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CITY OF
MELTON

2020

Community Vision and Council & Wellbeing
Plan – Report for Phase one engagement
with the Melton community

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Executive Summary:

Engagement with the community:

The impact of COVID-19 restrictions meant that planned face to face events for Phase One of the engagement had to be cancelled after 14 March 2020. Consequently, the engagement with the community for Phase One consists entirely of the community survey, which includes responses collected online and at Harmony Day. The survey closed with 515 responses.

Melton's first *Community Vision 2036* was created in 2016 as a result of an extensive community engagement process. This latest round of engagement used the existing themes of the original Community Vision as the foundation for an update of the document. The community were asked to consider where they would like their community to be by 2040 and what challenges needed to be addressed to achieve those aspirations.

The survey achieved a broadly representative sample for the demographic variables surveyed: gender, age, suburb, language spoken at home and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status.

Community Vision

Most important aspects:

Data note: Respondents were able to choose up to five aspects they deemed important to achieving the particular theme; therefore, results reflect the proportion of respondents who chose that aspect, not the overall proportion of responses and do not total 100%.

Safe and Socially Connected City

In the safe and socially connected theme, safety was overwhelmingly judged one of the most important aspects in achieving this theme. Nearly two-thirds of respondents (63.7%) chose a place where people feel safe as one of their most important aspects, with an additional 38.3% choosing safe places for kids to play. Access to local health services was also judged an important aspect for this theme by 37.1% of respondents. Respect, friendliness, and a place where people feel welcome and can take pride in also featured prominently.

Well-built City

In the well-built city theme, more than half of all respondents (56.8%) selected a local hospital as one of their most important aspects. An additional 26% also selected local health services. Improving travel featured prominently amongst the other priorities, with between one-third and one- quarter of respondents choosing good public transport connections (35%), free flowing traffic (30%), and efficient public transport (26.2%) as one of their five most important aspects. Good quality was selected by one-third of respondents (33%), while well planned neighbourhoods were selected by 30.4% of respondents.

Strong Local Economy

In the strong local economy theme, more than three out of five respondents (62.2%) selected local employment opportunities as one of their most important aspects. This was overwhelmingly the number one priority for this theme. An additional 43.6% also selected local business opportunities, while 41.1% wanted vibrant cafes and restaurants.

Thriving Natural Environment

In the thriving natural environment theme, nearly three out of five respondents selected parks and gardens (58.5%), and retain natural spaces (56.2%) as one of their most important aspects, while more than half selected clean waterways (52.5%).

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Challenges achieving themes:

Safe and Socially Connected City

Safety again was the most prominent challenge for achieving a safe and socially connected city. Around one in ten respondents (10.6%) cited safety generally; however, a much greater proportion (20.7%) stated the biggest challenge was the level of crime and that reducing crime in the municipality was the major safety challenge. Another strong aspect that emerged was that of creating a sense of community connection and/or social cohesion (18.7%). Comments suggested that there was a low sense of social cohesion currently. There were a number of perceived challenges within these ideas, in particular a perception of divisions within the community. For most, this was expressed as a generalised sense of a divided community. Of those who sought to offer a reason for the division, the most commonly cited was racism and xenophobia especially that directed towards new residents. However, others felt the socioeconomic divide that was becoming apparent was deemed a cause. Managing the growth of the municipality was considered one of the biggest challenges. Respondents were largely concerned with ensuring adequate community infrastructure and services to population growth.

Well-built City

The three main challenges that dominated achieving a well-built city were resources and funding (14.4% of respondents), dealing with population growth (12.8%) and adequate infrastructure (10.7%). Invariably there were links between all three of these aspects.

Strong Local Economy

Overwhelmingly, the main challenge in achieving a strong local economy was creating local jobs (22.3%). A related challenge to local job creation was the lack of diversity of employment and businesses in the Melton area. This was viewed as being a barrier to improving local employment and attracting people to the area (7.1% of respondents). Supporting local businesses was a challenge cited by 10.1% of respondents. The focus of this challenge was largely in terms of changing consumer behaviour to encourage people to buy local products. For others, this extended to providing material relief to businesses through rates or encouraging landlords to reduce rents to the business sector.

Thriving Natural Environment

The biggest perceived challenge for achieving a thriving natural environment was population growth and development impacting on the environment (28.9%). Those who highlighted this as a challenge tended to fall into one of two camps. Most wished Council to do more to manage the growth of the city, especially into its existing natural areas, which included restricting development into natural spaces or agricultural land. Other wanted to see more sympathetic development that worked well with the natural environment and incorporated sustainable design features to lessen the impact. Other challenges recorded related to residents' attitudes and behaviour. Some expressed concern that other residents did not appear to care about the environment; others suggested that people lacked sufficient commitment or desire to change their behaviour to help improve the environment. An additional 4.6% suggested attitudinal or behavioural change could be supported through increased education about environmental issues and sustainability principles. Maintenance and cleanliness of natural areas was considered to be a major challenge by 8% of respondents. The main areas of concern were litter, pollution, and keeping natural areas well maintained and looking attractive.

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Council and Wellbeing Plan

Respondents were asked what they would like to see Council achieve in the next four years. The top five suggestions are included below:

Safe and Socially Connected City

1. A larger/stronger police presence in the city (21.8%)
2. A focus on safety and security generally (20.1%)
3. Crime prevention/ reduction (19.8%)
4. Encouraging greater community connection and social cohesion. This particularly emphasised Council increasing the opportunities for the community to come together and connect and promote social harmony. (19.6%)
5. Increasing focus on youth activities, connection and engagement. (8.9%)

Well-built City

1. Public transport improvements. (19.8%)
2. Improving road connections across the city. (18.8%)
3. Improving infrastructure, especially in new developments and suburbs (18.4%)
4. Access to health services, including a public hospital. (16.7%)
5. Reducing traffic congestion. This was primarily focussed on duplication of the Western, Calder and Melton highways. (15.1 %)

Strong Local Economy

1. Creating local jobs (34.9%)
2. Encouraging business growth that would in turn create local job opportunities (14.1%)
3. Creating local economies by encouraging residents to buy local (8.8%)
4. Better shopping precincts in local areas (8.8%)
5. Encourage greater investment in the western region, especially of government agencies and larger businesses (8.8%)

Thriving Natural Environment

1. Retaining and protecting local natural habitats (21.3%)
2. More parks and gardens (17.5%)
3. Greater maintenance, cleanliness and beautification of existing natural areas (10.7%)
4. More trees, especially street trees (10.7%)
5. Planting more native trees (10.4%)

High Performing Organisation

1. Improve customer service. This included faster responses and greater resolution of issues. (11.8%)
2. More community consultation and engagement (11.3%)
3. Increased and improved communication with residents. (11.3%)
4. Improve the use of financial resources, especially through business improvements and innovation. (10.9%)
5. Listen to the community. (9.8%)

One thing to be achieved in the next four years:

Respondents were asked to list the one thing they would want to see Council achieve in the next four years. The top 10 are listed below:

1. A local public hospital (20%)
2. A more cohesive, connected and inclusive community (8.2%)

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3. A greater number of local jobs (6.4%)
4. A greater focus on the infrastructure and service needs of specific local communities within
    the Melton LGA (6.4%)
5. Public transport improvements 6.2%)
6. More open spaces and parks (6.0%)
7. A reduction in crime within the city (6.0%)
8. Better road connections and networks (6.0%)
9. More beautification of the city (5.8%)
10. More activities and engagement with young people (5.8%)

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Engagement with the Melton community:

Methodology

Initial plans for Phase One of engaging the Melton community included a significant amount of face to face engagement at the My City My Say listening posts, attendance at events, and planned community forums. These engagement events were planned to sit alongside an online survey. Owing to the impact of COVID-19 restrictions, the face to face events needed to be cancelled, with the exception of attendance at 2020's Harmony Day event. This means the engagement with the community for Phase One consists entirely of the community survey, which includes responses collected online and at Harmony Day.

