

Deliberative panel process report

City of Darebin: Design Your Darebin

Final report 21 June 2021

Introduction

This report outlines the engagement process implemented by Max Hardy Consulting and i.e., community ('the consultants') to develop and implement the Design Your Darebin 2041 - Deliberation Panel on behalf of Darebin City Council ('Council'). This process consisted of four sessions to develop the Community Vision and two sessions to provide recommendations for the Council, **Municipal Public Health & Wellbeing and Financial Plans**.

The task set for the Panel, known as the remit, for the Community Vision and major council directions is shown below.

To develop a community vision for Darebin 2041 that reflects the aspirations and needs of our community and celebrates what makes our City unique.

Our Vision will outline where and how Council and our community will focus our combined efforts to ensure we're resilient and can best navigate the future challenges facing our City.

This process has been completed in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Act 2020 and Darebin's Council's Community Engagement Policy 2021.

This report accompanies the **Community Vision and Council, Municipal Public Health & Wellbeing and Financial Plan Recommendations Reports** providing the outputs of the deliberative panel.

At the commencement of the process, the following objectives for the process were agreed with Council.

- Build confidence in Council and the engagement process through collaboration and deliberation.
- Provide clarity about the role of the participants and the extent of community influence over the vision and key.
- Ensure community members believe their input has been valued, and their time and effort are worthwhile.
- Deliver on the intent of the Local Government Act and Council's engagement policy.
- Ensure there is a positive legacy from this project, with Council's reputation enhanced, and the relationship with the community is stronger.

The key principles that informed our approach to the deliberative process are shown below.

- Transparency and accountability – of the drivers, process, outputs, and response.
- Support for the process – commitment is made to build stakeholder confidence in the process.
- Openness – sponsors or decision-makers have not already made up their minds – they are open to advice and seriously considering it.

- Commitment to the process – sponsors or decision makers back the process and commit to responding.
- Neutrality – of recruitment and facilitation.
- Fairness – a fair spread of evidence and information is provided and drawn upon.
- Do-ability – the time allowed is sufficient for deliberators to respond to the remit with reasonable confidence.
- Clarity regarding connection to broader engagement process – it is clear how the deep deliberative process relates to broader engagement.

Methodology

Co-design process

This process was co-designed between the Consultants and Council to:

- set a mutual understanding for the panel process
- agree upon the remit and core questions to be answered
- establish the approach to recruitment and panel structure
- ensure that internal stakeholders understand and support the deliberative engagement process.

The co-design process commenced at the inception meeting and included regular design and development meetings, integration with broad engagement planning and Councillor briefings. This involved:

- understanding goals and concerns
- clarifying the purpose and possible outcomes from the deliberative process
- establishing areas of enquiry including key questions, tensions and opportunities
- testing different remits
- identifying inputs and likely contributors
- mapping out the approach and structure for the sessions.

Developing the Panel remit

Put simply, remits are the task that is set for the deliberative process - most often in the form of a questions.

The remits were developed collaboratively between Darebin City Council and the Consultants. All remits were required to meet the following criteria.

- The issues or questions are not insignificant or trivial.
- Council is genuinely open to being influenced on the question presented.
- The questions are 'tricky' enough to be worthy of deliberation.
- They relate to a topic that community members are likely to be interested and can meaningfully engage in.

The overarching remit for developed for the Deliberative Panel to encompass the Community Vision and major council directions is shown below.

To develop a community vision for Darebin 2041 that reflects the aspirations and needs of our community and celebrates what makes our City unique.

Our Vision will outline where and how Council and our community will focus our combined efforts to ensure we're resilient and can best navigate the future challenges facing our City.

Recruitment and stratification

An independent specialist, Deliberately Engaging, was engaged to recruit the Panel and ensure they were representative of the Darebin community.

