

South Melbourne Market Strategic Plan 2026-30



# Engagement Summary Report

November 2025





## Acknowledgement of Country

**Council respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of this land, the people of the Kulin Nations. We pay our respects to Elders past and present. We acknowledge and uphold their continuing relationship to this land.**

### Postal Address

City of Port Phillip, Private Bag 3,  
PO St Kilda, VIC 3182

---

If you require a large-  
print version, please  
contact ASSIST on  
03 9209 6777.

---



Please consider  
the environment  
before printing.

### Language assistance

Русский (Russian): 03 9679 9813

Polski (Polish): 03 9679 9812

Ελληνικά (Greek): 03 9679 9811

廣東話 (Cantonese): 03 9679 9810

普通話 (Mandarin): 03 9679 9858

Italiano (Italian): 03 9679 9814

**For other languages not listed,  
please phone 03 9679 9814.**



## Contents

Introduction .....	4
Project background .....	4
What we set out to achieve .....	4
About this report .....	4
Before reading this report .....	4
What we did.....	7
Communication channels .....	7
Engagement activities.....	9
Who we heard from .....	11
What we heard.....	16
Survey .....	16
Community pop-ups .....	35
Trader workshop .....	35
Next steps.....	36



# Introduction

## Project background

The South Melbourne Market Strategic Plan 2026–30 sets out a roadmap for the Market over the next five years. It will ensure the Market upholds its strong reputation, continues to meet community needs and supports its traders to thrive.

From 25 August until 28 September 2025, we were seeking community input into the development of the new 2026–30 South Melbourne Market Strategic Plan, with feedback and ideas sought from our community including Market traders, workers, shoppers, visitors, residents, and local businesses.

## What we set out to achieve

The purpose of this engagement project was to gather community feedback on the drafted priorities, vision, and purpose for the South Melbourne Market over the next five years, to help inform the 2026–30 Strategic Plan.

## About this report

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of what we did to engage community members in this project including how we communicated with community members, who we heard from and what we heard.

## Before reading this report

The following should be considered in reading this report:

- The information in this report is based on qualitative research and does not necessarily reflect the views of a statistically representative sample of the community.



- Participants attending the community pop-up events were self-selecting. As such, the key themes of conversations at these events may reflect only a limited proportion of the local community.
- City of Port Phillip strives to include diverse voices in our engagement activities. We acknowledge, however, that some people are likely to have experienced barriers to participation in the activities that are outlined in this report – including people with disability, multicultural communities, older people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and others.
- The word ‘participants’ is used to describe the total group of community members and stakeholders who contributed to this engagement process. The terms ‘respondents’ is used to talk about the sub-group of total participants who responded to a specific question or engagement activity.
- The information and views presented in this report are a summary of the opinions, perceptions and feedback heard from across all the engagement activities. The feedback has not been independently validated. As such, some information maybe factually incorrect, unfeasible or outside of the scope of this project.
- This report summarises key feedback from participants and does not preclude the project team from considering community feedback in its original format.
- The report summarises the feedback from engagement activities. While every effort is made to include the full breadth of feedback provided, not all comments, views or advice are shown in the findings of this report. Where appropriate, a mix of quotes, themes and metrics are used to convey community feedback.
- We acknowledge that, while efforts are taken to manage duplication, there is potential for double-counting where participants have attended

multiple events, and/or completed online activities via the *Have Your Say* website.





- Detailed participant demographic data was not collected or mandatory across all engagement events and activities. This may affect the weight of findings about community participation. Where appropriate, response numbers for each question are displayed or acknowledged.
- This report focuses on the communication and engagement activities delivered by Council. It does not necessarily include events, meetings, surveys, or communications organised by the community or third parties.
- This report was developed through a combination of human analysis and artificial intelligence (AI). Human analysts conducted the primary data analysis. AI tools were used to process and analyse large datasets, identify trends, and generate some preliminary findings. Any AI-generated findings were subsequently reviewed, validated, and interpreted by human analysts with expertise in the subject matter. The final conclusions and interpretations presented in this report represent the considered judgment of these human analysts, even where AI contributed to the data processing.

# What we did

Between 25 August and 28 September 2025, we delivered a range of communications activities to let the community know about the South Melbourne Market Strategic Plan 2026–30 and collected feedback through a mix of engagement activities.

## Communications channels

To increase awareness of the engagement process, we did the following:



Activity	Detail	Reach
 <b>Posters, flyers and signage</b>	Posters, flyers and a-frame signs about the engagement process and the opportunity to provide feedback were placed throughout the Market and other selected Council-owned buildings including libraries and town halls.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1,000 flyers</li> <li>• 25+ posters</li> <li>• 3x onsite signs</li> </ul>
 <b>Letterbox drop</b>	Flyers were distributed to local residents and businesses within South Melbourne, explaining the engagement and inviting people to provide feedback.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 11,864 flyers delivered</li> </ul>
  <b>Newsletters</b>	Project information and an invitation to engage was included in the following e-newsletters during the engagement period: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SMM newsletter (25 August)</li> <li>• COPP Libraries newsletter (26 August)</li> <li>• Community Sector newsletter (27 August)</li> <li>• DiverCity newsletter (27 August)</li> <li>• CoPP Business newsletter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SMM (51,428 subscribers)</li> <li>• CoPP Libraries (7,440 subscribers)</li> <li>• Community Sector (1,289 subscribers)</li> <li>• DiverCity (14,335 subscribers)</li> <li>• CoPP Business (2,944 subscribers)</li> <li>• Help Shape our City (3,925 subscribers)</li> </ul>