The survey was launched on Thursday 12 March and also distributed at Harmony Day on Saturday 14 March, immediately prior to the imposition of COVID-19 restrictions. The initial engagement with the survey was very low as residents adjusted to new ways of living and working. The combination of time and increased promotion meant that the survey gradually gathered momentum but meant the planned closing date had to be extended until 31 May. The survey closed with 515 responses.

Data Notes

Please note that all quantitative data has been analysed at the disaggregated level (results analysed by the range of demographic data collected). Only results that are statistically significant when compared with the aggregated data will be noted in this report. This means all results not noted are statistically comparable with the aggregated results reported or those within that demographic variable.

Demographics

Gender:

The survey collected responses from a fairly even gender split with 44.4% of males and 55.6% females. Although the option was given to select a gender category other than male or female, no respondents selected this.

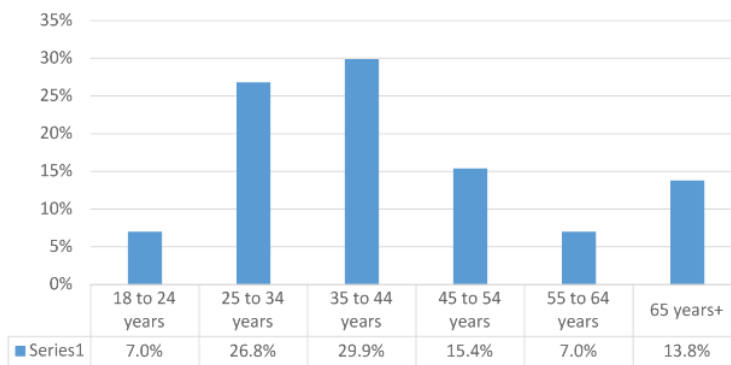Figure 1: Gender of respondent (n=381)
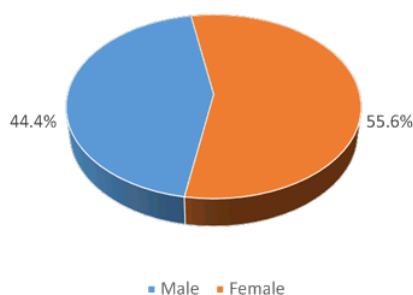
Age:

The survey recorded responses from all age groups in broadly representative proportions.

More than half of all respondents were aged between 25 and 44 years (56.7%). The lowest proportion of respondents was from those aged 18 to 24 years (7%); however, this is only marginally below that recorded in the 2016 Census for this age group (8.9%).

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Figure 2: Age of respondent (n=384)

	18 to 24 years	25 to 34 years	35 to 44 years	45 to 54 years	55 to 64 years	65 years+
■ Series1	7.0%	26.8%	29.9%	15.4%	7.0%	13.8%

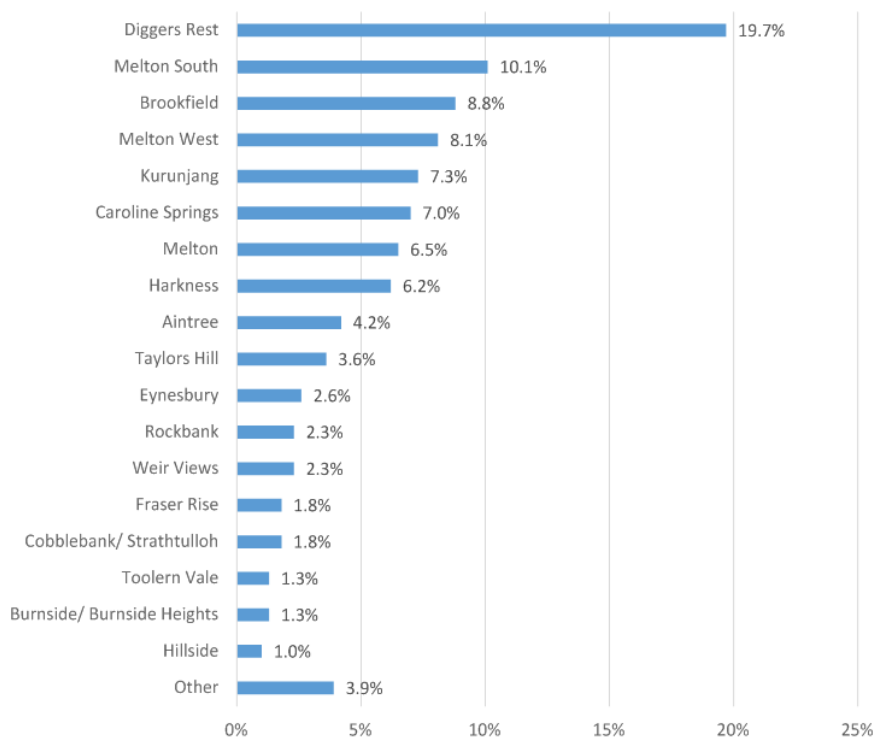## Suburb:

There was good representation from across the Melton municipality. The highest proportion of respondents came from Diggers Rest (19.7%), followed by Melton South (10.1%) and Brookfield (8.8%).

Figure 3: Suburb of respondent (n=385)

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Identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander:

The survey gathered responses from a small proportion of people who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island (3.9%); however this is significantly higher than the proportion recorded for Melton LGA in the 2016 Census (1.0%).
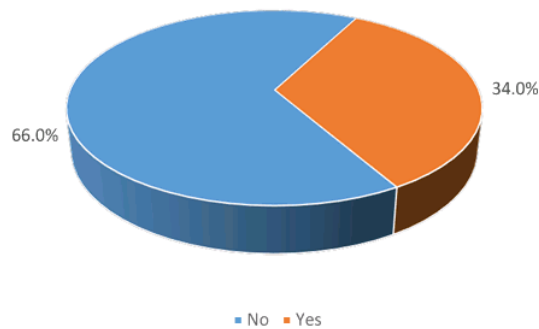
Figure 4: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status of respondent (n=381)
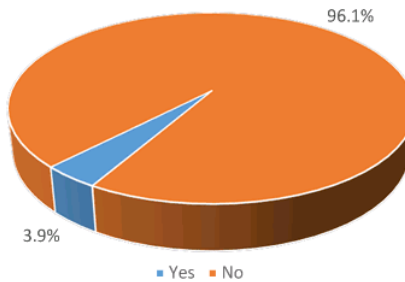
Language other than English spoken at home:

Two-thirds of the survey respondents (66.0%) spoke English only, while one-third of respondents (34.0%) spoke a language other than English at home, which is a similar proportion (32.1%) recorded in 2016 Census data.

