Melton City Council

CLOSING THE LOOP »

Council's response to the
City of Melton Community Panel 2021

CITY OF
MELTON

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY

Melton City Council acknowledges Aboriginal and/or
Torres Strait Islander peoples living and working in
Melton. Council recognises the people of the Kulin
Nations as the original custodians of the land now known
as City of Melton. On behalf of the municipality, Council
pays respect to their Elders, past, present and future.

MAYOR'S MESSAGE

The earlier part of 2021 saw
Melton City Council welcome
dozens of community members
to our City of Melton community
panel, a new and exciting
deliberative engagement tool
that enabled Council to tap into
the wealth of knowledge and
experience of our growing and
diverse community.

The passion and pride our residents
brought to the community panel
was awe-inspiring, and as Mayor,
I was very proud to have led a
process that resulted in the
development of *Melton City 2041:
The City We Create*, our shared
vision for the future of our City.

Deliberative engagement is based
on the belief that people affected
by a decision have the right to be
involved in the decision-making
process, and it is through the
numerous conversations we had
with the community panel that we
were able to develop our three key
strategic documents; our *Council
and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025,
Asset Plan 2021-2031* and *Financial
Plan 2021-2031* with our
community's needs in mind.

This was the first time that Council
had undertaken a process such as
this, and I'm so proud that by doing
so, we were able to have a deeper
understanding of the issues faced
by our residents, and have more
transparent conversations about the
future of our community.

The deliberative engagement
process gave the community panel
a greater opportunity to learn more
about local government, and we
appreciate everyone who took the
time to discuss issues and priorities
with one another, and for providing
important feedback to Council.

The conversations that took
place provided us with a clearer
understanding of where our
community thinks we should focus
Council resources in the short,
medium, and long term. It was a
purposeful process and Council
recognises that community
engagement and participation
processes are a vital part of local
democracy and civic participation.

Looking forward, I feel confident
that we are better placed to
effectively plan for growth; develop
and deliver services and facilities;
advocate on behalf of our residents;
and offer the programs, events and
support initiatives our community
needs to thrive not just now, but
well into the future.

Cr Kathy Majdlik
Mayor, City of Melton

CEO'S MESSAGE

In February 2021, residents were invited to share their thoughts and ideas about living in the City of Melton as part of a new deliberative engagement process, developed to help Council better understand community needs and assist us to plan for our collective municipal future.

The City of Melton community panel was established to unlock the untapped knowledge of our residents and business leaders, and better understand their perspectives, needs and wants for our City.

This, in turn, helped inform our decision-making and guide our future priorities, and resulted in the development not only of *Melton City 2041: The City We Create*, but also our four-year Council and Wellbeing Plan, which aims to realise the aspirations set out in the community vision and help us achieve better outcomes for the community.

This deliberative engagement approach was undertaken in response to the requirements set out in the *Local Government Act 2020*. It reinforced the principle that the involvement of our municipal community in making decisions is essential to good governance. It enabled us to gather critical knowledge that has resulted in improved strategic planning which will go a long way to ensuring future planning and decision-making is based on community aspirations, challenges, and concerns.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all the residents who participated in the process, in particular the 43 members of our very first community panel, who gave so generously of their time and knowledge to this project.

The resulting Community Vision, Council and Wellbeing Plan, Asset Plan and Financial Plan have been developed with a firm understanding of what our community believes to be important for the future of our City, and we look forward to implementing the strategies that will see our municipality prosper in coming years.

Kelvin Tori
Chief Executive Officer,
Melton City Council

INTRODUCTION

The City of Melton community panel was an exciting first for Melton City Council (Council), playing a critical role in ensuring Council considers the views of people who live, work, and visit and invest locally. The community panel met during February to April 2021 and contributed to the development of four strategic documents:

• Melton City 2041 – The City We Create

• Financial Plan 2021-2031

• Asset Plan 2021-2031

• Council and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025.

The *Local Government Act 2020* states that councils must apply deliberative engagement practices to the development of these strategic documents. The engagement process was intended to not just fulfil the legislative requirements but to also offer opportunities for greater dialogue between Councillors, Council officers and community.

This report provides an overview of the community panel process, its recommendations and the outcome of how Council considered the recommendations in the development of these four strategic documents.

"Great opportunity to involve community members in the planning process!"

City of Melton community panellist

Roles

Several groups were involved in this project, with differing roles as outlined below.

GROUP	ROLE	RESPONSIBILITY
Community panel	Randomly selected community members	To work together to support the aspirations of the City of Melton and prioritise how Council should get there.
Council	Host	To support and host the engagement process, prepare the background papers, provide expertise and knowledge as requested by the community panel, answer questions and respond to the community panel's final report.
MosaicLab	Independent facilitators	To facilitate the community panel sessions and provide a supportive, inclusive and productive space that enabled panellists to deliberate, respond to their remit and make recommendations within the time available.
Deliberately Engaging	Independent recruiters	To manage the community panel recruitment process and ensure it was fair and unbiased. To manage panellist attendance where required and provide support to panellists as needed to ensure they could attend sessions.

"It was a very fun and meaningful experience. I felt very heard and accepted by my fellow community members."

City of Melton community panellist

"I hope and like to believe that all the suggestions will be considered."

City of Melton community panellist

"I enjoyed the process and look forward to seeing the outcomes."

City of Melton community panellist

What is deliberative engagement?

Deliberative engagement is a form of community engagement that invites participants to critically consider arguments and weigh-up competing demands in order to determine preferences for resolving public policy questions.

Deliberative engagement takes place at the highest three levels of influence on the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation, 'Involve', 'Collaborate' or 'Empower', and engages a group of people who are representative of those affected by the matter under discussion. It requires a level of engagement that is measured, considered, and has the involvement of others.

The community panel's participation was at the 'Involve' level.

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL:

INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concens and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.

Increasing level of public impact ❯

Figure 1. IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

What is a community panel?

A community panel is one form of deliberative engagement. The process invites a group of community members to consider relevant facts from multiple points of view, identify options, and come to a group decision. The expectation is that Council will implement the community panel's recommendations to the greatest extent possible. However, it does not replace or take away from the decision-making powers of the elected councillors.

A deliberative engagement process involves the community and/or stakeholders who are affected by a decision and brings those citizens closer to the decision makers. It's built around these principles:

- a random sample of people affected by the decision are selected to participate
- participants are provided with detailed, in-depth information from a range of sources that helps them to understand the issues and options associated with the decision
- participants are given the time and support they need to consider and discuss information and ideas, weigh up issues and options and agree on recommendations
- participants write their own report, which is presented to decision makers - the recommendations in their report have a high level of influence over the outcomes or decisions.

Often, a deliberative engagement process is preceded by a phase of broader engagement, where everyone affected by or interested in the issue or decision is invited to participate. The results of the broad engagement phase are then provided to the community panel for consideration.

