

Your Yarra: Our Future

Engagement Report

Results of Stage 2 – broad
community engagement



Yarra City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as the Traditional Owners and true sovereigns of the land now known as Yarra. We also acknowledge the significant contributions made by other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to life in Yarra. We pay our respects to Elders from all nations and to their Elders past, present and future.

About the project

From November 2020 to January 2021 we ran an extensive community engagement project, Your Yarra: Our Future. This engagement will inform and support our long-term strategic planning, including Yarra's first-ever Community Vision. Here's an overview of what we did, who we heard from and what we heard.

About Your Yarra: Our Future

The purpose of Your Yarra: Our Future was to gather a snapshot of community views and to get a sense of what our community values most. We wanted to know what our community believes are the most important issues that we are facing into the future and to understand where views differ between different parts of the community.

This stage of community engagement will help inform a range of important council strategies, planning and decision making. These include, but aren't limited to, the four-year Council Plan and Financial Plan (10-year) and Asset Plan (10-year).

What does the process look like?

In the consultation stage of the engagement we are ensuring that all voices in our community can participate, be well informed and supported along the way.

The next stage of the project is the community panel process. This involves a panel of community members who are representative of Yarra's population. The panel will come together, over several sessions, to explore the issues and themes that have been raised in the first stages of the project.

This engagement will show a range of perspectives on different issues and values within our community. It will also help to raise questions at the next stage of the project when the representative community panel comes together to create the community vision.

Yarra's first-ever long-term Community Vision is the most exciting goal that we are working towards, and one that will have a real impact on the future of our city. This vision will be created by the community, for the community.

*The data we provide in this report was coded and analysed by the independent research company Metropolis Research Pty. Ltd.

Project timeline

Internal research and information gathering Stage 1 May to October 2020	Broad community engagement Stage 2 November 2020 to January 2021	A representative community panel deliberates Stage 3 Across four weeks in May 2021
Research, information gathering and planning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather information on what we've already heard from the community. • Determine questions that may help to inform the strategies and deliberation in Stage 3. • Identify the different types of community stakeholders to ensure we have broad representation. • Identify the information and supports that help our community to be able to participate in an informed and meaningful way (especially through COVID-19). 	Talking to our diverse community to get a sense of their priorities, needs and values: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using a range of communications and platforms to reach different groups and overcome barriers related to COVID-19. This included: outdoor advertising, social media, community ambassadors, translations, interpreter services radio ads and letterbox drops. • Mixing online and in-person opportunities to engage. • Adapting methods to suit groups with different needs. • Providing extra information to encourage long term, big picture thinking. 	A randomly selected panel of community members additional information and details to develop a long-term Vision for Yarra: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A relatively large panel of at least 60 participants. • The panel will be selected by an independent organisation to match Yarra's population by suburb, home ownership or renting situation, age group, and language and cultural backgrounds. • Across four weeks the group will listen to information, get to know and understand the range of perspectives and work together on the details that will go into Yarra's community vision.
The final outcome The community vision, key focus areas and high-level priorities to guide council's strategic planning.		

How we communicated

Spreading the word

We used a variety of online, in person, hard copy and creative approaches to reach our community.



social media



word of mouth



Yarra websites



Yarra Life/ emails



direct SMS



radio ads



outdoor ads



Yarra News



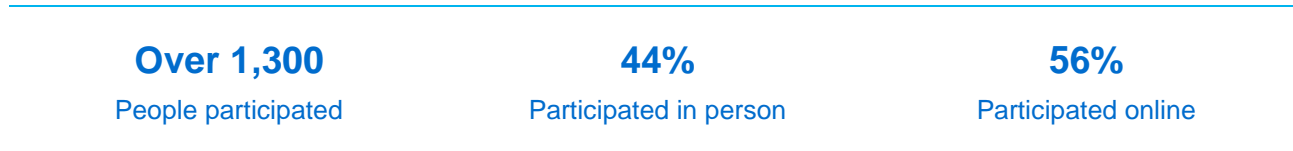
postcard delivery

Encouraging participation

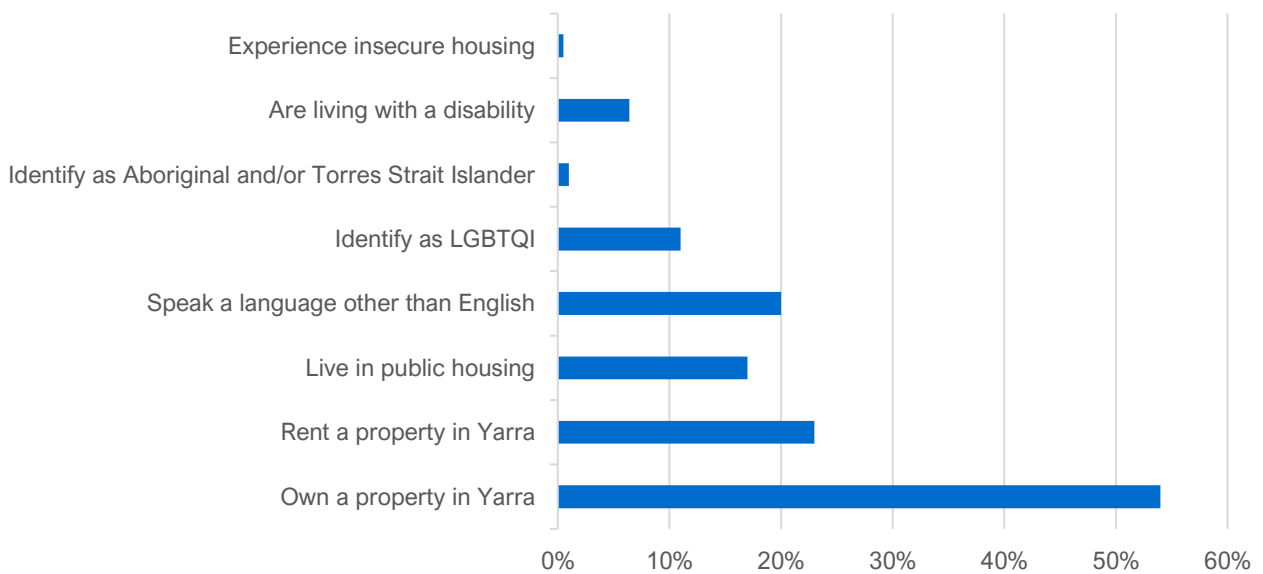
People engaged directly through CALD outreach	120
Cultural and Youth ambassadors	10
Promotional and feedback materials	10 languages
Videos in community languages	10
In person pop-up events	9
Online workshop	1
Public housing community events	2
English as second language classes	3
Kindergarten aged children engaged	40
School holiday programs	3
Young adults through youth services	50