Figure 5: Language other than English spoken at home (n=382)

The most common languages of survey respondents were Urdu, Punjabi, Malayalam, and Hindi.

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Community Vision Data:

Melton's first Community Vision 2036 was created in 2016 as a result of an extensive community engagement process. This latest round of engagement has used the existing themes of the original Community Vision as the foundation for an update of the document. The community were asked to consider where they would like their community to be by 2040 and what challenges needed to be addressed to achieve those aspirations.

A Safe and Socially Connected City

Most important aspects:

Respondents were asked to select their five most important aspects for achieving a safe and socially connected city from a list of key aspects identified in the 2016 engagement process.
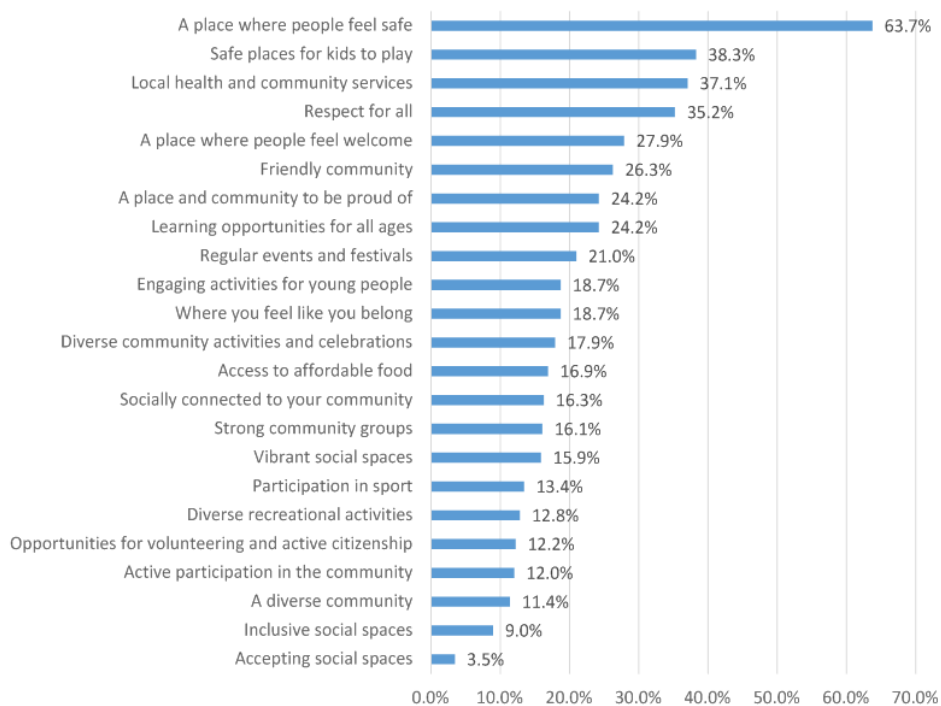
Safety was overwhelmingly judged one of the most important aspects in achieving this theme. Nearly two-thirds of respondents (63.7%) chose a place where people feel safe as one of their more important aspects, while 38.3% chose safe places for kids to play.

Access to local health services is a recurring theme throughout most themes in the survey and was also judged an important aspect for this theme by 37.1% of respondents. Respect, friendliness, and a place where people feel welcome and can take pride in also featured prominently.

The relative importance of all aspects to respondents is detailed in the chart below.

Figure 6: Most important aspects of a Safe and Socially Connected City (n=515)

NB: As respondents were asked to choose five aspects, results do not total 100%

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Significant differences between demographic variables

There were no significant differences between any aspects for gender.

Although "a place where people feel safe" received support from all age groups, this aspect was chosen significantly higher proportions of those aged 18 to 24 years (81.5%) and those aged 45 to 54 years (72.9%). Higher proportions of those aged 25 to 34 years were likely to choose "safe places for kids to play".

"Local health and community services" gained significantly more support from those aged 55 years and older (51.9% for those aged 55 to 64 years and 47.2% for those aged 65 years and older).

Younger respondents (those aged 18 to 24 years) were significantly more likely to choose "a diverse community" than other age groups.

Higher proportion of those aged 55 to 64 years were recorded for "a friendly community" (40.7%) and "a place and community to be proud of" (40.7%).

"A place where people feel safe" rated highly for all suburbs; however, it was significantly higher than other suburbs for Eynesbury (100%), Toolern Vale (100%), Weir Views (88.9%) and Melton South (71.8%).

Residents of Fraser Rise were more likely to select "where you feel like you belong" and "socially connected to your community" (both 57.1%).

Residents of Rockbank were significantly more likely to select "access to affordable food" (55.6%).

Missing aspects from the Safe and Socially Connected City theme:

Respondents were then asked if there were any aspects missing from this theme. A total of 133 respondents answered this question; however, 63% of responses to this question repeated aspects already listed. A further 15% of comments related to issues other than the safe and socially connected theme.

Of the new suggestions, the theme of safety was strongly evident. The most frequently cited suggestion was a stronger police presence throughout the city. This was followed by general comments about reducing crime or being a crime free municipality, along with the installation of CCTV, and increased street lighting.

A second strong theme that emerged here related to the acceptance of different religious practices throughout the city. In particular, allowing places of worship for all religions and promoting religious tolerance was cited by multiple respondents.

Greater support for the arts was considered by some respondents as a means of creating greater social connection and bringing the community together. For some, this included a purpose-built arts facility within the municipality, while others wanted to see support for arts-based community groups.

A further suggestion by multiple respondents was the need for a greater amount of community engagement, both to understand what the community wants as well as creating opportunities for the community to come together to connect and create solutions to local place-based issues. A smaller proportion also stated they wished to see more digital engagement being employed.

There were a range of other suggestions provided by single respondents.

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Challenges for achieving the Safe and Socially Connected City theme:

Respondents were then asked what they thought the main challenges would be in achieving a safe and socially connected city by 2040. Two hundred and ninety-four respondents answered this question.

Safety again was the most prominent challenge. Around one in ten respondents (10.6%) cited safety generally; however, a much greater proportion of respondents (20.7%) stated the biggest challenge was the level of crime and that reducing crime in the municipality was the major safety challenge. There was a strong feeling from some of these respondents that this related to young people, consequently a focus on facilitating youth activities and engagement was suggested by some as a way of reducing crime. These comments tended to cite the municipality's high rates of youth unemployment and youth disengagement as a primary cause. Other respondents linked crime to their perception of a high presence of drug and alcohol issues within the city.