Why a community panel?

The *Local Government Act 2020* requires a process of deliberative engagement to be conducted in the development of Council's key strategic documents at the beginning of each Council term. These documents are:

- Community Vision
- Financial Plan
- Asset Plan
- Council Plan (in this case, the Council and Wellbeing Plan*).

Beyond the legislated requirements, Council recognises that the involvement of its municipal community is essential to good planning and decision-making. Community engagement allows Council to better understand the needs, aspirations, challenges, and concerns of the community and improve the planning and delivery of its services.

Community panels, established through a random selection recruitment process, bring together a diverse group of people who reflect the broader community. Community panels typically include people who Council doesn't usually hear from but are impacted by Council decisions. The diversity of the community panel members is also valuable as they work together to consider the challenges and opportunities facing their own community.

*The Council and Wellbeing Plan is an integration of the Council Plan and the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan. This is the second time that Council has integrated the two plans as a way of reinforcing Council's high-level commitment to promoting, improving and protecting public health and wellbeing.

THE COMMUNITY PANEL ENGAGEMENT PROCESS AND REMIT

Who was on the City of Melton Community Panel and how was it selected?

The community panel was made up of 43 people from a range of demographics, representing the diversity of views and experiences in the City of Melton. Council engaged recruitment consultants, Deliberately Engaging, to undertake the community panel recruitment process.

Expressions of Interest, to take part in the community panel, were sought from a random selection of City of Melton rate payers via email (through the Council rates database). To ensure that community members who rent were also included, a separate recruitment process through random telephone calls and targeted Facebook advertising took place simultaneously. A total of 287 people registered their interest across both recruitment processes.
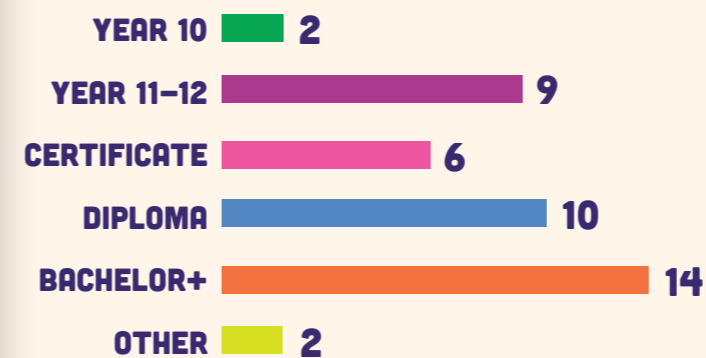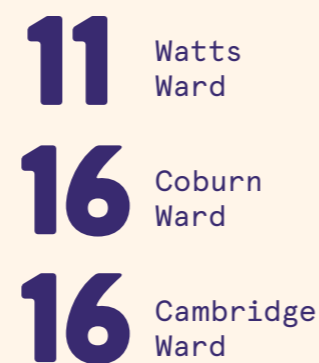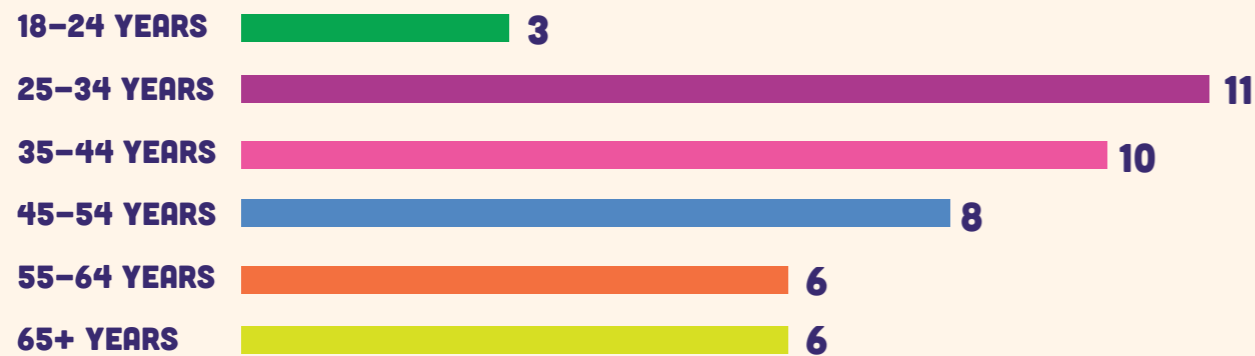
Demographic targets for the community panel were established to ensure that the composition of the community panel would match the demographics of the wider community as closely as possible. The demographic targets included location (ward and suburb), sex, age, tenure type, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status, cultural diversity, disability status, and education level.

The random selection process meant that everyone in the community had an equal chance of registering their interest and an equal chance (within their demographic) of being selected to be a community panel member. From the expressions of interest, 43 people were selected for the community panel. The demographics of the community panel are illustrated in Figure 2.

43
total number of panellists

City of Melton Community Panel

The City of Melton community panel was randomly selected to form a representative sample of the community

18–24 YEARS	3
25–34 YEARS	11
35–44 YEARS	10
45–54 YEARS	8
55–64 YEARS	6
65+ YEARS	6

1 OTHER
19 WOMEN
23 MEN

36 Owners
5 Tenants
1 Other
FOR LEASE

2 PEOPLE WITH A DISBILITY
3 LGBTIQA+
11 CALD
4 ATSI

CALD: Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
ATSI: Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
LGBTIQA+: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Gender Diverse, Intersex, Queer, Asexual and Questioning

11 Watts Ward
16 Coburn Ward
16 Cambridge Ward

YEAR 10	2
YEAR 11–12	9
CERTIFICATE	6
DIPLOMA	10
BACHELOR+	14
OTHER	2

6 MEMBER OF A LOCAL GROUP OR ORGANISATION

Figure 2. Community panel demographics

What was the community panel asked to do?

The community panel came together in February 2021 and was given the broad remit to consider 'what are our aspirations for the growing City of Melton in 2041 and how should we prioritise and resource in order to get there?'. As part of their deliberations, the community panel had to consider the summarised data gathered from the broader community consultation that took place in 2020 and 2021.

REMIT

What are our aspirations for the growing City of Melton in 2041 and how should we prioritise and resource in order to get there?

In addressing this remit, the community panel was asked to complete the following tasks:

- write a vision statement and title for the Community Vision 2041
- develop principles that would guide decision making for the Financial Plan 2021-2031 and Asset Plan 2021-2031
- prioritise strategies for the Council and Wellbeing Plan 2021-25.

Overview of the engagement process

Council engaged MosaicLab consultants to facilitate all community panel sessions. Due to the uncertainty of the situation surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, it was determined that all workshops would be delivered online via Zoom.