Who we heard from

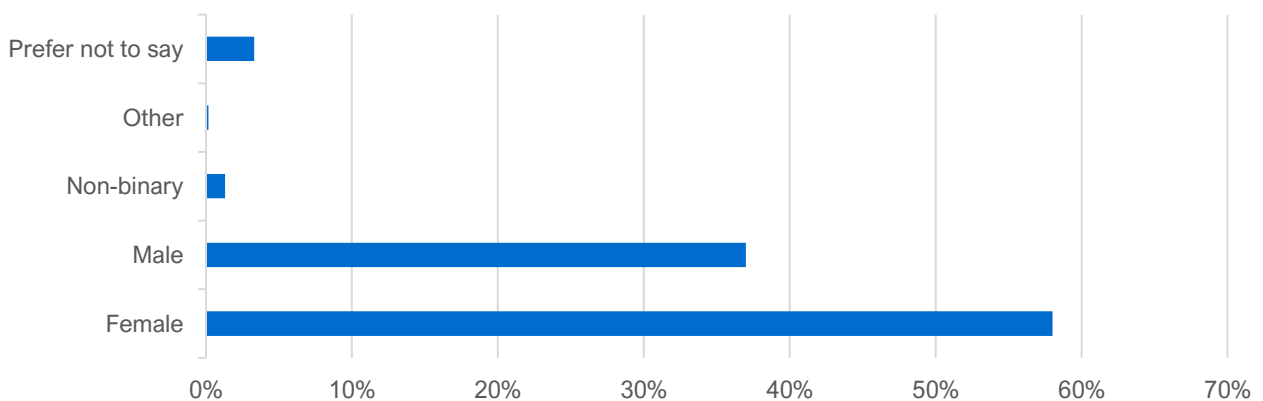
The numbers



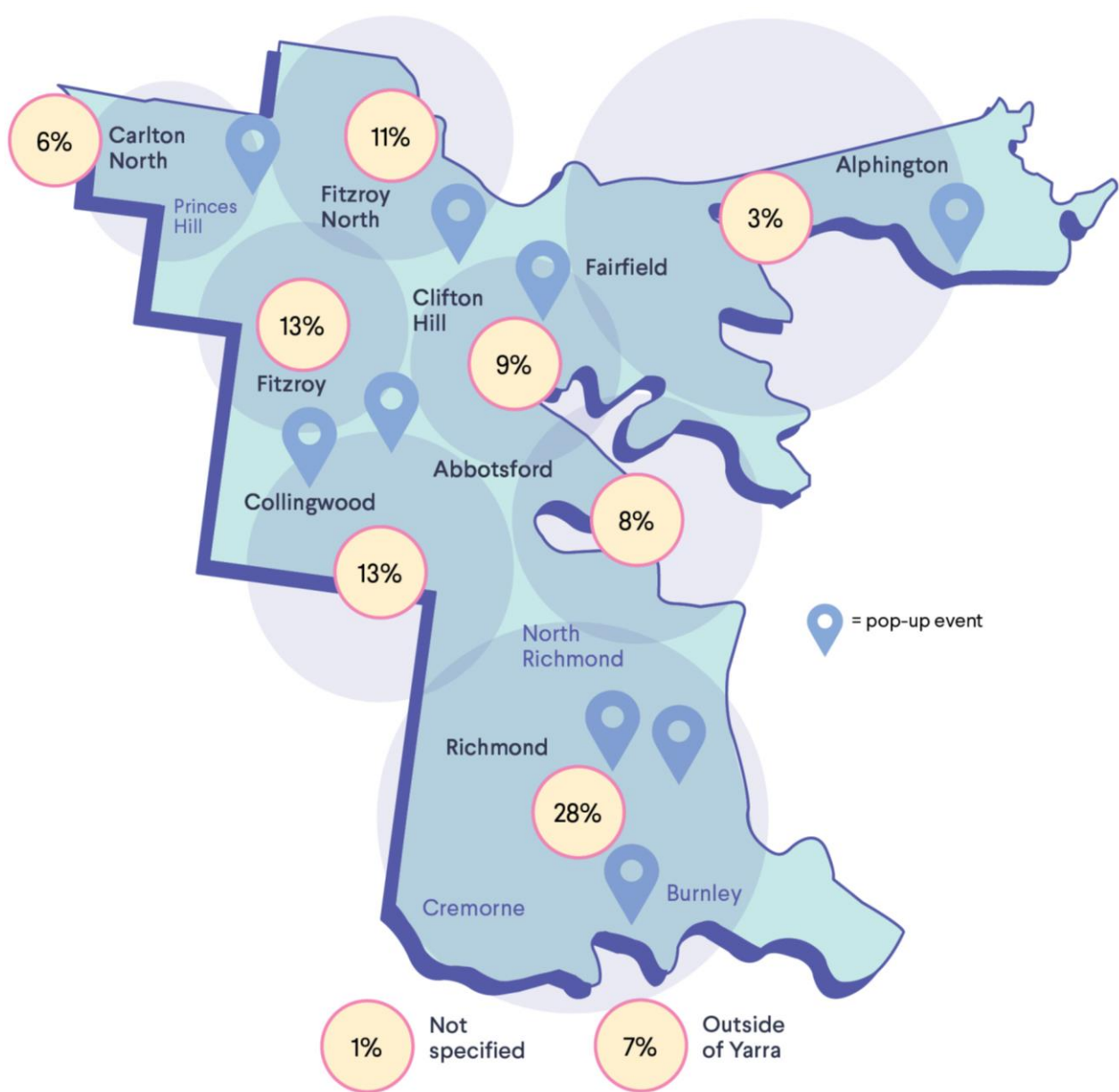
Diversity of voices



Participation by gender



Participation by location



What we heard

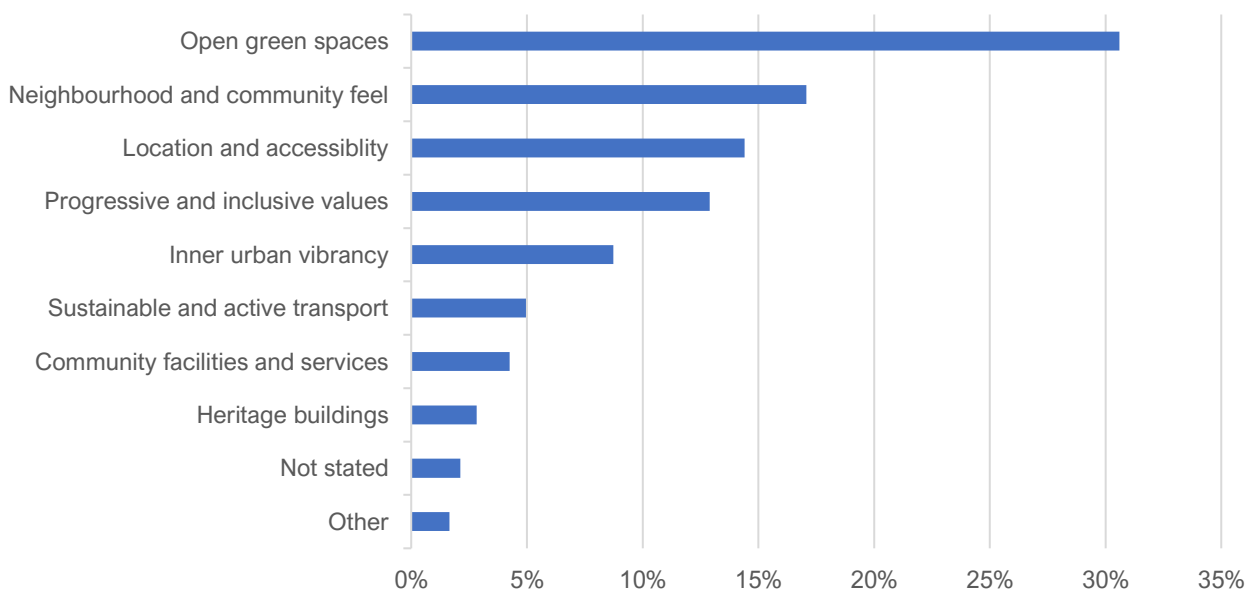
Three simple questions

These three questions aimed to capture a broad sense of what people really value in Yarra, where people would like to see change or improvement, and what action might be needed for a great future Yarra.

1. Right now, what do you love about Yarra? What makes it special?
2. Right now, what should Yarra stop doing?
3. What needs to happen for Yarra to be the best it can be in 2035?

Question 1: Right now, what do you love about Yarra? What makes it special?

Top 10 responses