Activity	Detail	Reach
<b>Social media</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help Shape our City newsletter (10 September)</li> </ul> <p>Social media posts were included on both the South Melbourne Market (SMM) and City of Port Phillip (COPP) Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn accounts to promote the engagement process.</p> <p>Paid advertising also ran on the SMM Facebook page targeting local residents and Market users.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SMM Facebook Followers: 54,000</li> <li>• SMM Instagram Followers: 89,000</li> <li>• SMM LinkedIn Followers: 880</li> <li>• SMM advertising: total reach: 36,892</li> <li>• click-through: 1,147</li> <li>• COPP Facebook Followers: 17,000</li> <li>• COPP Instagram Followers: 10,700</li> <li>• COPP LinkedIn Followers: 17,400</li> </ul>
<b>‘Have your say’ website</b>	<p>The project was featured on Council’s engagement website, <i>Have Your Say</i>, with details about the process, timeline, contact information, and ways to get involved.</p> <p>An email invitation was sent to existing subscribers on 26 August 2025, encouraging them to take part.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4,225 page views</li> <li>• 2,341 unique visitors</li> <li>• 49 followers</li> </ul>
<b>SMM website</b>	<p>The project was promoted on the South Melbourne Market website in the ‘News’ section and featured on the homepage for the duration of the engagement period.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homepage views: 24,624</li> <li>• Project page views: 215</li> </ul>



## Engagement activities

To collect feedback from the community we did the following activities:

Activity	Detail	Reach
 <p><b>Survey</b></p>	<p>We ran an online survey to gather feedback on the draft vision, purpose, and priorities for the Market over the next five years. The survey was available on the Have Your Say website and in hard copy on request. To encourage participation, respondents could enter a draw to win one of five \$30 Cobb Lane Bakery vouchers.</p>	<p>419 survey respondents</p>
 <p><b>Community pop-ups</b></p>	<p>We ran a series of local ‘pop-up’ activations across Port Phillip to engage people who may not take part in a survey. These were held at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Market St, South Melbourne                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tues 9 Sept, 9–10.30am</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Bay St, Port Melbourne                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fri 19 Sept, 10–11.30am</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Victoria Ave, Albert Park                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Thurs 18 Sept, 10–11.30am</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Cecil St, South Melbourne                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wed 17 Sept, 9.30–11.30am</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Community members were invited to learn about the project, chat with Council staff, and complete the survey online or on paper.</p>	<p>120+ people engaged</p>

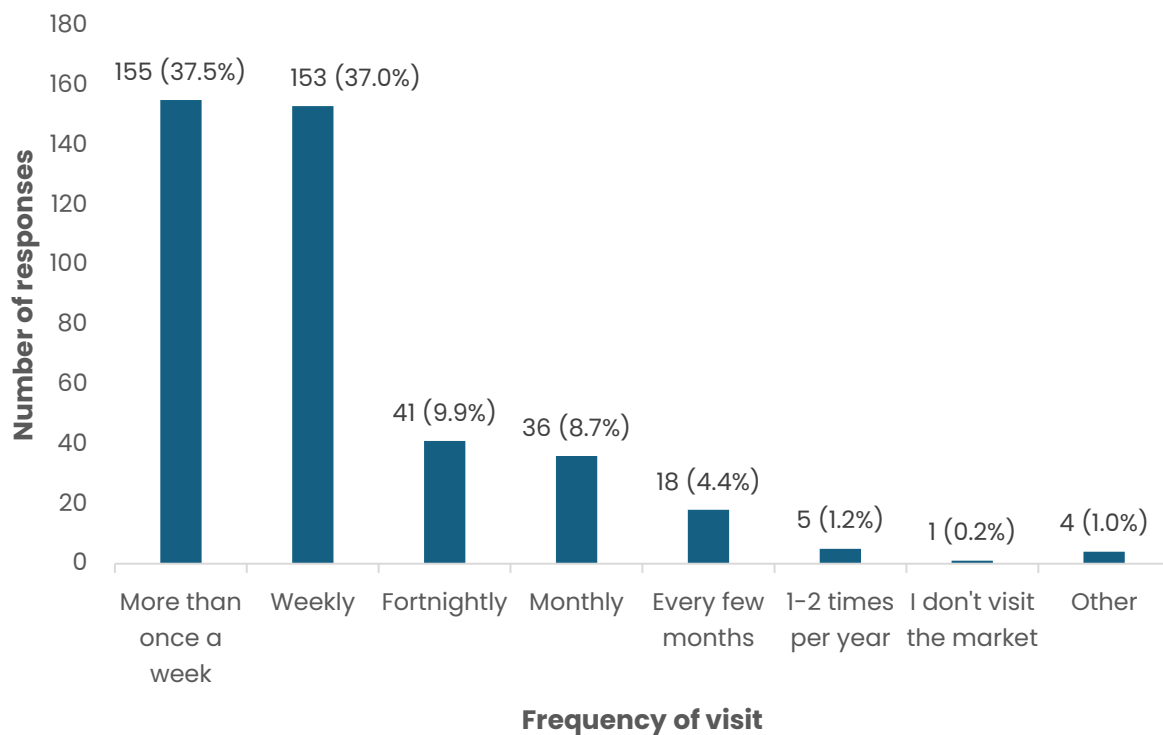
Activity	Detail	Reach
 <p><b>SMM Trader engagement</b></p>	<p>We met with and communicated with South Melbourne Market traders to share project updates, hear feedback and ideas, and promote the survey.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trader Workshop with Market Management Team and Advisory Committee members (21 August)</li> <li>• Trader Meeting (27 August)</li> <li>• Trader e-newsletters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• South Melbourne Market trader workshop attendance (x21)</li> <li>• South Melbourne Market Traders (220 contacts)</li> </ul>

# Who we heard from

Our survey asked participants to share demographic details such as their suburb, gender identity, age range, household type, diversity indicators, and any previous experience engaging with us. In total, 421 people provided this information, which is explored below.