The process involved:

- a randomly selected group of participants
- a clear question (remit) to focus the deliberations
- access to a broad range of information from a variety of sources relevant to the remit including a private City of Melton Conversations page, fact sheets, videos and documents
- conversations with key speakers (e.g. Council officers responsible for each strategic document)
- time (four sessions)
- support from facilitators experienced in delivering deliberative processes
- technical support for those new to using Zoom
- a final report authored by the community panel.

The community panel met for a total of 10.5 hours on four occasions.

- Welcome and context setting session (1.5 hours)
- Workshop 1 (4 hours)
- Optional Q&A with Council officers (1 hour)
- Workshop 2 (4 hours)

All sessions were held in the evening except for the Q&A. Figure 3 outlines the different steps of engagement with the community panel.

Engagement Roadmap

MEET AND GREET

7.00pm – 8.30pm
February 23

Welcome and introduction

Getting to know each other

Working agreements

About the City of Melton Panel

Workshop 1 - What to expect

DATA IN

Background fact sheets and videos

Draft Community Vision 2041

DATA OUT

Community Panel demographics

WORKSHOP 1

5.00pm – 9.00pm
March 3

Discuss project context & background

Learn about draft Community Vision 2041

Community Vision –gaps and writing the vision statement

Financial and Asset Plans – drafting guiding principles

DATA IN

Community Vision 2041 draft vision statement

Background materials

Slides about asset and financial planning and fact sheets

DATA OUT

Panel recommendations for community vision, gaps and draft ideas for financial/asset principles

Q&A SESSION

12.00pm – 1.00pm
March 10

Question and answer session with Melton City Council staff on the Community Panel's task

DATA IN

Questions for staff

DATA OUT

Video recording of Q&A session

WORKSHOP 2

5.00pm – 9.00pm
April 21

Review & refine guiding principles for Financial and Asset Plans

Prioritise Council and Wellbeing Plan draft strategies

Thank you with Mayor and CEO

DATA IN

Draft ideas for financial/asset principles

Draft Council & Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025 strategies

DATA OUT

Principles for financial and asset decisions

Priorities and gaps for Council & Wellbeing Plan

Figure 3. Community panel engagement roadmap

The community panel commenced with a meet and greet session that allowed the panellists to get to know each other and the facilitators, be welcomed by the Mayor, and be provided with important information and context for the tasks ahead of them.

Workshop one started with an overview of the broad community consultation that had already taken place in 2020 to provide context. Information about the draft Community Vision was then provided and the community panel was asked to develop a vision statement and title. Work also commenced on developing guiding principles for the Financial Plan and Asset Plan.

A Q&A session was held next where the community panel could ask questions directly to Council officers to help inform their deliberations; attendance was optional.

Workshop two finalised work on the guiding principles for the Financial Plan and Asset Plan. The second half of the session was devoted to prioritising the Council and Wellbeing Plan strategies. The community panel process concluded by presenting their report of recommendations to Council's Mayor and CEO.

Operating alongside the community panel was an engagement process with Councillors and Council officers to develop the Council and Wellbeing

Plan. The sequencing of workshops aimed to be iterative, with each conversation building on those held previously.

How did the community panel arrive at its recommendations?

The community panel considered a range of materials and heard from several speakers to inform their deliberations. They got to know one another, shared their perspectives and ideas, and worked collaboratively using the information from speakers, background research and their own lived experience.

The community panel was provided with a substantial amount of information to aid them in their tasks prior to each workshop. This was provided via email and the private City of Melton Conversations page. The information was provided as either written documents or video presentations to accommodate different learning styles.

The pre-reading/videos that the community panel was provided to assist their deliberations included:

- Welcome letter from the Mayor
- Overview of services provided by Council
- City of Melton Community Profile
- City of Melton Health and Social Needs Summary

- City of Melton COVID-19 Impacts Summary
- Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework
- Melton City 2036 – The City We Imagine
- Draft Community Vision 2041
- Asset Management 101
- Financial Management 101
- Written responses to the questions arising from workshop one and the Q&A session
- Council and Wellbeing Plan 101
- Council's role in addressing Climate Change.

The presentations from Council officers at the workshops were:

- Overview of the broad community engagement results from 2020 (Robyn Mitchell, Senior Community Engagement Officer)
- Community Vision (Michelle Venne-Rowe, Social Planning Officer)
- Financial Plan (Sam Rumoro, Manager Finance)
- Asset Plan (Mike Johnston, Coordinator Asset Management & GIS)
- Council and Wellbeing Plan (Liz Smith, Project Lead – 2021 Integrated Planning Project).

Additional information was also provided at the Q&A where panellists could ask questions directly to Council officers. This session was recorded for those who were unable to attend and a written response to all questions was provided.

The workshops commenced as a whole group in a plenary session where information and specific context was supplied, and the tasks for each strategic document were explained.

The community panel then worked in small groups to progress the assigned tasks in online breakout rooms. Following the small group work, everyone returned to the plenary session, where a group discussion was facilitated about the work in the breakout rooms. Panellists were then asked to vote on individual components of the task. The voting scale in Figure 4 was used to make decisions as a group; agreement was deemed to be anything above 'Live with it'.

In order for recommendations to be included in the community panel's final report, they must have achieved a majority vote from the community panel, meaning that 80 per cent had to vote 'Live with it' or higher. Recommendations were made at the end of each workshop relevant to the specific task for that session. The final report of recommendations was presented to Council's Mayor and CEO at the end of the final workshop.
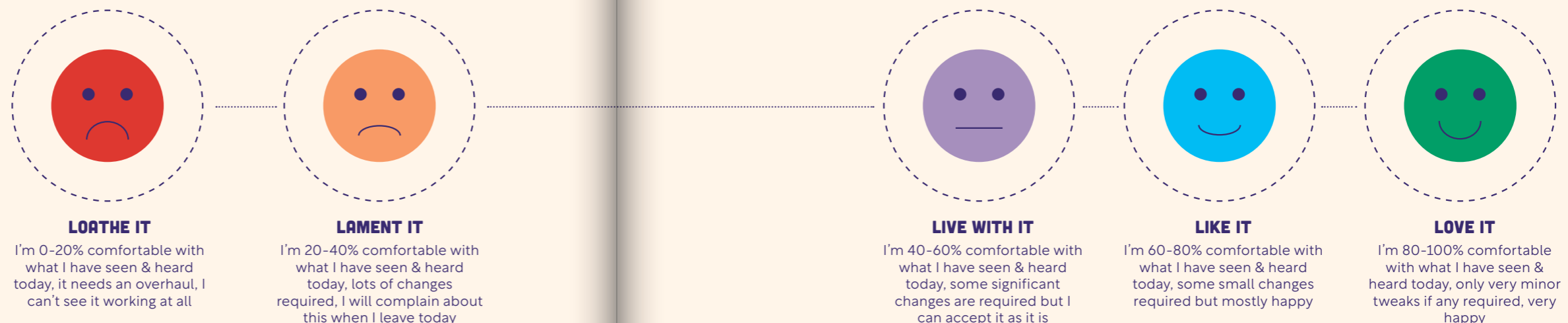
Figure 4. Group decision voting scale

LOATHE IT
I'm 0-20% comfortable with what I have seen & heard today, it needs an overhaul, I can't see it working at all

LAMENT IT
I'm 20-40% comfortable with what I have seen & heard today, lots of changes required, I will complain about this when I leave today

LIVE WITH IT
I'm 40-60% comfortable with what I have seen & heard today, some significant changes are required but I can accept it as it is

LIKE IT
I'm 60-80% comfortable with what I have seen & heard today, some small changes required but mostly happy

LOVE IT
I'm 80-100% comfortable with what I have seen & heard today, only very minor tweaks if any required, very happy

COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO THE COMMUNITY PANEL'S RECOMMENDATIONS

The community panel provided its report of recommendations to Council's Mayor and CEO on 21 April 2021. The report contained ten recommendations.