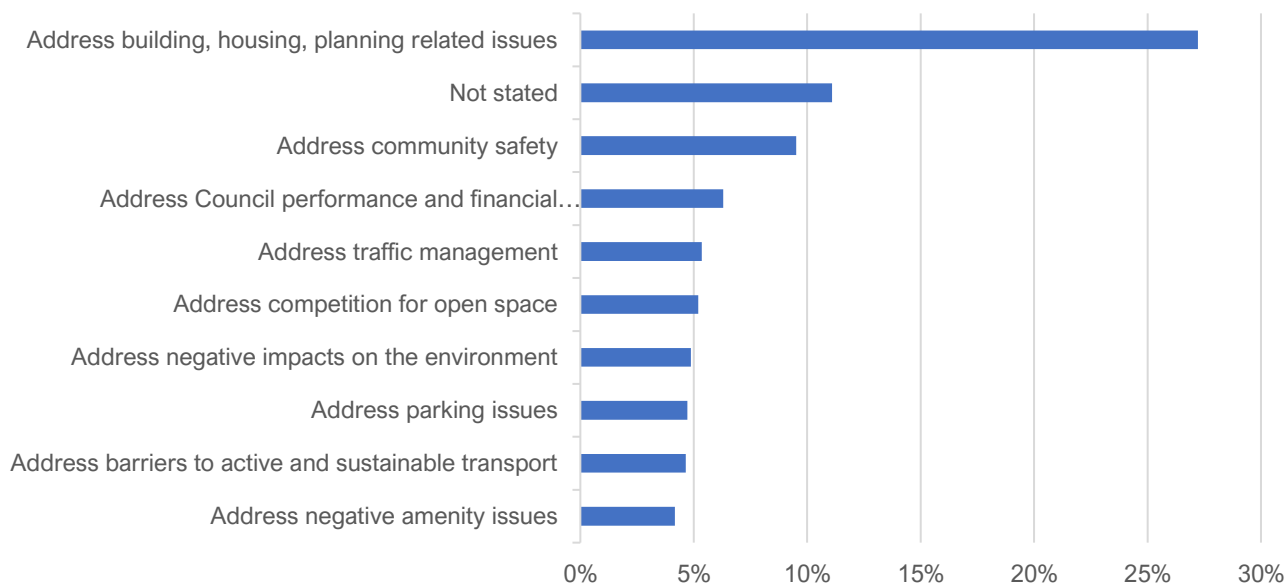
Sample responses

- “The fact that there is so many wonderful green spaces in an inner-city location (Clifton Hill resident).”
- “The diversity: people from a hundred national backgrounds; Victorian terraces to modern apartments; city streets to eucalypt woodlands; every kind of activity and endeavour; all held together by our mutual respect and kindness.”
- “A very tolerant, empathetic, kind and welcoming community that celebrates diversity. More so than anywhere else in the world that I've seen.”
- “The community feel, it doesn't have big skyscrapers or massive apartment buildings. It feels homely, and it's also got beautiful open spaces.”
- “The beautiful brown Yarra river is at the end of my street.”