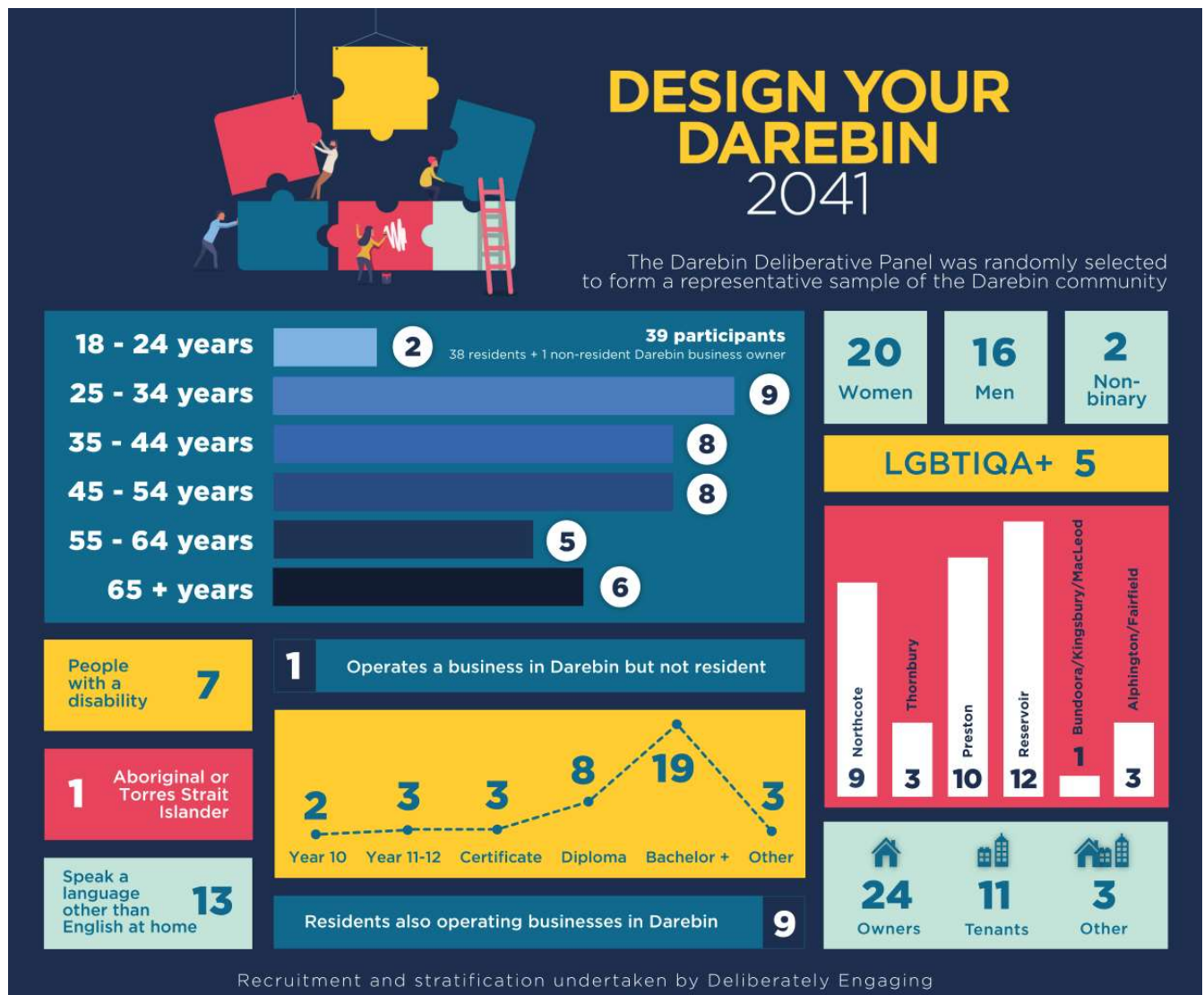
At the start of the process, the Panel consisted of 39 members that were randomly selected to form a representative sample of the Darebin community.

The invitation to express interest in joining the Panel was distributed through a variety of channels to reach a broad cross-section of the community. These included:

- promotion through existing Council communication channels
- targeted advertising on social media
- sharing with Council advisory groups and community groups.

Community members who registered their interest were provided with information on the Deliberative Panel process including the Panels role and remit, details of meeting times and dates and the \$300 honorarium for participation in the process. Interested members were asked to provide information on their age, gender, suburb, education, housing tenure, whether they were from a culturally and linguistically diverse background (CALD), identified as LGBTIQ+ or having a disability.

From the sample of community members that registered, a random stratification process was performed to select a panel that was broadly representative of the demographics of Darebin. The characteristics of the panel are summarised in the following infographic.