The community panel also noted 40 suggestions specifically relating to the Council and Wellbeing Plan that were discussed in the online breakout rooms. These suggestions were not voted on by the community panel as a whole and therefore cannot be considered as formal recommendations. However, in illustrating how the community panel's input has been considered by Council, the suggestions have been included in this report.

Council's responses to the community panel's recommendations are listed below and have been categorised by their level of support.

Support in full
Council has taken this recommendation on board without any changes and is included in the adopted document.

Support
Council has partially taken this recommendation on board with some changes and is included in the adopted document.
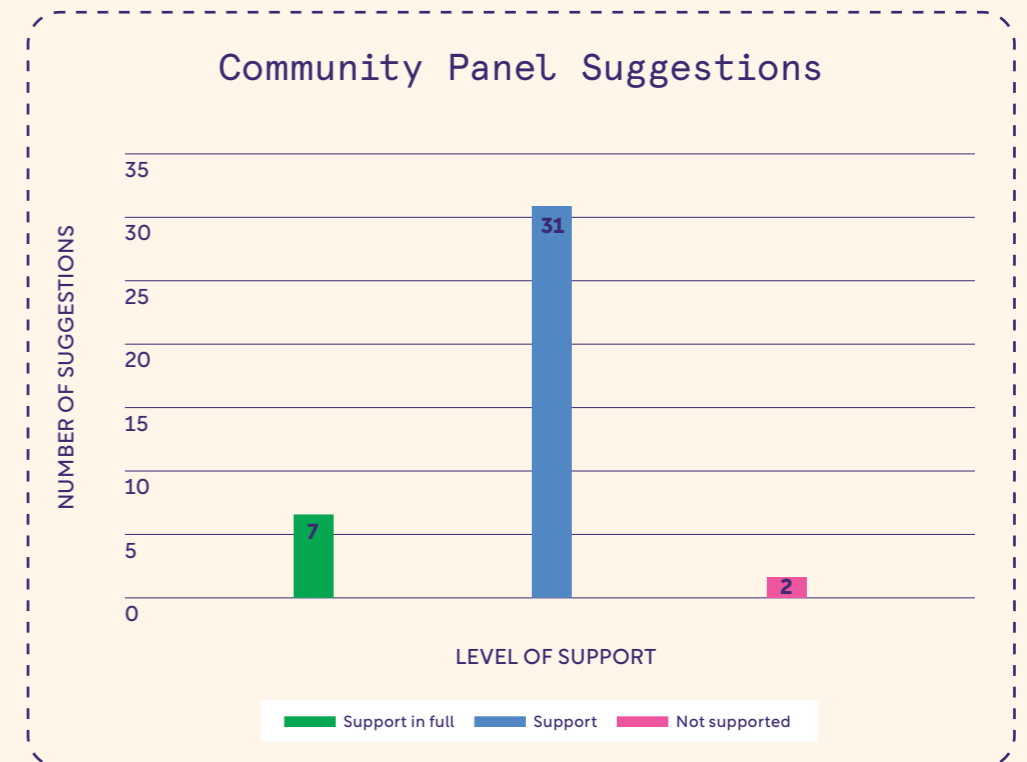
Not supported
Council has not supported this recommendation and it has not been incorporated into the adopted document.

Of the ten recommendations, Council supported three in full (30 per cent) and seven with partial changes (70 per cent).

The additional 40 suggestions for the Council and Wellbeing Plan were also categorised by their level of support. Seven suggestions were supported in full (17.5 per cent), thirty-one supported with partial changes (77.5 per cent) and two were not supported (5 per cent).

Community Panel Recommendations

NUMBER OF RECOMMEDNATIONS

8
7 — 7
6
5
4
3 — 3
2
1
0 — 0

LEVEL OF SUPPORT

■ Support in full ■ Support ■ Not supported
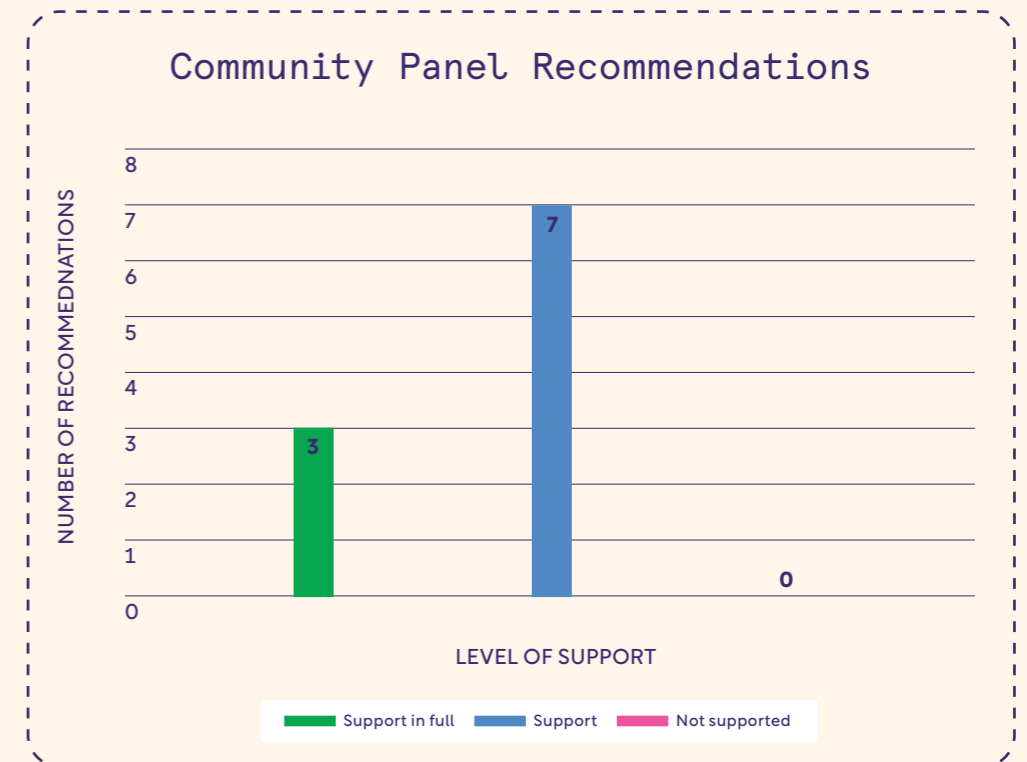
Graph 1. Council's level of support for the community panel's recommendations

Community Panel Suggestions

NUMBER OF SUGGESTIONS

35
30 — 31
25
20
15
10
7 — 7
5
2 — 2
0

LEVEL OF SUPPORT

■ Support in full ■ Support ■ Not supported

Graph 2. Council's level of support for the community panel's suggestions for the Council and Wellbeing Plan

COMMUNITY VISION

The community panel was tasked with writing a vision statement and title for the Community Vision 2041.

