



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

# Draft City River Strategy

## ANALYSIS OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT RESULTS

SUMMARY REPORT

28 August 2019

Prepared by Global Research Ltd

For



**CITY OF MELBOURNE**

# Developing a City River Strategy to Guide Future Aspirations for Melbourne's Inner-City River

The Yarra River, traditionally known as the Birrarung, is one of the defining features of Melbourne. It's a recreational area and a destination for many activities that contribute to the life of the city.

As Melbourne continues to grow and change, sustaining and improving people's experience of the Birrarung is an important priority.

The City of Melbourne is developing a strategy to guide Council's future planning of the inner-city section of the river. It will outline opportunities to improve the way we use our river and its edges.

**"The goal is to significantly raise the quality of the Birrarung environs in the central city stretch to be the centrepiece of Melbourne's economy, culture and liveability"**

There are many projects, plans, and strategies relating to the inner-city area of the Birrarung, that are currently being completed by various levels of government and private developers. This highlights a need to clearly define our preferences regarding the central city waterways and waterfront usage.

Between 17 April and 7 July 2019, a public consultation process was undertaken to communicate City of Melbourne's emerging vision for the City River. It gauged levels of support for fourteen proposed Strategic Directions, within the themes of Culture, Ecology, Movement, and Place.

It included online and face-to-face engagement activities, pop-ups along the river, an online survey, stakeholder meetings, posters in community facilities, social media posts and an ideas forum.

This document presents a summary of the community engagement feedback received from community members and other key stakeholders. Independent analysis and a detailed Community Engagement Report has been prepared by Global Research.

A Draft Strategy Overview, and the full Community Engagement Report can be accessed via <https://participate.melbourne.vic.gov.au/city-river-strategy>.



# Purpose of Engagement

The purpose of the engagement was to gain feedback on the City of Melbourne's future aspirations for Melbourne's inner-city Yarra River.

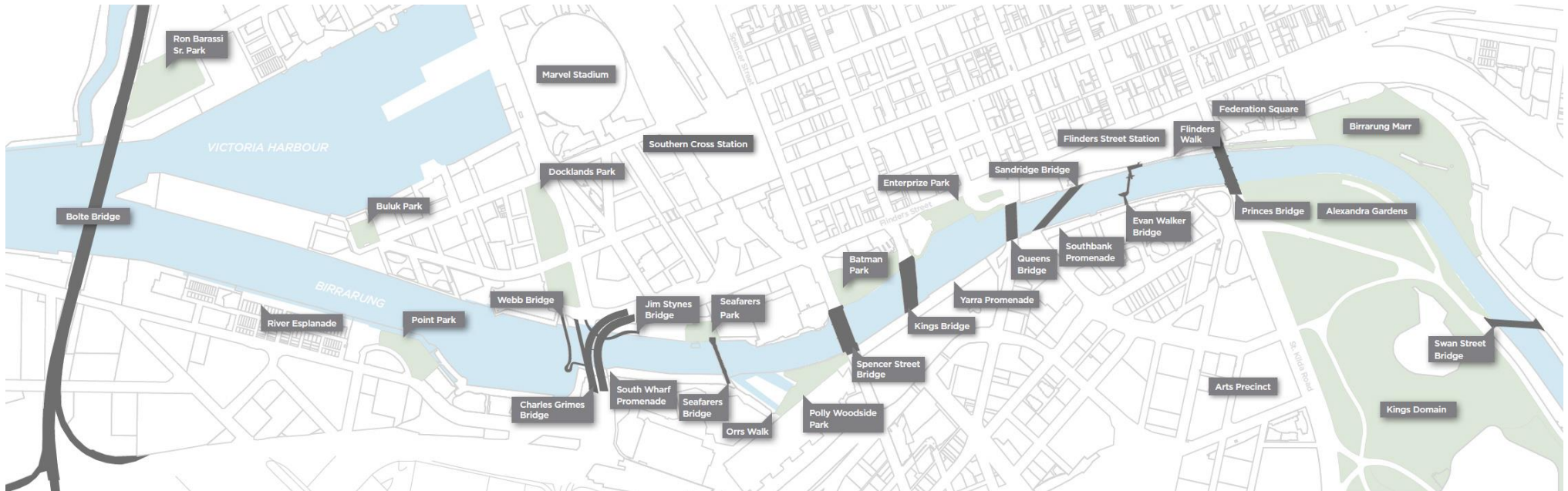
The engagement aims were threefold:

- To communicate City of Melbourne's draft vision for the river.
- To encourage the community to provide feedback on the draft City River Strategy.
- To test the proposed strategic directions with key stakeholders and the community, so the final strategy will have community support.