Question 2: What should Yarra stop doing?

Top 10 responses

Note: responses are expressed in the positive, 'Yarra should stop' is expressed as 'Yarra should address'.

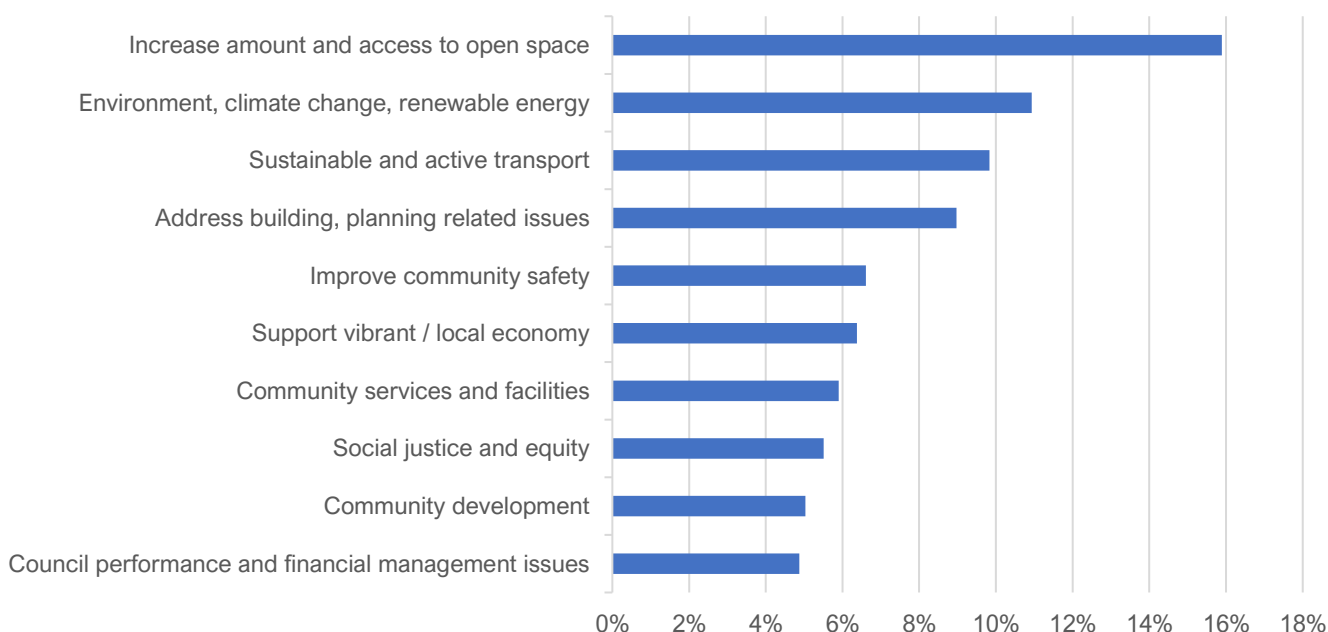


Sample responses

- "Allowing mass development with little regard for environment, encroachment on the river bank, no regard to architectural merit."
- "Permitting the building of huge apartment blocks without apparent equivalent investment in community infrastructure / public transport."
- "Development isn't always bad, as it can make the areas more accessible to more people."
- "We must stop allowing cars to park on our high streets. We need to give space back to cycle lanes, more pedestrian and dining space, greenery, pop-up spaces for arts, food trucks etc. We must be smarter and move beyond this car-centred thinking."
- "Sending so much to landfill."

Question 3: What's one thing that can make Yarra the best it can be in 2035?

Top 10 responses



Sample responses

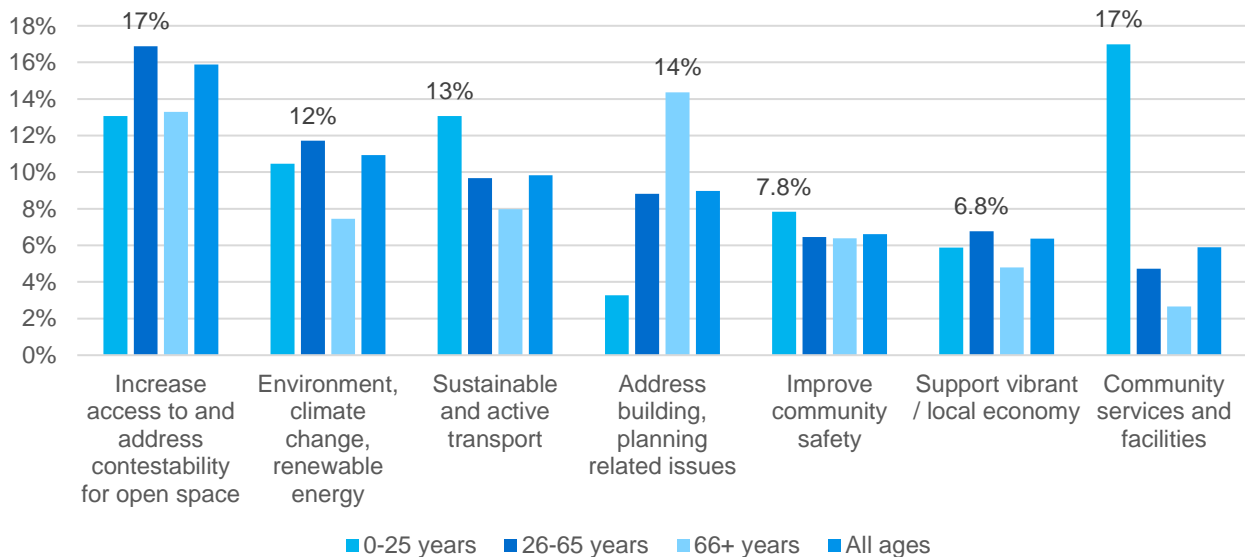
- “More diversity and density (smaller/cheaper houses).”
- “Encourage more single vendors and less chain/franchisees and address the noise and mess from nighttime businesses.”
- “Up its environmental game, i.e. more trees, less cars, more bikes, renewable energy.”
- “Plan for climate change - focus on increasing shade, planting greenery, promoting fewer cars. Commit to using power from renewable source.”
- “Lively restaurant strips. Bridge Rd & Vic St need help.”