Adopted Community Vision available at
melton.vic.gov.au/Council/About-the-City/Community-vision
(see title and page 4)

NUMBER	COMMUNITY PANEL RECOMMENDATION	COUNCIL'S RESPONSE AND OUTCOME
1	The community panel developed two draft vision statements for the Community Vision that were provided to Council officers to merge on their behalf.	**SUPPORT IN FULL** This recommendation resulted in a merged vision statement that is included on page 4 of the Community Vision.
	VERSION 1 In 2041 our community is known for being vibrant and welcoming through encouraging pioneering innovation. Known for being progressive in growth, sustainability and liveability, we promote a health-conscious community that is engaged and creates a sense of belonging that meets the needs of our diverse and evolving region.	'In 2041, our community is vibrant and welcoming. We are actively engaged in our community, we value each other and create a sense of belonging that celebrates our diverse and evolving City together. We are progressive in promoting liveability and sustainability, we nurture our natural environment, and we manage our growth in a way that fosters connection, inclusion and trust.
	VERSION 2 In 2041 our community is: inclusive, progressive, an innovative shire for all to enjoy and bringing a better quality of life by pioneering, world-class educational hub, engaged, belonging, valued, nurture/nurtured, environment, committed, dynamic and engaged community, that is connectiveness, mutual understanding, trust, sustainable and liveability (strongly connected, in a safe and secure environment).	We are a healthy community with abundant quality open spaces and places to support active lifestyles, mental health and wellbeing. We have access to a state of the art hospital and local health and community services. We are known as a learning City and for our pioneering innovation that delivers abundant local employment opportunities.'
2	The community panel recommended that the Community Vision title should be Melton City 2041 – The City We Create. The community panel voted on this title via the City of Melton Conversations portal.	**SUPPORT IN FULL** This recommendation resulted in the title being Melton City 2041 – The City We Create.

FINANCIAL PLAN AND ASSET PLAN

The community panel was tasked with developing guiding principles for the Financial Plan 2021-2031 and Asset Plan 2021-2031. These principles will be used to guide Council's decisions regarding financial and asset management.

Adopted Financial Plan available at
melton.vic.gov.au/Council/About-Council/Council-Plans-and-Budget
(see pages 8-9)

Adopted Asset Plan available at
melton.vic.gov.au/Council/About-Council/Council-Plans-and-Budget
(see pages 14-15)

NUMBER	COMMUNITY PANEL RECOMMENDATION	COUNCIL'S RESPONSE AND OUTCOME
3	**PRINCIPLE 1** Public transport and upgrade future road infrastructure network.	**SUPPORT** This recommendation has been considered in the development of the guiding principle of 'integration'. 'Integration: Council will take an integrated, long-term and transparent approach to planning, and coordinate with and advocate to local, state and federal government.'
4	**PRINCIPLE 2** Maintain existing assets in world class condition, and invest in new, safe and viable assets for the long term benefit of the community.	**SUPPORT** This recommendation has been considered in the development of the guiding principle of 'quality'. 'Quality: Council will deliver services and infrastructure that are safe, sustainable and fit for purpose, and seek to continuously improve them based on community needs and feedback.'
5	**PRINCIPLE 3** Facilities and services for the safety and wellbeing of the community (health services, GPs and education).	**SUPPORT** This recommendation has been considered in the development of the guiding principles of 'health and wellbeing', 'innovation' and 'integration'. 'Health and wellbeing: Council will make decisions that promote community health and wellbeing.' 'Innovation: Council will strive to deliver best-practice and evidence-informed services and infrastructure, invest in technology, and attract new business and services to the City.' 'Integration: Council will take an integrated, long-term and transparent approach to planning, and coordinate with and advocate to local, state and federal government.'

NUMBER	COMMUNITY PANEL RECOMMENDATION	COUNCIL'S RESPONSE AND OUTCOME
6	**PRINCIPLE 4** Subsidies to make new business formation easier and attract new businesses.	**SUPPORT** This recommendation has been considered in the development of the guiding principle of 'innovation'. 'Innovation: Council will strive to deliver best-practice and evidence-informed services and infrastructure, invest in technology, and attract new business and services to the City.'
7	**Principle 5** Ensure sustainability (people, planet and profit).	**SUPPORT** This recommendation has been considered in the development of the guiding principle of 'sustainability'. 'Sustainability: Council will undertake responsible spending and investment to manage financial, social and environmental sustainability.'
8	**Principle 6** An inclusive community for all.	**SUPPORT** This recommendation has been considered in the development of the guiding principles of 'community-focused' and 'equity and inclusion'. 'Community-focused: Council will respond to the diverse and changing needs of the community and make decisions based on these needs.' 'Equity and inclusion: Council will deliver services and infrastructure that are equitable, accessible, and encouraging of community participation.'
9	**Principle 7** Outdoor activities and enjoyment.	**SUPPORT** This recommendation has been considered in the development of the guiding principles of 'equity and inclusion' and 'health and wellbeing'. 'Equity and inclusion: Council will deliver services and infrastructure that are equitable, accessible, and encouraging of community participation.' 'Health and wellbeing: Council will make decisions that promote community health and wellbeing.'

In summary, the adopted principles that will guide Council's decisions regarding financial and asset management are:

1. COMMUNITY–FOCUSED

Council will respond to the diverse and changing needs of the community and make decisions based on these needs.

2. EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Council will deliver services and infrastructure that are equitable, accessible, and encouraging of community participation.

3. QUALITY

Council will deliver services and infrastructure that are safe, sustainable and fit for purpose, and seek to continuously improve them based on community needs and feedback.

4. LEADERSHIP

Council will identify and address changing circumstances, make informed decisions about how to best allocate resources for current and future needs, and seek to provide stability in the financial impact on the community.

