



Global Research
Turning **Information** Into **Insight**

Community Engagement Policy

Consultation Report

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Prepared by Global Research Ltd

For



CITY OF MELBOURNE

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REPORT PREPARED BY

Global Research
150 Office Rd
Merivale
Christchurch 8014
New Zealand
P +64 3 355 4562
M +64 27 2433 083
E. patrick.oneill@globalresearch.nz
www.globalresearch.nz

Executive Summary

BACKGROUND AND AIMS

The City of Melbourne recognises and values the vast knowledge and experiences within the municipality's diverse communities and is committed to placing the community at the heart of what Council does. Community engagement is an essential and legislated local government activity enabling members of the community who may be impacted by a council decision to be involved in the decision-making process. It improves outcomes through shared problem-solving, open dialogue and meaningful participation.

In February 2021, the City of Melbourne adopted its Community Engagement Policy (the policy) following extensive consultation with the community, council staff, management, and Councillors. The policy outlines the principles and approach that guide the City of Melbourne's community engagement practice and meets legislative requirements under the *Local Government Act 2020*.

This report outlines the consultation approach and findings that supported the development of the policy. Note that the terms 'engagement' and 'consultation' are used interchangeably throughout this report. In the context of this document, both terms carry the same meaning.

THE CONSULTATION

Between October 2020 and February 2021, the City of Melbourne ran an extensive consultation process to seek feedback on effective community engagement practice, policy and defining deliberative engagement. The consultation approach was designed around broad questions and built on relevant feedback and information garnered from previous consultations.

In total, over 1200 contributions were made from community members and council staff during the consultation period. From October to December 2020, early engagement informed key stakeholders of the policy development, explored overarching themes, and refined the consultation approach. This phase included staff and Councillor engagement, meetings with Traditional Custodian groups, face-to-face and online discussions with community representatives, facilitated conversations with young children and educators, and early promotion of consultation to business precincts, resident associations, local area networks, youth networks and community groups.

From 7 January to 3 February 2021, a broader public engagement was opened to seek feedback on the purpose, principles, barriers and enablers of community engagement and the key elements of deliberative engagement. Feedback was via multiple methods. A survey was accessible through the Participate Melbourne online platform and via pop-up kiosks held across the municipality.

In total, 13 pop-up engagement kiosks were held at community facilities, immunisation sessions, and public spaces across seven neighbourhoods, where a variety of activities gathered feedback, including a QR code linking to the Participate Melbourne page where frequently asked questions (FAQs), language interpreter options, and a 'Big Ideas wall' added to the ways people could contribute feedback. Other ways for people to have their say were via direct email submissions and phone interview options, or via two online community workshops.

RESULTS

Promotion of these consultation opportunities was via social media posts and advertisements, local newspapers, stakeholder-specific newsletters, direct emails, and community channels. These promotion activities resulted in 1,683 visitors to the Participate Melbourne page, newsletter and emails communication sent to 39,489 recipients, and social media posts viewed over 179,000 times, with 53 comments received on posts.

In total, feedback was received and collated via 449 community surveys, 68 staff surveys, 83 workshop participants, 13 pop-up kiosks, 30 targeted interviews, 686 face to face contacts, and over 2900 comments. The majority of contributors resided in the municipality. There were more females contributors than male, and the 26-45 year age bracket was the most widely represented age group for respondents. The most common way that respondents reporting finding out about the consultation was 'in person', reflecting the effectiveness of the in-person pop-up kiosks.



Pop-up kiosk at Multicultural Hub.

KEY FINDINGS

Overall, 95% of survey respondents indicated that they agreed that "Public participation in Council planning leads to better decisions and more sustainable solutions. Our different perspectives and experiences are valuable, and we all have a right to be involved in decisions that affect where and how we live".

Specific findings related to:

The importance of engagement

Many participants reported that the people who live and work in Melbourne should have a say on how their area develops, as they are the ones who will be most affected by Council decisions. Respondents also wanted to see a range of viewpoints on various topics represented in consultation, in order to help City of Melbourne see the issues that are affecting different sectors of the community and work to find solutions that can meet broader aspirations.

Barriers to participation

The three most frequently cited barriers that prevent participation in community engagement were lack of information or awareness of opportunities to consult, knowledge of the issue or council processes, and time constraints. Some participants also expressed scepticism that their feedback is listened to, and therefore are not inclined to participate in public engagements due to concerns about the value of participation. Representation and inequality were also key concerns, with respondents reporting that a lack of representativeness or feeling that some voices were "louder" than others were barriers to participation.

What encourages participation

Findings showed that broad promotion of engagement opportunities and providing clear information that is accessible, easy to understand and widely available was important. Making people feel comfortable at consultation activities was also felt to be critical, as people are more likely to share their ideas if they feel at ease. Another key finding was to reach people with fun and local activities, and having a presence in local places and spaces to encourage people to participate and build trust with local communities.

Elements of deliberative engagement

The top three elements of deliberative engagement chosen by respondents from the community were that evidence and background information is analysed; a real mix of voices are represented; and the people most affected are highly involved.

KEY THEMES

Common themes that emerged from the analysis of feedback gathered across the engagement period include:

More proactive efforts are needed from City of Melbourne to increase reach and accessibility

People wanted to hear more about consultations and how they can participate. Early and broad promotion through a wide range of methods is needed to ensure people are aware of projects and have time to contribute.

All voices must be heard and valued

Melbourne is a diverse city, but people feel this is not often fully represented in community engagement. Diverse groups, particularly minorities or those who are often excluded from government processes, must be included in the participation process.

People need to feel comfortable to participate

People wanted to feel they were actively welcomed and “invited” to participate, and to be clear on exactly what their involvement will look like. Increased support from City of Melbourne or opportunities to participate in more informal environments could help people feel more comfortable.

Consultation must be genuine, transparent and clearly linked to action

Greater transparency and accountability are needed from City of Melbourne to reassure communities that their participation is not tokenistic or a box-ticking exercise. Listening to what the community has to say and being clear about how people’s input influences decisions and impact outcomes is important.

REPORTING ON FEEDBACK

Global Research, an independent social research agency, has provided a full analysis of the feedback received in the following report. There is also a consultation summary report available on [Participate Melbourne](#).

How this feedback has and will be used

City of Melbourne's Community Engagement team provided Global Research's data analysts de-identified survey, workshop and other data as they were collected, to begin to ascertain early emergent consultation themes. A high-level summary of qualitative and quantitative findings was provided to staff to inform the drafting of the Community Engagement Policy, both of which were presented to Council at the 16 February 2021 Future Melbourne Committee meeting.

Now adopted, the Community Engagement Policy is available on the [City of Melbourne website](#). The policy is underpinned by four pairs of leading principles, and alongside the Community Engagement Framework, guides Council's commitment to engagement practice. These principles were developed through the consultation findings and include:

- Accountable and Transparent
- Inclusive and Accessible
- Trust and Respect
- Place-based and Community Development

The policy also outlines the different roles and responsibilities for community and Council in consultation, as well as highlighting various types of engagement.

In addition to informing the policy, the consultation findings will be shared with council work areas and a number of actions have been developed to support policy implementation. These actions can be seen on the next page.

As a result of feedback received during the community consultation, several actions have been identified.

What we heard	What we will do
The community wants to hear more about council projects and consultation opportunities, and ways they can have their say.	<p>Review current communication strategies and channels used for consultation activities, and identify ways to increase reach.</p> <p>Consider ways to build awareness and understanding of Council's engagement touchpoints, including participating in council meetings, using various features of Participate Melbourne, and subscribing to newsletters.</p> <p>Undertake research and integrate improvements from 'user testing' of Participate Melbourne platform and other channels.</p>
The community wants more accountability and transparency around community engagement outcomes, including what impact and influence consultations have.	<p>Review the Community Engagement Framework and identify areas to improve accountability and transparency, including reporting mechanisms and closing the loop guidelines.</p> <p>Increase annual performance measures for community engagement including number of contributions, engagement reach and community satisfaction in Council decision-making.</p>
There needs to be greater inclusion, participation and representation from diverse voices in community consultation.	<p>Continue to foster best-practice engagement with Aboriginal communities through the Aboriginal Community Engagement Protocols.</p> <p>Increase access to consultation opportunities for all people and, through the new Inclusive Melbourne Strategy, provide supports that encourage participation.</p> <p>Further develop inclusive engagement resources for staff and promote inclusion strategies through training and mentoring programs, Council intranet and engagement planning.</p> <p>Promote protocols on Plain English, online accessibility, language translation and interpreter use, and identify areas for improvement.</p>
The community values the presence of Council staff in neighbourhoods. It's seen as essential in building better relationships, and supporting effective community engagement.	<p>Establish a new Community Development branch that will work with communities to strengthen local networks and relationships, and develop neighbourhood plans that respond to the evolving aspirations of the community.</p> <p>Identify events, programs and other opportunities to increase on-the-ground engagement with local communities to promote current projects, initiatives and consultation activities.</p>

Project Overview

Background

The City of Melbourne has a strong history of commitment to effective community engagement. Community engagement is a planned process with the specific purpose of working with individuals and groups to encourage active involvement in decisions that affect them or are of interest to them. Council engages the community on many issues, including policies, strategies, major and local projects, and in many ways such as workshops, pop-ups, information sessions, focus groups, attending community meetings, surveys; council meetings; advisory committees; and via the Participate Melbourne website and other digital tools.

Since 2010, Council has invested in bolstering community engagement practice across the organisation through a Community Engagement Charter and the Community Engagement Framework, based on the four pillars – policy, people, practice, and performance. The new *Local Government Act 2020* stipulates that all councils have an endorsed community engagement policy that is developed in consultation with the community and includes a definition of deliberative engagement.

Objectives

The objectives of this engagement were to:

- Invite conversations about the role and possibilities of community engagement
- Inspire all Melburnians to consider the roles and responsibilities of local government and the community in shaping the city
- Generate reflections on the principles that underpin good engagement
- Identify barriers and enablers of effective community engagement
- Define deliberative engagement
- Create opportunities for participation that are accessible, relevant, and timely
- Activate and involve networks, leaders, and experts from across the community
- Reach and support those not familiar with engagement processes so they can meaningfully contribute
- Ensure a high level of involvement from councillors and staff.

Methodology

The City of Melbourne offered multiple ways for the community to contribute feedback, helping to ensure that a more diverse range of voices were heard.

The methods offered include:

- Participate Melbourne website with Virtual Ideas wall
- Online and paper survey
- Pop-up kiosks
- Community workshops (virtual and face-to-face)
- Meetings with Traditional Custodian groups
- Meetings with other social and community groups
- Engagement with childhood educators and children
- Targeted stakeholder interviews

- Email submissions
- Direct phone number access
- Staff survey, workshops and info sessions

Pop-up kiosks

The pop-up kiosks were a successful approach to meeting with diverse community members “where they are” during the consultation period. Thirteen kiosks were held across the following sites for either two or three hours:

- Queen Victoria Market, Saturday market day
- Federation Square
- City Library, CBD
- Kathleen Syme Library and Community Centre, Carlton
- East Melbourne Library
- North Melbourne Library, North Melbourne
- Kensington Community Recreation Centre, Kensington
- Boyd Park, Southbank
- Buluk Park, Docklands
- Fitzroy Gardens (International Student Picnic event), East Melbourne
- The Venny (Youth BBQ Day), Kensington
- Carlton Learning Precinct (immunisation clinic), Carlton
- Multicultural Hub (immunisation clinic), CBD

The pop-up kiosks offered a range of ways for people to engage in conversation, contribute their thoughts and submit feedback, including:

- Paper surveys
- QR codes for the online survey
- Display boards with information on the principles and deliberative engagement where people could ‘vote’ for their top three with sticky dots.
- A spinning wheel game that asked people to ‘spin and win’ by landing on a community engagement word or a concept from community engagement practice and answering a true or false statement for a small incentive.



An international student studying in Melbourne plays the spinning wheel game at one of the pop-up kiosks.

Limitations

The following limitations are to be considered when reading this report:

- The consultation was held over four weeks in January during the school and summer holiday period, and also COVID-19 restrictions. This timing was due to a legislative requirement under the Local Government Act 2020 to have the policy endorsed by 1 March 2021. To help mitigate this traditionally quiet time for consultations, pop-up kiosks and intercept surveys were run in higher visitation areas e.g., Queen Victoria markets and Federation Square. Where possible, advanced notice was provided on the engagement period to stakeholders. The consultation achieved a high number of responses within this period.
- Engagement was voluntary, and as such the feedback is not statistically representative. However, efforts were made to reach more diverse voices through different methods, and the data shows a good range of demographic respondents, particularly across age. Potential reasons why the consultation heard from fewer people who work, study and visit the city, as opposed to those who live in the city, could be due to COVID-19 restrictions, students being on summer holidays, and reduced tourism numbers. It was also not possible to capture consistent demographic data from people at the pop-up kiosks if they did not fill in a survey.
- The consultation sought feedback on key themes and principles of community engagement to develop the policy. The draft policy was sent to participants prior to going to council for endorsement. There was one submission received on the draft policy prior to endorsement.
- Another limitation was that not all questions were compulsory in the online surveys, so some questions were not answered by all respondents.
- At various times across the consultation, different questions were asked depending on the setting, audience, and stage of engagement (pre-engagement, and engagement period). This means some results are smaller in number and not comparative across all groups and led to presentation of findings via format rather than theme.
- Language translations were made on the promotional material with links to community language translation service phone numbers on the Participate Melbourne. However, the survey and FAQs were not translated into community languages.
- Interviews were held early with representatives from the three Traditional Custodian groups, and the notes taken during the interviews were verified with each group. However, as the demographic survey questions did not ask respondents to identify if they were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, the data does not indicate any wider representation of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Several activities were used at pop-up kiosks to stimulate conversation and offer a variety of methods to engage with passersby, including display boards for voting top three principles and elements of deliberative engagement; and an engagement spinning wheel to offer a small prize for having a conversation around a range of engagement words and concepts. The data was not collated for these activities as they were not consistently available at all pop-ups and their primary purposes was engagement and eye-catching displays. They were, however, successful in sparking interest and inviting people into the kiosk area.

