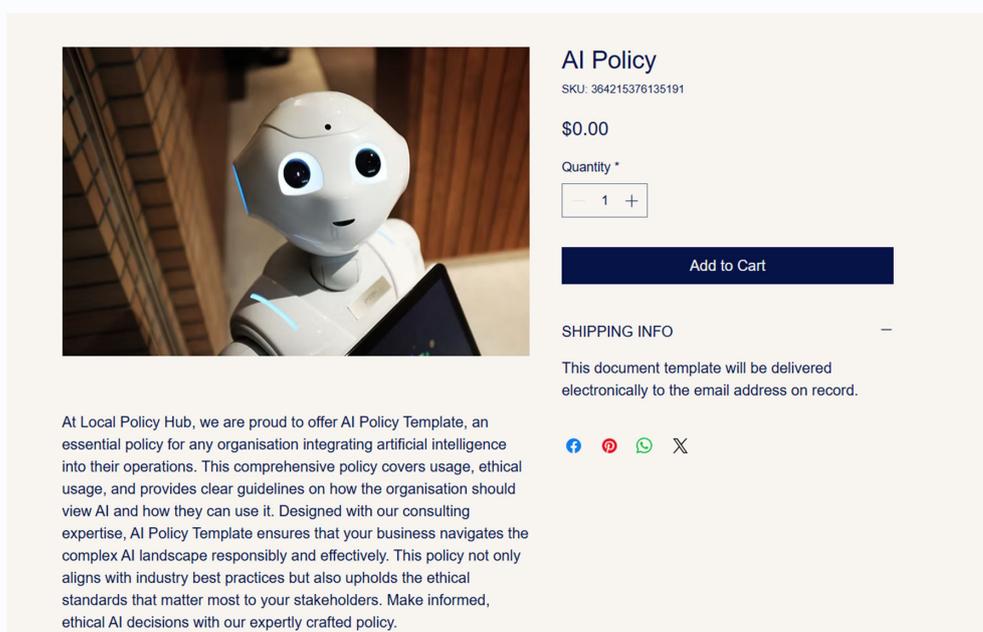
As part of our stakeholder engagement process, we met with both LG Pro and the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) to explore opportunities for collaboration and potential hosting arrangements for the Local Policy Hub (the Hub). The goal in these discussions was to identify a credible and sustainable organisational home for the Hub, one that could ensure its long-term maintenance, governance, and value to the local government sector. We identified LG Pro and MAV as key stakeholders given their established leadership roles, extensive networks across councils, and shared commitment to strengthening capability and collaboration within local government.

Throughout our conversations, both organisations expressed strong interest in the idea of centralised policy hub and its potential to address a clear sector-wide need for a shared repository of policies. Representatives from LG Pro highlighted that the project aligns closely with their ongoing focus on professional development, knowledge sharing, and sector innovation. They recognised that the Hub could become a vital resource for council officers and leaders seeking to access and adapt policies from other councils, ultimately improving consistency, efficiency, and collaboration across the sector. LG Pro also indicated an openness to exploring potential hosting or co-management arrangements, acknowledging the Hub's alignment with their mission to connect and support local government professionals.

Likewise, MAV demonstrated significant enthusiasm for the concept and its alignment with their strategic priorities. They noted that a centralised policy repository would directly support MAV's role in fostering collaboration, advocating on behalf of councils, and promoting best practice across Victoria. MAV representatives also acknowledged that such a platform could complement their existing policy, advocacy, and governance work while providing councils with a practical and accessible tool for information sharing

MAV expressed interest in continuing the conversation and exploring potential hosting or partnership models, pending further consultation and feasibility assessments.

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At Local Policy Hub, we are proud to offer AI Policy Template, an essential policy for any organisation integrating artificial intelligence into their operations. This comprehensive policy covers usage, ethical usage, and provides clear guidelines on how the organisation should view AI and how they can use it. Designed with our consulting expertise, AI Policy Template ensures that your business navigates the complex AI landscape responsibly and effectively. This policy not only aligns with industry best practices but also upholds the ethical standards that matter most to your stakeholders. Make informed, ethical AI decisions with our expertly crafted policy.

The project team sees the shared interest from LG Pro and MAV as a major milestone for our project and a strong validation of the Hub's purpose and design. Both organisations' willingness to engage with us reinforces that there is clear sector appetite for a centralised,

accessible, and well-governed policy-sharing platform. We believe that collaboration between LG Pro and MAV could create a powerful foundation for the Hub's long-term sustainability and impact.