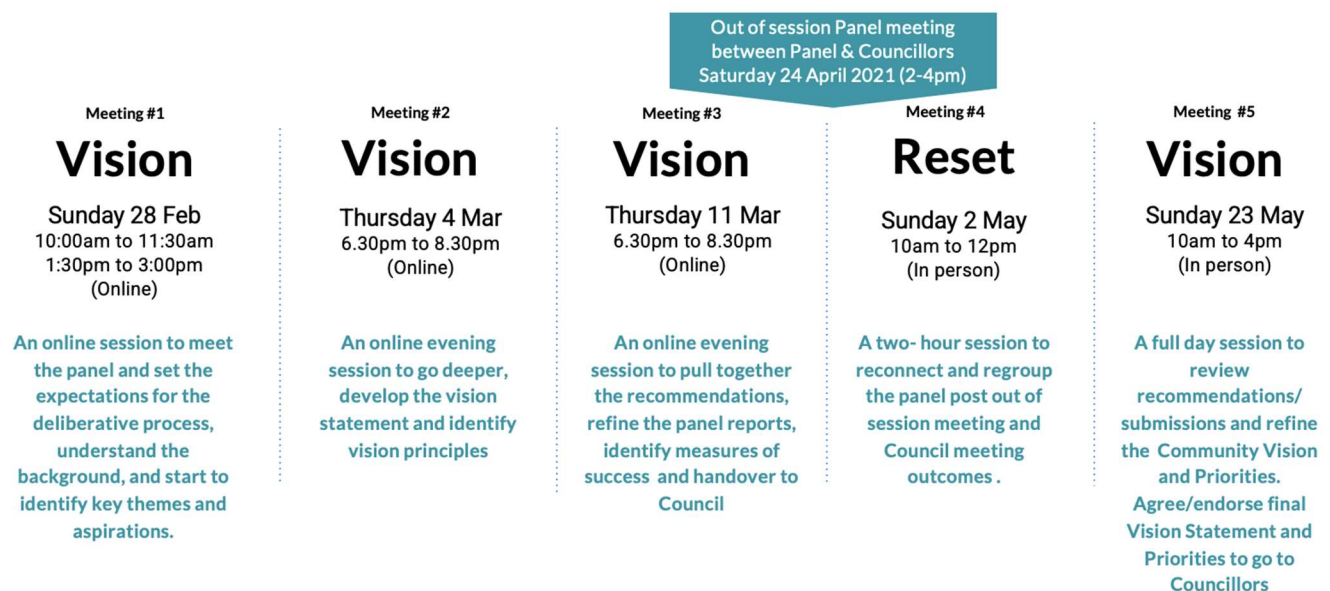


Due to unforeseen challenges and circumstances surrounding panel members and the panel process there were 21 Panel members involved in the final Community Vision Session.

Structure of the sessions

The process involved four sessions to develop the Community Vision and two sessions to develop input into the Council, Municipal Public Health & Wellbeing and Financial Plans, seven in total. There was also an out of session Panel meeting between the Panel and Councillors to discuss outcomes and decisions made on the Panel's Community Vision Work in Progress in the early April Council meeting. This was followed by a Reset Session to agree on a way forward for Panel members keen to continue with the Deliberative Panel process.

Vision process



There was also work completed by the Panel in between sessions including pre-reading and surveys to help finalise both the Work-in Progress Vision that went to Council in early April and to finalise the Community Vision on 23 May 2021. The panel were also provided with a series of submissions/recommendations from the following groups to consider in their refinement and finalisation of the Community Vision:

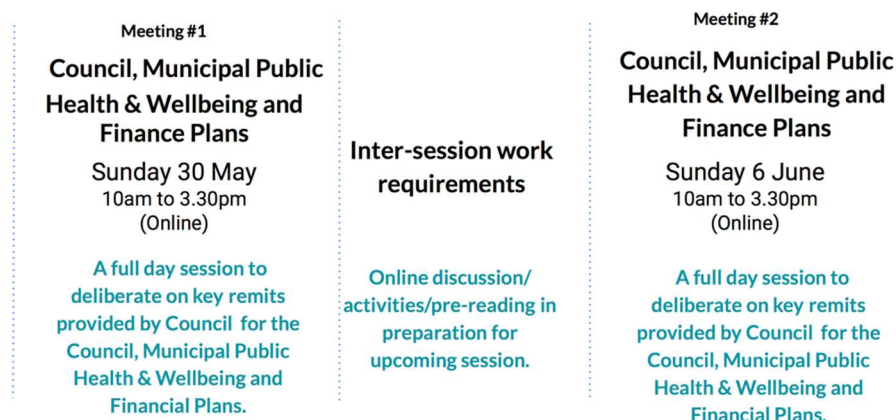
- Darebin Aboriginal Advisory Committee (DAAC)
- Young Citizen's Jury
- A variety of multicultural groups

In the Reset Session on Sunday 2 May Panel members keen to continue with the process developed and agreed on a set of expectations for how they would work together to finalise the Community Vision and Council, Municipal Public Health & Wellbeing and Financial Plan work in upcoming sessions. Their expectations of each other and the process going forward are below.