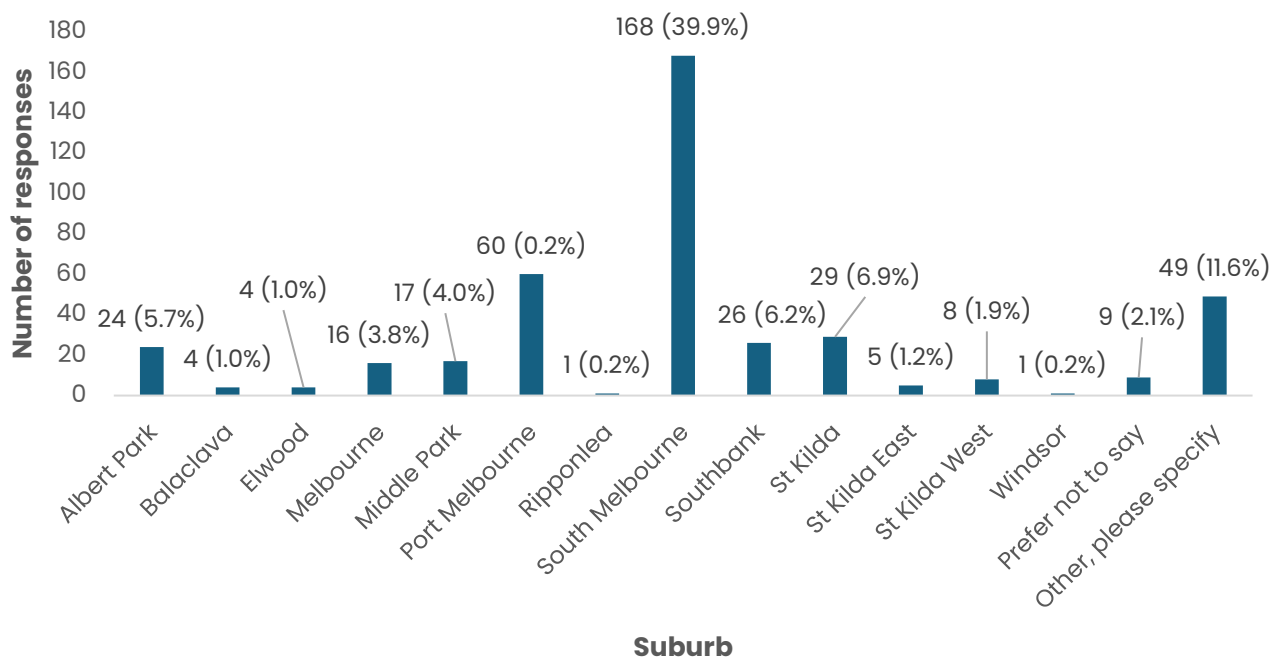
## Frequency of visit

We asked people how often they visit the Market. Of the 421 people that responded, most respondents said they visit either more than once a week (155 people, 37.5%) or weekly (153 people, 37%).



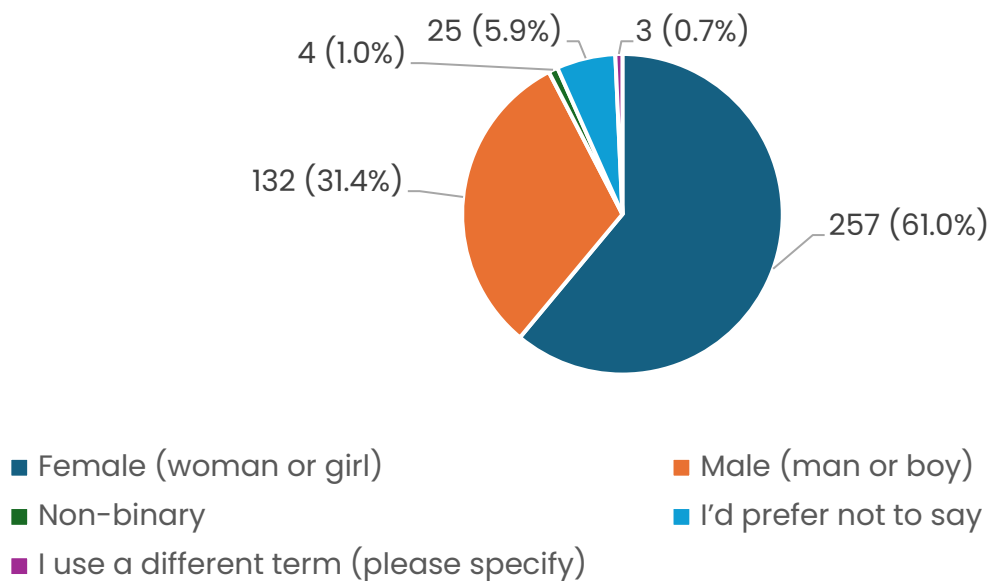
## Suburb

We asked survey respondents what suburb they live in. Of the 421 survey respondents, the largest group (168 or 39.9%) said South Melbourne. The next highest were Port Melbourne (60 or 14.3%) and 'Other' (49 or 11.6%), which included suburbs such as Balwyn, Brighton, Bundoora, Doncaster East, Kensington, Sandringham, South Yarra, and Yarraville.



## Gender

We asked people what gender they identify as. Of the 421 survey respondents, 257 (61%) identified as female (woman or girl), 132 (31.4%) as male (man or boy), 4 (1%) as non-binary, 25 (5.9%) preferred not to say, and 3 (0.7%) used a different term.



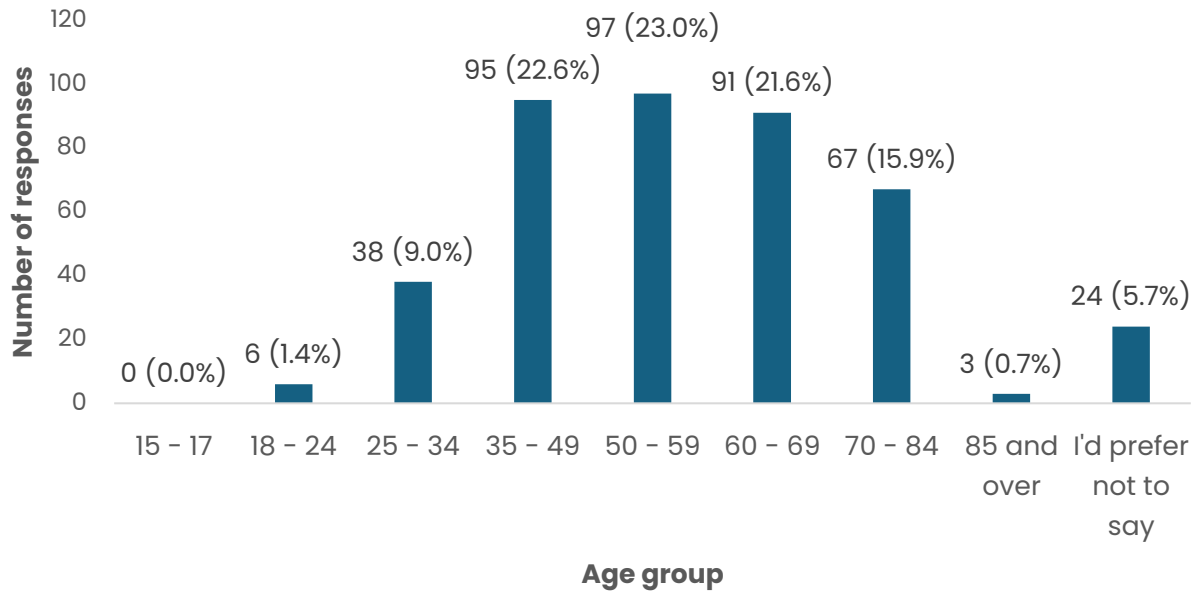
## Diversity

We asked people if they identified with any of the following statements. We had 437 responses to this question. Below is a summary of the number of responses to each of these statements:

- 'I speak a language other than English at home' (40 responses/9.2%)
- 'I identify as LGBTIQA+' (41 responses/9.4%)
- 'I am a person with disability' (23 responses/5.3%)
- 'I am from an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander background' (5 responses/1.1%)
- 'I'd prefer not to say' (34 responses/7.8%)
- None of these apply to me (294 responses/62.3%)

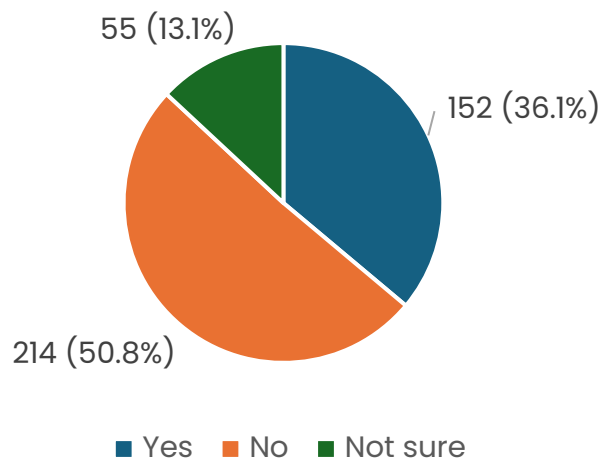
## Age

We asked people their age group. Of the 421 survey respondents, the largest age groups were 50–59 (97 or 23.0%), 35–49 (95 or 22.6%), and 60–69 (91 or 21.6%).



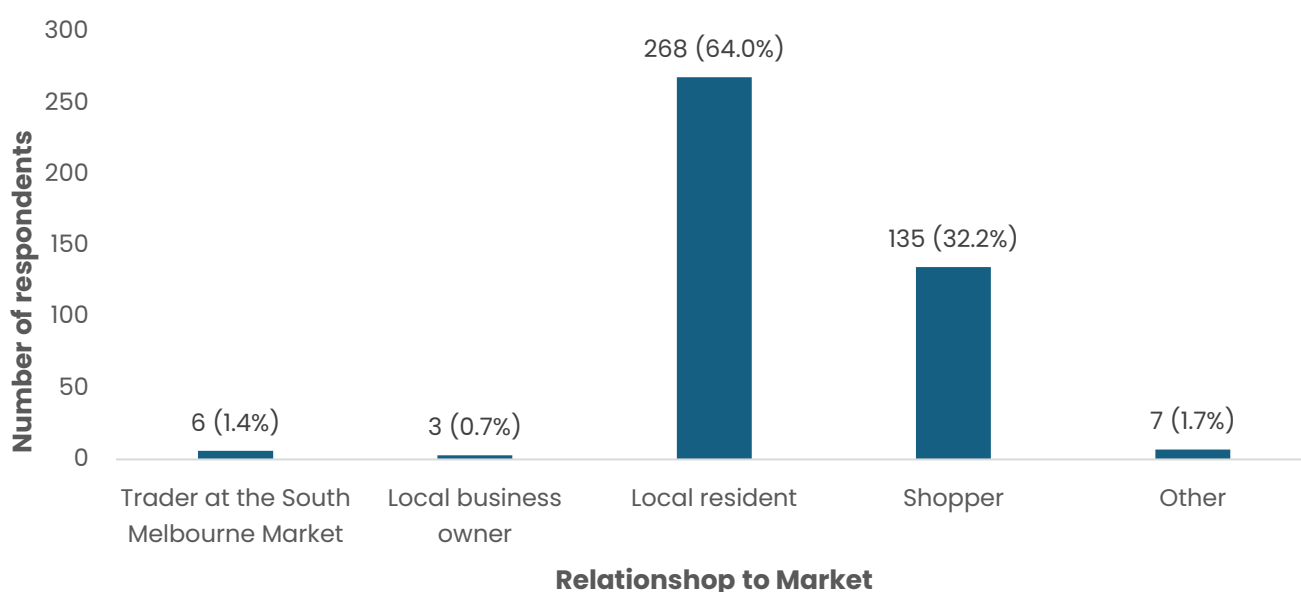
## Previous engagement

To see if we were engaging new community members, we asked if participants had given feedback on other Council projects in the past 12 months. Of the 421 respondents, just over half (214 or 50.8%) said they had not, 152 (36.1%) said they had, and 55 (13.1%) were not sure.



## Relationship to Market

We asked survey respondents their relationship to the Market. Out of 421 responses, the largest number of respondents (268 people / 64%) said they were local residents and (135 people / 32%) said they were shoppers.



## Traders

To ensure we also heard directly from traders, we held a dedicated workshop with South Melbourne Market businesses. All traders and their staff were also encouraged to fill in the survey. Participating traders at the workshop included:

- Aptus Seafoods
- Create TBT
- Emerald Deli / Small Town Pie Co
- Faslini Luggage
- Flinders + Co
- Fruits on Coventry
- Georgie’s Harvest
- K&L Poultry
- K-Sein Fromagerie
- La Central
- Maison Otto
- Moses & Co Market Wholefoods
- Naneez / The Sock Shop
- Padre Coffee
- Pearl and Pretty
- Remedy Clothing
- Rita’s Coffee and Nuts
- Smithburg
- South Melbourne Poultry
- The Soap Shop
- W.B. Smith Kitchenware



# What we heard

This section provides an overview of the information that we received via our engagement methods, including the survey, community pop-ups, the trader workshop and feedback uploaded to the Have Your Say website or emailed to the team during the consultation period, and at the Market.