5. COMMUNITY VOICES

Council will listen to the perspectives of the community to inform decisions, encourage an open and transparent dialogue, and work to achieve the community's vision as outlined in Melton City 2041 – The City We Create.

6. HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Council will make decisions that promote community health and wellbeing.

7. INNOVATION

Council will strive to deliver best-practice and evidence-informed services and infrastructure, invest in technology, and attract new business and services to the City.

8. SUSTAINABILITY

Council will undertake responsible spending and investment to manage financial, social and environmental sustainability.

9. INTEGRATION

Council will take an integrated, long-term and transparent approach to planning, and coordinate with and advocate to local, state and federal government.

COUNCIL AND WELLBEING PLAN

The community panel was tasked with prioritising the draft strategies for the Council and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025.

In addition to prioritising specific draft strategies, panellists also noted 40 suggestions that were discussed in the online breakout rooms. These suggestions were not voted on by the community panel as a whole and can therefore not be considered as formal recommendations. However, in illustrating how the community panel's input has been considered by Council, the suggestions have been included in this report and categorised by their level of support.

The majority of suggested actions from the community panel were put forward as action areas and feature in the Council Annual Action Plan 2021-2022. The suggestions that do not feature will be considered for inclusion in future action plans during 2022-2025.

Adopted Council and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025 available at
melton.vic.gov.au/Council/About-Council/Council-Plans-and-Budget
(see pages 44 – 57)

Adopted Council Annual Action Plan 2021-2022 available at
melton.vic.gov.au/Council/About-Council/Council-Plans-and-Budget

NUMBER	COMMUNITY PANEL RECOMMENDATION	COUNCIL'S RESPONSE AND OUTCOME
10	Prioritise the following strategies if not all the draft strategies can be delivered over the next four years: 1.1.1 1.2.1 1.2.3 1.3.3 1.4.2 1.5.1 2.2.1 2.3.1 2.3.2 2.3.3 2.4.1 2.4.2 2.4.4 3.1.2 3.2.3 3.3.1 3.3.2 3.3.4 3.3.5 3.4.1 3.4.2 3.4.3 3.4.5 4.1.1 4.2.1 4.2.3 4.2.4 4.3.2 4.4.1 4.4.4 5.1.3 5.2.1 5.3.2 1.3.5*	**SUPPORT IN FULL** These recommended draft strategies are all included in the adopted Plan. Please note that these strategy numbers may differ from the draft Plan that was presented at the community panel workshop. *Strategy 1.3.5 was 1.1.5 in the draft Plan. It was originally worded as 'invest in intercultural celebrations and events' and has been reworded to 'invest in festivals and celebrations in partnership with the community and local business'.

SUGGESTIONS

NUMBER	COMMUNITY PANEL SUGGESTION	COUNCIL'S RESPONSE AND OUTCOME
1	Need to promote and recognise the First Nation peoples of Australia – other countries show respect and educate the community about their extensive beliefs, stories etc.	**SUPPORT IN FULL** This suggestion is reflected in strategy 1.5.1.
2	Lots of missing areas around safety – how do we promote a safe community, safe personal space and a safe environment?	**SUPPORT** This suggestion has been put forward as an action area under strategy 1.2.1.
3	The focus on family violence should be more on equality between all people as this is the major way to reduce/stop violence.	**SUPPORT IN FULL** This suggestion is reflected in strategy 1.1.1.
4	Council makes it hard to do a cultural celebration or event because of red tape and paperwork.	**SUPPORT** This suggestion has been put forward as an action area under strategy 1.3.5.
5	Extending opening hours at Caroline Springs Police Station to 24 hour operation. Increase staff resources within the Caroline Springs Police Station as well as throughout City of Melton to accommodate the needs of the increasing population.	**SUPPORT** This suggestion has been put forward as an advocacy action area under strategy 1.2.3.
6	Tackle ignorance of different cultures and groups – need programs to help understand each other with availability of information about different cultures and groups.	**SUPPORT** This suggestion is reflected in strategy 1.1.2.
7	Post COVID-19 there will be a need for socialising to reduce feelings of isolation, rise in mental health issues and rise in domestic violence.	**SUPPORT IN FULL** This suggestion is reflected in strategies 1.3.2, 1.3.3, 1.4.2 and 1.4.4.
8	Due to COVID-19 restrictions, mental health has been an ongoing issue so work should be done in this space.	**SUPPORT IN FULL** This suggestion is reflected in strategy 1.4.2.
9	Reword strategy 1.2.1 'improve perceptions of safety by engaging and supporting the community to address concerns' and remove the words 'perceptions of safety'.	**SUPPORT IN FULL** This suggestion is reflected in strategy 1.2.1 and now reads 'invest in initiatives that promote road and community safety'.
10	Make grey water compulsory in all new developments.	**SUPPORT** Noting that Council can only advocate to water authorities and retailers on this issue, this suggestion is reflected in strategies 2.3.2 and 2.4.2.
11	Provide an incentive to assist people to use recycled water.	**SUPPORT** This suggestion has been put forward as an advocacy action area under strategy 2.4.2.

NUMBER	COMMUNITY PANEL SUGGESTION	COUNCIL'S RESPONSE AND OUTCOME
12	Encourage a 'circular' economy, for instance availability of mulch (derived from green waste bins), provided to residents at low or no cost.	**SUPPORT** This suggestion has been put forward as an action area under strategy 2.4.1.
13	Provision of a plant swap e.g. once a month at the recycling centre whereby residents swap/donate any unwanted plants/greenery.	**SUPPORT** This suggestion has been put forward as an action area under strategy 2.4.1.
14	Fire management on smaller scale to protect the City of Melton against fire vulnerability.	**SUPPORT** This suggestion has been put forward as an action area under strategy 2.2.1.
15	More conservation and restoration of public land in the City of Melton.	**SUPPORT** This suggestion is reflected in strategies 2.1.3, 2.1.4, 2.2.4 and 2.3.4.
16	Consider mechanical disposal of waste to produce sustainable energy sources.	**SUPPORT** This suggestion has been put forward as an action area under strategy 2.4.4.
17	Incorporation of renewable energy sources, urban farming and community gardens.	**SUPPORT** This suggestion has been put forward as an advocacy action area under strategies 2.3.2 and 2.4.1.
18	More incorporation of sustainability in current urban designs and planning.	**SUPPORT IN FULL** This suggestion is reflected in strategy 2.3.3.
19	Promote cost to household of using recycled water.	**SUPPORT** This suggestion has been put forward as an advocacy action area under strategy 2.4.2.
20	Minimise the amount of wasted drinking water through the use of recycled water in certain facilities such as factories.	**SUPPORT** While Council cannot mandate the use of recycled water, this is a key advocacy action contained in the Integrated Water Management Plan 2018-2028. In addition, this suggestion is supported by strategy 2.4.2 which seeks to maximise the use of alternative water sources and reduce Council's reliance on potable water.
21	Ensure that 'Green Belt' considerations are made between suburbs, not to be developed commercially or residentially.	**NOT SUPPORTED** The landuse planning framework for the City of Melton is guided by the Western Growth Corridor Plan and approved Precinct Structure Plans prepared by the State Government. These plans set out the land uses for new suburbs and do not make provision for 'Green Belts' between suburbs.