Engagement reach

Throughout this engagement, City of Melbourne reached Melburnians through various platforms. In total, over 1200 people participated in this engagement and more than 2900 comments were collated and analysed. These figures come from:

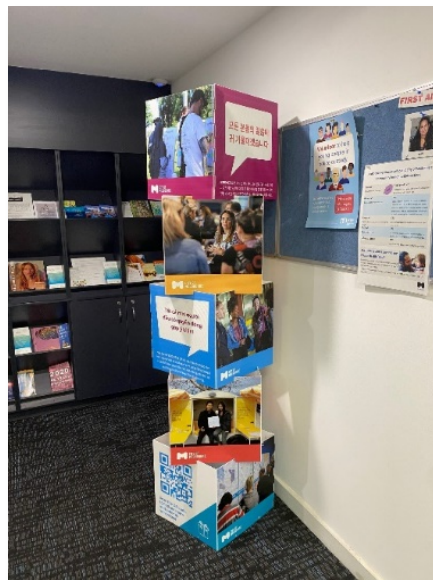
- 13 pop-up kiosks
- 449 survey respondents
- 68 staff survey respondents
- 3 consultations with Traditional Custodian groups
- 21 community workshop participants
- 5 childhood educators and 69 children
- 32 participants from social or community group interviews
- 19 comments on the virtual Ideas Wall
- 53 social media comments
- 686 face-to-face contacts.

Note that some of these sessions were fluid with people coming and going so exact numbers of attendees are not available in all cases, however, best estimates have been used.

Other methods used for communications include:

- Social media posts
- Postcards with a QR code distributed out in the community, including at libraries and community centres
- Promotional cube stacks with translations and QR code displayed in community hubs and immunisation centres
- Email signature on all engagement team emails between 7 January and 3 February 2021.

See appendix for examples of communications materials.



Example of promotional cube stack.

BREAKDOWN OF REACH



1,200

Participants



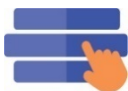
2,975

Comments analysed



179,000+

Total social media
views



1,683

Website visitors



686

Face-to-face contacts



39,489

Newsletters and
emails sent



517

Surveys completed



83

Workshop
participants



30

Targeted interview
participants



190

New Participate
Melbourne
subscribers

Data analysis

Unless otherwise stated, the same method of analysis has been used for all data collected through the various channels of engagement (surveys, workshops, pop-ups, etc.).

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS METHODS

Frequency analysis was completed on the demographic information such as age, gender, and connection to the municipality of Melbourne. Results for these quantitative questions are presented as charts throughout this report.

Quantitative questions asked in the surveys have been analysed separately and these results are presented as a discrete section.

Charts with demographic data collected across various platforms can be found in the appendix. These charts will give an indication of the demographics of most respondents.

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS AND REPORTING METHODS

The discussions within this report present results from qualitative analysis of the open-ended questions and feedback received from respondents over all engagement methods. Where the same questions were asked across various methods, analysis has been combined.

For some methods of engagement, such as staff surveys, workshop comments, targeted community groups and childhood educator contributions, the questions asked were different from those in the survey. Where this is the case, analysis of these questions has been conducted separately, and the discussions are contained in separate sections. The data used in each discussion is noted at the beginning of each section.

To complete the analysis, Global Research analysts read each comment received from the community and organised (coded) into themes and topics based on the points made. Some comments contained multiple points, relevant to multiple topics, resulting in many comments being coded to multiple topics. The analysis was assisted by NVivo qualitative analysis software.

Analysts then synthesised the coded comments and used the results to inform this report. The discussion below was written in the order of most-to-least commonly mentioned topics under each of the free-text questions.

To give a clear and consistent indication of the number of comments received on each topic, the following key was used to describe the relative number of comments on each topic (see next page):

Key for comment numbers	
3 comments	A few
4-7 comments	A small number
8-14 comments	Several
15-24 comments	A moderate number
25-49 comments	A considerable number
50-74 comments	A substantial number

Note: Participant comments are included throughout this report. Comments have been inserted verbatim, however, where obvious grammatical or spelling errors have occurred, these have been corrected (without changing the meaning or content of the comment).

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY: CONSULTATION ANALYSIS

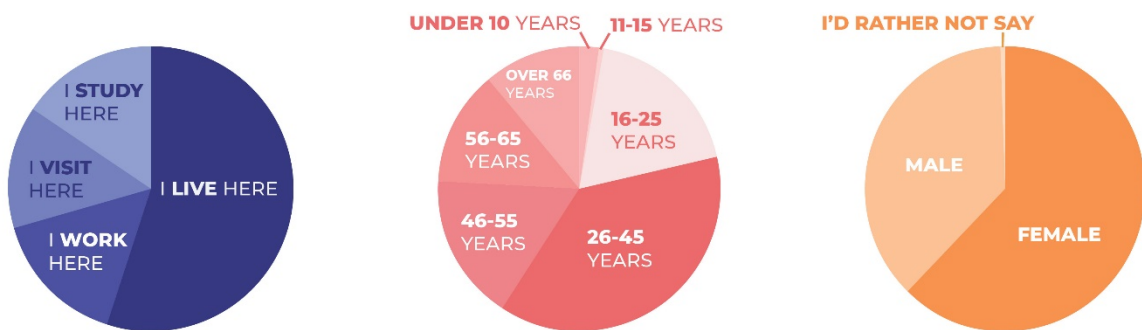
Between October 2020 and February 2021, the City of Melbourne spoke to the community, council staff, management and councillors in order to develop a Community Engagement Policy. Here are some of the key results.

ENGAGEMENT REACH



WHO CONTRIBUTED

(Including those who contributed through surveys, workshops and pop-ups)



RESULTS

95%

of survey respondents agree that:

"Public participation in Council planning leads to better decisions and more sustainable solutions. Our different perspectives and experiences are valuable, and we all have a right to be involved in decisions that affect where and how we live."

250

survey respondents selected 'evidence and background information is analysed' is one of their top 3 elements of deliberation.

YOU SAID

"Social, political, economic inequity. Some groups need to be met face-to-face. Basic respect for human beings. Breaking down them/us cultures."

"It is important to support community engagement using a variety of methods. Not everyone will feel confident providing their input via the same means."

"The community needs to be made better aware when there is the opportunity to attend and participate in such things. Where do you advertise, how does the local community hear about these forums?"

"You don't think it will make a difference - I guess that sounds cynical but it's also [a] pretty real feeling for me."

"That you are genuine about it and the process. Actions speak louder than words."

WE HEARD



DIVERSE VOICES MUST BE INCLUDED



PEOPLE NEED TO FEEL COMFORTABLE



PEOPLE NEED TO KNOW HOW THEY CAN PARTICIPATE



CONSULTATION MUST BE CLEARLY LINKED TO ACTION



CONSULTATION MUST BE GENUINE AND TRANSPARENT

Summary of feedback

The below points emerged as common themes throughout all community feedback collected during this engagement. They represent the key messages received from the community around community engagement.

More proactive efforts are needed from City of Melbourne to increase reach and accessibility

- Early and broad promotion through a wide range of methods is needed to ensure people are aware of engagement opportunities and have time to get involved.
- A mix of engagement options – online, offline, and in-person – are necessary to provide flexibility and ensure people can engage in ways and at times that suit them.

All voices must be heard and valued

- Melbourne is a diverse city, but people feel this is not often fully represented in community engagement. Diverse groups, particularly minorities or those who are often excluded from government processes, must be included in the participation process.
- Different groups have different needs and preferred modes of communication. Council must understand the diverse needs of its communities and engage with them in ways that are appropriate.

Consultation must be clearly linked to action

- Listening to what the community has to say and being clear about how people's input is translated into actions and decisions is important.
- Greater transparency and accountability are needed from City of Melbourne to reassure communities that their participation is not tokenistic or a box-ticking exercise.

People need to feel comfortable to participate

- People wanted to feel they were actively welcomed and "invited" to participate, and to be clear on exactly what their involvement will look like.
- Increased support from City of Melbourne or opportunities to participate in more informal environments could help people feel more comfortable.

Traditional Custodian Groups

The following section contains summaries of three meetings held with Traditional Owners groups during this consultation.

Each of the three groups, Bunurong Land Council, Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, and Boon Wurrung Foundation, shared their thoughts on why it is important for people to get involved in government decision making processes; what are the most important elements of deliberation; how the relationship between citizens and local government can be strengthened; and what they felt were barriers and enablers to participation in their communities.

Full notes from each of these meetings are available in the appendix.

Summary

- People's voices are their power and allow them the ability to shape their own narrative. These voices add value that cannot be found within government alone.
- Aboriginal people are under-represented in government structures, and public engagement is one way to remedy this.
- Effective deliberation requires enough time and notice for people to consider the topic.
- City of Melbourne must ask the right questions in the right way and listen deeply to what people have to say.
- Strengthening relationships requires acknowledging historical wrongs and subsequent feelings of mistrust or hurt.
- Strong relationships require respectful conversations and long-term investment where both parties learn about and value the other.
- Traditional Owners are more than just one of many stakeholders – their views must be given appropriate weighting in conversations.
- Aboriginal people need to feel comfortable to contribute – smaller, closed groups are preferable to larger, diverse groups.
- Reaching out to people at events or activities can encourage engagement.

Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR PEOPLE TO GET INVOLVED IN GOVERNMENT DECISION MAKING PROCESSES?

It is important for people to get involved in government decision making processes because peoples' voices add value that cannot be found within government alone. Governments should not make decisions without hearing from the community. The public wants to be involved, be heard, and have leaders and institutions that play by the rules.

We've seen this with recent elections; people want to be heard, to know that their ideals matter.

DELIBERATION: WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENTS?

The most important elements of deliberation are time and having a real mix of voices. Allowing enough time for people to think deeply on the topic, as well as enough advance notice to get involved in these conversations – preferably 6 to 8 weeks. Ensuring that a mix of people are engaged to represent Bunurong Land Council, including elders and younger community members is also important.

HOW DO WE STRENGTHEN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CITIZENS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT?

By learning more about each other, relationships between citizens and local government can grow and strengthen. Acknowledging that some people may have views to share, yet may want to express these quietly, is an important step in strengthening these relationships as it will make it more possible for everyone who wants to contribute to do so. Bunurong Land Council sees themselves more as partners than stakeholders.

Both camps need to be learning more about each other. For the relationship to be meaningful we need to know more about each other.

BARRIERS AND ENABLERS

Forum and atmosphere are crucial: People may feel uncomfortable joining big public workshops or sharing cultural knowledge in spaces where they are uncertain about who will be there receiving the information or how it is going to be used. These open forums can also lead to louder voices dominating the conversation, and important ideas and quieter voices being suppressed.

Small groups of Aboriginal people are preferable to larger, diverse groups. Invitations to closed, face-to-face discussions where people know they will be sitting to and talking with their own people are ideal. People need to feel secure that they can share knowledge and do not need to be guarded about passing on information.

Aboriginal communities respond better to small groups of Aboriginal people not larger, diverse groups.

Online tools like surveys and virtual meetings can work well: Online surveys are quick, easy and efficient and allow people to respond in their own time, enabling broader participation. They also enable a focus on the finer points of an issue rather than telling bigger, broader stories that skim over the nitty-gritty. Virtual get togethers are useful to cut out unnecessary travel time, or to allow Bunurong who live across the country to participate.

Engage people where they are: Events and activities like family festivals, or at places like train stations where people are waiting can be a good time to engage. City of Melbourne could offer something, such as a gift or experience, to make people feel like they are getting something back, or could offer an activity for children to allow their parents time to talk about upcoming projects.

Time and resources are a barrier for Bunurong Land Council and for people: Limited staff resources are the single biggest limiting factor for Bunurong Land Council to participate. If people in the community need to read and consider lengthy documents, there must be a financial incentive to compensate them for their valuable time and energy.

Invitations to engage will be better received if they come from Bunurong Land Council: Bunurong Land Council can forward City of Melbourne engagement opportunities to their network, which may be an effective way to increase the voice of Melbourne's Aboriginal community in city decisions.

Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR PEOPLE TO GET INVOLVED IN GOVERNMENT DECISION MAKING PROCESSES?

It is important for people to get involved in government decision making processes because Aboriginal people are not represented in government structures, so should be able to represent themselves through public engagement.

Electoral process discriminates and needs to be updated to enable recognised Elders of Traditional Lands to nominate for local government political positions, just as a resident of the municipality can.

DELIBERATION: WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENTS?

The most important elements of deliberation are deep listening, being open to having 'hard conversations', asking the right questions in the right way, and having the right people in the room who are needed to make decisions and address the issues faced by the community.

HOW DO WE STRENGTHEN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CITIZENS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT?

The relationship between citizens and local government can be strengthened through taking a number of different actions. It is important for council staff to see their role in terms of service to the community, and for there to be accountability and consistency of approach and of commitments across different departments within City of Melbourne. Other suggestions included:

Where we start with Reconciliation is relationships; respect; opportunity

If City of Melbourne wish to embrace the whole-of-community, then it can't be piecemeal.

BARRIERS AND ENABLERS

Invest in rebuilding and nurturing relationships: Meaningful engagement requires investing in nurturing, respectful, long-term relationships with the Aboriginal community and recognising the lack of trust and feelings of anger, hurt and offense caused and perpetuated by government. Members of the Aboriginal community need to feel they are taken seriously, and truth-telling and "getting down to the nitty gritty" is important.

Lack of recognition of Aboriginal authority acts as a barrier: Historical and political structures undermine, destabilise and destroy the authority of Aboriginal groups, and processes can feel like they aim to destroy unity and cohesion and veer from previous commitments, obligations and responsibilities.

Rather than being seen as one of many stakeholders, the Aboriginal community must be given appropriate respect and weighting within the conversation.

Conversations that go nowhere: Barriers include a lack of follow-up and communication from decision-makers and senior leadership. Care must be taken that this Community Engagement Policy is distributed widely and does not remain “a glossy document that sits on a shelf.”

Aboriginal culture must be visible across the city: Part of it is seeing Aboriginal culture, stories and history, such as the Barak statue, everywhere across Melbourne to showcase Indigenous peoples’ resilience, culture and history like in other States. Wurundjeri visibility and degree of participation at Moomba events feels as though it has decreased in recent years.

Boon Wurrung Foundation LTD

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR PEOPLE TO GET INVOLVED IN GOVERNMENT DECISION MAKING PROCESSES?

It is important for people to get involved in government decision making processes because their voices are their power, and how they create their own narrative. When the government speaks for you, they devalue you, and therefore people must be given the chance to make their voices heard and share their thoughts. It is also important for people to have the chance to share their lived experience, particularly for Aboriginal people who have been marginalised for generations, and who want to walk alongside leaders. It is important to hear people's thoughts, because otherwise decisions are left up to a small group of people who cannot understand the full diversity of opinions and knowledge of the people.