## Survey

The below information explores information received via a survey of 419 people.

### Proposed Vision

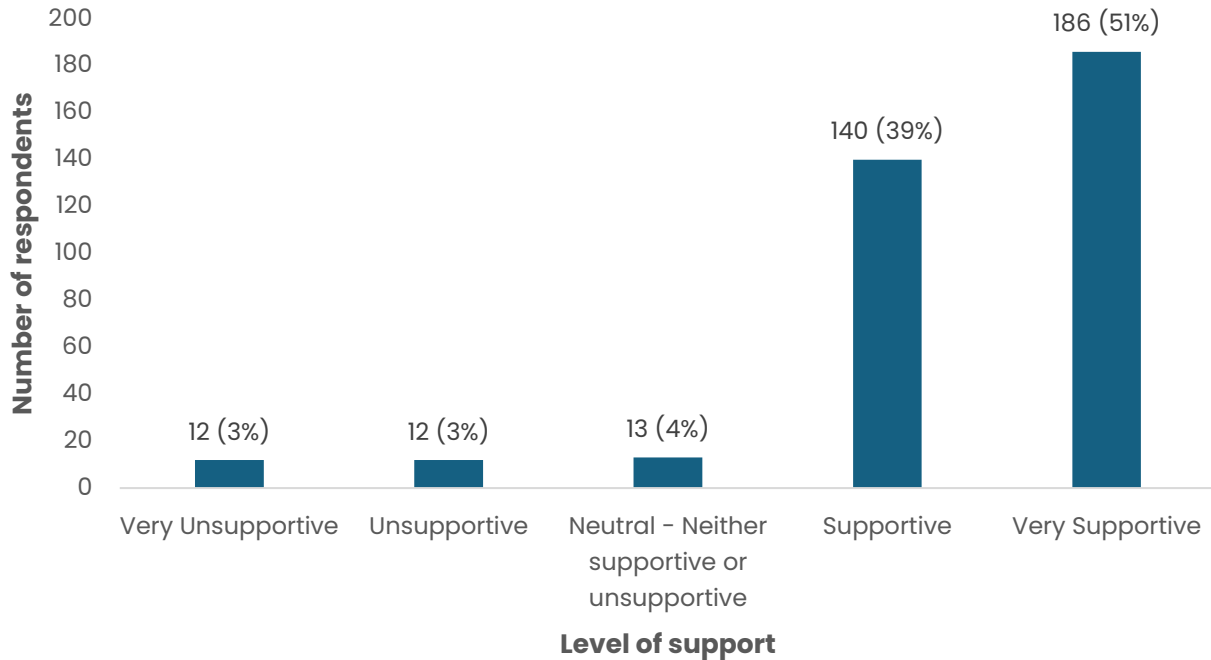
*“A world-class, thriving, local market for generations to come”*

#### Support of proposed vision

In our survey, we asked people to rate their support for our proposed vision for the Market. Of the 363 people who responded to this question, the majority (326 people/ rated their support as either ‘supportive’ or ‘very supportive’, showing strong overall agreement with the proposed vision.



### Proposed Vision



### Feedback on proposed vision

We also asked people to share feedback on the proposed vision for the Market. Of the 363 people who responded to this question, 231 people (64%) provided open-ended comments. While many supported the overall direction, others suggested changes or raised concerns.

A strong theme in the feedback was support for the Market being a “locals’ market” that prioritises the needs of the local community.

A high number of respondents were sceptical about the term “*world-class*”, with some questioning its relevance or meaning in the context of a local community market.

Below is a summary of the types of feedback we received.

**Theme:** Support for prioritising the needs of the local community.

**Number of comments received:** 120 (52%)

**Examples of feedback:**

- *"I would like the emphasis of the project to be for a LOCAL market that meet the needs of local residents."*
- *"Important that we don't lose sight of the primary purpose of the market. That is, to serve the needs of the local community."*
- *"Putting locals first is highest priority in my view...and has to take precedence over oyster-eating tourists"*
- *"I agree strongly with putting locals first. It does not need to be world class, it just needs to be great! A fun, unique and useful local facility."*
- *"Meeting the needs of the community" and "putting locals first" sound like exactly what a local market should be doing."*

**Theme:** Scepticism toward the term "World-Class"

**Number of comments received:** 48 (21%)

**Examples of feedback:**

- *"The vision is contradictory. The aim to be 'world class' is inconsistent with the aim to put locals first."*
- *"As for 'World Class'... the interpretation is subjective & a notion that we Australians are somewhat fixated with being! Instead, I would suggest focusing on creating the 'best' market experience for the stakeholders most closely involved (Locals, Stallholders, etc.)."*
- *"I don't want to see the charm of the existing market lost to striving for world class. The character that currently exists must be preserved."*
- *I don't want to see the charm of the existing market lost to striving for world class. The character that currently exists must be preserved*
- *World class is an inappropriate term. We need a well run market providing a variety of produce for locals and visitors to the market.*
- *I'm not sure 'world-class' and 'local' necessarily align. I wonder if aspirations for world-class might negate local needs and desires.*

**Theme:** Concerns around product pricing and affordability

**Number of comments received:** 28 (12%)

**Examples of feedback:**

- *"I agree with the 'world class' vision, however, it should not come with 'world class' prices. If the market truly proposes to be 'local' and putting the needs of locals and the community first, then that should also take into account having a range of traders at the lower and higher end of the economic scale."*
- *"Putting locals first includes ensuring that vendors selling affordable fresh food continue to operate at the market. For example, supporting green grocers, butchers, poultry sellers and fishmongers that offer everyday produce not just those which offer a high end/ high price product."*
- *"Yes, the proposal should prioritise the provision of affordable food for the local community to provide a viable alternative to the supermarket duopoly."*
- *"I don't think the market needs to be "World Class" to be successful. It is important that pricing and value be kept competitive so locals can afford to shop."*