 "I am no longer confident to go for a walk without a dog or let my kids walk home from school alone due to assaults and aggravated robberies on people. If we can overcome this it will go a long way to promoting a safe community feeling."

"Large criminal population who harass people in public spaces, steal from houses and shops, and are aggressive."

Another strong theme that emerged was that of creating a sense of community connection and/or social cohesion (18.7%). Comments suggested that there was a low sense of social cohesion currently. There were a number of perceived challenges within these ideas, in particular a perception of divisions within the community. For most, this was expressed as a generalised sense of a divided community. Of those who sought to offer a reason for the division, the most commonly cited was racism and xenophobia especially that directed towards new residents. However, others felt the socioeconomic divide that was becoming apparent was deemed a cause. These divisions were sometimes also linked to a lack of safety. A smaller proportion felt that the Melton municipality had a negative reputation or stigma to overcome and this was an impediment to creating a genuine sense of community connection. Some also stated that the physical distance and isolation of different geographical parts of the city hindered that sense of connection to the Melton municipality.

"Connecting people to one another and to their local space when they spend so much time commuting for work and study."

"Healing the division in the community - cultural/ socioeconomic/ education."

"Breaking down the stigma associated with cultural diversity, breaking the ever-growing anti-social behaviour that has increased over the last 2 years. The anti-social behaviour is a big issue for young families attending festivals and events held around the city."

"The different suburbs don't feel connected - Diggers Rest is far from Melton and it doesn't feel like we are a big part of the shire in terms of vision"

Managing the growth of the municipality was considered one of the biggest challenges for all four themes, although perhaps less so for this theme than others. Those who did mention this as a challenge for this theme were largely concerned with ensuring adequate community infrastructure and services to population growth.

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"The city is expanding fast and attention is only being put on new estates. Older estates are left alone and nothing is done to upgrade the facilities to encourage people to get out and connect."

"Melton city is growing so fast we need to ensure all people are aware of what Melton has to offer especially the CALD people. I think that's the biggest challenge but also ensuring we have things to offer from babies to our retired older residents, something for everyone."

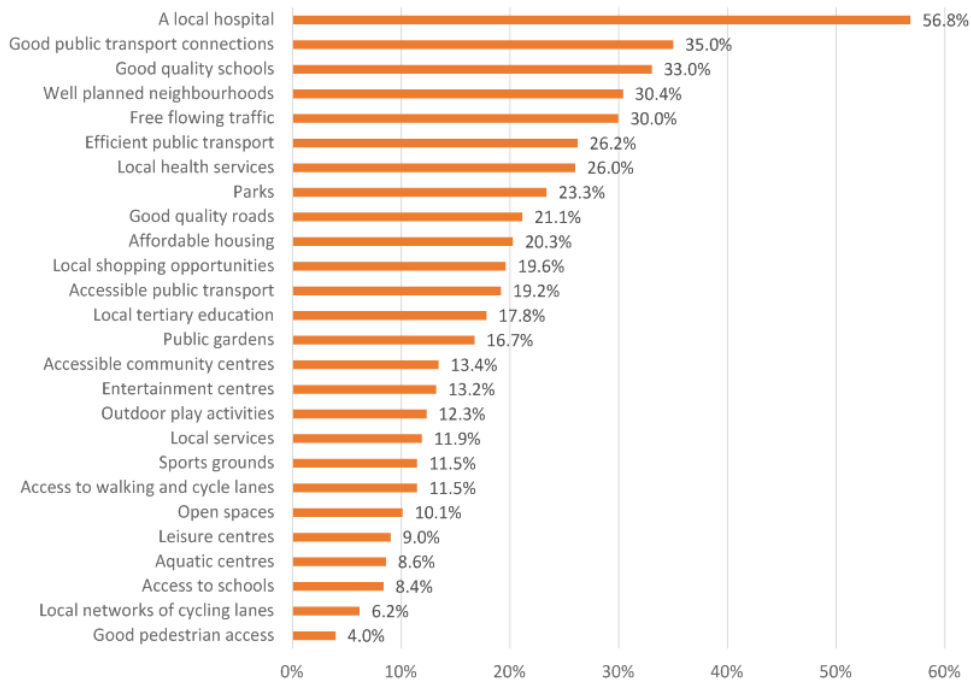## A Well-built City

Most important aspects:

More than half of all respondents (56.8%) selected a local hospital as one of their most important aspects. This was overwhelmingly the number one priority for this theme. An additional 26% also selected local health services.

Improving travel featured prominently amongst the other priorities, with between one-third and one- quarter of respondents choosing good public transport connections (35%), free flowing traffic (30%), and efficient public transport (26.2%) as one of their five most important aspects. Good quality schools also featured prominently, being selected by one-third of respondents (33%), while well planned neighbourhoods were selected by 30.4% of respondents.

The aspects that gained the least support from respondents both related to sustainable transport options – local networks of cycling lanes (6.2%) and good pedestrian access (4.0%).

The relative importance of all aspects to respondents is detailed in the chart below.

Figure 7: Most important aspects of a Well-built City (n=515)

NB: As respondents were asked to choose five aspects, results do not total 100%

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Significant differences between demographic variables
There were no significant differences between any aspects for gender.

While all age groups considered a local hospital and local health services important, significantly higher proportions of those aged 55 years and older selected these priorities (67.9% and 41.5% respectively). Conversely, those aged 65 years and older showed the lowest proportion of respondents for parks (11.3%) and open spaces (7.5%).

There were no other significant differences for age.

A local hospital was a high priority for respondents from most suburbs, with the exception of the suburbs of Fraser Rise, Taylor's Hill and Toolern Vale. These suburbs recorded significantly lower proportions of responses for this aspect than other suburbs.

Local shopping opportunities was selected as a priority by a significantly higher proportion of respondents from Diggers Rest, Cobblebank/Strathtulloh, and Rockbank.

There were no other significant differences for suburb.

The only aspect that showed any significant difference for language spoken at home was a local hospital, where people who spoke a language other than English were more likely to choose this aspect than those who spoke English only (69% compared with 51.9%).

Significantly higher proportions of those who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander selected the following aspects than other respondents: a local hospital; local health services; efficient public transport; affordable housing; and accessible community centres.

Missing aspects from the Well-built City theme:
Respondents were asked if there were any aspects missing from this theme. A total of 125 respondents answered this question; however, 52% of responses to this question repeated aspects already listed. A further 23% related to issues other than the well-built city theme.

A large proportion of comments related to highly individual issues that were the sole concern of that particular respondent (8.9%).

Where common themes emerged, the largest proportion of respondents (10.1%) made comments about the safety of the roads and road networks within the municipality. This included better connections to access freeways, duplication of both the Melton and Western highways to cope with increased traffic from population growth, improving traffic intersections that were judged to be hazardous, and improving the quality of roads, particularly in new estates, which were also perceived as a safety issue.