## The Study Area

The focus of the Strategy is the inner-city reaches of the Birrarung, covering 11kms of diverse river edges and urban settings (5.7km on the north bank and 5.6km on the south bank).

Many people currently use the river and its surrounds within our city as a place to exercise, commute, relax and socialise. Improvements to the areas outlined in the strategy are envisaged to create areas that are destinations, spaces which people can both actively and passively enjoy.



# The Strategy

The City River Strategy proposes a design approach for the inner-city reach of the Birrarung. It is organised around four key themes, within which key strategic directions are outlined to provide guidance on how the river and its edges should be planned for and managed.

The four themes are:

**Culture:** Heritage and narrative. Cultural values, stories, spiritual, genealogical, historical.

**Ecology:** Habitat and water. Holistic urban waterways environment: landscape, ecology and water.

**Movement:** Journey and connection. Network of connections to and along the waterfront.

**Place:** Activity and character. Identity, quality, activation and economy of the urban environment.

The development of the draft Strategy was based on the following approach:

- A review of relevant plans, strategies and policies that influence the planning and design of the waterways across the City of Melbourne municipality.
- Site visits involving the observation of user behaviour and the influence of the physical environment on their behaviour.
- Reference to the City of Melbourne's pedestrian counting-data at key locations across the corridor, and reference to previous speed and volume surveys undertaken through recent studies.
- Pre-contact historical research of vegetation and landscape conditions.
- Multi-layered analysis of: biodiversity and urban forest; topography and flooding; place and urban design; access and movement; and, activation and uses.
- A review of international best practice in urban waterfront developments.
- Key internal and external stakeholder engagement, including commencing discussions with the Traditional Owner groups.

# How We Engaged with the Community

## ENGAGEMENT REACH

**42,683**



ACCOUNTS REACHED (TWITTER, LINKEDIN  
AND FACEBOOK)

**5,000+**



VISITORS TO THE CITY  
RIVER PAGE

**321**



CLICKS ON PARTICIPATE MELBOURNE LINK  
TO VIEW THE PROJECT PAGE

## HOW RESPONSES WERE COLLECTED

**128**



IDEAS FORUM NOTICEBOARD  
FOR COMMENTS, ATTRACTING

**1169** REACTIONS

**100+**



FACE-TO-FACE POP-UP SESSION  
RESPONSES

**79**



ONLINE  
SURVEYS

**13**



STAKEHOLDER  
SUBMISSIONS

# Who Completed the Survey

In total 79 survey respondents:

## AGE OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS



## MAIN REASON SURVEY RESPONDENTS VISITED THE BIRRARUNG



## WHERE SURVEY RESPONDENTS LIVE



## HOW OFTEN SURVEY RESPONDENTS VISITED THE BIRRARUNG





# The Majority of Respondents Supported the Strategy

The strategic directions outlined in the draft City River Strategy were broadly supported by the majority of respondents.

## Culture



At least **87%** of respondents  
'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with the  
directions.

## Ecology



At least **97%** of respondents  
'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with the  
directions.

## Place



At least **90%** of respondents  
'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with the  
directions.

## Movement



At least **85%** of respondents  
'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with the  
directions.

# Summary of Opinions on Strategy Directions

■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Disagree

## Culture: collaborative, visible, maritime

Culture - C1 Collaborative: On-going collaboration with Traditional Owners to tell the Aboriginal story



Culture - C2 Visible: Increase visibility of Aboriginal intangible heritage and history



Culture - C3 Maritime: Recognise maritime historical and contemporary importance



## Ecology: Riparian greening, ecologically connected, resilient

Ecology - E1 Riparian greening: Re-introduce riparian zone improving water habitat, biodiversity and a healthy river ecosystem



Ecology - E2 Connected: Optimise urban river bank vegetation prioritising Indigenous improving biodiversity and ecological networks



Ecology - E3 Resilient: Address flood risk and improve water quality



## Place: Inviting, multi-functional, public, legible

Place - P1 Inviting: Prioritise Northbank renewal to create an inviting backdrop to the City.



Place - P2 Multi-functional: Celebrate character areas and encourage new economies: a range of civic, educational, cultural, hospitality and water dependant uses.