Moving forward, the project team plan to continue our discussions with both organisations to explore possible partnership structures, governance models, and technical hosting options. Our intention is to ensure that the Local Policy Hub is not only successfully implemented but also positioned for ongoing relevance and growth. The support and interest shown by LG Pro and MAV demonstrate that this project aligns with broader sector priorities around efficiency, transparency, and collaboration. With their potential involvement, the Local Policy Hub can evolve into a lasting resource that strengthens policy development and knowledge sharing across Victorian councils.

A website was developed to roadshow the project: www.localpolicyhub.net

This website contains policy templates which are available for a one-off purchase or a link for Council's to subscribe to the platform. This option allows unlimited downloads. The benefit of this option is that all policies are updated annually or as required for legislative changes.

Conclusion

The Local Policy Hub stands as a transformative solution for Victorian local government, offering a centralised platform that streamlines policy development, reduces duplication, and promotes consistency across the sector. By leveraging shared, high-quality templates, councils can ensure their policies are not only compliant with legislative requirements but also tailored to the needs of their communities. This approach fosters efficiency, saves valuable resources, and supports a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement among councils.

While local nuances will always be important, the ability to start from a robust, sector-wide foundation empowers councils to focus on innovation and community outcomes. The platform's scalable design means future expansions could include standard operating procedures, strategic frameworks, and additional shared resources, further strengthening collaboration and knowledge sharing across local governments.

With strong support from sector stakeholders and a clear alignment to broader goals of transparency, efficiency, and best practice, the Local Policy Hub is positioned to become an essential resource for councils of all sizes. Now is the time for councils and sector leaders to champion this initiative, invest in its development, and work together to build a smarter, more connected future for local government in Victoria.

Acknowledgements

Local Government Policy Hub
Project Working Group

Brian Doyle **Janak Bahrati** **Holly Sawyer** **Alison Treloar** **Kirsty Phillips**

Tom Meek **Awais Sadiq** **Carrie Lindsay** **Liz Chapman**

Policy Comparative Analysis – Victorian Council Policy Registers

Executive Summary

This report analyses policy registers from ten Victorian councils to identify commonalities, differences, and best practices. The aim is to support the development of standardized templates for council policies and registers, improving consistency, compliance, and transparency across the sector.

1. Introduction

Victorian councils are required to maintain a suite of policies, many mandated by the Local Government Act 2020 (LG Act). This analysis compares registers from metropolitan and regional councils, focusing on:

- Mandated and model policies
- Policy vs procedure distinction
- Register structure
- Review mechanisms
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)
- Resource allocation
- Best practice recommendations

2. Data Sources

Registers analysed from the following councils:

- Casey Shire
- Darebin
- Mansfield
- Melbourne
- Melton
- Shepparton
- Strathbogie Shire
- Bendigo
- Brimbank
- Cardinia

3. Comparative Tables

Table 1: Policy Register Summary

Council	Total Policies	Mandated (LG Act)	Model/Recommended	Policies with Procedure Elements
Casey	54	11	8	6
Darebin	49	10	7	5
Mansfield	52	12	9	4
Melbourne	47	11	8	3
Melton	56	12	9	7
Shepparton	50	11	8	5
Strathbogie	41	10	7	2
Bendigo	53	12	9	6
Brimbank	48	11	8	4
Cardinia	45	10	7	3

Note: Numbers are indicative, based on register content and typical LG Act requirements. Actual counts may vary slightly per council.

Table 2: Review Frequency and DEI Coverage

Council	Typical Review Cycle	DEI Policy Present	DEI Embedded in Other Policies
Casey	2 years	Yes	Yes
Darebin	3 years	Yes	Yes
Mansfield	2 years	Yes	Yes
Melbourne	2 years	Yes	Yes
Melton	3 years	Yes	Yes
Shepparton	2 years	Yes	Yes
Strathbogie	3 years	Yes	Yes
Bendigo	2 years	Yes	Yes
Brimbank	3 years	Yes	Yes
Cardinia	2 years	Yes	Yes

Table 3: Policy vs Procedure Distinction

Council	Clear Separation	Mixed Documents	Recommendation
Casey	Partial	Yes	Separate
Darebin	Yes	Some	Maintain
Mansfield	Partial	Yes	Separate
Melbourne	Yes	Few	Maintain
Melton	Partial	Yes	Separate
Shepparton	Yes	Some	Maintain
Strathbogie	Yes	Few	Maintain
Bendigo	Partial	Yes	Separate
Brimbank	Yes	Some	Maintain
Cardinia	Partial	Yes	Separate

4. Key Findings

Commonalities
- All councils comply with LG Act mandates.
- Most adopt sector model policies.
- Core areas covered: governance, financial management, risk, engagement, DEI.