How are we different?

We're not all the same in Yarra. That's what makes us great! Part of the research involved finding out where our future priorities might be different according to our age, where we live and how we live.

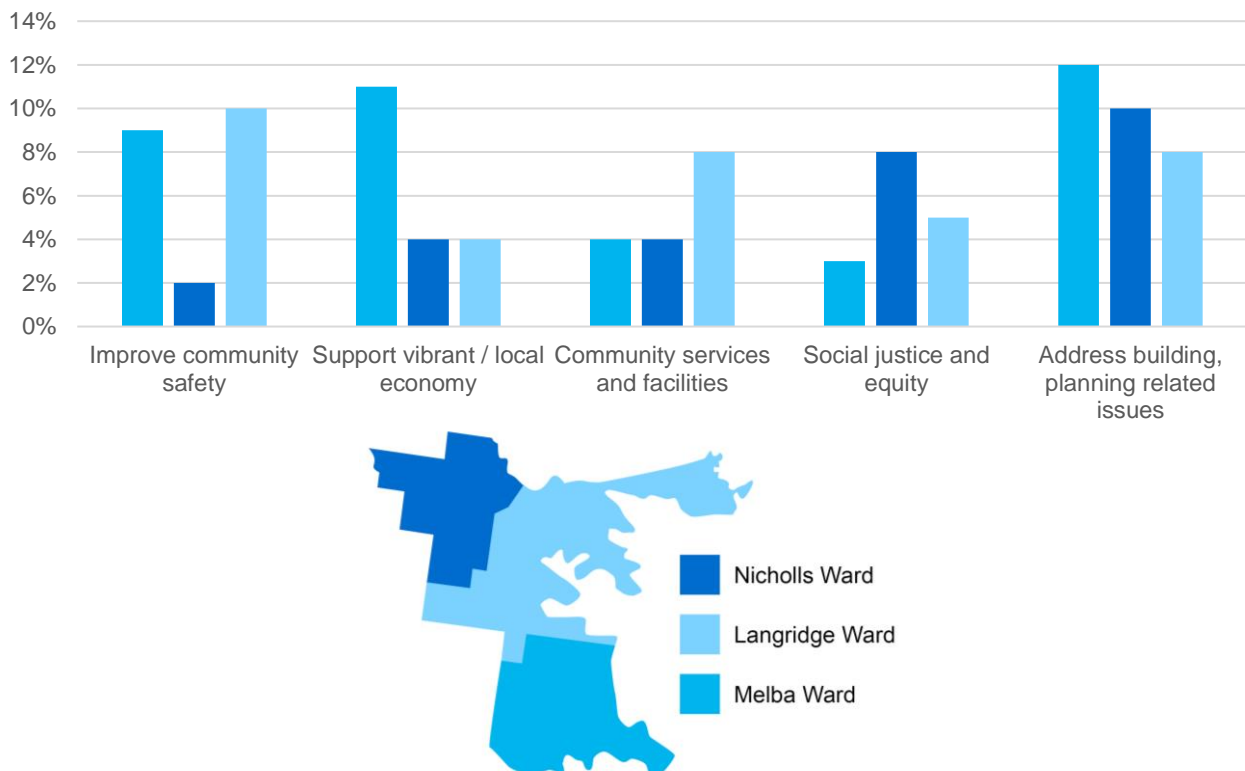
Question 1: What's one thing that can make Yarra the best it can be by 2035?

How do we differ by age group?



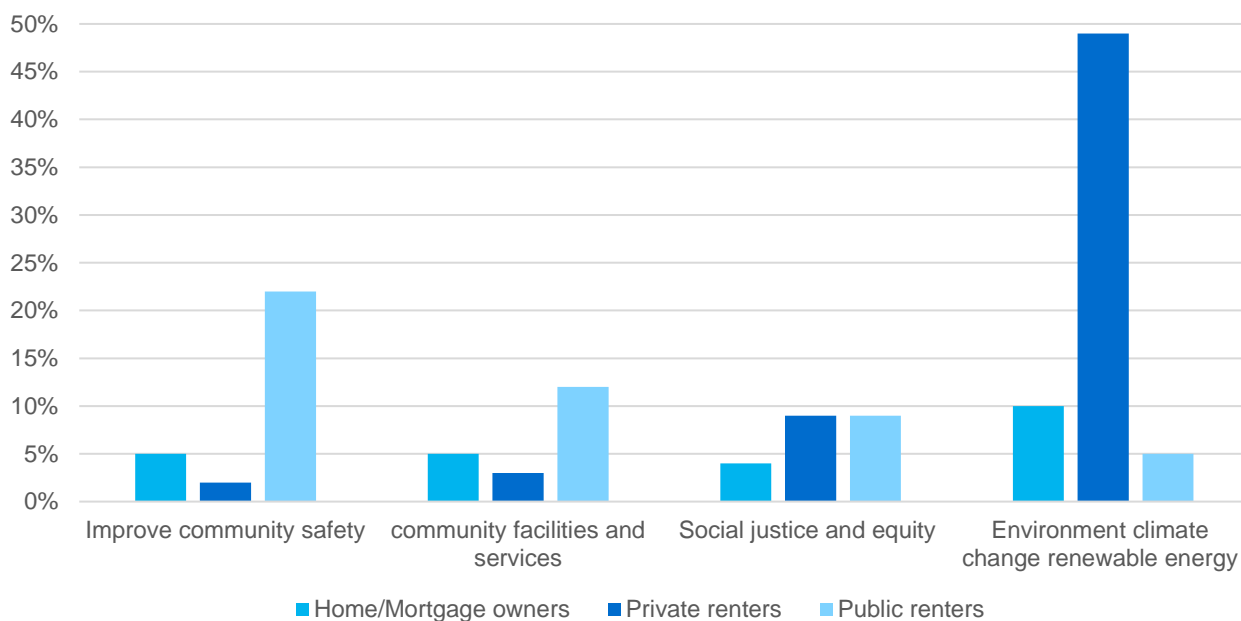
Question 3: What's one thing that can make Yarra the best it can be by 2035?