Place - P3 Public: Sustain the civic focus by encouraging activation that offers broader inclusion and supports a public waterfront.



Place - P4 – Legible: Rationalise clutter and on-water infrastructure to ensure unobstructed vistas and views.



## Movement: slow, integrated, accessible, water transport

Movement - M1 Slow: Distinguish the river by creating safe, alternative north and south bicycle routes.



Movement - M2 Integrated: Transform the condition of key 'barriers' to address the gaps to the north-west and integrate access



Movement - M3 Accessible: Raise the quality and universal accessibility of riverfront pathways.



Movement - M4 Water transport: Encourage more water related activity and greater diversity of vessels, particularly more non-motorised crafts.



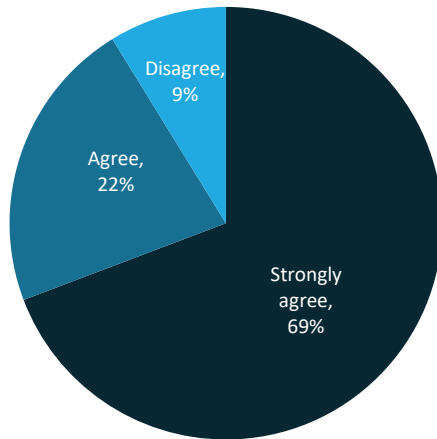




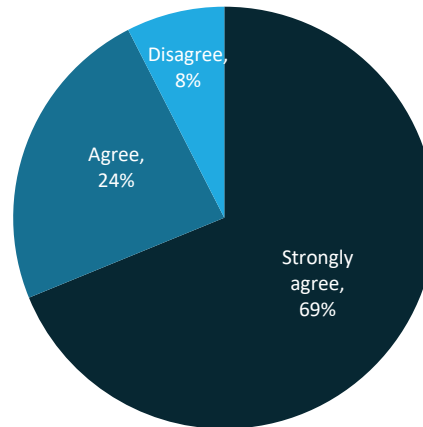
## Culture | Heritage and Narrative



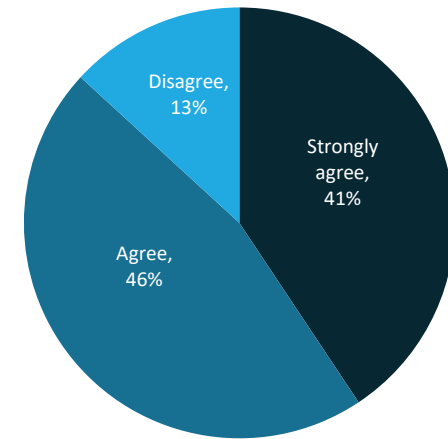
Collaborative (C1): Ongoing collaboration with Traditional Owners to tell the Aboriginal story.



Visible (C2): Increase visibility of Aboriginal intangible heritage and history.



Maritime (C3): Recognise maritime, historical and contemporary importance.



#### You said:

“Maintaining Aboriginal history alive, especially in such an essential location as the Birrarung, is crucial to actually being able to re-tell the story of the river.”

#### We heard:

- > Traditional Owners must be acknowledged via a visible presence in any changes to the river or its banks.
- > First Peoples' input is valued, equating it with returning to more environmentally sound principles.
- > Historical connections to the river should be recognised and a strong narrative should be present and accessible to river visitors.
- > We should celebrate post-contact maritime history alongside Aboriginal history, as well as the histories of trade, immigration, and recreation as valuable aspects of the river's story.

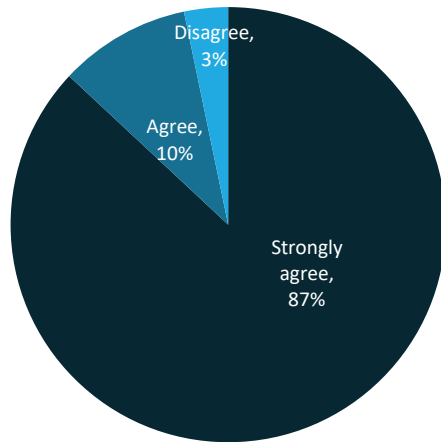


A photograph of a pond with ducks and reeds, with a city skyline in the background. The pond is filled with water, and several ducks are swimming. In the foreground, there are tall green reeds. The background shows a city skyline with a prominent white building with a dome and a tall tower. The sky is overcast.