Differences
- Register structure and detail vary (some include objectives, review dates, links).
- Some councils mix procedures with policies.
- Explicitness of DEI, resource allocation, and performance indicators varies.

Objectives & Performance Indicators
- Registers rarely list objectives or KPIs; these are in the full policy documents.
- Best practice is to include a summary of objectives and indicators in the register.

Resource Allocation
Not consistently referenced in registers; usually in policy documents.

DEI Coverage
Most councils have dedicated DEI policies and embed principles in other policies.

5. Best Practice Recommendations

Policy Register Template Columns
- Policy Name
- LG Act Reference
- Model/Recommended
- Status (Active/Draft)
- Objective (brief, measurable)
- Key Actions/Standards
- Performance Indicators
- Review Date/Cycle
- Responsible Officer/Department
- DEI Considerations
- Resource Allocation
- Link to Document

Policy Document Template Sections
1. Title
2. Purpose

3. Objectives (SMART)
4. Scope
5. Definitions
6. Policy Statement
7. Key Actions/Standards
8. Performance Indicators
9. Review Mechanism & Frequency
10. Resource Allocation
11. DEI Considerations
12. References (LG Act, Model Policies)
13. Approval & Review Dates

Register Structure

- Centralised, searchable, with metadata fields for easy comparison.
- Tag mandated, model, and council-specific policies.

Separation of Policy and Procedure

- Policies should set principles and intent.
- Procedures should be separate documents detailing implementation steps.

6. References

- Local Government Act 2020 (Vic)
- Victorian Model Policies (LGV, MAV)
- Council Policy Registers (uploaded files)
- Sector best practice guides (LGPro, ISO 9001 Governance)
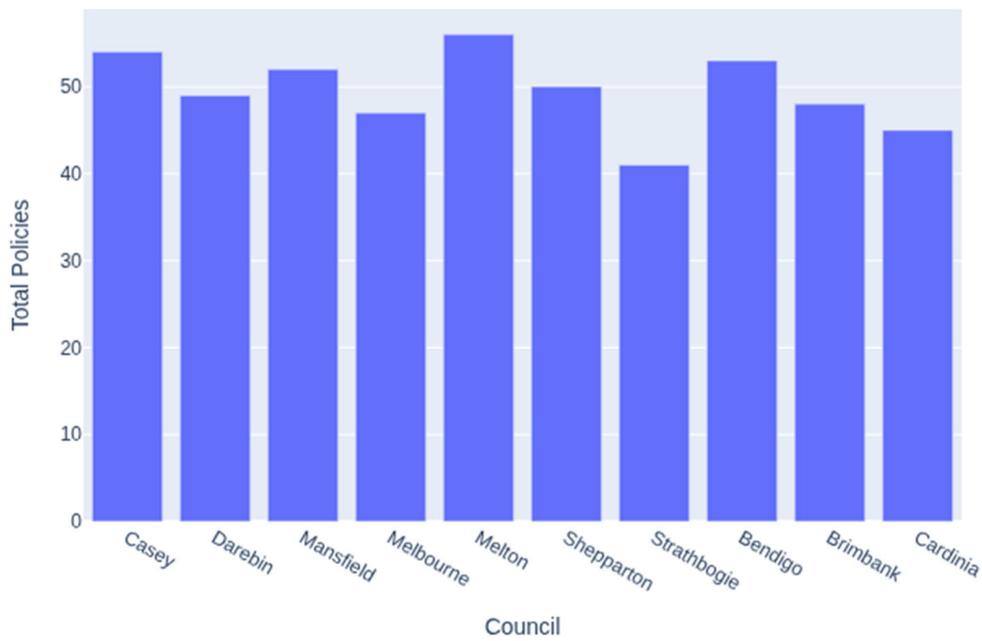
Total Policies per Council

Figure: Total Policies per Council
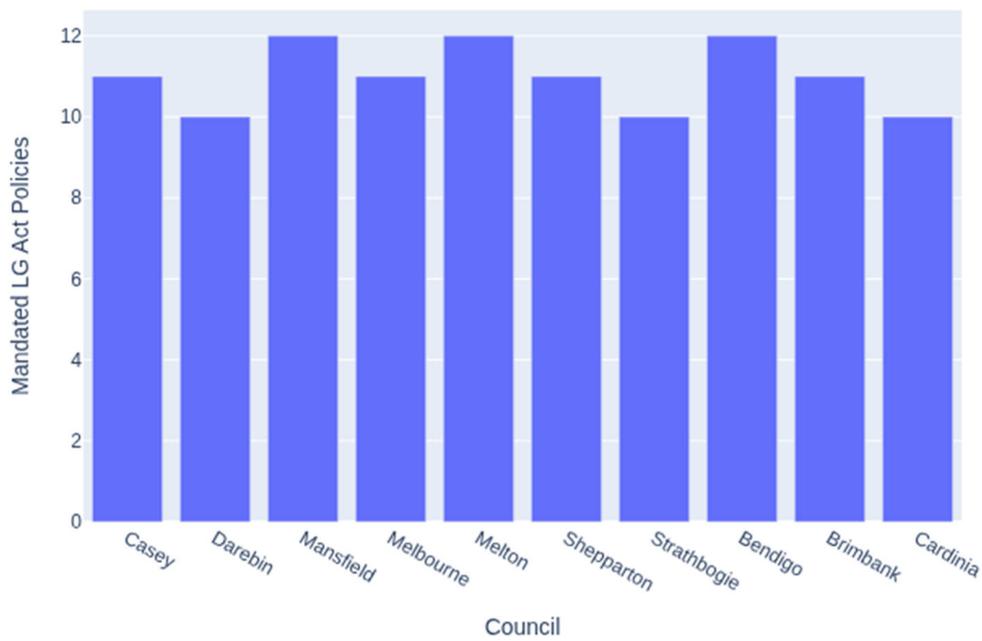
Mandated LG Act Policies per Council

Figure: Mandated LG Act Policies per Council

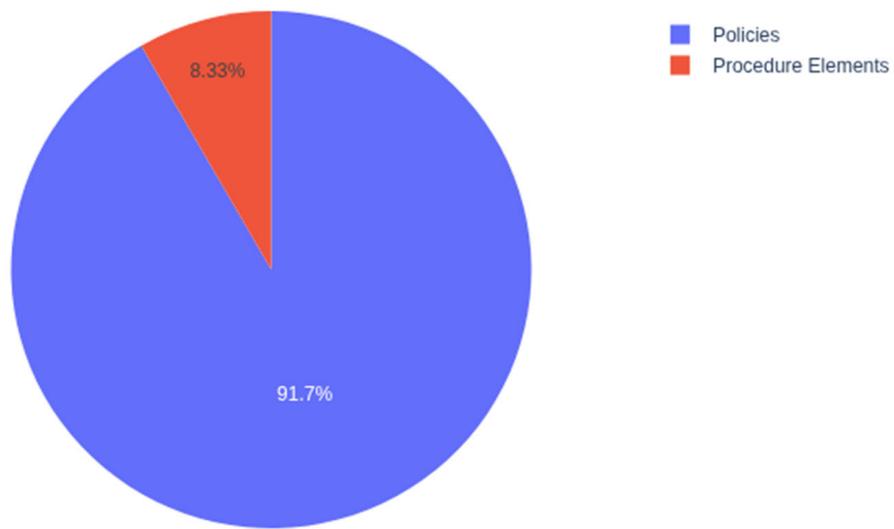## Proportion of Policies vs Procedure Elements Across All Councils