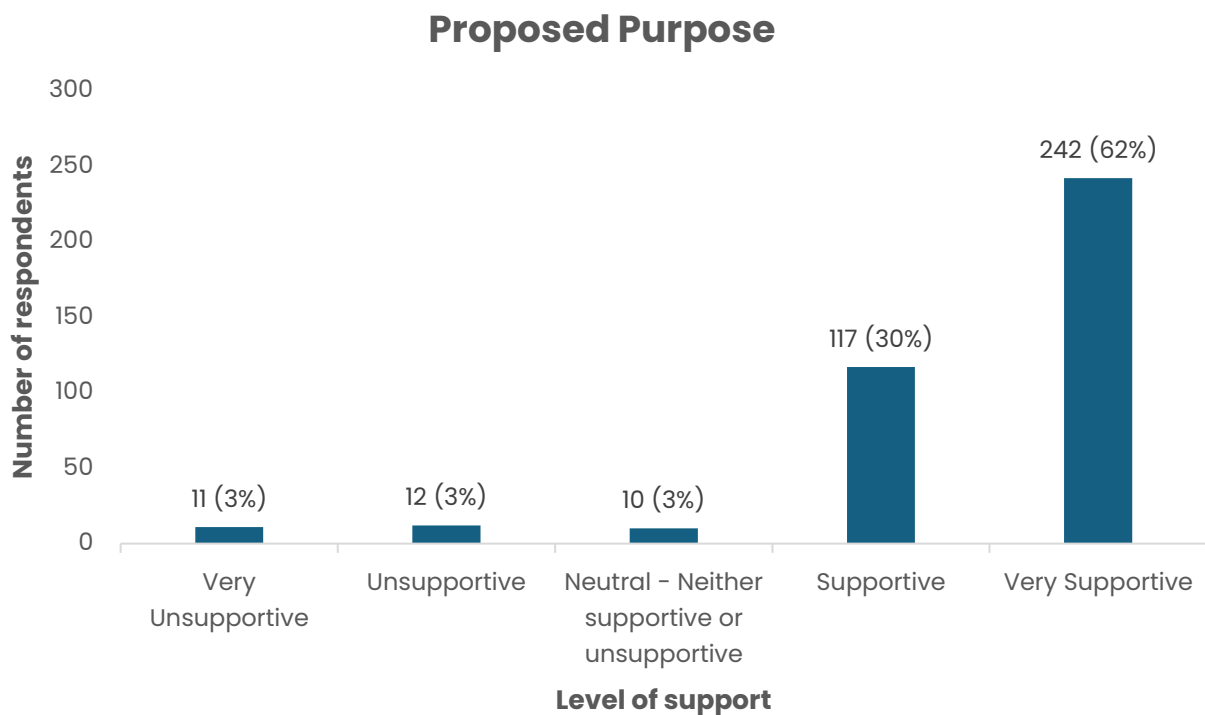
## Proposed Purpose

We asked people about our proposed purpose for the Market:

- “To provide a vibrant marketplace where shoppers have access to a choice of quality, fresh produce and groceries, and a wide range of goods, services and dining experiences from knowledgeable independent small businesses.
- To provide a welcoming and inclusive place for people to eat, meet, shop, connect and socialise.”

### Support of proposed vision

We asked people how supportive they were of the proposed purpose. Of the 392 respondents to this question, most were supportive of the proposed purpose for the Market, rating themselves as ‘supportive’ or ‘very supportive’ (359 people/92%), indicating strong overall agreement.



## Feedback on proposed purpose

We asked if respondents had any feedback on the proposed purpose. 174 (48%) respondents provided a mix of open-ended feedback on the proposed purpose.

Participants again highlighted the importance of the Market serving the everyday needs of the local community. A significant number of respondents noted the importance to focus on fresh produce and grocery shopping over dining, retail and experiences. Many participants also highlighted price and affordability as missing from the proposed Market purpose.

Below is a summary of the types of feedback we received.

- *“It would be disappointing if too much emphasis moves away from fresh food . It is important not to over emphasise eating and meeting.”*
- *“The main purpose of this market is to provide good quality, seasonal produce..... all other things are secondary to this to remain a true market.”*
- *“It feels generic and a little disconnected from the vision. Also I think the economic role of traders should be apart of the purpose. The market should help them grow and innovate, not just exist.”*
- *“Please keep it “down to earth”*
- *“The market should maintain its value as a fresh produce market and not become a place selling trinkets to tourists.”*
- *“Care needs to be taken that the market retains its roots as a “local” market. Recent new traders seem to be more focussed on generic restaurant dining establishments or generic retail establishments that could be found in any shopping mall/food court/generic neighbourhood shopping strip rather than something that is genuinely authentic that has a “local” feel about it.”*
- *“Would like to see an emphasis on the diversity and quality of fresh produce and groceries stalls over the other homewares and services or dining stalls. The cost of groceries and food produce should also be a factor to consider whereby affordability should be promoted, while also recognising and supporting that some higher quality produce stores may have higher costs.”*

## **Priorities**

We asked people to rate how supportive they were of our four proposed priorities for the Market over the next five years. Responses are outlined below.

### **Proposed priority 1: A Thriving Market**

#### **A market:**

- that provides a supportive environment to enable independent and small businesses to thrive and prosper
- where passionate traders are trusted by the community for their expertise and knowledge
- that is the preferred choice for purveyors of quality, equitable, unique and authentic products, services and produce to meet the community needs
- with a curated retail mix that best meets community needs and expectations and introduces new, innovative and exciting offers