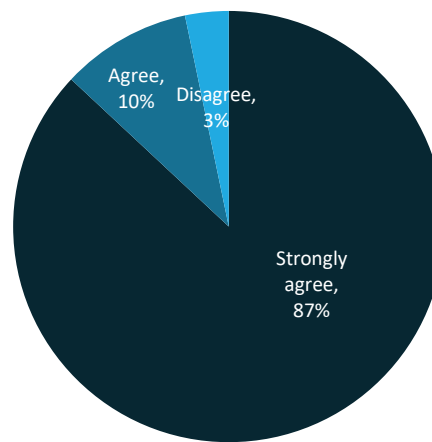
## Ecology | Habitat and Water



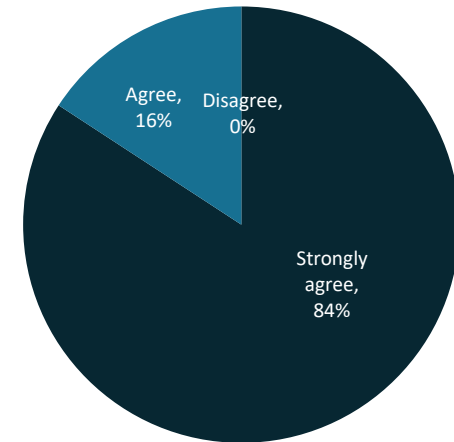
Ecology – E1 Riparian greening: Re-introduce riparian zone, improving water habitat, biodiversity and a healthy river ecosystem.



Ecology – E2 Connected: Optimise urban river bank vegetation, prioritising Indigenous, improving biodiversity and ecological networks.



Ecology – E3 Resilient: Address flood risk and improve water quality.



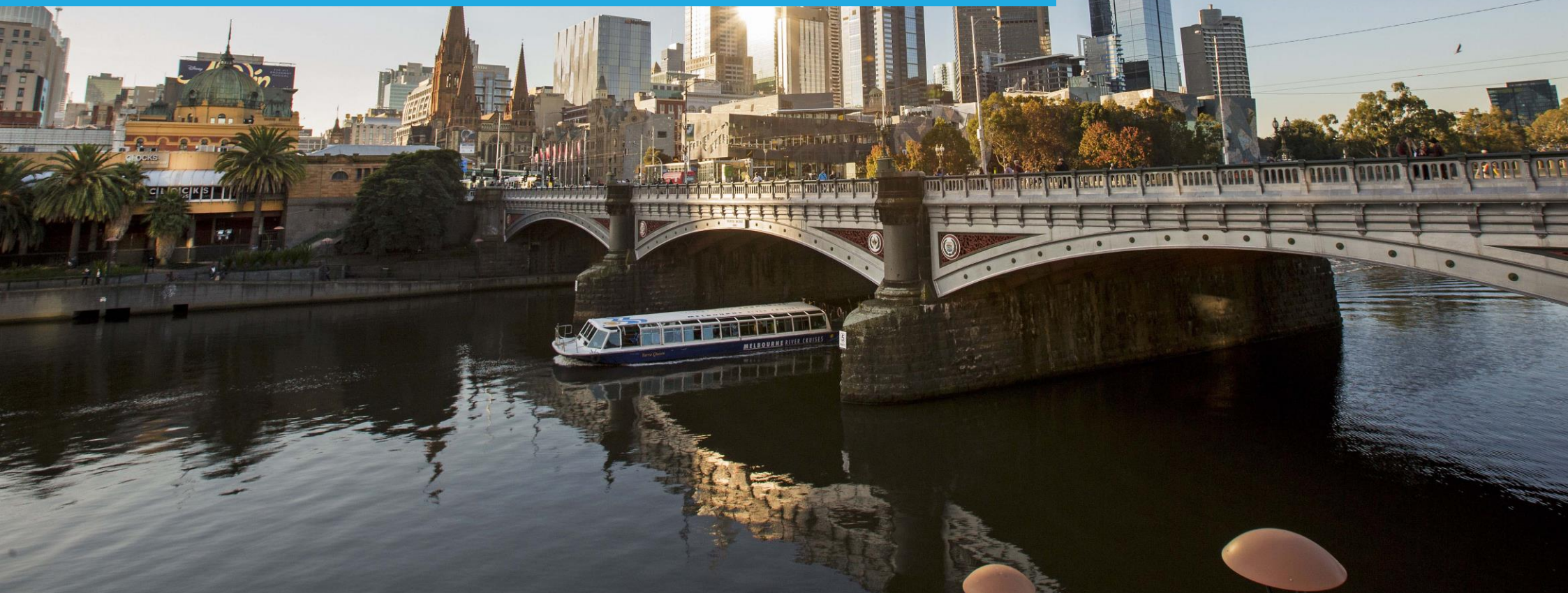
#### You said:

“The ecology of the river is crucial to promote and restore urban ecology within the city, for both local fauna and for the benefit of humans.”