Three similar themes were cited by the second highest group of respondents to this question (3.2% each). The first related to places of worship, particularly the capacity for all faiths to be allowed a place of worship for their particular religion within the municipality. The second was improving parking facilities across the city, particularly around sites where there is high need, such as council offices, medical centres, shopping centres, and schools. The third related to ensuring more green space was included in urban areas, particularly new developments.

Other aspects listed that attracted multiple responses included improved signage across the city, better quality walking and cycling tracks, improved street lighting, more libraries, and ensuring larger blocks of land in developments.

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Challenges for achieving the Well-built City theme:

Respondents were then asked what they thought the main challenges would be in achieving a well-built city by 2040. Two hundred and forty-three respondents answered this question.

This theme attracted much more unity of thought around what challenges Melton City faced than some themes. The three main challenges that dominated were resources and funding (14.4% of respondents), dealing with population growth (12.8%) and adequate infrastructure (10.7%). Invariably there were links between all three of these aspects.

Of those who spoke about resources and funding, the overwhelming majority were concerned with ensuring enough resources to provide adequate infrastructure for the growing population. A particular focus was advocating for adequate support from State and Federal arms of government. A smaller proportion of these respondents were concerned with ensuring there was an even distribution of money and infrastructure across the entire municipality, particularly in newly established suburbs.

"Funding! How do you plan to improve our roads, public transport and outdoor spaces without the State Government's assistance with funding!!!!?"

"Funding to ensure council can meet community needs."

"Might need more funding to build and to work together with community leaders in reshaping a well-built city."

The focus on growth for some respondents was primarily focussed on concerns about adequate infrastructure being available for the growing population. This was expressed as fears about overpopulation, along with the rapidity of the growth occurring. Many felt the growth was occurring at a rate faster than the ability to adequately provide for this population via infrastructure and services, especially in ensuring that infrastructure was in place before those communities had moved into new estates.

"Managing the needs of growing communities in the period before they reach a threshold for major infrastructure spending."

"The growing population and demand could be a big challenge. The Melton City is very large and many residents would be wanting to see an immediate change and it's most likely impossible to keep up with all demands. Therefore, to ensure the community is at least satisfied, there would need to be clear communication on the plans and the community would need to feel involved."

The third main aspect related to provision of infrastructure. As mentioned, there were strong links between several aspects. The fears about growth were largely centred on the fear about the city being unable to build the infrastructure required at the pace of the growth occurring. There was also a concern that some areas may be left behind and an uneven focus on the infrastructure required across the municipality. This was a particular concern for residents from Diggers Rest, Rockbank and Eynesbury.

"Keeping up with the infrastructure needed for the growth the council are allowing. Maybe make developers a bit more accountable to ensure they deliver wider roads, readiness for public transport etc. With the population growth here, Sunshine hospital is not coping. ER wait times are through the roof with queues often out the door."

"The development is occurring faster than infrastructure."

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Achieving good public transport connections was considered a challenge by 9.8% of respondents. Issues relating to connections across the municipality were regularly cited, with many stating it was extremely difficult and time consuming to get around the city using public transport.

"The efficiency of the public transport is atrocious - there are not enough bus stops and buses do not tour often enough. Students have to walk great distances and leave sometimes even an hour early to make it in time for school. "

"Currently has bad public transport (routes don't extend through all of the newer areas and there can be a VERY long walk for some people to get to a stop, and services run fairly infrequently- 40 mins or more between buses instead of the 20 mins or so other places I've lived). The freeway needed widening 5 years ago and doesn't even seem to be on the books. I know it's VicRoads responsibility but having a 2-lane grid lock all the way out to Melton really holds the place back."

Again, in this question, residents' desire for a local hospital and local health services was shown strongly (7.8% of respondents); however, many felt it would be a challenge to attract the services required to service the growing population, especially considering, as some noted, this was frequently outside of Council's locus of control.

"We need a hospital with all facilities. However, I'm not sure the State Govt will prioritise us."

A theme that was recorded from 6.6% of respondents related to the problems created by the sheer physical space and distance that the municipality of Melton occupies. These respondents felt it was difficult to achieve a sense of cohesiveness within the city, and as such Melton didn't feel connected as a city.

"Once built, assessing that the people here are connected. being well built is not about the delivery of the infrastructure itself, it is how the delivery of the infrastructure works and add values to the lives of the people it was built for."

"There is not a sense of the Melton community as a whole. It feels physically very divided. It would be great to see more connection achieved through greater physical connection, be it roads or shared community buildings."

The range of other challenges cited to achieve this theme included achieving consensus about the city's priorities, the quality of local roads, infrastructure that enhances residents' safety, easing traffic congestion, and working with developers to achieve well planned neighbourhoods and developments.

A Strong Local Economy

Most important aspects:

More than three out of five respondents (62.2%) selected local employment opportunities as one of their most important aspects. This was overwhelmingly the number one priority for this theme. An additional 43.6% also selected local business opportunities, while 41.1% wanted vibrant cafes and restaurants.

The relative importance of all aspects to respondents is detailed in the chart below.

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Figure 8: Most important aspects of a Strong Local Economy (n=515)
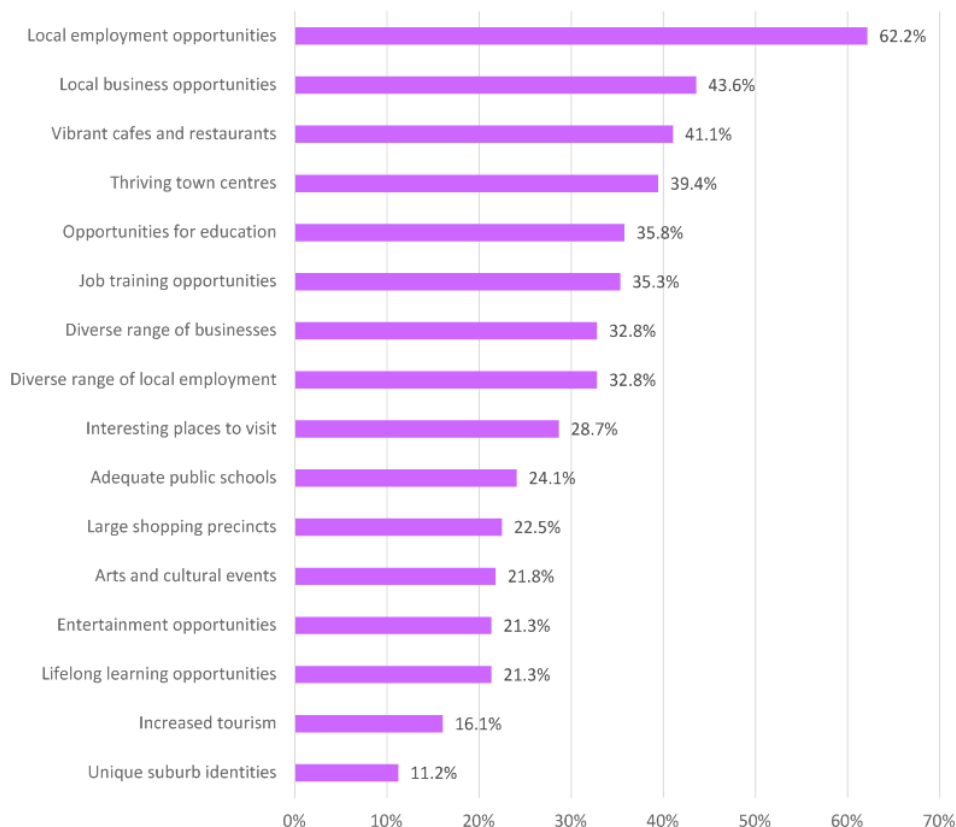
NB: As respondents were asked to choose five aspects, results do not total 100%

Significant differences between demographic variables
There were no significant differences between any aspects for gender.