How do we differ by location? These areas represent the Council wards in Yarra: Melba (in the south of Yarra), Nicholls (in the north) and Langridge (in central Yarra).



Question 3: What's one thing that can make Yarra the best it can be by 2035?


How do we differ by how we live?



Exploring issues and themes

We asked community participants to consider questions relating to 5 themes. This was done in order to address some challenges that are unique to Yarra.

We also wanted to test community sentiment on issues relating to future planning on services, asset management and financial management.

Resilience	What makes a great community in the face of change and uncertainty?	
Our people	How do we make sure we look after everyone in our community?	
Spaces and places	Who uses Council's buildings and assets now and in 2035?	
Sharing our streets	How do we create streets that work for everyone?	
We're different	How do we protect our diverse economy and community?	

Resilience and change



Thinking about

- What lessons did we learn from COVID-19 for the future?
- Role of Council, community, and anybody else in addressing/ adapting to climate change?
- Our point of truth, and who has access to it? English as a first language or only people who have access to the internet?
- Can technology improve our neighbourhoods and lives?
- Does everybody have access to technology that we now use every day and are they able to use it?

We asked

Environment and sustainability

We asked how much you agreed with this statement using a slider scale with the two statements at either end. Responses are grouped here into seven categories.

“We should actively invest in measures that promote environmental sustainability and respond to the climate emergency.”



60.4%	Completely agree – individuals can't act alone
10.8%	Mostly agree
19.4%	Somewhat agree
0.8%	Not sure
4%	Somewhat disagree
1.3%	Mostly disagree
2.7%	I completely disagree – it's up to individuals

Adapting to new technology

We asked how much you agreed with this statement using a slider scale with the two statements at either end. Responses are grouped here into seven categories.

“We should support everybody with access to the internet and technology as they continue to change how we live.”

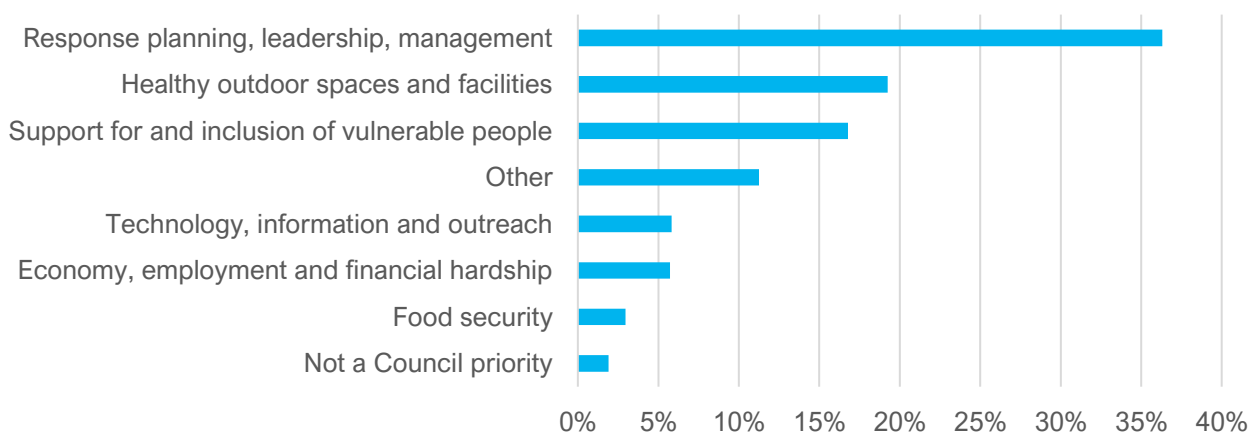


45%	I completely agree – some people need help with this
13%	Mostly agree
31.6%	Somewhat agree
1.2%	Not sure
5.2%	Somewhat disagree
1.1%	Mostly disagree
3.3%	I completely disagree – it's up to individuals

Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic

COVID-19 has greatly impacted our health and wellbeing. So, we asked:

“What could be done better in the future if we had another pandemic?”



Sample comments on COVID-19 and resilience

- “Connecting each other – a buddy system with people who have resources to give.”
- “More visual information especially for older residents on the help Council provides during a crisis.”
- “More virtual/ online opportunities for people to connect.”
- “It was a state issue that Councils had to respond to. I believe there was a pretty good response.”
- “Reduce inequality. One thing the pandemic has shown is nobody is safe until everybody is safe. Encourage community gardens and spaces especially for our apartment dwellers.”

Our people



Thinking about

- By 2035, our population will grow by almost 40,000 people (that's a 40% increase).
- Who we are and how we live will change (increase in renters and apartment living).
- We have a few interesting health and wellbeing challenges – information provided in fact sheets.