#### **We will achieve this by:**

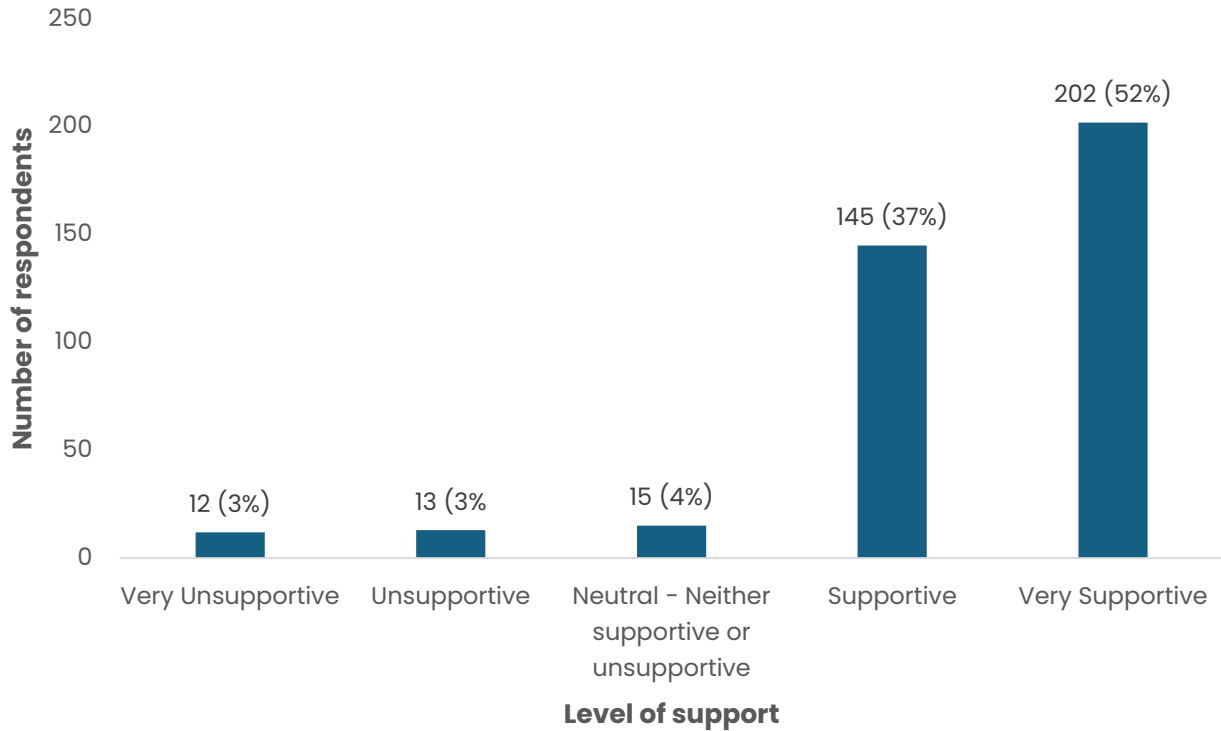
- A review and update of the Retail Mix in alignment with research and community feedback, with a renewed focus on grocery, essential goods and services categories, to ensure the Market continues to meet the needs of the local community.
- A fair and transparent appointment process for new businesses.
- Providing support, education and mentoring opportunities to small business owners to help them thrive.
- Expansion of the business incubator program to include more opportunities for business start-ups in other categories such as food.

#### **Support for the proposed priority**

Of the 387 people who responded to this question, the majority 347 people (89%) rated their support as 'supportive' or 'very supporting' indicating strong overall agreement.



### Proposed priority 1 – A Thriving Market



### Priority implementation

We asked people what else the Market could do to support this priority. Over 260 respondents provided a mix of open-ended feedback or additional suggestions relating to the proposed priority.

The major themes related to the mix of stalls, prioritising the needs of the local community, increasing trading hours and addressing traffic congestion and accessibility.

There was strong support shown in relation to the Market providing a place where small, independent businesses can thrive and prosper, and strong support for the renewed focus on the grocery offer at the Market. Some respondents noted that the Market needs to prioritise the needs of the local community so they can continue to support the Market, and others noted the impact that overheads, rent and competition can have on product pricing.

Some respondents commented that limited opening hours prohibit attendance, and opening an additional trading day would further support traders to prosper.

- *“Keep it local. Keep it authentic and attainable, not so fancy that only a small percentage of people can afford to do their weekly shop there.”*
- *“Encourage more essential household item vendors – grocers, butchers, etc. to locate at South Melbourne Market and ensure good competition across many levels of the price/quality range. Don’t let the market move towards a model where it becomes significantly more expensive than shopping at Coles/Woolies or the customers will shift away.”*
- *“Seek First Nations input or co-designed opportunities and consider gender and cultural diversity (representative of the community) in the retail mix.”*
- *“I think another day open would be great – it might help spread the heaving crowds of the weekends.”*
- *“Stop trying to gentrify it – all it does is raise the price of fresh food. We don’t need more restaurants or clothing boutiques.”*

## Proposed priority 2: A Vibrant Community Market

### **A market:**

- that remains relevant to the local community
- that is the first choice for shopping for the local community
- that is a vibrant shopping destination that provides a sense of discovery and encourages onsite exploration
- that is informed by a robust community engagement framework
- that provides the community with social connection
- that supports and delivers relevant, engaging and educational experiences both online and onsite.

### **We will achieve this by:**

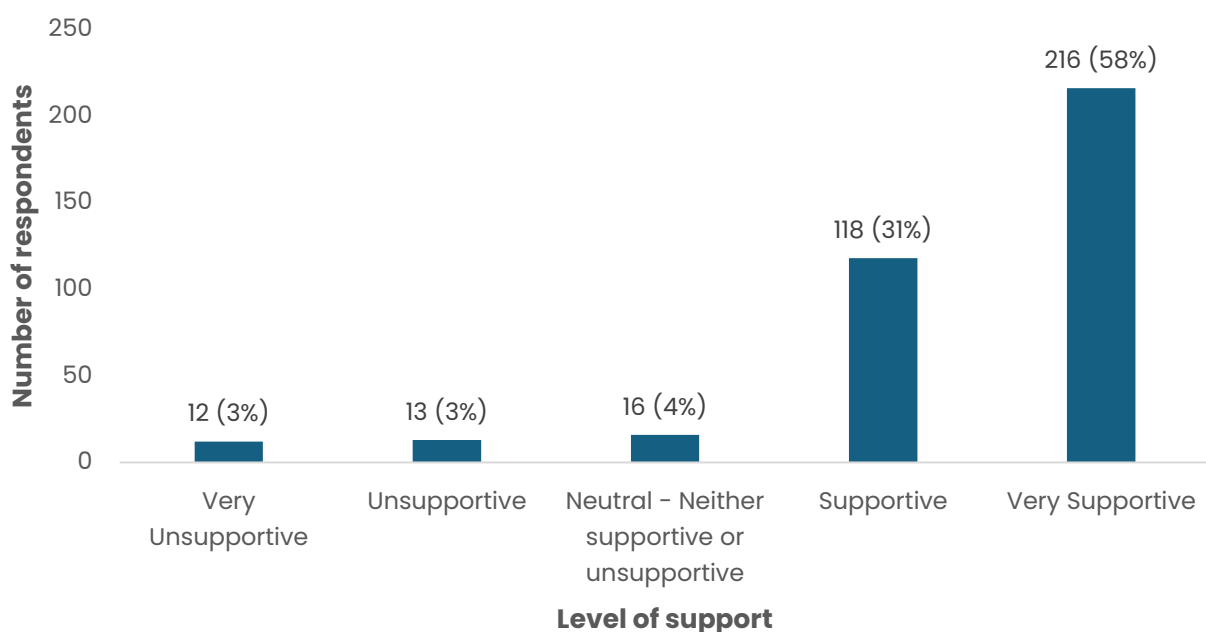
- Harnessing and promoting the skills and knowledge of our traders and the breadth of offer throughout the Market.