NUMBER	COMMUNITY PANEL SUGGESTION	COUNCIL'S RESPONSE AND OUTCOME
22	Internet connectivity is poor throughout the City of Melton - need for all businesses and working from home.	**SUPPORT** This suggestion has been put forward as an advocacy action area under strategies 3.3.3 and 4.4.5.
23	Better road planning for new development areas and associated traffic congestion.	**SUPPORT** This suggestion is reflected in strategies 3.4.1 and 3.4.3.
24	There needs to be more safe walking areas.	**SUPPORT** This suggestion is reflected in strategy 3.4.5.
25	Consider higher density living arrangements (townhouses/low-rise apartment blocks) in order to accommodate the increasing population levels as it is not sustainable for all future 300,000 residents to build a single storey property on a block of land.	**SUPPORT** The City of Melton Housing Diversity Strategy guides the location of housing growth within the existing areas of the municipality. It identifies the focus of higher density residential development such as townhouses and apartment blocks to areas around the Melton and Caroline Springs Activity Centres and the Principal Public Transport Network. This suggestion is supported by strategy 3.3.2.
26	Advocate for more public transport, in particular electric trains.	**SUPPORT IN FULL** This suggestion has been put forward as an advocacy action area under strategy 3.4.1.
27	Bike/walking tracks to be well lit to ensure health and safety of the community.	**SUPPORT** This suggestion has been put forward as an action area under strategy 3.4.4.
28	Encourage existing/new agricultural operations between suburbs to ensure healthy environments around the residential areas.	**SUPPORT** The City of Melton has two green wedges – Western Plains North and Western Plains South which encourage the development of existing/new agricultural operations. This suggestion is supported by strategies 4.1.1 and 4.1.2.
29	Ensure secondary education includes multiple trade training options (electrical, plumbing, carpentry etc.), not only academic education.	**SUPPORT** This suggestion has been put forward as an advocacy action area under strategies 4.2.3 and 4.4.4.
30	Ensure that the employment focus is long term, not only short-term projects/incentives.	**SUPPORT** This suggestion is reflected under objectives 4.1 and 4.3.
31	Develop top rank secondary schools.	**SUPPORT** This suggestion has been put forward as an advocacy action area under strategy 4.2.1.

NUMBER	COMMUNITY PANEL SUGGESTION	COUNCIL'S RESPONSE AND OUTCOME
32	Attract universities into the City of Melton to attract infrastructure and international students to contribute to local economy.	**SUPPORT** This suggestion has been put forward as an advocacy action area under strategy 4.2.3.
33	Encourage local business to tender for Council services and projects.	**SUPPORT** This suggestion is in part reflected under strategies 4.1.1 and 4.1.2 noting that Council has to comply with strict procurement procedures.
34	Developer contributions could go towards development of employment pathways and local business employers.	**NOT SUPPORTED** This suggestion cannot be supported by Council because developer contributions are governed by legislation and are collected for the delivery of physical infrastructure such as community centres, roads and active open space.
35	Support all people, regardless of gender, in their areas of interests. Women are not able to use the Men's Shed and women are capable and able to use saws, drills etc. Equally, men need to be supported to access cooking classes.	**SUPPORT** This suggestion has been put forward as an action area under strategy 4.4.1.
36	Encourage local medium and large businesses to encourage their staff to be actively involved in local volunteering.	**SUPPORT** This suggestion has been put forward as an action area under strategy 5.3.2.
37	Create a community billboard, website, social media platform to update the community on what is going on to increase the transparency of Council.	**SUPPORT** This suggestion has been put forward as an action area under strategies 5.1.3 and 6.3.3.
38	Provide an online presence to connect people that are geographically far but within the same municipality.	**SUPPORT** This suggestion has been put forward as an action area under strategies 5.2.2 and 5.2.3.
39	Provide low cost access to Council/ community buildings for groups.	**SUPPORT** This suggestion has been put forward as an action area under strategy 1.3.4.
40	Provide a list of what organisations or groups are in the City of Melton where locals can volunteer.	**SUPPORT** This suggestion has been put forward as an action area under strategies 5.3.1 and 5.3.3.

FEEDBACK FROM THE COMMUNITY PANEL

The community panel was surveyed at the commencement and conclusion of the deliberative engagement process. The aim of the surveys was to understand the community panel's experience of the process and how being involved had shaped their attitudes towards Council. Given that this was the first time that Council has undertaken a process like this, the community panel's feedback will be used to strengthen future deliberative engagement processes.

Survey results at the commencement of the process showed a low level of confidence that Council would implement the community panel's recommendations (42 per cent 'somewhat confident' or above). By the end of the process this had risen to 100 per cent. A similar result was recorded for how accountable community panel members felt Council was as an organisation, with only 50 per cent rating Council 'somewhat accountable' or higher at the commencement of the process. This also rose to 100 per cent by the end of the process.

How confident are you that the recommendations from the community panel will be implemented by Council?

Graph 3. The community panel's level of confidence in Council implementing their recommendations

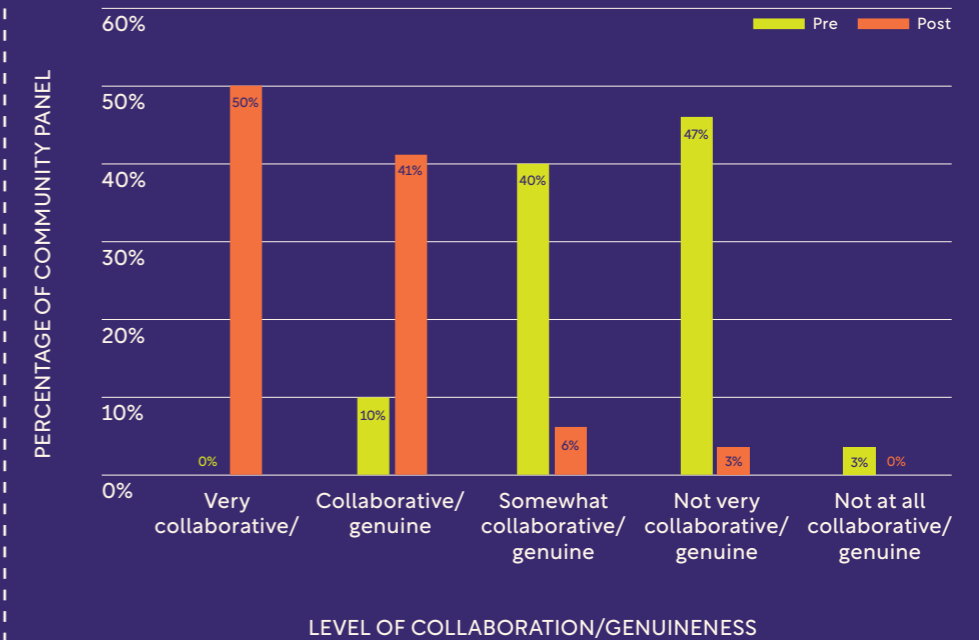## How accountable do you think Council is as an organisation?