Aboriginal people have been very active. We have a history of activism and we're not going away or going to stop. We can be active and influential. We are agents of change, and we need to help people find and value their voice.

Black fellas never gave away our rights. We are Melbourne.

When else do we embed those stories; so as not be victims of your Melbourne histories.

Kids need to grow up knowing they have a voice on Country. Young people made a big impact during COVID. We need to plan activities that keep them engaged and contributing. Upskill young people into local government. Let them be at the table of negotiations so they can see what meaningful engagement is. It's about their confidence. There's a new awakening among young people. They are questioning why there are injustices. There's a consciousness about effecting change.

Globally we are a more informed population. But we need to start trusting the systems.

People want to feel confident that they are part of something that will have a legacy.

DELIBERATION: WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENTS?

A number of elements were felt to be the most important elements of deliberation. Listening, allowing enough time for deliberation, respecting the wisdom in the room, and providing the resources necessary for people to participate were all seen as being important. Other elements that were considered important include:

Group discussion—small cohorts. Don't lump people together, build solutions with people with diverse experiences. There will be frustrations and conflict, and you can't please everybody.

Diversity. Melbourne is very privileged. It's such a diverse, multicultural city. All people need to be included in storyboards and conversations about Melbourne.

Respectful – humans have weaknesses and strengths and are dealing with emotions. People need to be observant of that.

HOW DO WE STRENGTHEN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CITIZENS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT?

To strengthen the relationships between citizens and local government City of Melbourne can take a number of steps. One of the key elements emphasised in this discussion was the importance of reciprocity, where citizens and Council know what each group values about the other and trust each other to share in solutions. It was noted during this discussion that “shared reciprocity plays out in the acceptance of Bunjil’s lore and obligations to observe them”. Council must ensure that its leaders and spokespeople are respectful when engaging with the community.

The importance of representation was also highlighted. Few people get the opportunity to serve as elected representatives in local government, so it is critical to find other ways to involve citizens. When doing so, it is important to bring the diversity of Melbourne into these conversations, including young people. Helping to educate Aboriginal people about the three tiers of government was suggested as a way to help encourage engagement with the community, as was allowing sufficient time to build trust and relationships. Other ideas put forward included:

Don’t promise the world. You’ve got to be open that we want to take your voice on-board and it will be represented, but we can’t only go on what we hear from you, as there will be many voices.

Important to look at the way Aboriginal people have been defined by history and in the public realm. There are lots of historical documents but we need more narrative around the history and marginalisation. It’s all about stories and how those stories are told.

BARRIERS AND ENABLERS

Relationships, healing and belonging: Understanding the complexity of Aboriginal issues and being willing to address these in an open, honest and meaningful way is essential. The feelings of distance and distrust amongst the Aboriginal community is a barrier to participation that can be worked on over time through respectful relationships which are earned, not assumed. An important step to enable the Aboriginal community to participate in council decision-making processes is meaningful engagement, not tokenism, and to help foster a sense of belonging where Aboriginal people feel seen and heard by City of Melbourne and its institutions.

Still lots of healing needed. How do we address truth telling and treaty?

Everyone has a voice: Instead of speaking *for* the community, allow them to speak for themselves. Allowing the community to use their own voices and feel heard will empower them to participate. Council must help people to value the voice that they have, particularly those that don’t know they have a voice yet. Having a voice and trusting one’s own ability is key.

Don’t speak for me. Don’t take my voice away. You don’t help me by silencing me.

Working together and building understanding. Helping Aboriginal people to understand the role, opportunities and different areas of the council and the system of local government that operates in the City of Melbourne will help them to get involved.

Working collectively to achieve outcomes is also important; knowing that people can come together and share their knowledge and collectively find solutions helps people to understand that there are different viewpoints in this world that need to be considered.

Consultation must lead to action: Accountability is necessary to ensure that consultation leads to actions and delivery rather than “just talk,” for example, Reconciliation Plans getting developed and then shelved.

Consultation must be coordinated across local governments: There is a challenge in the coordination of consultation with councils and Aboriginal groups, particularly when divisions between areas do not match up – for example, Boon Wurrung Foundation covers 28 Local Government Areas (LGAs). Local governments need to do more to work together and streamline opportunities, especially as they are often asking similar things.

The system has separated us into siloed councils, but our people are not divided into LGAs.

Survey results

The following section contains analysis and synthesis of both quantitative (option selection) questions and qualitative (free-text) questions asked in the survey. In some instances, data captured from other methods, such as workshops, has been included in the analysis of survey results. This has only occurred where the same questions were asked across both/all platforms. Where this has occurred, the data sources used are stated.

Open-ended questions asked respondents to explain their thoughts on various elements of the policy, including the eight principles of engagement identified by City of Melbourne, barriers and enablers to effective public engagement, and any other comments that respondents wished to share. The summaries that follow present the key points made in response to each of these questions.

Demographics

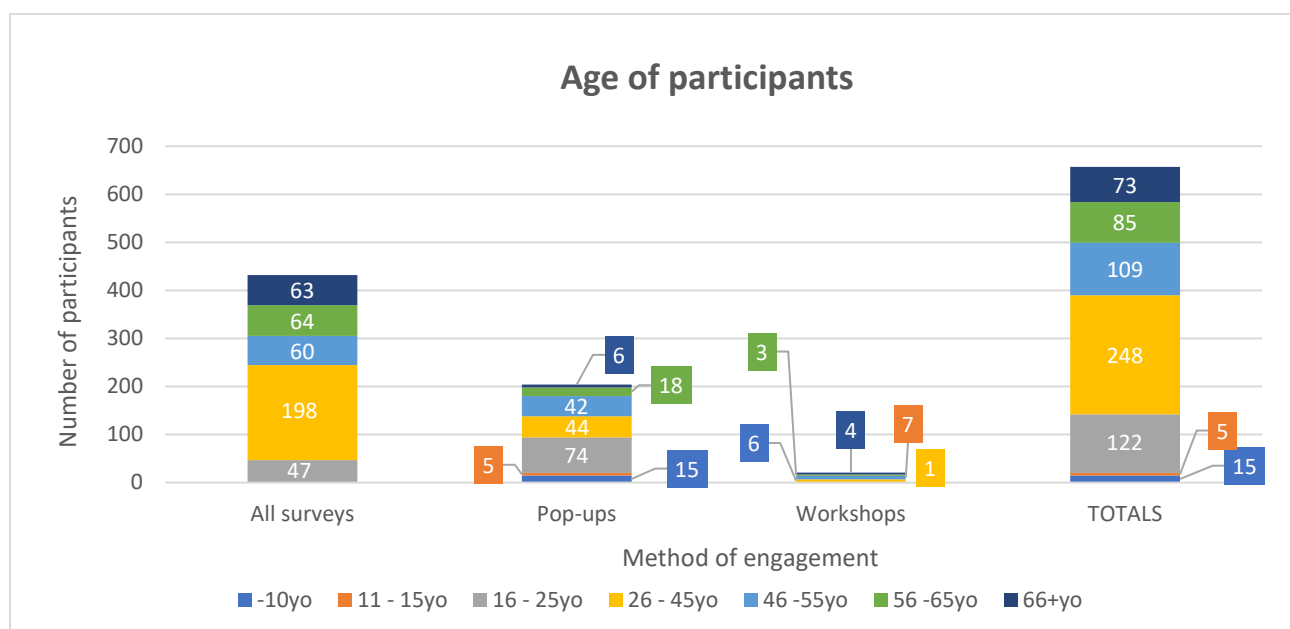
Participants were asked a series of demographic questions. The results from these questions are presented in charts below. Note that these results represent the 449 survey responses received, as well as responses from the pop-up kiosks and workshop participants.

The below charts and more in-depth interpretations of this respondent characteristics data can be found in the appendix.

Summary

- The 26 – 45 years age group was the most well-represented age group among survey respondents.
- Females were the most highly represented gender among survey respondents.
- Over half of respondents live in the municipality of Melbourne.
- The most common way respondents found out about this project was 'in person'.

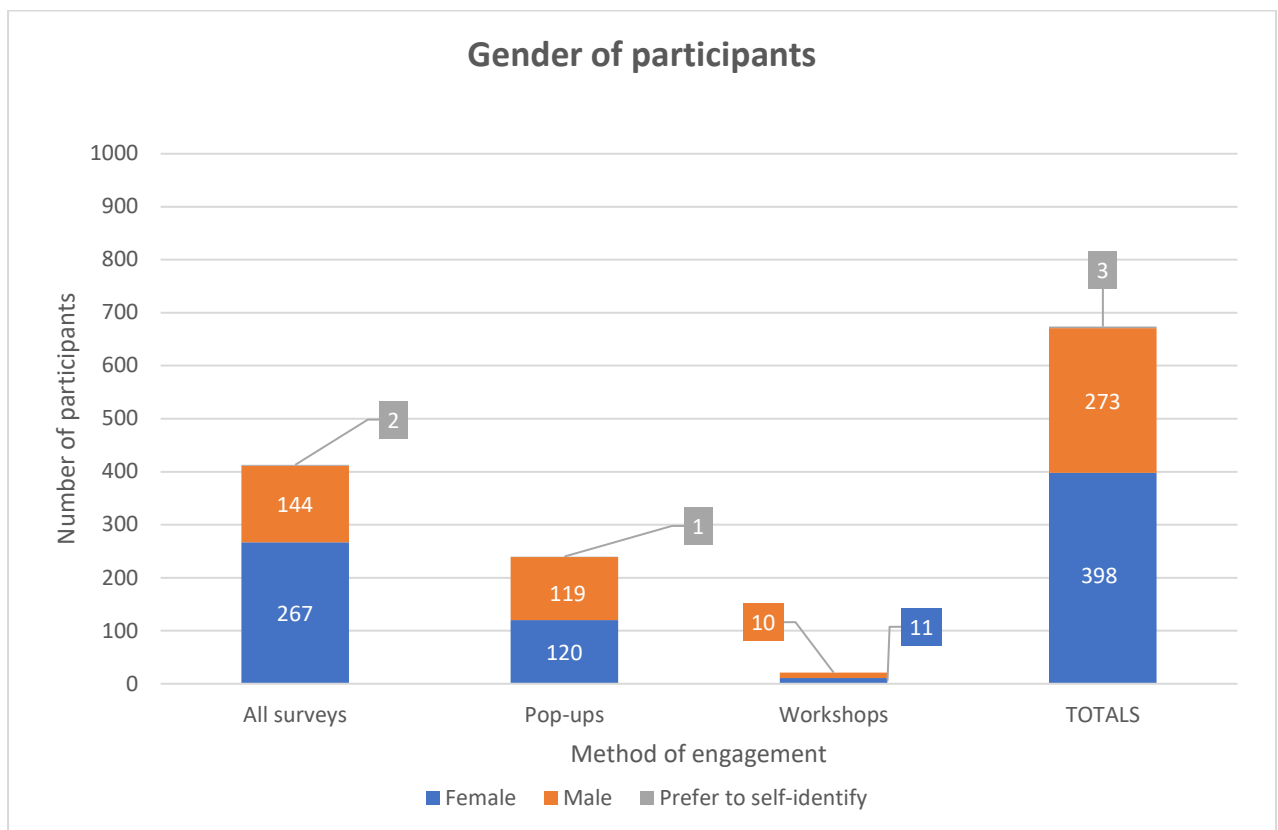
AGE



Findings:

- > The 26 – 45-year age bracket was the most widely represented across all participants.
- > Pop-ups had a larger proportion of 16 – 25-year-olds compared with other methods of engagement.

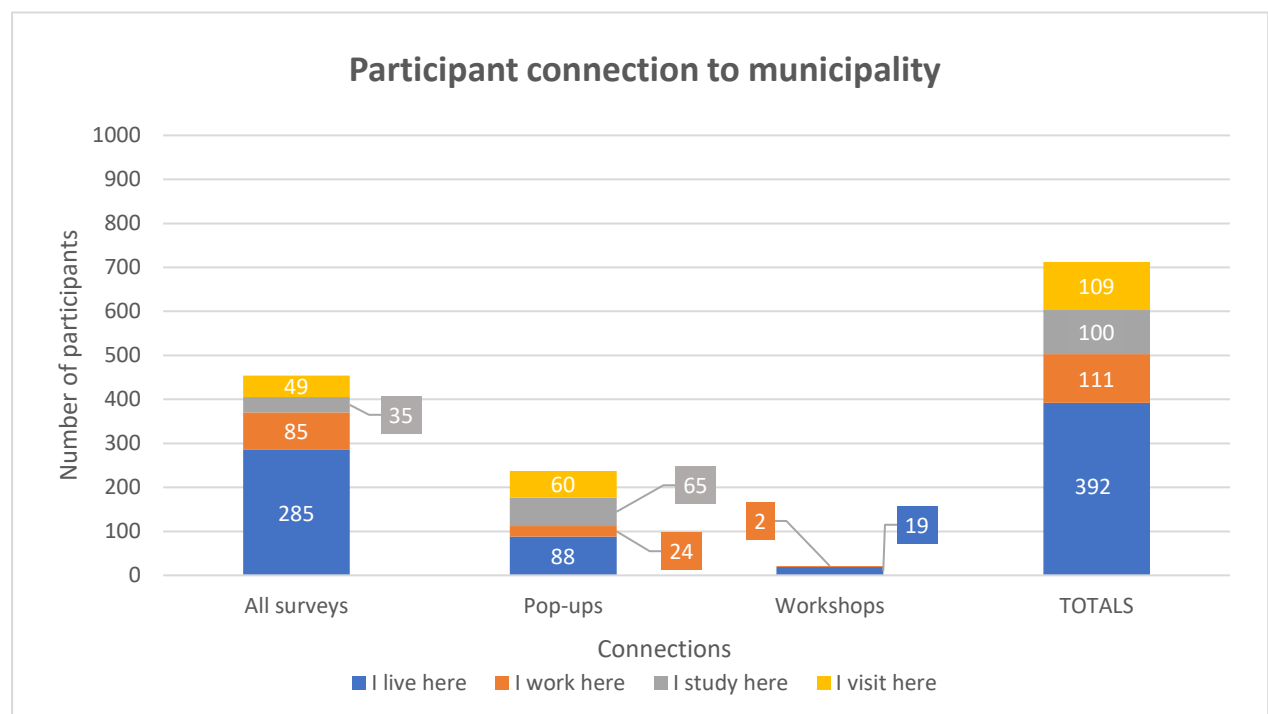
RESPONDENT GENDER



Findings:

- > The ratio of female to male participants was higher across all methods of engagement, with survey data having the highest participation rates.
- > The ratio of female to male participants was much more even at pop-ups and workshops than in the online survey, where females were more highly represented.
- > Overall, there were more females than any other gender.