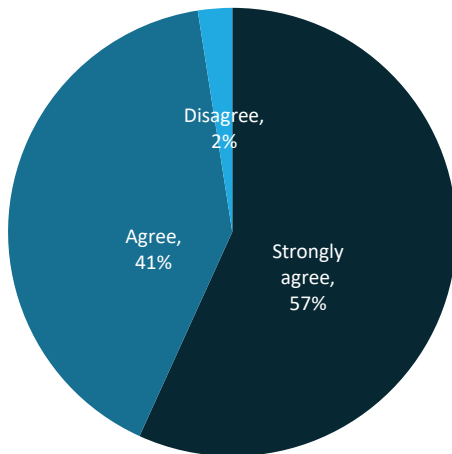
#### We heard:

- > It's important that we have a healthy and useable river; ideally one we can swim in one day.
- > A healthy river is one that is ecologically robust, biologically diverse, and in many cases planted with native vegetation – resembling as closely as possible pre-European settlement states.
- > A whole-of-river-system approach, with appropriate planting is necessary, as opposed to piecemeal river modifications.
- > We need to be environmentally responsible. This will have positive outcomes and benefits to communities.

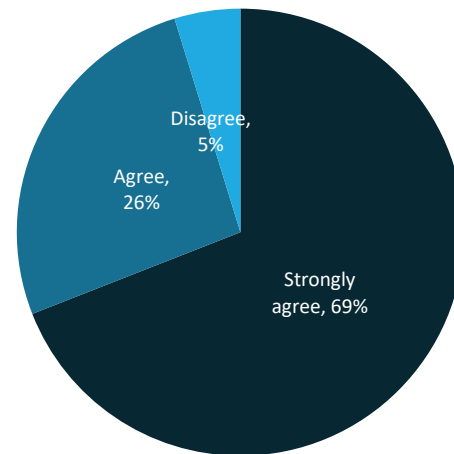
## Place | Activity and Character



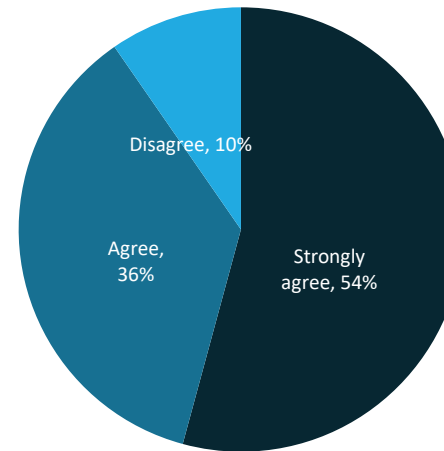
Place – P1 Inviting: Prioritise Northbank renewal to create an inviting backdrop to the City.



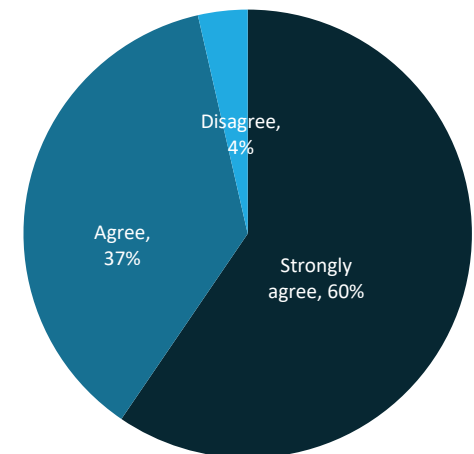
Place – P2 Multi-functional: Celebrate character areas and encourage new economies: a range of civic, educational, cultural, hospitality and water-dependant uses.



Place – P3 Public: Sustain the civic focus by encouraging activation that offers broader inclusion and supports a public waterfront.



Place – P4 Legible: Rationalise clutter and on-water infrastructure to ensure unobstructed vistas and views.