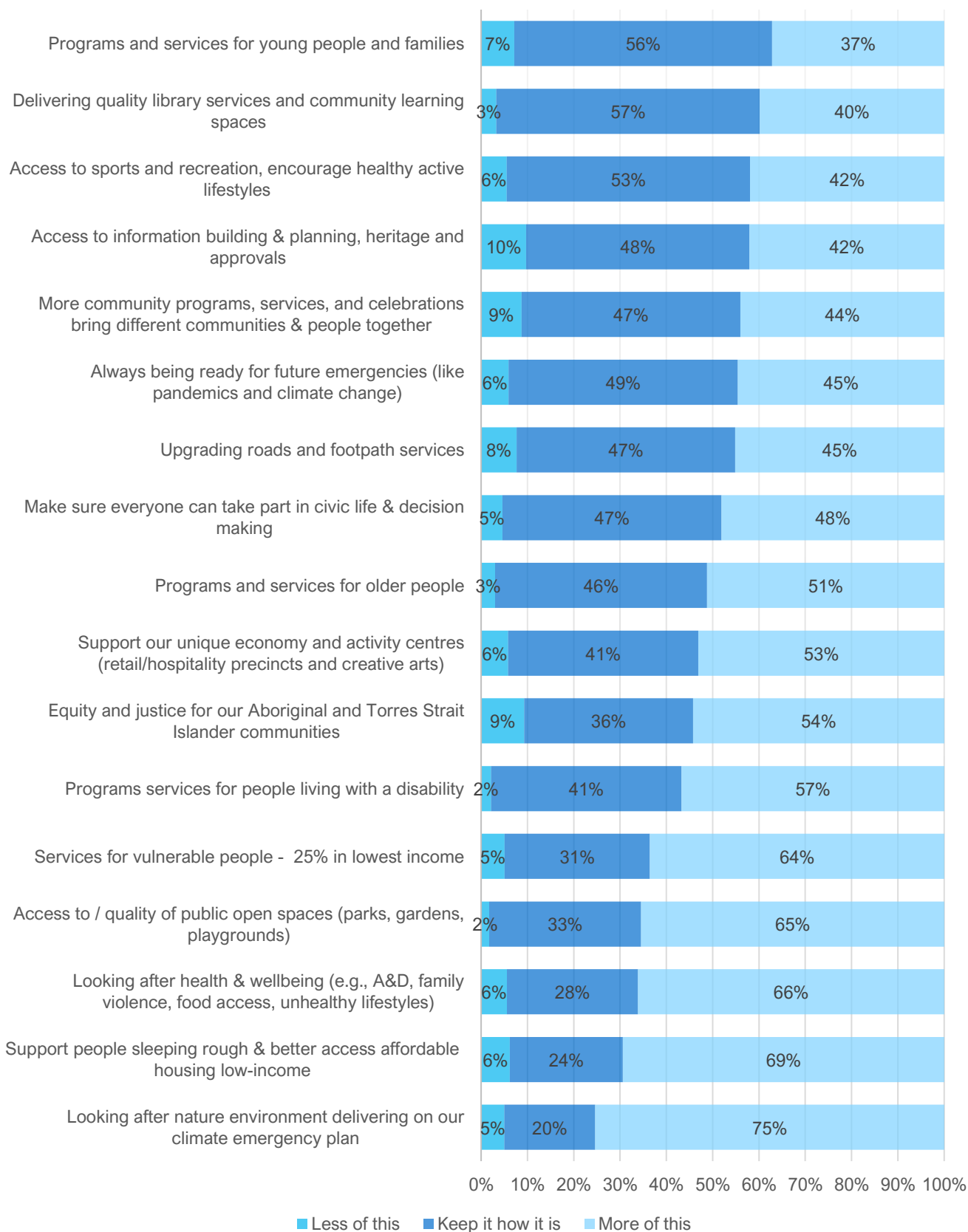
We asked

“How would you fairly balance services for best value and benefit to the whole community?”

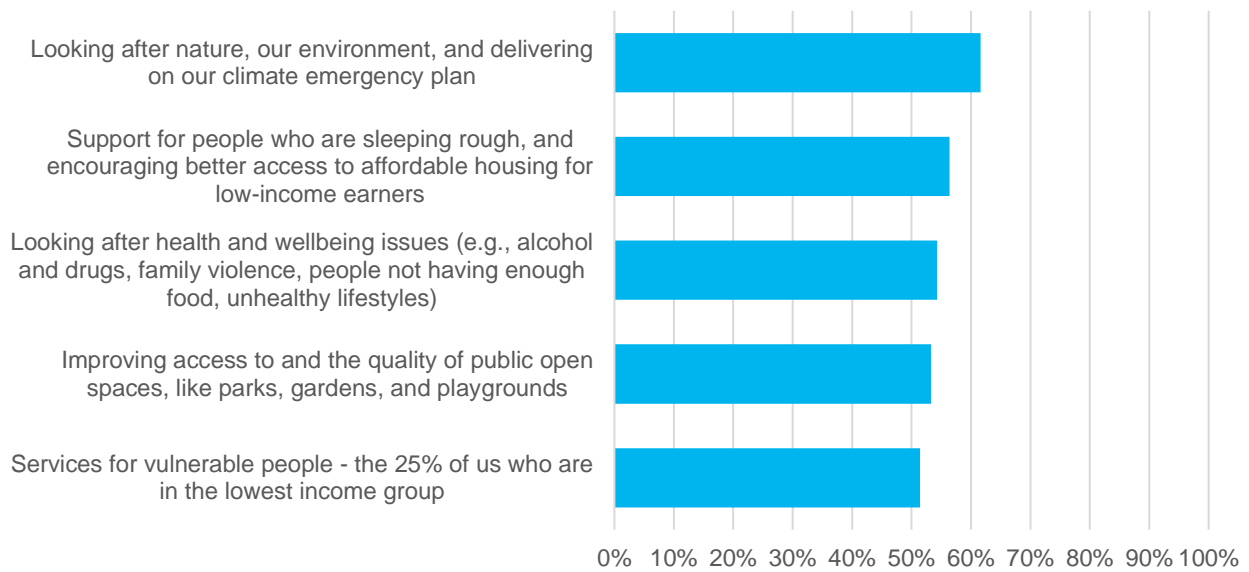
This question asked which services you would provide more of, less of, or keep as they are. It should be noted that results from this question were mostly skewed towards ‘more of’. The question did not force participants to trade-off more with less.