CONNECTION TO THE MUNICIPALITY

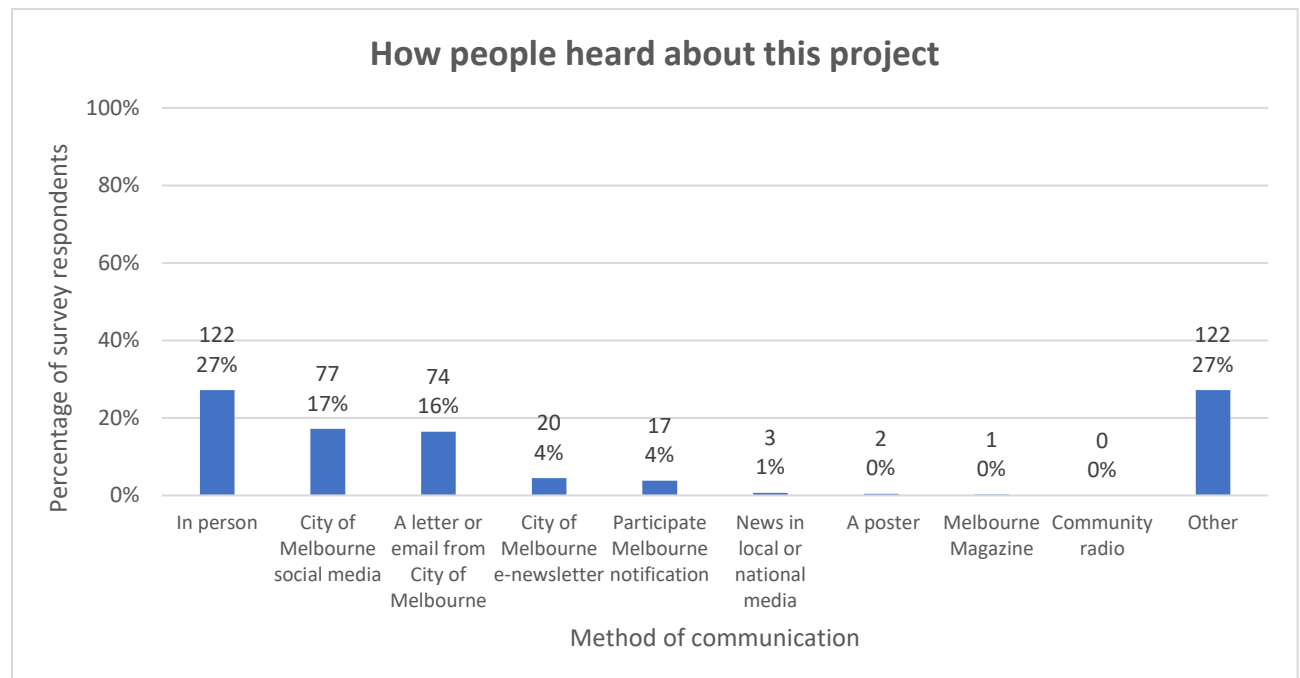


Findings:

- > 'I live here' was most commonly selected as participants' primary connection to the municipality across all three methods of community engagement.
- > Pop-ups had the most even spread of participants with different connections to the municipality of Melbourne.

HOW PARTICIPANTS HEARD ABOUT THIS PROJECT

Note that this question was only asked of survey respondents, so results therefore do not represent pop-up kiosks or workshop participants. Percentages may not add to 100 as not all respondents answered this question.



Out of the 449 survey respondents, 438 answered this question.

Findings:

- > The most common way that respondents found out about this project was 'in person' (27%).
- > Over one-tenth of respondents found out about the project through City of Melbourne social media (17%) or a letter or email from City of Melbourne (16%).
- > All other methods were selected by less than 5% of respondents apart from 'other', which was selected by 27%.
- > 'Other' ways that respondents found out about the project included: pop-ups; residents' groups or newsletters; LinkedIn; through Google; and through other committees or groups.
- > As a result of this engagement, more than 190 people subscribed to Participate Melbourne to receive regular updates of other consultation opportunities.

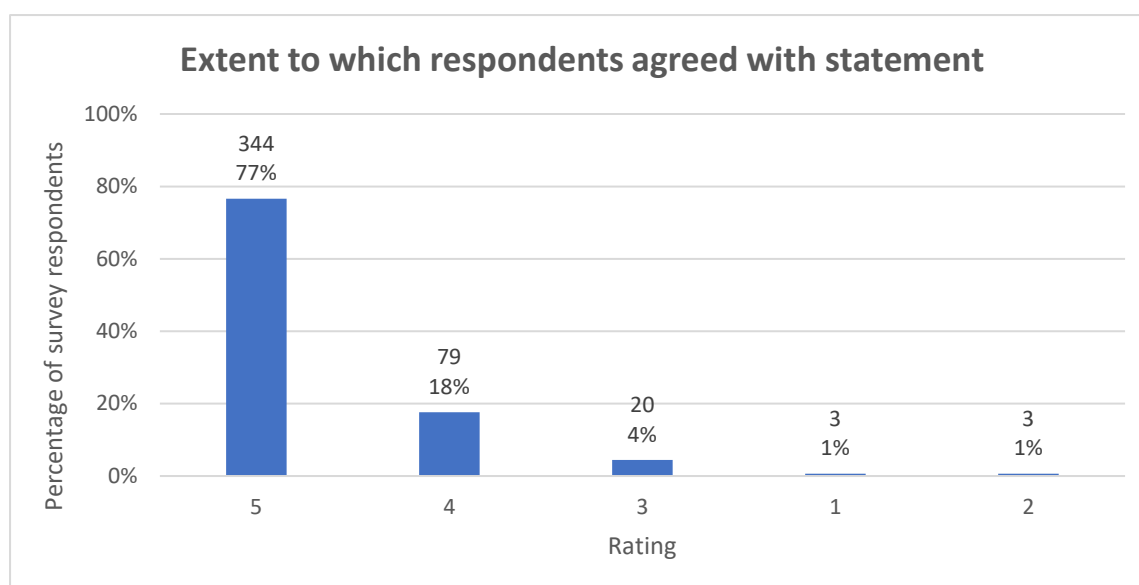
Qualitative findings

There were six key survey questions related to community engagement (not demographic questions), made up of multiple choice and open-ended questions. This section looks at the results from these six questions.

1A. TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE WITH THIS STATEMENT?

"Public participation in Council planning, leads to better decisions and more sustainable solutions. Our different perspectives and experiences are valuable, and we all have a right to be involved in decisions that affect where and how we live."

Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed with the above statement, from 1 to 5. The table below represents the responses received to this question.



This chart represents responses from the 449 survey respondents.

Findings:

- > Over three-quarters of survey respondents gave a rating of 5, indicating a high level of agreement with the statement (77%).
- > The second most frequent response was a rating of 4 (18%).
- > Ratings of 3 and lower made up only 6% of responses to this question.

1B. WHY DO YOU FEEL THIS WAY?

Respondents were then asked to justify their chosen response. Responses have been discussed based on the ratings that respondents gave.

5 stars

323 comments

Five stars was by far the most common answer to this question, with over three quarters of respondents selecting this option. Over half of these comments simply argued that the community should have a say in decisions that affect them. People made the argument that input from a range of perspectives is valuable and will help Council better understand its constituents and reach decisions that are beneficial for more people.

People who decided to live in the city know best the issues that they are facing day to day. We all have different needs and lives. Our varied perspectives can help build a better life for all.

We are the ones that have to live here. the public have a good idea about what's sustainable and what sustainability means to them. which might differ from the perspective of council. Being in discussion and dialogue, we can come up with better solutions.

A considerable number of other comments simply expressed support for community consultation in general. Examples of such comments include:

Everyone's busy, including councillors, and when we're busy we sometimes neglect the very communities we're there to serve. Better engagement means better outcomes.

If you are providing a service "for the people" then you have to know what "the people" want and need.

It's simple really the more we put into our community the better it will be for all of us

Remaining comments were varied and ranged from specific issues respondents wanted to raise with City of Melbourne outside the scope of this project, to praise Council on the work they do for Melbourne, or broad statements such as "To tie together place, people and decision making, for broad, integrated planning and visioning."

4 stars

70 comments

Those who answered this question with 4 stars generally felt that it is the right of residents and people who spend time in the city of Melbourne to have a say in how their area develops, as they are the ones who are impacted by council decisions. In particular, respondents felt that diverse representation in public engagement is important, as it helps to uncover 'blind spots' and reach better solutions that work for more people.

Public participation brings views into the discussion which may be missed or ignored otherwise.

These comments noted that without hearing from the public, councillors cannot understand the issues faced by the community and how different decisions may affect them. Several respondents also noted that people are more likely to be invested and involved in their communities if they are able to participate in planning and decision making.

3 stars

17 comments

Respondents who answered this question with 3 stars suggested that while it is good to offer everyone the opportunity to express their opinions and be heard, the public can be biased or are not always well-informed on a topic or able to see what is best for the majority of the community. A few of these respondents noted that council officials are elected to make decisions on behalf of their constituents, and therefore should be able to be trusted to make decisions for the benefit of the area as a whole without favouring small, often louder, sectors of the population.

2 stars

3 comments

The three comments given by respondents who answered this question with two stars gave different reasons. These ranged from the view that although community consultation has its value, people are craving decisive leadership from City of Melbourne, to the suggestion that the public often lacks the knowledge on a specific topic to be able to make helpful contributions, and they can be biased.

1 star

4 comments

Respondents who answered this question with one star did so because they felt that public engagement is not conducted efficiently or effectively. Comments suggested that people did not feel listened to by Council, and that the engagement process often takes too long and is too complicated for many people.

2. THE PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

Respondents were asked: *"Our principles of engagement guide our approach and are our promises to you. Looking at the eight principles of community engagement, is there anything that you think is missing or unclear?"*

The eight principles mentioned were:

1. Planning the engagement early
2. Providing clear information to support the community's participation
3. Letting the community know to what extent they can influence the decision
4. Seeking input from a diverse range of perspectives in the community
5. Using a variety of tools to support the community's participation
6. Ensuring the community's contribution is considered in the decisions that impact them
7. Telling the community how their input has influenced the decision
8. Evaluating the process and continually improving how we engage with the community

Note that the synthesis below includes data collected from two virtual and one in-person workshops as well as surveys.

Summary

- A considerable number of comments suggested changes that could be made to the eight existing principles to make them clearer, more meaningful, and more effective.
- Other comments noted things that were missing from the principles, offering suggestions of areas for City of Melbourne to focus on.
- Improving overall communication, ensuring that engagement opportunities are accessible and inclusive, and ensuring that council processes reflect the principles and uphold the value of the community's opinions were the most commonly discussed topics.
- A large number of respondents felt that nothing was missing or unclear in the eight principles listed in the survey.

Things that need clarification

288 comments

The principles

34 comments

Some respondents made points about things that could be added or clarified for the eight principles listed. Suggestions are summarised below, and specific wording changes are noted in verbatim comments.

Planning the engagement early

0 comments

No comments were made about this principle.

Providing clear information to support the community's participation

1 comment

One comment suggested the following wording change:

The second principle should read "providing clear information in an accessible format to support the community's participation". This recognises that some members of the community cannot access information in the standard formats and may need an alternative format to access that information in order to be able to participate.

Letting the community know to what extent they can influence the decision

3 comments

One respondent simply noted that they had never seen any information about the extent to which the community could influence a decision. Meanwhile, another respondent made the observation that:

You need to make clear that consultation is not abrogating council responsibility to govern. Consultation is not participatory democracy or community decision making. Unless this is made clear from the outset people will generate false expectations by becoming involved in a consultative process.

Seeking input from a diverse range of perspectives in the community

3 comments

Three respondents offered specific wording suggestions for this principle:

I would say "actively seeking" vs simply "seeking" in the fourth box

Seeking input from diverse range of community members should be "ensuring input from a diverse range of community members" - particularly indigenous Australians.

Principle 4 > change "diverse" to "representative"

Using a variety of tools to support the community's participation

5 comments

A small number of respondents suggested more clarification was needed around the term "tools". They wanted to know what tools would be available, and how they would be used. One comment also highlighted an issue translating the term "tools" into other languages, noting that this has been a point of confusion for some respondents who do not have English as a first language.

Ensuring the community's contribution is considered in the decisions that impact them

3 comments

These comments were made:

You might ensure the community's input is considered, but what does that mean? That you read a report? What did you actually change, implement, do differently as a result of all the feedback people took their time to give you? Does community actually have any influence? I'd like to hear about how community input has improved what you're doing.

Principle 6> what's the metric for ensuring the community's contribution is considered?

There's no definition of community

Telling the community how their input has influenced the decision 18 comments

This was the most commonly discussed principle. Respondents took issue with the use of the word “telling”, indicating that demonstrating how community input has influenced the decision through actions would be more meaningful, or that the word “sharing” would be more appropriate. A few comments suggested that this is the element lacking most in public consultations at the moment, with respondents feeling like there is no point in engaging because they do not receive any follow-up communication on how their input was considered or used.

You have to tell people how their input has influenced the decision. You need more honesty and transparency.

Respondents also wanted City of Melbourne to provide justification for their final decisions and be honest if community feedback has not been taken into account.

Telling the community how their input has influenced the decision is the most important - need to tell the community how the input of other stakeholders was also used. People want to know they were heard even if they weren't listened. Why weren't their views taken on board?

Evaluating the process and continually improving how we engage with the community 1 comment

One respondent noted that ‘evaluating’ is often poorly planned and argued that results of these evaluations must be communicated to the public.

Communication

69 comments

A substantial number of respondents called for consultation at various stages throughout a project, including early on in the planning process, and regular updates as the process continues. Respondents also wanted an opportunity to share their thoughts on a project after consultation may have taken place but before the final decisions are made.