### You said:

**“The river is important to Melbourne and anything to enhance it - and the public's use of the river and waterfront - are to be encouraged.”**

### We heard:

- > It would be good if the river developments included a new public swimming pool.
- > The river should be the setting for a wide range of uses and activities, but especially for active and passive recreation.
- > Water pollution, litter, graffiti and other issues need to be addressed as they detract from the river's natural amenity value.
- > The river ought to be an attractive and inviting destination for visitors.

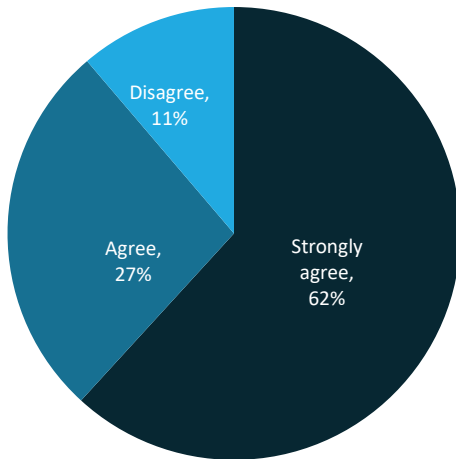




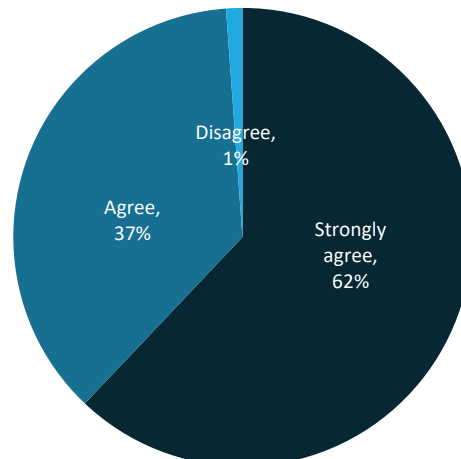
## Movement | Journey and Connection



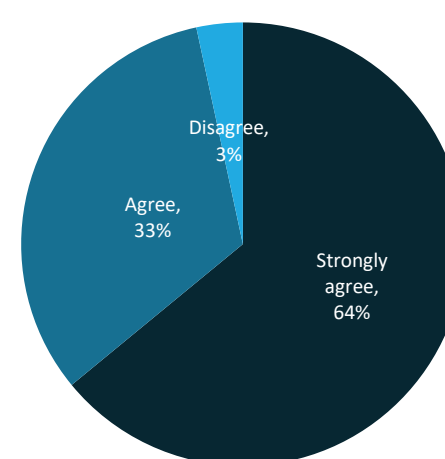
Movement Theme – M1 Slow:  
Distinguish the river by creating  
safe, alternative north and south  
bicycle routes.



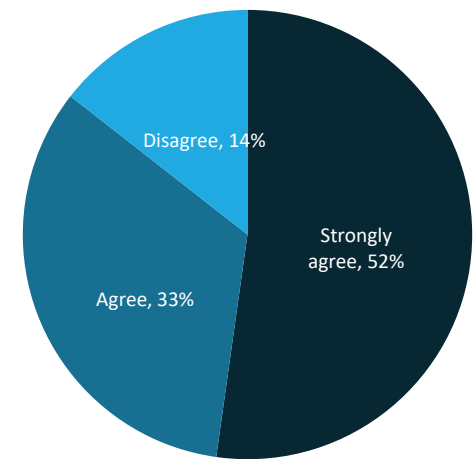
Movement Theme – M2 Integrated:  
Transform the condition of key  
'barriers' to address the gaps to the  
north-west and integrate access.



Movement – M3 Accessible: Raise  
the quality and universal  
accessibility of riverfront pathways.



Movement – M4 Water transport:  
Encourage more water-related  
activity and greater diversity of  
vessels, particularly more non-  
motorised crafts.



### You said:

"I have seen a lot of pressure on the area, it has many tourists so would benefit from alternative routes for fast cyclists."

### We heard:

- > Walking and cycling should be encouraged; however, the current state of shared paths is problematic for pedestrians (who feel unsafe) and commuter cyclists (who want to travel faster), as well as for tourists.
- > Perhaps there could be alternative routes for fast cyclists, which might be separated from other transport modes.
- > It's important that all the city river reach areas are accessible, with ease of movement in and between them. More coherent and cohesive design would create logical routes and simpler wayfinding.
- > It would be good to see more watercraft available and used, particularly non-motorised vessels and public transport.