Overall it shows that there is broad satisfaction on the level of this service delivery as it stands, and a clear top five where the community feel more effort or investment is warranted.

Refer to chart on the next page (page 17).



Top five of where participants thought more effort or investment might be necessary



Sample of comments

- “Think about existing resources strengthening community e.g. volunteering, support organisations e.g. neighbourhood houses.”
- “Core services and liveability. Don't get involved in cultural programmes.”
- “Libraries are ace!”
- “We need to trim the budget and live within means - this may mean tough choices, but council has to.”
- “Meeting needs of the vulnerable, nobody should be hungry or sleeping rough in Yarra.”

Spaces and places



Thinking about

- How do we manage our community's assets fairly: for the most benefit or for the best value for money?
- How do we make decisions now that are fair for future generations?
- Where do we have access to open space?
- Will our future needs mean we should reconsider how we currently use our community land and buildings?

We asked

How we use council properties

We asked how much you agreed with this statement using a slider scale with the two statements at either end. Responses are grouped here into seven categories.

“Council should explore a different mix of uses for its properties like social and affordable housing or renting to external service providers or other businesses”



39%	I completely agree
14%	Mostly agree
31.5%	Somewhat agree
3.5%	Not sure
6.4%	Somewhat disagree
.8%	Mostly disagree
5.1%	I completely disagree

Council's ownership of property

We asked how much you agreed with this statement using a slider scale with the two statements at either end. Responses are grouped here into seven categories.

“Selling some council-owned land and buildings would be okay if it is to balance the budget, even if they might never be repurchased.”



9%	I completely agree
4%	Mostly agree
18.1%	Somewhat agree
4.8%	Not sure
26.1%	Somewhat disagree
7.5%	Mostly disagree
31.3%	I completely disagree

Sample of comments

- “Nth Richmond - Children can't use estate playgrounds.”
- “Getting most out of the Yarra bend park. ...but much more could be done. Large sections almost completely unused.”
- “More education, funding, building community, around environment. E.g. closing streets to host a party or community garden spaces.”
- “So many ppl growing & sharing own food & plants etc. increasing awareness food security is big issue.”
- “Social housing or affordable housing should be included in property developments.”

Sharing our streets



Thinking about

- What's a fair way to decide how we use our limited street spaces?
- How do we ensure we all have access to transport or mobility options?
- What can make our streets great places to be?

We asked

New technology

We asked how much you agreed with this statement using a slider scale with the two statements at either end. Responses are grouped here into seven categories.

“I’d like to see new technologies like smart sensors, way finding technology and infrastructure for electric vehicles in my neighbourhood”



32.2%	I completely agree
9.2%	I mostly agree
33.6%	I somewhat agree
2.6%	Not sure
11.7%	I somewhat disagree
1.1%	I mostly disagree
9.3%	I completely disagree

Greening and shade

Using a slider scale with the two statements at either end we asked you which you agreed with more. Responses are grouped here into seven categories.

“Streets and public spaces in my local Yarra neighbourhood need:”



4%	A lot more cars and parking spaces
1%	Mostly lean more towards this option
6%	I lean somewhat towards this option
4%	Not sure
28%	I lean somewhat towards this option
9%	Mostly lean towards this option
48%	A lot more trees and greenery

Room for active and sustainable transport

Using a slider scale with the two statements at either end we asked you which you agreed with more. Responses are grouped here into seven categories.

“By the year 2035 it will be more important to use Yarra’s streets for:”



5%	A lot more cars and parking spaces
1.7%	Mostly lean more towards this option
5.7%	I lean somewhat towards this option
1.7%	Not sure
20%	I lean somewhat towards this option
11.6%	I mostly lean towards this option
53.9%	A lot more active and sustainable transport options

Sample of comments

- “Definitely more trees. ...Princes Hill are so stark in the height of summer, walking is really sweltering and uncomfortable.”
- “Calming vehicle access to city residential streets is needed to allow new found pleasure of street walking through local suburbs.”
- “Ensure sufficient road access and car parking spaces for older residents.”
- “Why don’t we have ANY infrastructure for electric cars? Majority of cars are on the street I can’t install an electric charger for if I don’t have a garage.”

We're different



Thinking about

- Our unique personality is built on our Aboriginal heritage, waves of migration and our economic and social struggles.
- Our hospitality, retail and creative industries have thrived because we are a special place to visit.
- We have emerging industries, like the 'new Silicon Valley' of Melbourne in Cremorne.
- We are a very old city, so much of our post-colonial heritage is reflected in monuments, place names and markers.

We asked

Diversity supported by housing options

Using a slider scale with the two statements at either end we asked you which you agreed with more. Responses are grouped here into seven categories.

“It’s Council’s role to encourage more social and affordable housing and rent options so we keep our diversity and fairness”



34.5%	I completely agree
9.5%	Mostly agree
33.6%	Somewhat agree
1.8%	Not sure
11.6%	Somewhat disagree
2.1%	Mostly disagree
7.9%	I completely disagree

Our social and political history

Using a slider scale with the two statements at either end we asked you which you agreed with more. Responses are grouped here into seven categories.

“Yarra’s social and political history isn’t set in stone. Views and beliefs change over time, and we recognise that we might need to change too.”



38.8%	I completely agree
11.1%	Mostly agree
38%	Somewhat agree
1.6%	Not sure
5.2%	Somewhat disagree
.8%	Mostly disagree
4%	I completely disagree

How can Yarra stay unique, special and diverse into the future?

The top ten responses to this question:

