

Stage 1 - Community engagement report

Purpose

To listen to community feedback on, and assess community support for, the draft community engagement policy 2020 and four year action plan.

Figure one: stages and influence

Internal early 2019	External stage 1- input to inform draft mid to late 2019	External Stage 2 - exhibition of draft policy and action plan June 2020
Involve	Consult/involve	Consult

Objectives – exhibition stage

- Report back to the community on the outcomes of stage one external engagement and show how the policy and action plan respond to that input
- Ensure promotion to and encourage participation of participants in stage one as well as the broader community
- Provide plain accessible and plain English context and information to support engagement

What did we ask?

Participants were asked:

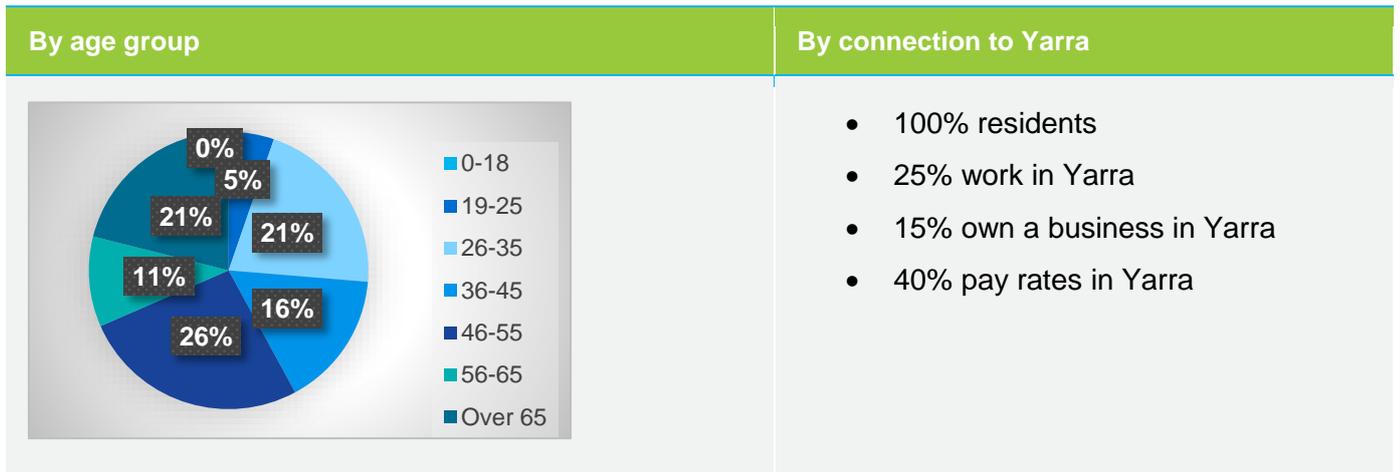
- To provide feedback on the policy, in particular their level of support for the nine commitments that shape our policy and our accountability?
- To provide feedback on the approach that guides the four year action plan under each of the directions:
 - Transparent and accountable
 - Representative and inclusive
 - Informed and meaningful
 - Respecting and strengthening community
- Participants were asked to provide both a rating of their level of support and further comments on both sections.

Promotion undertaken

- Direct emails invitations to all participants from stage one
- Email campaign to a range of community stakeholder organisations
- Emails to all advisory groups
- Social media posts (Facebook, twitter and Instagram)
- Yarra News E newsletter

Who did we hear from?

- 296 visitors to the Your Say Yarra page
- 20 completed survey responses
- 1 detailed submission on behalf of the Fitzroy Residents Association



What did we hear?

- Level of support for the nine commitments that shape our policy and our accountability:
 - An average 60% of participants stated they were reasonably or highly supportive of the nine commitments
 - Note: the level of satisfaction relating to, “*Respectful: we value and respect our community’s time, engaging closely when their influence is high and scaling back when it is more limited,*” rated significantly higher than all other commitments.
 - 5% were not sure
 - The remainder were somewhat or definitely unsupportive (It should be noted that a significant percentage of responses stating “unsupportive” related to dissatisfaction on customer service or particular neighbourhood based decisions).
- Level of support for the approach that guides the four year action plan under each of the directions:
 - An average of 72% stated they were highly or reasonably supportive of the directions guiding the plan
 - An average 5% were not sure
 - The remainder were reasonably or highly unsupportive
 - Again a significant number of unsupportive responses related to dissatisfaction on issues outside the scope of this policy and action plan
 - Support for the actions listed under “Respecting and strengthening community” was notably higher than for other directions

Key themes captured through participant comments	Council officer response
Support for the best practice frameworks and theory that underpins the policy and the accessible language used to give context	Noted
Support for the inclusion of deliberative engagement practice	Noted

Key themes captured through participant comments	Council officer response
<p>Acknowledgement of different approaches and methods required to include groups at risk of underrepresentation with particular suggestions around outreach to CALD communities</p>	<p>Noted. The action plan includes further initiatives to enhance our engagement of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities including progressing our ability to reach out to key organisations and community leaders through our stakeholder mapping.</p>
<p>Concern to see actions and evidence of accountability match the commitments provided in the policy</p>	<p>Noted. The policy provides clear outline on how we will report back to the community on outcomes of community engagement advising how they will inform next steps and decision making.</p>
<p>Concern over a lack of response to general inquiries or complaints made to Council.</p>	<p>These concerns were outside of the scope of this policy and action plan, however, the feedback has been forwarded to our access Yarra team and council officers relevant to the issues cited.</p>
<p>Concern that the interest of rate payers in Yarra rate payers should be given the primary focus of decision making yet not referenced in report on stage one engagement outcomes</p>	<p>Noted. The participation of home owners at 41% and apartment owners at 19% was provided in the report from stage one engagement showing significant level of input was provided by Yarra rate payers. All analysis of overall preferences towards outreach channels and methods of participation included the input provided by these groups.</p> <p>Approximately 50% of Yarra's residents are renters and many are customers of Council services. This number as a percentage is projected to grow. It is therefore, recommended the voices of non-rate payer residents are actively included in decision making processes to ensure services and infrastructure are meeting the needs of the broader population and Council decisions are reflective of the needs, expectations and priorities of the community as a whole.</p>
<p>The Fitzroy residents association provided a detailed submission commending a number of specific actions included in the action plan and also providing specific recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the Policy include the following under the heading 'Community Engagement': "The Yarra City Council is committed to community-based governance and will seek opportunities for participatory and deliberative democracy. The Yarra City Council recognizes the need to refresh its political legitimacy and to 	<p>Yarra Council has been at the forefront of deliberative engagement practice in local government having facilitated a number of key planning and decision making processes. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Liveable Yarra project informing the rewrite of the Yarra planning scheme policy ○ The Yarra Age Care services community panel ○ representative workshop on parking management in Yarra <p>Deliberative engagement practice is now formally acknowledged in the draft policy and actions in the four year plan address delivery of best practice deliberative processes.</p>

Key themes captured through participant comments	Council officer response
<p>ensure managerial competence in all aspects of its work.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Community Engagement Action Plan 2020 – 2024 should be strengthened through the inclusion of community advisory boards, neighbourhood committees, community budgeting and citizen juries as a means of achieving joined-up planning and services. These are best enacted before the current Council term ends in October to lay the groundwork for future engagement with the community. • ‘Diverse communities such as LGBTIQ+’ be included in the Community Engagement Policy (Table page 5). 	<p>Representation of all neighbourhoods will be a key deliverable in the deliberative panel process that will be undertaken to determine Yarra’s long term community vision and four year Council plan. This process will be undertaken mid-2021.</p> <p>“Diverse communities such as LGBTIQ+” has been added to the policy to reflect community expectations.</p>

Sample of comments relating to key themes

- “It’s terrific, well done, easy to read. A good mix of plain English and theory. It shows you take engagement seriously and that your methods are grounded in evidence and research.”
- “Great to see the draft policy recommend citizens juries and deliberative panels.
- “State how council will measure its achievements, to clearly see whether council has achieved its objectives or failed to meet them. Currently Council doesn’t respond to feedback, complaints or issues submitted via email or its “Report an Issue” webpage.”
- “Lets make sure that there is action and not just lots of nice words. Yoursayyarra is a good initiative to get feedback and ideas, but council officers are the ones to make it all happen.”
- “Where changes are going to impact a significant % of people from non-English speaking backgrounds, or first nations people - having a more representative group of people doing the engagement should be considered to make it possible for impacted residents to look like they are worth talking to. Signs and printed material in the non-English languages of the most impacted groups’ language.”
- “Driving a stronger and united sense of community is extremely important in Yarra because of the diverse backgrounds stakeholders come from. However, your primary intent must prioritise the interests of the private ratepayers of this LGA - they determine the level of investment, maintenance and development the homes in this city experience, and this is all about the place we call home.”

- “The FRA believes that deliberative community engagement can help to create better council services, promote social cohesion and foster a thriving democracy. The FRA therefore commends the Action Plan for identifying compliance and best practice and providing resources to the community in the form of guides and Page 2 of 2 templates, deliberative engagements, social media campaigns to engage with a broader audience, exploring new on-line methods (we would encourage a new platform for feedback and complaints), new place-based online engagement methods and a representative and meaningful consultation process.”