Just remembering to keep everyone informed (keep the communication and feedback coming through) - before, during and after any community engagement is sought.

A considerable number of other respondents wanted generally improved communication from City of Melbourne. They wanted to be informed about public engagements and how they could participate; more transparency and accountability regarding how and why final decisions were made; and they wanted it to be easier to communicate with City of Melbourne.

More accessible and inclusive

46 comments

A considerable number of respondents felt that a commitment to making community engagement more accessible and inclusive was missing from the list of principles provided. The groups that were most frequently mentioned by these respondents included people with intellectual and/or physical disabilities; different age groups; a variety of different language speakers and ethnicities; and Indigenous Australians.

Respondents felt that using plain English, having translations available, and using a variety of different methods of engagement would help to achieve this aim of inclusivity and accessibility.

The missing factor is HOW to engage the community. Many elderly do not engage in social media. I am 75 and do not have an email address so cannot enter the competition or subscribe to Participate Melbourne.

Actions speak louder than words

26 comments

A considerable number of respondents noted that these principles mean little without seeing action taken by City of Melbourne to enforce them. These respondents wanted community engagement to be more than just “box-ticking”.

These mean nothing if not done with a desire for actual community influence.

Principles are fabulous but they need to be implemented

About the process

25 comments

Comments about the process were made by a considerable number of respondents. Over half of these comments were about the consultation process itself, including the supporting documents and the survey. Respondents described the survey as “very wordy” and noted that a lot of it was not in simple English and difficult to understand.

A few comments noted that the principles are too general and need more detail and specifics about *how* these principles will be met.

One respondent suggested the following:

I think it is pretty good but as it is an iterative process it might work better if shown as a cycle rather than a block of images and text as it is now considering this sits along long-term planning for communities

A small number of respondents felt that *timing* was missing from the principles. These comments suggested that community engagement needs to be structured and the public need to be informed about the timeline of the project. Some of these comments stressed the importance of conducting engagements in a timely manner to avoid them “dragging on and on”, while others argued that for an engagement to be deep and well-considered, enough time needs to be allowed.

Community

14 comments

The importance of engaging directly with the community and ensuring that their opinions are valued was discussed by several respondents.

These 8 pillars are great and up to the mark. What is felt missing here is engagement between community people and current leadership. That will build confidence and trust among people in community.

City of Melbourne processes

8 comments

Several comments were made about council processes more widely. These ranged from calls for more information about how projects are funded or negative comments about past experiences with consultations, to a desire for policies to be based on robust research and expert advice as well as public consultation.

Questions

5 comments

A small number of questions were raised about these principles:

The sectors of people who can offer opinions should be clarified. For example, can non-citizens make a difference through this?

How are these achieved? More details about how these are undertaken and met?

What types of communication are you using - is it just letters? How can it be easier for people to find out information and participate?

Give times on how often this engagement would occur. Could it happen when the community has an issue they want to discuss?

How do you ensure that an unrepresentative and vocal minority do not have a disproportionate say?

Other

61 comments

A range of other one-off comments were made. These comments were varied, and did not all relate directly to the question asked. Within these comments were a moderate number of suggestions for how City of Melbourne might improve their consultation process. These suggestions included: offering rewards or incentives to those who participate in community engagement; providing pros and cons for each project so the community can see the full picture; engaging directly with body corporate managers to reach more CBD residents; and “road mapping” each of the steps that will be completed during a project so that the community can be kept up to date on the progress of various projects.

A small number of direct suggestions that City of Melbourne could add to their community engagement principles follow:

These principles, whilst laudable, sound top-down and un-specific in the detail. What about: Prioritising listening over talking.

Add> Facilitating communication between different stakeholders (so they hear from each other of their priorities and perspectives.) Being the conduit to respectful discussion among groups.

Add> Respond to specific needs or ideas raised by community members and explain why (help people to feel they've been heard)

Add> Promotion; clear entry points into participation, so people are aware there's an opportunity to contribute. + Add to Principle 1 > inviting contributions right at the start for the project

Nothing was missing

106 comments

A large number of respondents felt that nothing was missing, nor unclear in the set of principles listed in the survey. Around a quarter of these comments were non-detailed statements such as “no” or “nothing is missing”, while others expressed agreement with the principles or noted that they felt the eight principles covered the most important issues of engagement. A substantial number of other comments specifically noted which of these principles they felt were most important.

3. PARTICIPATION BARRIERS AND ENABLERS

Respondents were asked: "It's important that everyone feels supported and comfortable to have their say in Council decisions. What might prevent or encourage you to participate?"

Note that the synthesis below includes data collected from one in-person and two virtual workshops as well as surveys.

Responses have been discussed below in order from most-to-least frequently discussed.

Summary

- Accessibility and knowledge of opportunities were seen as the most important elements. Respondents wanted engagement to be inclusive and accessible for all groups, suggesting that a range of different consultation options and forums should be available to meet different needs and time constraints, that opportunities to engage must be widely advertised, and that information must be clear and easy to access and take language or other barriers into account.
- Respondents emphasised the importance of feeling welcome, valued and comfortable. Some respondents described how an intimidating atmosphere or a sense that they lacked the necessary expertise or speaking skills discouraged them from participating.
- Consultation must be genuine and people's input should be heard and acted upon. Respondents expressed concerns about hidden agendas and lobbyists, and did not want to participate in "token" consultation where decisions had already been made.
- The issue's relevance or impact on people was recognised as a key driver of participation, with some respondents suggesting that people needed to understand what the benefits of contributing are, or that City of Melbourne could make engagement more appealing through offering rewards or activities.
- Inequality and lack of representation was identified as a barrier for a considerable number of respondents, who noted that it was important to include all voices in the consultation process and that Council needed to do more to understand and reach out to diverse groups.

Accessibility and awareness

542 comments

The most frequently discussed theme under this question was accessibility and awareness. This theme has been broken down by topics, which are discussed below in order of most-to-least frequently mentioned.

Opportunity and information

186 comments

A large number of comments reported that a significant barrier to participation is a lack of knowledge or awareness about an engagement opportunity. Respondents felt that Council could do more to promote engagement opportunities and make it clear *how* people can participate. Suggestions included more proactive outreach and having a more visible presence in community spaces, increasing information and advertising, and enhancing the channels of communication between the community and council staff or councillors.

Encouragement - more awareness needed, including more promotion to the community, utilises social media more. Make the communications clear that people can voice their opinion to help with decision making. People may be concerned about what is being asked of them.

A lack of knowledge about the topic was also seen as a barrier to participation. Respondents felt that by providing easy to find, easy to understand information to the public, people will be better able to submit informed feedback. Having user-friendly interfaces (such as the Participate Melbourne website and online surveys) will also encourage participation.

If too complicated or time consuming.

Often the nature of the information being presented is complex. It's too much to draw people's interest in.

General accessibility and inclusivity

99 comments

The general accessibility and inclusiveness of community engagement projects was discussed by a sizeable number of respondents, who felt that both of these elements are crucial to successful public engagement. It was argued that to allow as many people as possible to contribute, consultation should be simple and convenient and that both the information about the issue and the method of participation should not demand too much time and effort.

Respondents also pointed out that different groups have different barriers, and that effective engagement needs to account for this. The need for materials to be in clear, straightforward English and translated into different languages was frequently mentioned, while other barriers included technological access and capability, cultural or religious concerns, or socio-economic inequality.

Also need to ensure right outreach and information in relevant languages to ensure CALD people feel part of the engagement/involved.

Lack of culturally appropriate forums in order to feel comfortable to speak up is a barrier.

Different options for participation

89 comments

A sizeable number of comments were made about the need to provide different ways to participate in community engagement projects. These comments argued that providing a variety of options enables more people to contribute as there is likely to be at least one method that suits them. The types of methods that respondents wanted to see included: online surveys and forums, face to face, public meetings, and mail/paper surveys and information.

Respondents noted that while each of these methods have their benefits, they also have limitations or issues, and therefore a mix of methods is preferable. For example, some people may prefer to engage in

person if they find accessing online surveys difficult, while others may be less comfortable sharing their opinions publicly and prefer the anonymity of online forums. While online options and virtual meetings were commonly praised for the accessibility, convenience and flexibility they allow, several respondents wanted more face-to-face interactions.

It is important to support community engagement using a variety of methods. Not everyone will feel confident in providing their input via the same means.

The fact that this submission was digital, easily accessed on my phone, and could be done in my own time was a great form of encouragement to get me to contribute.

Feelings of confidence and legitimacy

87 comments

A sizeable number of respondents highlighted the importance of feeling safe and comfortable and knowing their participation is welcomed and valued. Some respondents expressed a sense that they were not eligible or that their participation was not legitimate due to factors such as lack of knowledge, education, or policy experience, not feeling as though they are part of the community, or not feeling “invited”. Many of these comments focused on public meetings, describing fears of an intimidating and unfamiliar atmosphere or conflict with domineering or aggressive people, lack of public speaking confidence, and concerns about judgement and potential backlash.

Not feeling like it is my place, not thinking it matters or that anyone will listen.

When aggression is expressed in a debate it can really turn you off.

Suggestions to encourage feelings of comfort and safety included ensuring people could participate anonymously, offering support or helping people prepare, good facilitation, or offering opportunities for participation in casual or informal environments where people can feel more relaxed.

There would need to be an atmosphere of allowing people to share different views, this would encourage me to participate.

Time constraints

81 comments

Having the time to participate was noted as a critical barrier by a sizeable number of respondents, who pointed out that many people struggled to find the time and energy to understand or learn about the issue and then participate in consultation. Commitments like parenting and work added to this difficulty, with several respondents pointing out that meetings were often held during working hours and that it would be useful to have options that were flexible, or meetings offered in weekends and evenings. Respondents felt that it was important to get the timing of the consultation window right, noting that there needs to be sufficient lead-in time and early notifications to allow people time to contribute, but that if responses and follow-up are too slow people can “lose energy”.

As a business owner juggling a demanding business in this pandemic plus a family with small children it is mostly the time factor and energy factor, how much extra time and energy is this taking out of my children and the extra time I spend at the business.

Timing. After work is important. Digital enables participation without needing babysitting.

Council actions and processes

196 comments

Input must be listened to and valued

125 comments

Feeling as though their opinions were heard and taken into account was critical for making people feel that public participation was worthwhile. A large number of respondents made comments simply stating that they wanted to feel that their input was actually valued and considered, or that their

opinions “made a difference” or led to a tangible end result. A considerable number of respondents mentioned past experiences with City of Melbourne which had left them feeling that their input had been ignored, making them less motivated to engage in the future. People called for their contributions to be acknowledged – not just with an automated response – and wanted to see how their feedback had been incorporated into decision-making.

Historically Council hasn't taken the feedback on, I would be more likely if I felt the contribution was being considered.

You don't think it will make a difference - I guess that sounds cynical but it's also pretty real feeling to me.

Encourage: having visibility of how community contributions have influenced direction

Concerns about agendas and council integrity

43 comments

A vein of scepticism and distrust ran through a considerable number of comments, with respondents expressing doubt that the council's commitment to public participation was genuine. People felt that consultation was often a “tick box” or “tokenistic” exercise where decisions had already been made and outcomes were pre-determined, or felt that influential lobbyists or business interests would overshadow residents' concerns.

The feeling that many decisions are made behind closed doors and that everything is 'done and dusted' before [community] consultation takes place. With such a feeling one feels less inclined to participate - as just being a charade and a waste of time.

We don't see results from surveys and consultations. It falls on deaf ears so why bother. There are many people very cynical about consultation, we're sceptical, it can be tokenistic.

Feeling it won't influence predetermined outcomes, nor be heard in the noise of vested interests. More transparency around competing perspectives and evidence that community-driven priorities sometimes take precedence would encourage me to have my say.

Need for transparency and collaboration

28 comments

The need for a more open and collaborative process arose in a moderate number of comments. Respondents called for greater transparency around competing perspectives and wanted to see clearly how community input was used – or not used – and how decisions were made. A few comments noted that the current decision-making process was not collaborative and that communities needed to be involved more in the design of the process.

A small number of comments raised the point that people needed to be encouraged to look towards the collective good rather than focus on individual interests, and that “providing input on a project does not equate to the right of veto.”

The communities within Melbourne community need to be consulted about HOW they wish to be engaged, be part of designing the process, developing a safe and trusted, transparent relationship.

The knowledge that essentially Melbourne does not have a framework to share decision making. It is fundamentally linear in its application and not collaborative.

Relevance or benefits to people

62 comments

The relevance of the issue or the benefits of contributing was noted as a key factor in encouraging engagement. Respondents observed that people were much more likely to participate if they felt directly affected by the issue, if they had relevant knowledge or interests, or if their social or community network encouraged them to engage. The benefits of contributing were discussed in a moderate number of comments, with respondents suggesting that more people would engage if they understood what was in it for them or the value they would get from participating. Others suggested offering more immediate incentives such as vouchers or prizes.

People can be encouraged by emphasising value and what their vested interest is.

We need to know that what's at the end is going to be positive.

In engaging with the community you need to be really clear on what is in it for them? If they don't see you as the person who can fix something for them by tomorrow they will not come.

Representation and inequality

44 comments

Ensuring that all voices are included to reflect Melbourne's diversity was highlighted as an important element of community engagement. Respondents noted that inequalities, biases and lack of representation acted as barriers to involvement, and that City of Melbourne must understand the different needs and priorities of various groups and reach out to them in appropriate ways to make them feel welcome and included. Specific suggestions included having a representative group from the community, trauma-informed community building, or selecting people at random to be involved (similar to a jury process).

Not identifying with the people asking

Social, political, economic inequity. Some groups need to be met face-to-face. Basic respect for human beings. Breaking down them/us cultures.

- Linguistic and cultural disempowerment i.e. they may not know they have a right to speak up or may be afraid of being disadvantaged as a result of speaking up. Encourage:*
- government needs to go above and beyond in its efforts to represent the views of Aboriginal Australians, and be really open and sincere about that.*

Other

12 comments

Comments categorised under "other" included: 7 comments that were generally positive about what City of Melbourne is doing or reiterated the general importance of consultation; 2 comments which expressed doubt as to the usefulness of public consultation, and 3 comments that were not relevant to the question.

4. TOP ELEMENTS FOR DELIBERATION

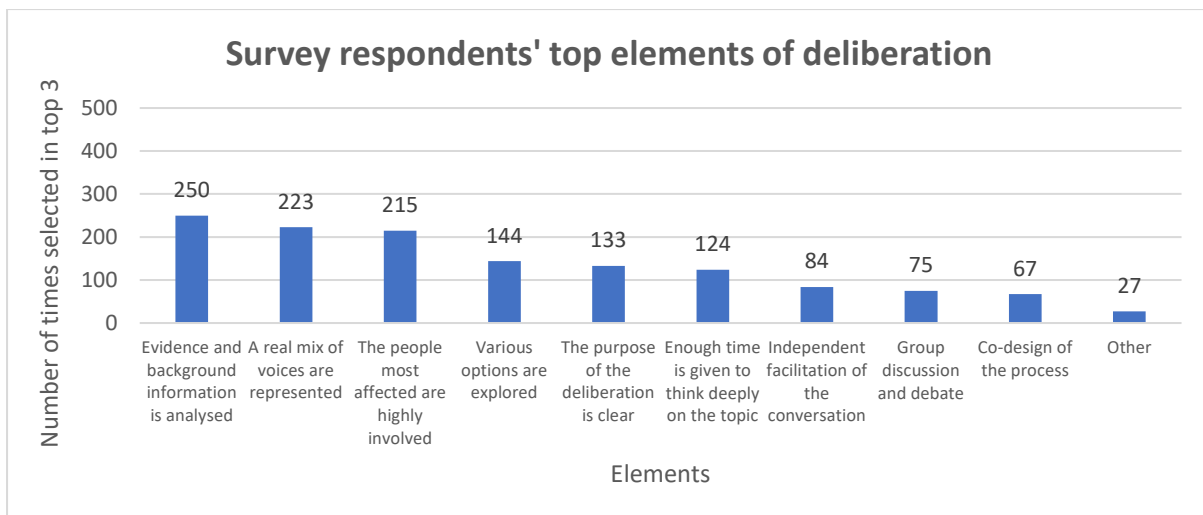
Respondents were provided with this statement and question:

Deliberation generally refers to intentional, careful and unhurried consideration of an issue. In the local government context, this type of deep thinking is applied to complex issues or planning that we must tackle across our municipality. It requires locals, experts, and council employees to be engaged in a meaningful process that leads to a decision. What do you think are the top three elements for deliberation?

Respondents were directed to select three elements from the list below:

- Enough time is given to think deeply on the topic
- A real mix of voices are represented
- Evidence and background information is analysed
- Various options are explored
- The people most affected are highly involved
- Group discussion and debate
- Co-design of the process
- Independent facilitation of the conversation
- The purpose of the deliberation is clear
- Other (please specify)

Results are presented in a chart below.



Findings:

- > 'Evidence and background information analysed' was most frequently ranked in respondents' top 3 elements of deliberation, with 250 respondents selecting this option.
- > 'A real mix of voices are represented' and 'the people most affected are highly involved' came in at second and third most frequently selected options, with 223 and 215 selections respectively.
- > 'Independent facilitation of the conversation', 'group discussion and debate' and 'co-design of the process' were each selected less than 100 times.
- > Other elements submitted by respondents who selected 'other' included respondents who: called for the involvement of lobby groups (i.e. developers) to be better managed; wanted more regular consultation; wanted more to be done to combat tokenism and bias within community engagement; and those who found it too difficult to identify just three options as they are all important.

5. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Respondents were asked: "Do you have anything else to share about Community Engagement and Public Participation that you'd like us to consider in our Community Engagement Policy?"

Responses have been discussed below in order from most-to-least frequently discussed. Many of the ideas in this section echoed themes that arose in previous questions.

Summary

- Comments focused on how methods of engagement must be responsive to the different needs of the community, with early and broad promotion of consultation opportunities and distribution of accessible information highlighted as key priorities. People wanted the council to offer different ways to participate, and to be clear about what people's involvement will look like and how it will be used.
- A substantial number of people said that they had nothing more to add.
- People want all voices to be represented in consultation. A substantial number of comments highlighted the importance of inclusivity and ensuring diverse groups, including future generations, are represented.
- Calls for greater action and accountability were made by a substantial number of respondents. People wanted to know that consultation was genuine rather than token and would result in clear actions, to have improved lines of communication between City of Melbourne and the community, and greater transparency in how decisions are made.
- A considerable number of comments offered specific suggestions for ways City of Melbourne could engage or reach out to various groups.

Council meeting community needs

92 comments

Active reaching and clear, accessible information

37 comments

Respondents called for more proactive efforts from City of Melbourne, including early notification of projects and widespread promotion across a range of mediums – both online and offline – to ensure that everyone knows about opportunities to participate and has ample time to do so.

Different options that were suggested for promotion included email, texts messages, mail to letterboxes, social media, using various council and community locations as conduits, or having a presence (particularly of senior council staff and managers) out in the streets and community to talk to people.

The community needs to be made better aware when there is the opportunity to attend and participate in such things. Where do you advertise, how does the local community hear about these forums. These are important questions, because a lot goes on that is not advertised enough and therefore many have missed the opportunity to attend.

Respondents also emphasised that information must be clear, short and succinct, easy to access and "understandable for all – not just academics". Some respondents made more specific suggestions, such as "more structure" in engagement questions to allow people to take part easily and quickly, presenting options as partial feasibility studies, or that "visualisation of projects along with translated materials are helpful". A couple of respondents noted that having a non-biased expert presenting information or facilitating forums was important.

You need to humanise the language. "Community Engagement and Public Participation" sound too bureaucratic. What you're talking about is asking people and listening to people.

Where will this be distributed? Plain English policies please. Make sure it's clear what it says and means. Get more people to tell stories. Lots of fun activities for all ages

Different options and modes of communication

33 comments

The need for a greater mix of strategies to cater to different groups was repeated, with respondents offering a range of suggestions including workshops, talks or information sessions, mail and email, online live broadcasting, surveys, community events, using community services, pop-up engagement stations, and ways to involve young children. A small number of comments called for these strategies to be dynamic and appealing, such as events with live music, art and engaging activities.

Get more people to tell stories. Lots of fun activities for all ages

Many members of my community are over 60 years and do not engage frequently with the digital environment. They are excluded from these consultations. They do not engage 'virtually' with ease - but would very much like to stay connected and involved with these decisions and plans. They find out after the review is published.

We have a diverse community, in terms of culture, language, education, time, expertise...a strong mix of strategies to cater for this diversity should be available and communicated as broadly as possible.

Time

12 comments

Respondents discussed the importance of ensuring people had enough time to contribute, pointing out this includes allowing time for debate in meetings and "unhurried decision-making". Comments noted that even though people may have views, they often do not have time or energy to contribute or follow-up on issues, and that some groups may have more time to commit which could put others at a disadvantage. One respondent suggested that information should be included from broad sources (e.g., existing surveys or data, past protests or complaints) to ensure that more opinions were incorporated even if people did not have time to participate in the consultation.

Rules of engagement

10 comments

Setting clear guidelines for what is being asked of people, the timeframes, what their involvement will look like and how it will be used is vital to ensure people feel comfortable and confident to engage, and that they understand where their contribution fits in to "the big picture." Setting guidelines was noted as particularly important for meetings or public forums, where all participants must be "clear about what is being discussed (scope), what is considered to be acceptable behaviour during meetings and to be sure that rules are communicated and followed." A few respondents noted that people can feel "intimidated" or that there can be a "general attitude of hostility" that acts as a barrier or makes people feel unsafe, and one person suggested that an informal environment with refreshments could make people feel more comfortable.

It's important to ensure the safety of community members and staff. People should be free to explore their voices. Everyone has a voice to speak-up.

You need to make it clear what is in it for people - why would they engage, how does it impact them, what contribution can they make that will affect any change.

Would want information about what my involvement would look like and what is being asked of me.

Nothing more to add

57 comments

A substantial number of respondents had no additional comments that they would like considered in City of Melbourne's Community Engagement Policy.

Diversity and including all voices

55 comments

The importance of including all voices and groups was reiterated, with respondents noting that this included those who "would normally not have a voice in issues of development and planning". A small number of comments raised the point that often it was the loudest or wealthiest voices that are heard, and that it was important that all affected members of the community are represented. Comments specifically mentioned First Nations people, different ethnicities and cultures, international students, non-binary individuals, people who are not "tech-savvy" or who are "working hard to pay their bills", disadvantaged members of the community, and young people like children, high schoolers and university students. Respondents suggested increasing targeted outreach and support, ensuring materials were translated into different languages or using representatives or community leaders to reach these groups in ways that suited them.

The community engagement team should include young people and people of colour.

How do you reach some people like homeless people - very complex to ensure you are involving everyone. We have a very diverse community and need consultation to be representative. Would be great for you to set-up for a week in the library so people could know to come and talk to you. Setting up at the NGV or Kings domain or cafes would also be a good approach to chat to people in casual and relaxed way.

Please ensure that results of any discussions are widely distributed and our First Nation people are included.

Action and accountability

50 comments

A substantial number of comments focused on the importance of City of Melbourne listening to the community and translating feedback into action. Respondents wanted to feel that consultation was genuine and that their opinion was counted, to see clear results as to how feedback was used, and to ensure that the interests of small groups were not prioritised over the needs of the broader community. They also called for greater transparency and honesty around decisions and priorities and for improved issues resolution. However, several comments did acknowledge that it was important for the council to be efficient and able to move forward with decisions, and that there is "a fine balance between having a mix of voices and not being too broad."

Take on board what the community has to say. What policy makers might think is what the community wants might be the complete opposite.

That you are genuine about it and the process. Actions speak louder than words.

We need a framework that enables council officers (particularly where it relates to building applications) to not feel like they have to take-on/respond to every comment or objection.

Suggestions for engagement options

29 comments

A range of specific suggestions to encourage engagement were offered. These included convening regular groups or "citizen juries" who could then liaise with the council on community needs and issues, City of Melbourne working more closely with already existing community groups, being present in community spaces (e.g. streets, libraries, cafes), and holding town hall or public meetings. Respondents also suggested looking at other local governments for examples of best-practice engagement, using a

“snap/send/solve” app, having a specific site on the City of Melbourne webpage to show engagement opportunities and results, making environmentally-conscious decisions (such as paperless correspondence), using peer engagement, and working with child education and health providers to engage with children.

I think that sometimes it can be quite daunting to meet up at a place with people you don't know and speak freely about hard topics that affect everyone in the community so maybe present an option for people to facilitate their own group meetings with a session plan that is provided so that they can ask their own friends in the community and collect opinions that way.

Citizen participation forums run by the state govt 1-2 years ago were great. Took part in this. Great to have ministers and senior public servants there. Felt heard, listened to and that I could contribute something. A good model to look at. Need normal average person to talk about issues.

Specific issues and concerns

22 comments

A moderate number of comments focused on specific concerns or issues in the community rather than engagement more generally, for example, suggestions to invest more in libraries, requests for action on pollution and rubbish, or complaints about decisions made in Southbank.

Generally positive

13 comments

Several respondents made positive statements or comments expressing general appreciation of City of Melbourne and the current consultation, and stating they were looking forward to the resulting policy and changes.

This is a good initiative and hope it brings some positive changes.

It was a very nice experience to engage with City of Melbourne staff on this consultation. I felt welcome and included. It's important as a member of the Indian community that we can share our thoughts and be part of the conversations.

Generally negative

10 comments

Several comments expressed a negative view of the survey, the policy, or of the council's past engagement history. Comments encompassed a range of issues, including that the survey had “too much jargon”; that it was not clear what community engagement was or how this policy would help; that council processes were too bureaucratic and inflexible for community groups to deal with; that businesses were valued over residents, a distrust of the council and councillors; and complaints about past experiences where people had felt ignored.

Accuracy and fairness

7 comments

Concerns around bias or misinformation were raised in a small number of comments, with respondents noting that City of Melbourne should actively seek ways to minimise bias or ensure that one group's opinion did not outweigh all other factors. A proposed safe injection room was specifically mentioned as an example where misinformation had influenced opinion. Suggestions included disseminating clear information with statistics, facts and figures and measures to ensure expert analysis was not outweighed by individual opinion.

6. WHY PEOPLE CHOSE TO PARTICIPATE

Respondents were asked: “*Why did you choose to participate in this conversation?*”

Note that the synthesis below includes data collected from one in-person and two virtual workshops, as well as surveys.

Responses have been discussed below in order from most-to-least frequently discussed.

Summary

- The vast majority of comments (over 300) focused on respondents’ love for Melbourne and their desire to be involved in decisions that shape the future of the city and the communities who live there. Respondents described the value of public engagement and the importance of being able to have a say and make a contribution.
- Council outreach efforts were mentioned in a considerable number of comments as the reason for people’s involvement, with respondents particularly praising the “friendly” approaches by City of Melbourne staff.
- The sense that City of Melbourne has room to improve in their public engagement was expressed in a considerable number of comments, with respondents referencing past events where they felt consultation had been done poorly or had not resulted in good outcomes.
- A moderate number of respondents stated they chose to participate because the topic was aligned with their work, volunteering activities or interests, or because they were encouraged to through their social networks.
- Sixteen respondents said they participated because they wanted to discuss a specific issue.

People value public engagement

343 comments

The greater driver of participation was simply the value people placed on public engagement and its importance for Melbourne’s future, which people described in different ways. Over 100 comments focused on respondents’ love for the city of Melbourne or described how they care deeply about the decisions that affect the city and communities within it, such as the following:

I had time and changes in Melbourne matter to me.

I love Melbourne, I want to see it continue to blossom and grow in the important things. Whether it be in Lifestyle, business. We must seek to keep our city safe, strong, clean and beautiful for everyone.

I live here and want to be involved in decisions that affect me

Because it’s important to have a say in the future of Melbourne

A substantial number of comments emphasised how important they felt it was to be involved in public engagement and democracy and how they wanted to be a part of decision-making. Respondents commonly used phrases like “have a say,” “share my thoughts,” “be involved in decisions” or “make my voice heard”. While people frequently just stated that “it’s important”, others elaborated on how they felt participating was a social responsibility or obligation, or how they wanted to be able to contribute or influence future decisions and gain better outcomes. A moderate number of comments simply stated they were interested, curious or “just felt like it”. Several respondents noted that they wanted to ensure

diverse voices were represented, said they “had the time” or that they wanted to support City of Melbourne in what it was doing, or expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to be involved. A few respondents noted it was the first time they had participated.

I think it's important. Council gets bashed a lot in the media and people need to be educated about council's role, and the trade-offs that are entailed with tough decisions.

I believe in this process. This conversation reflects my beliefs, how democracy works.

I have a disability and I want to ensure that the right of people with disability to full participation is not forgotten.

Staff and engagement approach

47 comments

Council outreach efforts encouraged a considerable number of people to participate, with 25 comments stating they had been asked or approached. Several comments praised the “friendly” or “nice” approaches by staff, or said they liked the face-to-face interaction that the pop-up kiosk offered. The possibility of winning a voucher was described as an enticement by several respondents. The information materials were also highlighted in several comments, with respondents stating that they liked the postcards, saw the boards or pop-up kiosk and were interested, or that the Facebook post made it sound useful.

Friendly faces asking nicely :) and \$200 voucher :)

I was drawn to the postcard "help shape your city". It's a shift in paradigm to invite locals into that process.

You approached me in the library. It was an absolute pleasure to meet you.

City of Melbourne needs to improve

45 comments

A considerable number of comments expressed dissatisfaction with City of Melbourne or suggested that it could do better. Respondents often mentioned past experiences where they had not been offered the chance to give input on decisions that affected them or felt that outcomes had been poor. Some respondents described feeling under-represented, ignored, or frustrated by council processes, or felt that informing often “masquerades as consultation”.

MCC is trying, with good people and programmes in difficult times, residents need to support it to do better.

Sick of dealing with council via email and only getting usual 'blah blah blah' response. Unless really throw a hissy fit nothing happens.

Hoping that the present way of decision making can be changed if enough people speak up.

There is a slim chance someone there will read this, and I must take every chance I can.

Work, social networks, or interests

21 comments

Respondents described how they were motivated to participate due to having work, volunteer, study or general interests that were aligned to engagement, community-building and place-making, or other council policies. Several respondents stated they had been encouraged to participate through their social network or through their involvement with a community group.

I am involved in a community organisation based in the city and we would like to work more closely with the council to ensure we are meeting the needs of our community.

Wanted to discuss a specific issue

16 comments

A moderate number of respondents stated that they were driven to participate to raise their concerns about a specific issue, for example, homelessness, green spaces, or the Southbank Boulevard project, or that they had generally hoped it would be focusing on “issues not process”.

Thought this would be linked with actual planning conversations going on.

I feel there has not been sufficient community engagement with building works going on around where I am located.

Community Workshops

Virtual workshops

Two virtual workshops were held on 20 January and 2 February 2021. These were attended by two and nine participants respectively.

During these virtual workshops, participants discussed their level of agreement with the same statement provided in the online survey (see page 29), why they were taking part in the consultation, barriers and enablers to community engagement, and the community engagement principles and elements of deliberation.

These comments have been included in the analysis and synthesis of survey questions in the section above, but have also been summarised below for reference.

Why people participated

- People chose to participate for various reasons, including having an interest in the direction of public engagement and council decision-making as a longtime resident of the municipality; representing an organisation or group of people affected by council decisions such as public housing tenants and residents' groups; and having a general interest in the project.

Barriers and enablers

- **Accessibility:** First and foremost, the City of Melbourne needs to ensure that community engagements are accessible to as wide an audience as possible. This means:
 - > Offering multiple participation channels or methods.
 - > Considering time constraints when designing engagements.
 - > Presenting information and surveys in simple, easy to understand language.
 - > Supporting CALD people to participate through the use of translators.
 - > Making efforts to engage with multiple different communities in ways where they will feel comfortable and safe.
- **Communication:** The City of Melbourne must keep the community informed at various stages of the consultation, including explaining how their feedback has been used and how it has influenced decision making.
- **General comments about engagement:**
 - > The community must be given enough time to deeply consider the issues within the consultation and to relay their thoughts back to City of Melbourne.
 - > People need to feel that engagement is transparent and genuine, otherwise there will be little motivation for them to participate.
 - > Residents are the most affected by council decisions long-term, and there was a feeling that this group should be prioritised in community engagements.

Face-to-face workshop

A face-to-face workshop with Carlton Neighbourhood Learning Centre Garden Group was held on November 26th, 2020. Eleven participants attended this event, along with five children under 12 (who did not participate in the discussion). This group discussed what 'community engagement' meant to them, barriers and enablers to participation, the principles of engagement, and their top elements of

deliberation.

Comments have been included in the analysis of survey questions in the section above, but have also been summarised below for reference.

Barriers and enablers

- **Communication:**
 - > Information must be presented in a clear, easy to understand format that contains all the necessary information for people to form opinions about a project.
 - > This group suggested that engaging face-to-face rather than online would make people feel more personally valued and develop better relationships between council staff and the community.
- **General comments about consultation:**
 - > This group felt that consultation was not always genuine, and this discourages participation. People need to feel like their contribution is valued and will make a difference.
 - > Incentives such as vouchers or free food were seen as good ways to encourage more people to participate in community engagement.
 - > Creating engaging and exciting activities may encourage participation.

Elements of deliberation

- The most popular element of deliberation was 'a real mix of voices are represented', which received five votes.
- This was followed by 'the people most affected are highly involved' and 'group discussion and debate', which received four votes each.

Targeted interviews

Community representatives

There were a number of targeted interviews conducted during the early engagement phase with a range of community stakeholders, including community networks, community leaders, community organisations and various representative groups. Notes were recorded from interviews with Docklands Representative Group, Dockland Chamber of Commerce, Kensington Community Network and Carlton Housing Estate Resident Service. The aim of these conversations was to explore engagement themes, test engagement questions in community and refine the planning and engagement approach for formal consultation period.

Overall, these discussions were informative in the quality of conversation. Some of the key feedback themes included:

Communication

- Community consultations need to be delivered in plain English so that the community can understand the issues, form their opinions, and relay these back to council with ease.
- A dedicated channel should be created to support CALD people in communicating with council.
- The council should do more to promote engagement opportunities, including clear communication about the type of information that the council is seeking from the public and what participation might look like.
- The council should make the most of community events and 'engage people where they are'. By setting up pop-up kiosks and workshops at events that already draw community members, City of Melbourne could reach a wider audience.

Who should be listened to

- Focus for community engagement should be placed on those who will be most impacted by particular projects. This may mean identifying target audiences and focusing engagement efforts on these groups.
- There was a feeling that the opinions of long-term residents should be prioritised over others, as Melbourne has many transient communities that are less impacted by the council's plans and actions.
- Participants questioned how City of Melbourne is engaging young people, and how communications and the questions asked are adapted to a younger audience.

Engaging with businesses

- Business owners want more open and regular communication with the council to foster ongoing relationships.
- Businesses are often busy, so in order to ensure that business owners are able to contribute to community consultations, City of Melbourne must ensure that the timing of consultation is appropriate and allows participants adequate time to review information and submit their views.
- In addition, businesses will be more likely to contribute to community consultations if they feel that their voices will be valued and have an impact on outcomes.

Key elements of deliberation

- It is important that the people most affected are highly involved.
- Co-design helps people feel a sense of ownership over a project and offers community members 'a legitimate place at the table'.
- It is essential that the purpose of deliberation is clear.
- Diversity should be encouraged, but it is important to understand where the value in diversity comes from. Having genuine diverse input from affected parties is important but be wary of tokenism when approaching people to take part.
- Having independent facilitators is not necessarily productive and can make things more difficult.

Social support groups

Members of two older persons social groups were met by City of Melbourne staff to share their thoughts on the issue of public engagement. One of these was delivered in Italian. The questions asked at these two meetings were:

- What does community engagement mean to you?
- Have you been involved in any of our engagement activities before?
- What might prevent or encourage you to take part in engagement activities?
- What do you think are the most important elements for 'deep and considered' community engagement activities?
- Other comments?

Not all participants shared their age or gender. Of those who did, 14 participants were female and 4 were male. 11 participants were aged between 80 – 89 years, 5 were aged between 70 – 79 years, and 2 were 90+ years.

The respondents from these two sessions tended to belong to an age group not widely represented in online survey responses, and therefore their responses have been analysed separately to ensure that their voices are not lost.

Summary

- Some groups may need extra support to participate. This should be considered by City of Melbourne when designing community engagement programs to ensure that an appropriate variety of tools, methods of engagement and promotional approaches are used.
- Knowing that their voices will be heard motivates people to get involved.
- While physical access to face-to-face meetings can be a barrier for older people, the social aspect of these meetings was highly valued.

WHAT DOES COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MEAN TO YOU?

The opportunity to meet with people who care and want to make people's lives better, and share social interaction with others was seen as a way to be heard. The social support group was praised as a form of social engagement in itself. Participants also enjoyed connecting with the council and others in a social and friendly setting, though they noted that feedback or concerns should be responded to promptly to ensure that people feel they have been listened to.

HAVE YOU BEEN INVOLVED IN ANY OF OUR ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES BEFORE?

A small number of participants had been involved in previous consultation activities. They had contributed via paper surveys, or through face-to-face group discussions or sessions.

WHAT MIGHT PREVENT OR ENCOURAGE YOU TO TAKE PART IN ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES?

Participants felt that physical access to in-person consultation activities was a barrier to engagement. Transport is difficult to use, and walking is difficult when footpaths contain many trip hazards, speeding cyclists, and too few benches for people to stop and rest. One participant stated:

Health issues prevent me from participating. Knowing you are going to be heard encourages me to take part.

They enjoyed meeting in small groups to discuss topics that they are interested in or affect them. One participant suggested that adding a social or beneficial element to engagement opportunities such as a visit somewhere or learning a new skill would encourage participation.

WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENTS FOR 'DEEP AND CONSIDERED' COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES?

Elements that participants felt were important included accessibility; understanding how the issue will impact them; finding the topic interesting or important; and seeing results.

Note: City of Melbourne staff noted that they experienced some difficulty translating 'community engagement' into Italian, and though they used an interpreter over the phone, felt that a longer session would be beneficial in the future to ensure adequate time to translate concepts properly.

Children and childhood educators

In November-December 2020, a small number of childhood educators were approached to share their thoughts on best ways to involve children in community engagement conversations. Below is a summary of the insights gained from surveys with five childhood educators and conversation with children in their programs. All of the 69 children who took part in these conversations were under the age of nine.

Summary

- Children and families are directly impacted by council decisions and should therefore be included in community engagement projects.
- Engaging children early will teach social responsibility and encourage participation as adults.
- Using different methods to explain things to children and paying close attention to the different ways they will communicate their own ideas is important to ensure mutual understanding.

WHY CITY OF MELBOURNE SHOULD ENGAGE WITH CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Respondents were asked: *What benefits are there in listening to children about how to make parks, childcare centres and other places in the city? or Why should people who work for the Council talk to families and young children about how to make parks, childcare centres and other places in the city? Why do you think it is important?*

Children are citizens too

Respondents stated that because children are citizens of the council too, they should be afforded the opportunity to express their opinions and ideas on what they want their world to be like. Listening to children's ideas would give the council a different perspective and help them to understand what children and families need and want.

Direct benefits of participation for children

A couple of respondents shared other benefits to children around being invited to contribute to the planning of parks, childcare centres, and other places in the city; it provides a safe, fun and interactive learning opportunity for them, helping them learn about the council and that they have the ability to use their voice to shape how they want their world to be.

HOW TO ENSURE THAT CHILDREN UNDERSTAND WHAT THE COUNCIL IS DOING

Respondents were asked: *How can people who work for Council make sure that children understand what the council is doing. What are the best ways of explaining things to young children?*

Using the right modes of communication

Respondents noted that the best ways to explain things to children was to use a variety of communication aids including pictures, photos, diagrams, maps, stories, books, and songs. Using simple and easy words is also important.

When explaining things to children we find it works well to use pictures, stories, books and songs. If you use different types of communication you are more likely to get them to understand.

Engaging with children and families in the right places

Respondents suggested reaching out to families and children in places where they go to be social, such as playgroups or library sessions.

HOW TO ENSURE ADULTS UNDERSTAND WHAT CHILDREN THINK

Respondents were asked: *What are the best ways for children to tell people who work for the council what they want? How do you make sure adults understand what children think?*

Modes of communication

The main idea expressed by respondents was that different children communicate best in different ways. Some will prefer to draw their ideas, while others will be able to talk through what they are thinking, provided they are given ample time to do so. Some children will be more likely to share in one-on-one conversations with a trusted person, while others will be comfortable sharing in larger groups of strangers. Some children will be more likely to express themselves through their actions, than through words. Because of this, council staff may need to take a varied approach to how they engage with children and families.

Watch the children play in an environment they are already comfortable in. Take note of their actions, it is not just about words.

Pay attention and listen

Respondents noted that to make sure that adults understand what children are thinking, they must pay attention to them, and listen carefully. One respondent also noted that a good way to get this information is from the parents, though the council must ensure that questions are directly about the child's opinions and not the parents'.

ADDITIONAL WORKSHOP WITH CHILDREN

One of the childhood educators who completed a pre-engagement survey also had a session with a group of twenty children aged under 4 (mix of male and female), where the children discussed what the council is doing and what they want. The ideas that children shared during this session about what they wanted included:

- Happy, warm, fuzzy people
- Parks with:
 - > see-saw
 - > swings and slides
 - > running machine and trampolines
 - > grass and water to play

- > flowers; lakes for frogs
- > trees, ropes, stepping stones
- > birds and nets
- > doll house and apartments
- > trains and buses.
- Swimming pools
- Fireworks
- Music festivals
- Library with lots of childrens' books
- Cafes with ice creams and pancakes
- Markets and shops
- Decorations on streets
- Myer window christmas decorations and displays
- Many more childcare centres
- Bollywood music

Children enjoy having tangible, playful activities which include personal expression and creative endeavours. They also highlighted the importance of nature and caring for the environment.

I want people to recycle. I don't want any rubbish seen around.

Put the rubbish in the bins.

We need more fireworks.

I like to collect leaves and sticks from the parks.

I want more playgrounds.

I like to have picnics in the park with my family.

I want musical instruments like pianos.

Big Ideas wall

Another way that the community could get involved in this project was through the 'Big Ideas wall' on the Participate Melbourne website. This tool allowed people to submit an idea with an image (optional) to a virtual public 'wall' where users could see each other's submissions.

Overall, 19 of these responses were received. Some of these have been included in the appendix.

Summary of Ideas

Below are summaries of the comments received. These comments either related to specific concerns that respondents wished to share with City of Melbourne, or suggestions on how the council could improve its community engagement process.

Specific concerns

10 comments

Several of the ideas posted raised specific concerns that respondents wanted addressed by the council, including the following:

- **Solar panels**
A call for a program to help buildings, residential and commercial, select, fund, and install solar panels.
- **Soft plastic recycling**
A proposal to introduce an additional bin just for soft plastics, so that this can be sent for processing in a location that has access to soft-plastic recycling facilities.
- **Food waste**
A call for City of Melbourne to collect food waste so that it does not go to landfill
- **Harbour Esplanade & Sheds redevelopment Docklands**
A call for the area to be fixed and reopened as soon as possible.
- **Off leash dog park for Docklands**
A call for more off-leash space to be provided for the growing number of dogs in the area.
- **Community space for East Melbourne**
A call for a space where the East Melbourne community can meet and enjoy activities such as yoga, crafts, workshop, music and social activities (mentioned by two respondents).
- **Connecting businesses**
Suggestion for a platform where City of Melbourne businesses can post requests for collaborations / partnership ideas so we can partner up with other businesses to help grow foot traffic instore.
- **Pedestrian only areas**
A call for the CBD to become a pedestrian only zone so that everyone can safely enjoy the area, including the elderly and young children.
- **Opportunities for aspiring entrepreneurs**
Comment that thousands of aspiring entrepreneurs and small business owners may be wondering what to do next as they take stock of the changed economic landscape.

Several other posts were made that related directly to the issue of community engagement:

- **Proper process before works in heritage parks**
One respondent felt there had been inadequate community consultation for the major new works in Fawkner Park.
- **Collaboration with local CBD residents**
One respondent reported a desire for more cooperation and partnership between the council and CBD residents to make Melbourne the most liveable city in the world.
- **Deliberative Engagement focusing in the people impacted**
One respondent argued that ensuring affected communities are heavily engaged, City of Melbourne could achieve more public support, make better decisions on difficult issues, and build trust between community and council.
- **Council - social media platforms - More attention to Residents matters**
One respondent urged City of Melbourne to better utilise their social media platforms to promote engagement opportunities. In particular, they wished to see a focus on residents, not just visitors and businesses.
- **City of Melbourne Phone App - engage community participation**
One respondent suggested that City of Melbourne could develop an app such as Snap Send Solve to facilitate a complaints process. Members of the public could use this app to report issues directly to the council.
- **Platform for Business and Community Connection**
One respondent suggested that a streamlined platform where Docklands residents and businesses can easily communicate with each other about their concerns/needs (big or small). They felt that this would help remove some barriers and allow community collaboration
- **Create a Citizens' Council**
One respondent suggested that a Citizens' Council could be created, whereby members are randomly recruited to sit alongside City of Melbourne and bring ordinary citizens into the political decision making process and give people a platform to raise priorities that are relevant to their community.
- **Resident Panels**
Similar to the above suggestion, one respondent submitted that a Citizen Jury or Resident Panel should be formed, where a representative group of community members engage in an independent and systematic process to consider evidence and provide recommendations to government decision-making bodies like City of Melbourne.
- **Advance Notice**
One respondent felt that many projects are known about in advance by the organisers, but not the respondents. They suggested a 'Forthcoming Reviews list' that could be advertised regularly to allow groups and citizens to have discussions, do some brainstorming and prepare their contribution for when it goes "live". This is particularly the case with periodic reviews, such as Community Engagement.

Social media

Throughout the formal public consultation period of 7 January to 3 February 2021, the City of Melbourne published ten social media posts to inform the public about the policy development and promote opportunities to participate. These posts consisted of:

4 Twitter posts

4 Facebook posts

2 LinkedIn post

Social media posts were viewed over 179,000 times, with 53 comments received across all posts. A sample of posts and responses can be viewed in the appendix.

The comments made by the public on these seven posts covered a range of topics and have been read by City of Melbourne staff. The themes that emerged within these social media comments were:

Lack of faith in City of Melbourne 15 comments

Several comments expressed cynicism about the council's desire for public input into decision-making. These comments often referenced previous projects that respondents felt were not handled well. Other comments simply suggested that City of Melbourne did not really want to hear from the community.

Social issues 7 comments

A small number of comments were made that called for City of Melbourne to address social issues such as homelessness and drug use in public places.

Transport and parking 6 comments

A small number of comments were made about transport and parking. These comments generally opposed the removal of car parking spaces, as well as the use of bikes and skateboards in the area. One comment, however, supported efforts to make cycling safer in Melbourne.

Not relevant 17 comments

A moderate number of comments were not relevant to the post. This included comments about the photograph used by City of Melbourne in these posts, or people 'tagging' others in their comment.

Other 8 comments

Other topics mentioned in these social media comments included: general praise for City of Melbourne's efforts to improve community engagement; questioning the use of a monetary incentive (\$200 voucher prize) for participation; and comments about the city being dirty or requiring more maintenance.

Appendix

Participate Melbourne survey questions

1. "Public participation in Council planning, leads to better decisions and more sustainable solutions. Our different perspectives and experiences are valuable, and we all have a right to be involved in decisions that affect where and how we live. To what extent do you agree with this statement? ". (Rate 1-5 stars)

1b. Why do you feel this way?

2. Our principles of engagement guide our approach and are our promises to you. Looking at the eight principles of community engagement, is there anything that you think is missing or unclear?
 - > planning the engagement early
 - > providing clear information to support the community's participation
 - > letting the community know to what extent they can influence the decision
 - > seeking input from diverse range of perspectives in the community
 - > using a variety of tools to support the community's participation
 - > ensuring the community's contribution is considered in the decisions that impact them
 - > telling the community how their input has influenced the decision
 - > evaluating the community engagement process and continually improve how the City of Melbourne engages with the community.

3. It's important that everyone feels supported and comfortable to have their say in Council decisions. What might prevent or encourage you to participate?

4. Deliberation generally refers to intentional, careful and unhurried consideration of an issue. In the local government context, this type of deep thinking is applied to complex issues or planning that we must tackle across our municipality. It requires locals, experts, and council employees to be engaged in a meaningful process that leads to a decision.

What do you think are the top three elements for deliberation? (select three options)

- > enough time is given to think deeply on the topic
- > a real mix of voices are represented
- > evidence and background information is analysed
- > various options are explored
- > the people most affected are highly involved
- > group discussion and debate
- > co-design of the process
- > independent facilitation of the conversation
- > the purpose of the deliberation is clear
- > Other (please specify)

5. Do you have anything else to share about Community Engagement and Public Participation that you'd like us to consider in our Community Engagement Policy?
6. Age (select one)
- > Under 10 years
 - > 10-15 years
 - > 16-25 years
 - > 24-45 years
 - > 46-55 years
 - > 56-65 years
 - > Over 66 years
7. What is your gender? (select one)
- > Female
 - > Male
 - > Non-binary/gender diverse
 - > I'd rather not say
 - > Other (please specify)
8. Your primary relationship to the municipality of Melbourne (select one)
- > I live here
 - > I work here
 - > I study here
 - > I visit here
9. How did you hear about this project? (select one)
- > A poster
 - > City of Melbourne social media
 - > City of Melbourne e-newsletter
 - > Community radio
 - > In person
 - > Melbourne Magazine
 - > Participate Melbourne notification
 - > News in local or national media
 - > Other (please specify)
10. Why did you choose to participate in this conversation?

Drawings from session with children

Drawing of what children wanted:



Big Ideas Wall

Posted by StanCapp | 10 days ago

One form of community participation that has been used in local government and elsewhere is the creation of Resident Panels or as they are often referred to, Citizen Juries. A Citizen Jury or Resident Panel is a representative group of community members who engage in an independent and systematic process to consider evidence and provide recommendations to government decision making bodies like Council. In planning and development, councils have special responsibilities and are subject to...

3 Likes 1 Comments

Harbour Esplanade & Sheds redevelopment Docklands

Posted by VVB | 14 days ago

Shedds on pier have been closed for over a year and the pier is now breaking. There has been much discussion about how the council will redevelop the area to make it more attractive, liveable and to bring people into the area. It is a prime, waterfront location that really needs to be fixed up from a social and safety perspective ASAP

0 Likes 0 Comments

City of Melbourne Phone App - engage community participation

Posted by Rafael | 10 days ago

The City of Melbourne should have their own phone app such as Snap Send Solve- to facilitate the COMPLAINT processes. Logging in to city of Melbourne website to try to do a report or make a complaint is not an easy processes, there are some many options. With the app our info will be saved already you can choose the options of the report/complaint and pictures or videos can be uploaded easily from your phone. This could contribute and accelerate the process of problem solving and...

2 Likes 1 Comments

Off leash dog park for Docklands

Posted by VB | 14 days ago

There has been a massive increase in dogs living in small apartments over covid and we need more open space for the dogs to run around as the only space is in South Melbourne

0 Likes 0 Comments

0 Likes 0 Comments

Food waste

Posted by Mitathome | 10 days ago

How about you pick up food waste so it doesn't rot in landfill. The photo shows waste from 10 households in a week. Now times that by how many households there are in the COM. Frightening !

0 Likes 1 Comments

Platform for Business and Community Connection

Posted by CST | 14 days ago

A streamlined platform where Docklands residents and Docklands businesses can easily communicate with each other about their concerns/needs (big or small) would help remove some barriers to assistance and allow community collaboration. Whether it be somewhere to hold a meeting on short notice, a group who are vulnerable and need some help, a resident who has a big community idea but doesn't know how to get it off the ground. There are also business who want to help, but aren't sure how!

0 Likes 0 Comments

Proper process before works in Heritage Parks

Posted by JenniferMcDonald | 7 days ago

There has been inadequate community consultation, and no guidelines from a current Masterplan for the major new works in Fawkner Park. The Council has admitted mistakes but refuses to rectify them. This is unacceptable for such a major change to one of our finest and most distinctive and much loved Parklands.

0 Likes 0 Comments

Collaboration with local CBD residents

Posted by Am | 8 days ago

Decisions made by Council impact local residents, as most of us live here, study here and work here. We would like more cooperation and partnership to make our city the most livable in the world! Let's involve the Residents and create an even greater Melbourne!

0 Likes 0 Comments

Deliberative Engagement focusing in the people impacted.

Posted by Rafael | 9 days ago

We need to make sure that council's decisions are deliberated by the people impacted. Deliberative processes allow Council to put forward a problem, explain the possible options, present research and different opinions on all the possible outcomes and allow the community to come to Council with well researched and reasoned recommendations. The benefits are : Supported Decisions, Better decisions on difficult issues, build Trust between community and council. Simple example : Closure...

2 Likes 0 Comments

Solar Power

Posted by Ian | 10 days ago

I've been unable to find any program to support (other than "in principle") apartment buildings with solar panel installations. There are or course, state and federal projects for houses and small buildings; but it does not take much for an apartment building to exceed their scope. We have unused roofspace, and expensive electricity bills. I expect we're not alone. A program to help buildings, residential and commercial, select, fund, and install solar panels would help us out.

1 Likes 0 Comments

Council - social media platforms - More attention to Residnets matters

Posted by Residents3000 Group | 9 days ago

We would like to see more interaction with Residents into Council's social media platforms. We usually only see events and images for the general public and more businesses related information, very rarely for locals. We suggest that these social media tools(city of Melbourne and what's on - instagram and Facebook) should be used to promote CITY leaving and community engagement too. In the end of the day, we have rate payers that live in here that also deserve attention and...

2 Likes 0 Comments

Soft Plastic Recycling

Posted by Ian | 10 days ago

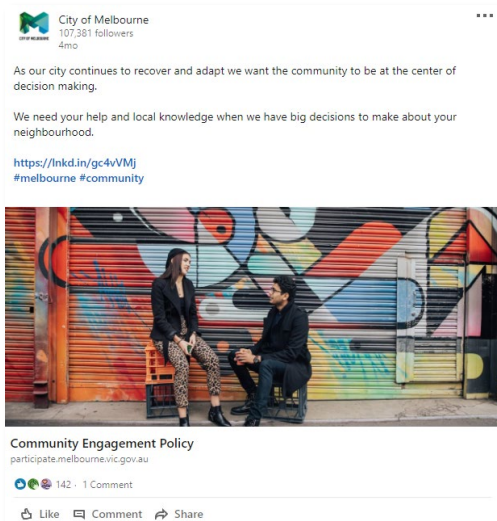
It's a simple one, there isn't anywhere in the Hoddle Grid that I'm aware of, to recycle soft plastic. While REDCycle is supported by coisworth, they don't operated in the limited space here. So we have to resort to transporting the soft plastic out to Carlton, Collingwood, Sth Yarra etc. Anyone who has seen the contents of an apartment building recycle bin will know most residents won't go to that effort. We have electronic waste, cardboard, and mixed recycling, and soon glass as well...

Resident Panels

Social media posts

A sample of posts from City of Melbourne's social media engagement across LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter.

LINKED IN



FACEBOOK



TWITTER



City of Melbourne communications

Below are examples of the communications sent out by City of Melbourne to promote this engagement.

Three variations of postcards with QR codes were distributed out into the community and at libraries and community centres.



Postcard 1





YOUR VOICE MATTERS!

As our city continues to recover and adapt we want the community to be at the centre of decision making.

We need your help and local knowledge when we have big decisions to make – we call this community engagement.

Tell us what is important for you to see in our new Community Engagement Policy.

What helps you to participate and get involved in the issues that matter to you?

Visit
participate.melbourne.vic.gov.au/community-engagement-policy

Have your say by
Wednesday 3 February 2021.



Postcard 2



HELP US PREPARE FOR OUR CITY'S GROWTH

How should Melbourne City Council prioritise its spending over the next decade?

What makes for great consultation conversations?
Have your say by **Wednesday 3 February 2021**.
participate.melbourne.vic.gov.au/community-engagement-policy

YOUR VOICE MATTERS!

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We need your help and local knowledge when we have big decisions to make – we call this community engagement.

Tell us what is important for you to see in our new Community Engagement Policy.

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Visit
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Have your say by
Wednesday 3 February 2021.



Postcard 3

City of Melbourne's engagement team staff also included the following email signature in all of their emails between 7 January and 3 February, 2021.



Email signature on all engagement team members' emails during engagement period.

This report has been prepared by:

Global Research
150 Office Rd
Merivale
Christchurch 8014
New Zealand
+64 3 355 4562
www.globalresearch.nz



Global Research
Turning **Information** Into **Insight**