# Ideas Forum Comments

## You said:

**"A river pool! Public bathing, lap swimming, kids recreation. It's what the Yarra should be about!" (+33 positive reactions)**

## We heard:

- > The topic of a **pool** at the Yarra was the most 'liked', receiving 28 comments, and attracting a total of 450 'likes'. Respondents showed clear support for the inclusion of a public dedicated swimming area at the Yarra.
- > Relatedly, a **swimmable** and/or **clean** river was called for by Ideas Forum respondents. Swimmability was frequently raised in relation to its health and vitality as a water body, with comments urging that the river be cleaned up, healthy, or clean enough to swim or fish in.
- > **Community** spaces, including recreation and play spaces were called for by 22 people (and agreed with by 68 'likes'). Suggestions included community gardens, boat launching places, outdoor gyms, public spaces, events spaces, parks and water-based events/sports.
- > Riparian **planting** and plants to provide **habitat** for animals and birds were supported by 12 people (and by 61 'likes'). A focus on landscape, and landscaping interventions, were sought, as well as general agreement that nature was favourable compared with hard surfaces/edges.
- > There was agreement from several people that certain areas were currently uninviting, and that improvements could and should be made.

<p>14 June, 2019 ben.orance says:</p> <p>"Separate the cycle paths along the north and south banks, from pedestrian traffic. There are many conflict points for different paces."</p> <p>♥ 1</p>	<p>14 June, 2019 David says:</p> <p>"Batman park should have posts for slackline to use, to keep them off the trees. This is an under-utilised park, foster the community!"</p> <p>♥ 1</p>	<p>14 June, 2019 mtraanderson-oliver says:</p> <p>"Great cities worldwide have built on riverbanks connecting citizens to their waterways, creating places of beauty and play - let's do it!"</p> <p>♥ 3</p>	<p>9 June, 2019 Ideasman says:</p> <p>"Demolish the ugly and intrusive Crown Plaza building on north bank and open up the riverfront there."</p> <p>♥ 3</p>	<p>9 June, 2019 Ideasman says:</p> <p>"Aspire to covering the railway at Fed square east and creating a huge new park/urban cultural institution, like millenial park in Chicago."</p> <p>♥ 3</p>	<p>7 June, 2019 FSS says:</p> <p>"Please see www.spcarepublic.com to arrange a meeting regarding finders at station."</p> <p>♥ 1</p>
<p>7 June, 2019 chris says:</p> <p>"More grass, I see there are lots of 'spaces' but these get dated very quickly. Grass in London is still key 200 years on"</p> <p>♥ 2</p>	<p>5 June, 2019 Clem Newton-Brown says:</p> <p>"Helicopters have been an integral part of the Yarra River for over 50 years. The strategy needs to recognise and protect the city helped."</p> <p>♥ 0</p>	<p>4 June, 2019 Bec says:</p> <p>"Introduce informal play spaces for children."</p> <p>♥ 0</p>	<p>4 June, 2019 Bec says:</p> <p>"Increase opportunities to interact with the water, hopefully in the not too distant future it will be clean enough to touch"</p> <p>♥ 5</p>	<p>4 June, 2019 Greg says:</p> <p>"Under M4A, provide more launching/landing points for kayaking that have pontoons or decks lower to the water (e.g. city to Herring Island)."</p> <p>♥ 1</p>	<p>1 June, 2019 Gardener says:</p> <p>"Include a CBD community garden in the plans. CBD residents have green thumb too!"</p> <p>♥ 0</p>
<p>2 June, 2019 Seraph says:</p> <p>"It would be good to see the pools and area around it designed to show the aboriginal heritage of this country. NZ does it well and it works."</p> <p>♥ 7</p>	<p>30 May, 2019 karly_g says:</p> <p>"An outdoor gym for a quick lunch break workout, a playground to break up the long walk for young children, a skate park with event potential"</p> <p>♥ 3</p>	<p>30 May, 2019 Peter K says:</p> <p>"There is such an opportunity to create spaces for traditional owner groups to use for events and ceremony along the river edge."</p> <p>♥ 3</p>	<p>30 May, 2019 Visitor says:</p> <p>"Co-creation processes with traditional owners are critical to restoring the Yarra River and moving beyond a static notion of 'Bin C history'."</p> <p>♥ 6</p>	<p>30 May, 2019 Visitor says:</p> <p>"As business owners abutting the river we think that activation can be combined with a stronger focus on landscape and habitat"</p> <p>♥ 6</p>	<p>30 May, 2019 Visitor says:</p> <p>"I walk along the river regularly from Port Melbourne to the City and I would love to see a stronger emphasis on a natural edge to the river"</p> <p>♥ 6</p>
<p>30 May, 2019 Build the Pool! says:</p> <p>"The Yarra Pool proposal seems so perfectly aligned to this strategy! Let's make it happen."</p> <p>♥ 8</p>	<p>29 May, 2019 Phoebe says:</p> <p>"Connect Docklands to the Fishermans Bend area with a pedestrian bridge"</p> <p>♥ 3</p>	<p>29 May, 2019 Phoebe says:</p> <p>"A leisurely cycle along the river. One of the great pleasures, don't take that away (like our parks) - just separate the areas wisely."</p> <p>♥ 3</p>	<p>29 May, 2019 West says:</p> <p>"How cool would it be to have something like Yarra Pools part of this? <a href="http://yarrapools.com/">http://yarrapools.com/</a>"</p> <p>♥ 5</p>	<p>27 May, 2019 Visitor says:</p> <p>"Would be good to see better recognition of the historical significance of the River - both Aboriginal and recent history."</p> <p>♥ 4</p>	<p>27 May, 2019 Visitor says:</p> <p>"More paddleboats and kid friendly water activities."</p> <p>♥ 2</p>
<p>28 May, 2019 Matthew says:</p> <p>"Separate foot and bicycle traffic. There is plenty of space on the southern bank of the river to separate bicycle traffic."</p> <p>♥ 4</p>	<p>25 May, 2019 Janet says:</p> <p>"Get rid of orange shops in Batman Park. They hide a space of inquiry, drug use, urination, piles of stinking garbage, graffiti, seedy environ"</p> <p>♥ 2</p>	<p>25 May, 2019 WIB B says:</p> <p>"Complete overhaul of Queensbridge square as a new public green space. So much open space. Garden beds can include integrated islands."</p> <p>♥ 7</p>	<p>24 May, 2019 Victoria says:</p> <p>"A zig zag ferry service, like ferries seen on the chao phraya in Bangkok. Allowing people to quickly and easily traverse the river on foot."</p> <p>♥ 6</p>	<p>24 May, 2019 Tommy S says:</p> <p>"Water transport that's a part of the Melbourne's public transport system using Myki and encourage more activity on the water."</p> <p>♥ 8</p>	<p>23 May, 2019 Jeff says:</p> <p>"City Cat public transport - Botanical Gardens to the Convention Centre. Borrow a couple from Brisbane and see how popular they'd be."</p> <p>♥ 9</p>
<p>23 May, 2019 Tom says:</p> <p>"POOL!"</p> <p>♥ 6</p>	<p>23 May, 2019 Adam Coutts says:</p> <p>"Prioritise pedestrian movement with one continuous walk way from Birrarung Marr park to the docklands - without traffic or cyclist interaction"</p> <p>♥ 3</p>	<p>22 May, 2019 DubDub184 says:</p> <p>"The river development should contain both a swimming pool and also have aspirations for the river to be clean enough to swim in"</p> <p>♥ 7</p>	<p>22 May, 2019 Visitor says:</p> <p>"Green infrastructure for urban canyons limit heat island effect. Deciduous trees! Permeable paving!"</p> <p>♥ 7</p>	<p>22 May, 2019 Visitor says:</p> <p>"Bird droppings are annoying. Design light poles so no birds come in. Remove bins."</p> <p>♥ 1</p>	<p>22 May, 2019 Marielee says:</p> <p>"Waste management is such a problem along the river - need more bins and more frequent collection to keep the open spaces clean"</p> <p>♥ 3</p>

# How your Feedback will be Used

We have received community and stakeholder support for the draft City River Strategy.

Your feedback is helping us revise our draft City River Strategy. The next step is to present the strategy to the Future Melbourne Committee. The Strategy will be finalised early 2020.

The vision and priorities articulated in the Plan will provide Council with a formal position from which to advocate to the State government, and to better facilitate collaboration across the full length of the City River corridor.

Your feedback is also being shared with and considered by Melbourne Water, who is tasked with undertaking the Yarra Strategic Plan. The insights gained through our consultation activities will provide them with an understanding of key ideas and opportunities for river improvement that have the greatest community support.

Thank you to everyone who has shown interest in the City River Strategy and contributed to our consultation process. Your positivity and constructive ideas are helping Melbourne make the most of the incredible city asset that is the Birrarung.

This report has been prepared by:

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