PERCENTAGE OF COMMUNITY PANEL

Legend: ▇ Pre ▇ Post

	Pre	Post
Very accountable	0%	29%
Accountable	10%	39%
Somewhat accountable	40%	32%
Not very accountable	50%	0%
Not at all accountable	3%	0%

LEVEL OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Graph 4. The community panel's perspective on how accountable Council is

How collaborative and genuine have Council's engagement activities been?

PERCENTAGE OF COMMUNITY PANEL

Legend: ▇ Pre ▇ Post

	Pre	Post
Very collaborative/genuine	0%	50%
Collaborative/genuine	10%	41%
Somewhat collaborative/genuine	40%	6%
Not very collaborative/genuine	47%	3%
Not at all collaborative/genuine	3%	0%

LEVEL OF COLLABORATION/GENUINENESS

Graph 5. The community panel's perspective on how collaborative and genuine Council is

The community panel was also asked to assess how collaborative or genuine they felt Council's engagement activities had been previously. This recorded a result of 53.3 per cent for 'somewhat collaborative or genuine' or above. Panellists were then asked to rate how collaborative or genuine they felt this process had been. An overwhelming 96.9 per cent rated it 'somewhat collaborative or genuine' or higher – with 50 per cent rating the process as 'very collaborative or genuine' and 40.6 per cent rating it 'collaborative or genuine' which is the highest result for all aspects surveyed.

The deliberative engagement process also appears to have impacted on panellists' desire to be more involved in Council decision making processes. When surveyed at the commencement, only 26.3 per cent rated themselves as 'somewhat involved' or higher. By the end of the process, this had risen to 100 per cent, with 15.6 per cent predicting they would become 'very involved' and 71.9 per cent stating they would become 'involved' in Council decision making processes.

## Interest in being involved in Council decision-making
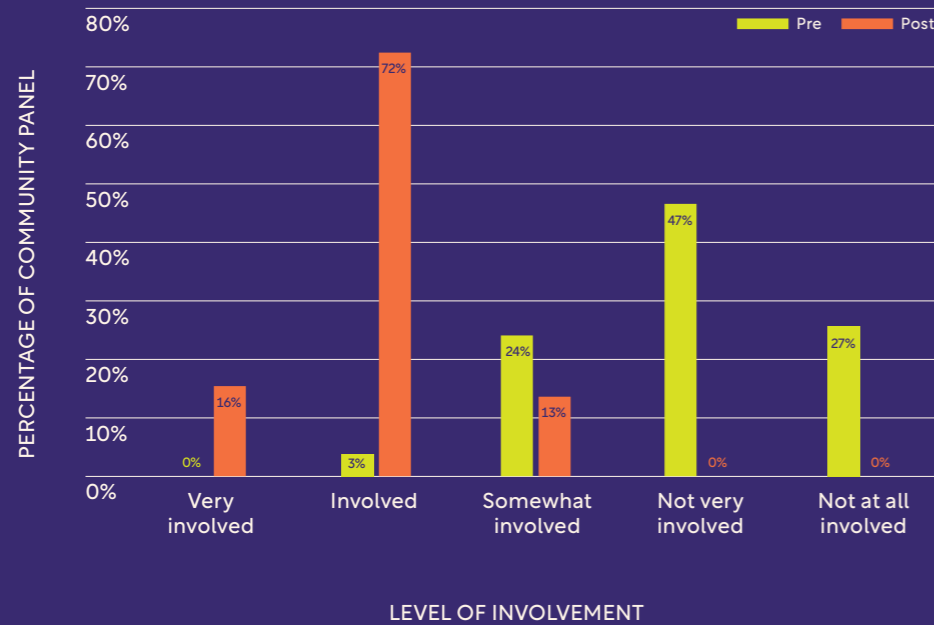
Graph 6. Community panel's interest level in being involved in Council decision-making

All results indicate that the deliberative engagement process had a positive impact on the attitudes of panellists towards Council and its engagement, as well as contributing to their desire to become more actively engaged residents.

When asked about the length of the process, more than half (56.3 per cent) stated it was 'about right'. One-third of the community panel (34.4 per cent) felt the process was too short.

In an open text question, panellists were asked whether they had suggestions for improving the process. The most common responses were:

- the panellists very much enjoyed the community panel process and being given the opportunity to contribute to their community in this way

- have a single topic or focus per session as it was difficult for panellists to transition from one task to the next within a single session

- make the pre-reading available earlier or find ways to break down the text heavy information into sizeable chunks

- have more time devoted to deliberating on the topics at hand

- have shorter online sessions as it was noted that these can be very draining, especially at the end of a workday

- hold future workshops in person as it was felt there would have been greater engagement face-to-face

- have more opportunity to discuss things as a whole group, rather than just breakout rooms.
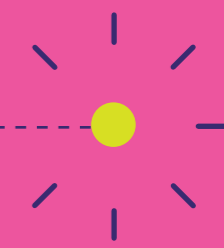
SUMMARY

The community panel was a positive way for Council to work with the community to consider what the aspirations for the growing City of Melton will be in 2041 and what Council should prioritise and resource in order to get there.

The deliberative engagement process led to valuable contributions to the Community Vision, Financial Plan, Asset Plan, and Council and Wellbeing Plan, and built the community panel's confidence in Council through increased engagement, transparency and accountability.

The establishment of the community panel met Council's legislative requirements under the *Local Government Act 2020* to apply deliberative engagement practices to the development of these strategic documents. The engagement process was intended to not just fulfil the legislative requirements but to also offer opportunities for greater dialogue between Councillors, Council officers and community.

The community panel considered relevant facts from multiple points of view, identified options, and put forward ten recommendations for Council to consider as well as an additional 40 suggestions. The expectation was that Council would implement the community panel's recommendations to the greatest extent possible. All the community panel's recommendations were supported by Council, with three supported in full and seven supported with partial changes. Of the additional 40 suggestions for the Council and Wellbeing Plan, seven were supported in full, thirty-one supported with partial changes and two were not supported.

This was the first time that Council had undertaken a deliberative engagement process like this. This process demonstrated that hearing from a range of perspectives strengthens decision-making, while encouraging ownership and belonging from all sections of the community. Furthermore, it ensured transparency, integrity and trust in Council processes.

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