Our expectations - Darebin Deliberative Panel

- Work within the process: no going outside the process, i.e., direct to Councillors.
- Clear, strong process for support: we want a process for raising issues and an advocate.
- Communication process: clearer communications, keep it brief, aware of next steps.
- Clarity of roles: we want to understand the role of the Panel, facilitators, Council staff and Councillors in the process.
- Safe space: we want to create a safe space to have different views, be respectful and positive.
- Be open and honest, declare your interests: we want panel members to be open and honest about their intentions, play your cards upfront.
- Let's get on with it: we need to put aside issues and focus on completing the task ahead.

Council Plan (incorporating Municipal Public Health & Wellbeing Plan) and Financial Plan process



Due to disruptions to the planned Deliberative Panel process and the need for more time to finalise the Community Vision, it was agreed to provide an additional two sessions for Panel members keen to work on the Council Plan

(incorporating Municipal Public Health & Wellbeing Plan) and Financial Plan process remits. Interested Panel members were provided an additional honorarium of \$75 per session. The first Council session had **19 Deliberative Panel members** and **18 participated** in the final Council Plan (incorporating Municipal Public Health & Wellbeing Plan) and Financial Plan session. Due to COVID-19 restrictions and the accompanying lockdown, these sessions were completed online via zoom, both running from 10am to 3.30pm.

Council Plan (incorporating Municipal Public Health & Wellbeing Plan) and Financial Plan Session Remits

Further work was done with Council, Councillors and the Consulting team to define specific remits to be explored to inform the Council Plan (incorporating Municipal Public Health & Wellbeing Plan) and Financial Plans. The remits centered on the following themes and are detailed below

Council Plan (incorporating Municipal Public Health & Wellbeing Plan) and Financial Plan Session #1

- **Community safety:**

Community Safety is an important priority for Council and is proposing to develop a community Safety Framework as part of the draft Council, Municipal Public Health & Wellbeing and Financial Plan priorities. In addition to Council, there are other key agencies, that play a key role in providing for a safe community. There are a number of ways in which Council supports safety, including

- Keeping the city clean and tidy
- Well light and well-designed spaces
- Working in partnership other agencies to provide for safe community

Remits-

What is the expectation of the role Council has in providing for a safe community and what initiatives or relationships should be prioritised to have the most impact?

In any year, Council can improve a few public spaces because of the cost involved. How should Council prioritise where to improve first?

- **Equity and disadvantage:**

Focus on generating equity to address disadvantage and the more vulnerable in the community is a very strong focus on the current priorities in the Council, Municipal Public Health & Wellbeing and Financial Plans. This includes investing in social and public housing, place-based activities in socio disadvantaged neighbourhoods, improving services for youth, women and multicultural communities.

Remits-

Has Council got it right? Is it enough? If more can be done what would this look like and what should we do less of and what is the benefit of what is proposed?

Council Plan (incorporating Municipal Public Health & Wellbeing Plan) and Financial Plan Session #2

- Waste and Recycling Charge reform:

Waste costs have been increasing and are expected to keep increasing significantly because of market forces and new state government obligations. It is estimated the cost to deliver waste services will increase from around \$16 million per year in 2020-21 to around \$25 million a year in 2030-31 (in ten years' time)

Remits-

What is the community prepared to accept to cover the full cost and also increasing cost of the waste service? Would an increase in waste charges be acceptable with the same level of service or should an increased or adjusted level of service be considered?

Many people contact council asking for higher levels of service or investment in establishing a circular economy (such as weekly pick-ups of green waste bins). This would also increase costs. Are higher levels of service something that community is happy to pay for?

How should we deal with disadvantage – should everyone pay more, or should some services be free for those experiencing disadvantage, even if this means slightly higher costs covered by others?

Conclusion

This report outlines the process that was undertaken to develop the final Community Vision and Council Plan Recommendations by the deliberative panel. These recommendations are detailed in the accompanying **Community Vision and Council Plan (incorporating Municipal Public Health & Wellbeing Plan) and Financial Plan Recommendations Reports**.

It can be concluded that the process was conducted in accordance with requirements of the Local Government Act 2020 ('the Act'), section 55 (2) and that the panel followed a robust and methodical deliberative engagement approach.