Significantly higher proportions of respondents aged 18 to 24 years selected opportunities for education, entertainment opportunities, and arts and cultural events as their top priorities when compared with other age groups.

Significantly higher proportions of respondents aged 55 to 64 years selected diverse range of businesses as one of their top priorities when compared with other age groups.

Significantly higher proportions of respondents from Melton, Melton South and Taylor's Hill selected local job opportunities as one of their top priorities when compared with other suburbs.

The only significant difference for language spoken at home was a higher proportion of those who spoke a language other than English at home selected opportunities for education as one of their top priorities.

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Significantly higher proportions of respondents who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander selected local job opportunities, increased tourism, entertainment opportunities, and arts and cultural events as one of their top priorities, while those who were not of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent selected vibrant cafes and restaurants in higher proportions.

Missing aspects from the Strong Local Economy theme:

Respondents were asked if there were any aspects missing from this theme. A total of 81 respondents answered this question; however, 59% of responses to this question repeated aspects already listed. A further 18% related to issues other than the strong local economy theme.

The most frequently recorded aspect was working towards creating a local economy that was strong and varied enough for residents to live, work, shop and play in the Melton area (14.7% of respondents). In particular, these respondents were keen for Melton to increase the variety of jobs and businesses available so the local economy was not so reliant on individual industries.

Another suggestion included encouraging businesses/ governments to invest in the western region. This was strongly linked to the well-built city theme and emphasised building the infrastructure needed to attract a greater variety of business opportunities. Some respondents expanded this to the idea of Melton becoming a satellite business area away from the Melbourne CBD.

Other ideas included establishing business innovation hubs, and more emphasis on activating existing business areas.

Challenges for achieving the Strong Local Economy theme:

Respondents were then asked what they thought the main challenges would be in achieving a strong local economy by 2040. One hundred and eighty-eight respondents answered this question.

The highest proportion of respondents felt the biggest challenge was creating local jobs (22.3%).

"Local residents given the opportunity and priority to be employed and serve in their own community."

"Creating jobs locally so that we don't have to travel to the Melbourne CBD for work."

"More self-sufficient services provided for locals by locals."

A related challenge to local job creation was the lack of diversity of employment and businesses in the Melton area. This was viewed as being a barrier to improving local employment and attracting people to the area (7.1% of respondents).

"Lack of industry. Can't all work in prisons, takeaway shops or harness racing. Bring back more manufacturing and less warehousing."

Supporting local businesses was a challenge cited by 10.1% of respondents. The focus of this challenge was largely in terms of changing consumer behaviour to encourage people to buy local products. For others, this extended to providing material relief to businesses through rates or encouraging landlords to reduce rents to the business sector.

"Rents for small businesses can be high and also many people support chain stores like Coles and McDonalds as they aren't educated on how supporting local helps the community. We need to educate people about the impact of buying local and it improves the economy for all of us living locally."

"Keep business rates low and encourage new businesses."

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Perhaps reflecting the timing of the survey during COVID 19 restrictions, the next most frequently cited challenge was the economic climate and was cited by 8.6% of respondents. The economic challenges by this situation were prominent in respondent's minds, especially in how this may impact employment and local businesses. However, some comments reflected the view that economic opportunities in the Melton area were poor regardless of COVID 19.

"Recovering from the current issues arising from Covid-19 and the economic challenges that will flow from it."

"The economy and the general lack of economic opportunities in the west"

Encouraging people to shop in or visit Melton was a challenge mentioned by 6.6% of respondents. Some felt a lack of promotion of the area was the issue, while others cited a lack of diversity in the businesses and attractions hindered the attraction of customers.

"Getting people in to the areas. Marketing an area isn't the easiest. Keeping it about the people (via markets and such) would bring more tourism."

"Making Melton an attractive and interesting place to visit. Melton has the races at Tabcorp Park and Djerriwarrh festival and that is it. The recent food truck festival was overpriced and lacking in actual entertainment."

Resources and funding again came up as an issue for this theme, along with the difficulty of attracting investment in the west were challenges that came up from 6.1% of respondents respectively. The resource issue was mostly linked to a lack of funding from state and federal governments, particularly in the area of job creation.

"Attracting business owners and their business, especially larger, international brands. Something like IKEA in the western suburbs would draw attention to the community."

"There's a lack of interest in the west. We seem to be the poor cousin when it comes to business and government investment. More investment means more local jobs, which in turn eases the burden of road and transport networks. That investment will pay for itself."

Other challenges mentioned by respondents included gaining consensus from the community about shared economic priorities, population growth, attracting local health services, the lack of education and training opportunities, the reputation of Melton, and the lack of unique attractions to draw visitors.

A Thriving Natural Environment

Most important aspects:
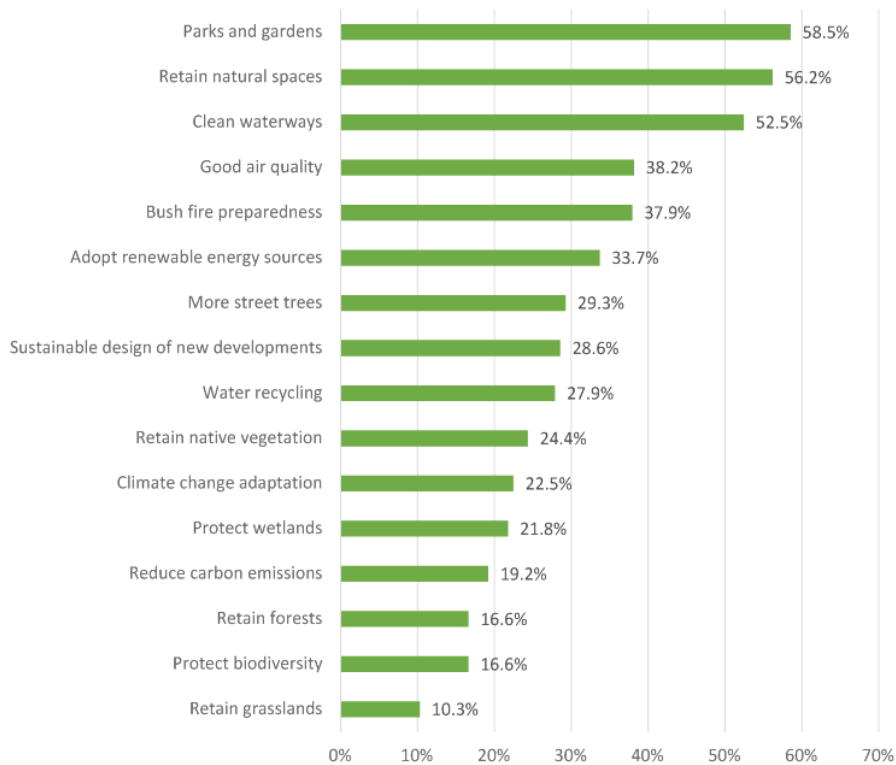Unlike other themes there was no one aspect that stood out significantly more than others.

Nearly three out of five respondents selected parks and gardens (58.5%), and retain natural spaces (56.2%) as one of their most important aspects, while more than half selected clean waterways (52.5%).

The relative importance of all aspects to respondents is detailed in the chart below.

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Figure 9: Most important aspects of a Thriving Natural Environment (n=515)

NB: As respondents were asked to choose five aspects, results do not total 100%

Significant differences between demographic variables

Significantly higher proportions of male respondents (47.9%) selected bushfire preparedness than female respondents (30.6%).

Higher proportions of younger respondents (those aged 34 years and under) selected climate change adaptation in their priorities than older respondents (29.8% compared with 11.2%).

There were no significant differences for any aspect for suburb or language spoken at home.

Higher proportions of those who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander selected retain native vegetation, and bushfire preparedness as one of their top priorities.

Missing aspects from the Thriving Natural Environment theme:

Respondents were asked if there were any aspects missing from this theme. A total of 79 respondents answered this question; however, 38% of responses to this question repeated aspects already listed. A further 5% related to issues other than the thriving natural environment theme. This theme attracted fewer new ideas than other themes.

The most frequently recorded aspect was providing more environmental education so people could learn about the impact of their behaviour and how it impacts the environment (17.7% of

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respondents). It was also suggested this could occur at community centres or in partnership with schools.

The cleanliness and maintenance of natural areas was a focus for 12.6% of respondents. They wanted to see a greater emphasis on maintaining the beauty of the natural areas that already exist, along with greater attention to things like litter, graffiti, and pollution that spoil the city's natural areas.

There were a range of other ideas that attracted smaller numbers of respondents. These included encouraging native fauna to the area, establishing composting hubs, more community gardens, and introducing indigenous methods of bushfire management.

Challenges for achieving the Thriving Natural Environment theme:

Respondents were then asked what they thought the main challenges would be in achieving a thriving natural environment by 2040. One hundred and seventy-six respondents answered this question.

The highest proportion of respondents felt the biggest challenge was population growth and development impacting on the environment (28.9%). Those who highlighted this as a challenge tended to fall into one of two camps. Most wished Council to do more to manage the growth of the city, especially into its existing natural areas, which included restricting development into natural spaces or agricultural land. Other wanted to see more sympathetic development that worked well with the natural environment and incorporated sustainable design features to lessen the impact. A number of respondents felt there was not enough influence on developers to ensure they constructed new dwellings with environmental factors in mind.

"The main challenge would seem to be around development within the city. Mature thinking is necessary to ensure that vested interests do not influence council operations."

"Developers not caring about the local flora and fauna. We have to give them incentives to not only protect the local environment but also to further it through investment and local initiatives."

"Poorly designed developments with bare minimum environmental practices and inclusion. Melton can lead the way and be an example for developing areas around the nation. This would also benefit the citizens finically and the feeling of pride in their town."

The second most frequent challenge recorded related to residents' attitudes and behaviour and was listed by 10.9% of respondents. Some expressed concern that other residents did not appear to care about the environment; others suggested that people lacked sufficient commitment or desire to change their behaviour to help improve the environment.

"Melton City is lagging behind when it comes to sustainability and the environment. A cultural change is imperative for the future."

"Nobody here cares."

"People not caring about what they have. Look at the beautiful parks we have. But many people don't even bother about the putting their rubbish in the bins."

"To become a more sustainable city and that people are fully aware of sustainability and the value of the environment in their lives."

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An additional 4.6% suggested attitudinal or behavioural change could be supported through increased education about environmental issues and sustainability principles.

"More local educational events to increase knowledge and participation in sustainable living to result in capacity building for residents (especially important in primary school settings)."

"Educating the population about the necessity of having a thriving natural environment."

Maintenance and cleanliness of natural areas was considered to be a major challenge by 8% of respondents. The main areas of concern were litter, pollution, and keeping natural areas well maintained and looking attractive.

"Getting people to stop dumping, there is trash everywhere."

"Deal with the problem of litter which finds its way into the creek at Brookfield. This is in a disgusting state and has not been cleared in the last three years."

"Keeping beautiful natural spaces protected and clean."

Responding to the issue of climate change was noted as a challenge by 7.8% of respondents. Many comments made strong links to other challenges cited, such as changing behaviour, attitudes, and education about environmental issues.

"Reducing our carbon footprint by integrating natural energy sources to all government and community sites. Finding ways to encourage local businesses and residential owners to live more sustainably."

"Lack of federal and state guidance around climate change."

"Reduction of carbon emission is too little too late for Australia and the World to avoid worsening natural disasters."

Support for renewable energy sources was also a frequently cited challenge (7.6% of respondents). For some, this was levelled at state and federal governments; however, some also stated local government had a role to play in supporting the use of renewable energy.

"Install solar panels / wind mills for renewable energies in all public buildings."

"Lack of federal support for renewables."

Other challenges mentioned by respondents included encouraging environmental education, the threat of bushfires, improving recycling, including sustainability in future planning, protecting biodiversity, retaining native natural areas, and an over-reliance on private vehicles.

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Council and Wellbeing Plan Data

Following the section on the Community Vision, respondents were then asked what they would like Council to focus on in the next four years to help move towards the 2040 Community Vision. This section asked a series of open-ended questions, focussed on the four themes of the Community Vision, with the additional internally focussed theme of "A high performing organisation". A smaller number of respondents chose to answer this section, with 243 respondents completing this section.

A Safe and Socially Connected City

When asked what Council's focus should be for the next four years, safety was again the dominant focus of this theme, with some aspect of safety cited by 59% of respondents.

The main comments that received from the highest proportions of respondents are listed below in descending order:

Please note: many respondents gave more than one aspect; therefore, results reflect the number of responses in relation to respondents.

1. A larger/stronger police presence in the city (21.8%)
2. A focus on safety and security generally (20.1%)
3. Crime prevention/ reduction (19.8%)
4. Encouraging greater community connection and social cohesion. This particularly emphasised Council increasing the opportunities for the community to come together and connect and promote social harmony. (19.6%) Other ideas below were also focussed on achieving creating social harmony
5. Increasing focus on youth activities, connection and engagement. (8.9%)
6. Holding more community events, especially those that encourage social connection and/or celebrate diversity (8.9%)
7. Increasing access to community services and programs, especially those that support physical health, mental health, and emotional wellbeing (8.2%)
8. Increasing opportunities for greater community participation, including opportunities for volunteering and active (7.8%)
9. Proactive efforts to heal divisions in the community. This was particularly focussed on preventing racism and xenophobia (7.4%)
10. CCTV cameras employed across the city (6.2%)
11. More community programs that educate and promote understanding (5.1%)
12. Community programs and resources available online to increase accessibility (3.8%)

A Well-built City

When asked what Council's focus should be for the next four years, the greatest focus was improvements to public transport (19.8%). It should be noted that in this theme, four out of the top five issues for Council to focus on were outside of Council's control and were advocacy issues.

The main comments that received from the highest proportions of respondents are listed below in descending order:

Please note: many respondents gave more than one aspect; therefore, results reflect the number of responses in relation to respondents.

1. Public transport improvements. This related to the frequency, connections and schedules of all public transport options. The lack of connection between the different public transport modes was noted as a particular problem for Melton. It was acknowledged that this was not

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an issue that could be resolved by Council and was therefore considered an important advocacy issue. (19.8%)

2. Improving road connections across the city. This was most frequently focussed on improving road networks and connections to highways (outside of Council's control); however, a smaller number of respondents referred to the lack of connecting roads in new estates, or to other parts of the municipality. (18.8%)

3. Improving infrastructure, especially in new developments and suburbs. In particular, the focus was on ensuring adequate infrastructure was provided before residents moved into news estates, along with ensuring infrastructure matched population growth. (18.4%)

4. Access to health services, including a public hospital. Although this was overwhelmingly the number one issue in this theme for the Community Vision, again it was acknowledged that delivery was outside Council's control, but that it should remain a key advocacy issue. (16.7%)

5. Reducing traffic congestion. This was primarily focussed on duplication of the Western, Calder and Melton highways, and again, acknowledged as an advocacy issue. (15.1%)

6. Improving the planning of the city. This focus related to some of the comments in issue 3 about infrastructure planning for future growth; however, it also included issues such as planning with sustainability features and the social determinants of health in mind (e.g. good pedestrian access, cycle lanes, renewable energy, sustainable building designs etc.). (14.2%)

7. Improving the road quality. Roads were a dominant feature through this theme. These comments related solely to the physical quality of the roads, and focussed on improving and maintaining them. (11.2%)

8. More open space and parks in the city. (6.1%

9. Affordable housing. (5.3%)

10. Improvements to shopping precincts, particularly beautification and cleanliness. (4.8%)

A Strong Local Economy

When asked what Council's focus should be for the next four years, the greatest focus was overwhelmingly creating local jobs (34.9% of respondents), with an additional 8.4% wanting a specific focus on jobs for young people (43.3% in total).

The main comments that received from the highest proportions of respondents are listed below in descending order:

Please note: many respondents gave more than one aspect; therefore, results reflect the number of responses in relation to respondents.

1. Creating local jobs (34.9%)
2. Encouraging business growth that would in turn create local job opportunities (14.1%)
3. Creating local economies by encouraging residents to buy local (8.8%)
4. Better shopping precincts in local areas (8.8%)
5. Encourage greater investment in the western region, especially of government agencies and larger businesses (8.8%)
6. Greater diversity of businesses and employment options (8.4%)
7. Creating jobs for young people. This was considered separately from those who only mentioned more general job creation. People in this category wanted a particular emphasis on helping younger residents gain employment (8.4%)
8. More restaurants and cafes (7.6%)
9. More support for businesses (7.6%)

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10. More tourist attractions (5.3%)

A Thriving Natural Environment

When asked what Council's focus should be for the next four years, the greatest focus was retaining the existing local natural habitats (21.3%)

The main comments that received from the highest proportions of respondents are listed below in descending order:

Please note: many respondents gave more than one aspect; therefore, results reflect the number of responses in relation to respondents.

1. Retaining and protecting local natural habitats (21.3%)
2. More parks and gardens (17.5%)
3. Greater maintenance, cleanliness and beautification of existing natural areas (10.7%)
4. More trees, especially street trees (10.7%)
5. Planting more native trees (10.4%)
6. Measures to respond to climate change (9.8%)
7. Manage development so it does not encroach on natural habitats (9.4%)
8. Protect the biodiversity of the area (8.8%)
9. More efforts to prepare for bushfires (8.6%)
10. Establish minimum standards of environmental considerations in new developments, such as sustainable designs, renewable energy, water recycling, and minimum green space requirements (7.5%)

A High Performing Organisation

This theme attracted the lowest number of responses for the survey with 114 respondents providing comments.

When asked what Council's focus should be for the next four years, the greatest focus was improving customer service (11.8%).

The main comments that received from the highest proportions of respondents are listed below in descending order:

Please note: many respondents gave more than one aspect; therefore, results reflect the number of responses in relation to respondents.

1. Improve customer service. This included faster responses and greater resolution of issues. (11.8%)
2. More community consultation and engagement (11.3%)
3. Increased and improved communication with residents, particularly across a diverse range of methods to ensure accessibility. Ensuring a combination of traditional and digital communication (11.3%)
4. Improve the use of financial resources, especially through business improvements and innovation. (10.9%)
5. Listen to the community. This is strongly related to the focus on community engagement; however, this aspect emphasised Council acting on the feedback from the consultation process (9.8%)
6. Greater transparency about decision-making, especially in terms of communicating how and why decisions are made (8.8%)

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7. Greater collaboration with other agencies/stakeholders to deliver infrastructure and services (8.6%)
8. Ensure decision are evidence-based/ use of evidence to drive policy (8.0%)
9. Adopt a place-based approach to localised needs (7.6%)

There were a number of other suggestions included; however, these were proposed by single respondents.

One thing to be achieved in the next four years

The final survey question asked respondents to specify the one thing they wanted to see achieved at the end of the next four-year Council term.

Overwhelmingly, one in five respondents (20%) chose a local hospital as the one thing they wished to achieve within four years. This was significantly higher than any other issue listed. Interestingly, some of the most prominent issues that came through in the individual themes did not feature as strongly in this question.

The main comments that received from the highest proportions of respondents are listed below in descending order:

1. A local public hospital (20%)
2. A more cohesive, connected and inclusive community (8.2%)
3. A greater number of local jobs (6.4%)
4. A greater focus on the infrastructure and service needs of specific local communities within the Melton LGA (6.4%)
5. Public transport improvements (6.2%)
6. More open spaces and parks (6.0%)
7. A reduction in crime within the city (6.0%)
8. Better road connections and networks (6.0%)
9. More beautification of the city (5.8%)
10. More activities and engagement with young people (5.8%)
11. An improved reputation for Melton (5.6%)
12. Improved safety (5.6%)
13. Better management of population growth and development (5.6%)
14. Improved traffic management (5.5%)
15. Improvements to major highways, especially duplication (5.3%)
16. More community consultation and engagement (5.3%)
17. Places of worship for all faiths (5.3%)
18. Improvements in infrastructure, especially in new developments (5.0%)

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