Figure: Proportion of Policies vs Procedure Elements
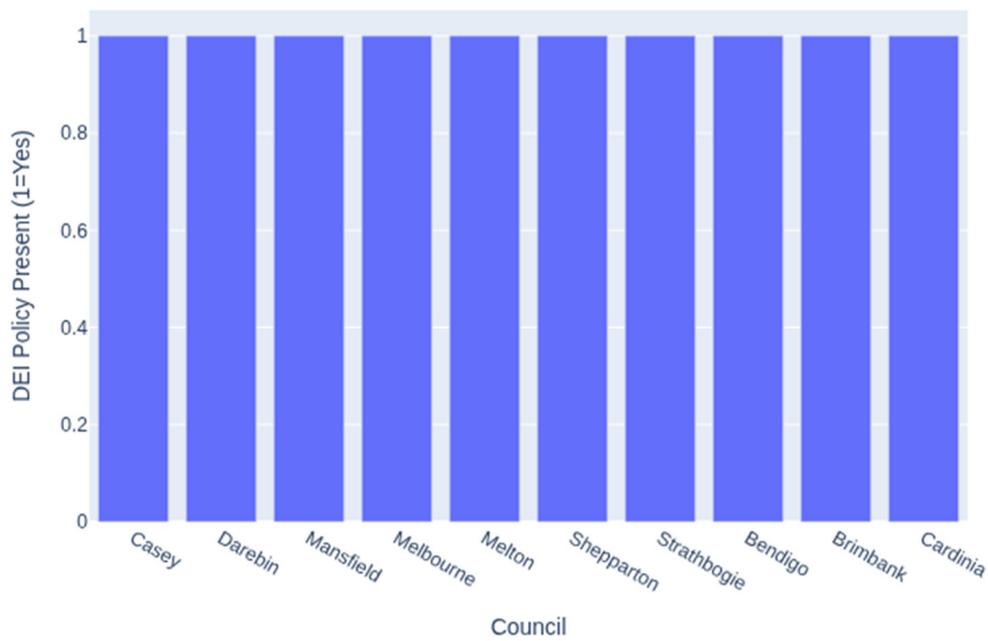
DEI Policy Presence Across Councils

Figure: DEI Policy Presence Across Councils

Appendix 2

Policy Development Cost Benefit Analysis: Local Policy Hub

Cost Benefit Analysis

This section provides a comprehensive cost benefit analysis of the Local Policy Hub proposal, including current costs, projected savings, and return on investment.

Current State: Cost of Policy Development

Cost for Policy Development in Local Government		
Cost Category	Simple Policy (AUD)	Complex Policy (AUD)
Officer Time	$2,400–$3,600	$7,200–$10,800
Manager Time	$900–$1,800	$3,600–$5,400
Executive Time	$600–$1,200	$2,400–$3,600
Councillor Time	$240–$400	$800–$1,200
Internal Workshops	$500–$1,000	$2,000–$4,000
Community Consultation	$1,000–$3,000	$5,000–$15,000
Legal Review	$1,000–$2,000	$3,000–$6,000
Graphic Design & Comms	$500–$1,000	$2,000–$4,000
Printing & Distribution	$200–$500	$1,000–$2,000
Contingency (10%)	$700–$1,000	$2,000–$3,000
Total Estimated Cost	$8,040–$15,500	$28,000–$56,000

- Annual policy development costs per council: Estimated at $50,000–$120,000, depending on council size and policy volume.
- Officer hours spent drafting and reviewing policies: Ranges from 300–800 hours per year per council.
- Senior management and Councillor time spent approving policies: Estimated at 100–250 hours annually.
- Some councils employ dedicated policy writers: For example, Bass Coast Council employs a policy officer at an annual cost of approximately $120,000 (including on-costs).

Proposed Solution: Local Policy Hub Costs

- Initial development (platform build, templates, integration): Estimated at $100,000–$150,000.
- Annual maintenance and support: Approximately $287,500, comprising:

  - Policy expert salary: $187,500 (including on-costs)
  - Law firm support: $100,000

- Subscription model: Councils pay $15,000 per annum for access. With 25 councils participating, annual revenue would be $375,000.

Projected Savings and ROI

- Direct cost savings: Councils can reduce policy development costs by 30–50% through shared templates and reduced duplication.
- Staff time savings: Estimated reduction of 200–400 officer hours per council annually.
- Legal and consultancy savings: Shared legal review and best-practice templates reduce reliance on external consultants.
- Sector-wide impact: If 25 councils participate, total annual savings could exceed $1 million.

Payback Period and ROI

- Payback period: With sector-wide adoption, the initial investment is recouped within the first year.
- ROI: The platform delivers a positive return on investment in Year 1, with ongoing annual savings.

Summary Table: Financial Impact

Item	Annual Cost (per council)	Annual Savings (per council)	Sector-wide Impact (25 councils)
Policy development (current)	$100,000	—	$2,500,000
Policy Hub subscription	$15,000	$30,000–$50,000	$375,000
Net savings	—	$15,000–$35,000	$375,000–$875,000
Platform maintenance (total)	—	—	$287,500

www.localpolicyhub.net