

Mediation Meetings



The purpose of a mediation meeting is to ensure all parties are aware of each other's issues in attempting to resolve grounds of concern as well as providing an understanding of the planning process.

Mediation meetings are facilitated by Council officers and Councillors may attend as observers. Neither officers nor Councillors are to 'take sides', nor can officers provide any opinion on the merits of a proposal, as mediation occurs prior to an assessment of an application. The Ararat Rural City has developed the following protocol for the conduct of meetings.

Mediation Meetings Procedure

- 1) A Council officer will welcome all participants and explain the purpose of the mediation meeting.
- 2) All participants will introduce themselves.
- 3) The Council officer will provide an outline of the application, and any relevant planning policies that must be applied in the assessment of a proposal. The applicant will then provide a more detailed explanation of the proposal.
- 4) The objector(s) will outline areas of concern and through the chairing officer ask any relevant questions.
- 5) The applicant will respond and either explain reasons for the design or, if possible, seek to explore changes that address the objectors' concerns.
- 6) Prior to the conclusion of the meeting the officer will clearly summarise any outcomes of the meeting.



Mediation Meetings Ground Rules for Behaviour

- Respect each other's right to speak without interruption.
- Be aware of how long and how often we speak so that all have time to contribute to the discussion.
- Make every effort to listen to each other so that we understand the various perspectives we have.
- Speak for ourselves (for example, 'I think' and 'I feel' rather than 'everyone knows' or 'you should').
- Don't use personal attacks or put downs or use expletives.
- Use inclusive language (that is not racist, sexist, ageist).
- If appropriate, discuss whether any aspect raises a question of confidentiality.
- Stay to the end or negotiate special arrangements.
- Avoid interruptions from mobile phones etc (or agree on what level of use is acceptable).
- Expect that the facilitator will encourage everyone to follow the guidelines.