- Listening to our locals – through feedback, community consultation and engagement and market research
- Delivery of educational activities, programs and content.
- Fostering collaborative partnerships with brands and organisations that align to the Market's brand, vision and purpose
- Promoting the added value, quality offering and genuine benefits of market shopping to the local community to broaden visitor exploration across categories.
- Creating a program for stronger community connection and increased value for market visitors via health, wellbeing and other community programs.

### Support for the proposed priority

We asked survey respondents to rate their support for this proposed priority. Of the 375 people who responded to this question, most participants (334 people/89%) rated their support as 'supportive' or 'very supportive', indicating strong overall agreement.

#### Proposed priority 2: A Vibrant Community Market



## Priority implementation

We asked if there is anything else the Market could do to support this priority. Over 160 respondents provided a mix of open-ended feedback or additional suggestions relating to the proposed priority.

There was strong support shown in relation to listening to the locals and the Market being a place for social connection.

In line with other questions, there was also commentary around there being no need for change, addressing both traffic and visitor congestion, and increasing trading hours.

There were a mix of feedback in relation to both events and partnerships, with some respondents supportive of these, and others against, arguing that this is beyond what a local market needs to provide.

- *“Don’t change it too much. I love it the way it has been for the last 25 years since I moved into the area.”*
- *“Stick with the first line ‘that remains relevant to the local community’, forget all the other rubbish... forget education, forget online – stick with the market’s main purpose – to be a market for fresh produce.”*
- *“Love the education component! I’d love to see what happens there. It provides an opportunity for locals to connect then!”*
- *“This is trying to be too much. Focus on being a market with quality traders with good fresh produce and groceries. I.e. align with the purpose for which the land was gifted to start with.”*
- *“Concerned about what collaborative partnerships, community connections and educational activities entails and how it is connected to grocery and good shopping.”*
- *“If you want it to be “first choice” for locals then it needs to be open more often for essential services.”*



## Proposed priority 3: A Sustainable and Resilient Market

### **A market:**

- that embodies corporate social responsibility
- that strives to be a leader in environmental sustainability in collaboration with traders, stakeholders and the community
- that builds resilience by investing in asset renewal and ensuring building compliance
- that is responsibly managed and financially sustainable
- that advocates for improvements in journey arrival by all modes of transport.

### **We will achieve this by:**

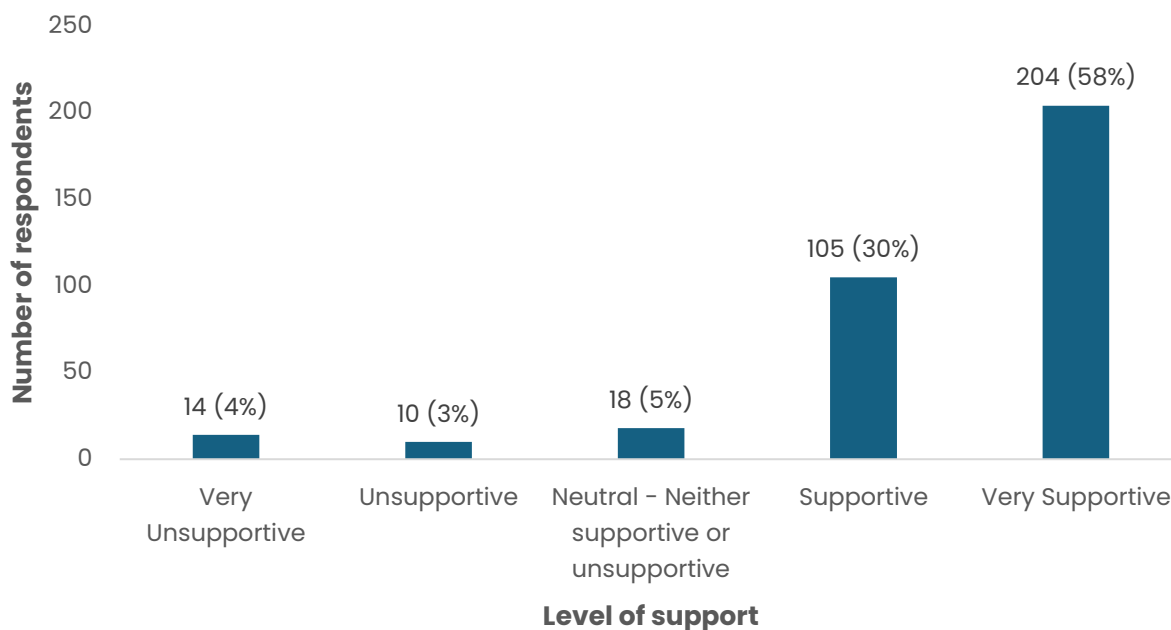
- Developing and implementing a corporate social responsibility (CSR) framework for the Market.
- Delivering initiatives and actions in line with the Market’s Environmental Sustainability Strategy.
- Delivering Project Connect – the major Capital Works program which will ensure building compliance by increasing the number of toilet facilities, aisle regrading, improved access to the rooftop carpark, and increased/improved public realm on York and Coventry Streets.
- Investing in and maintaining the market asset and supporting stall changeover with base build works to ensure compliance.
- Prudent financial management and high-quality risk management in line with Council and legislative requirements
- Working under a governance framework with SMM Advisory Committee oversight
- Advocating for improvements to transport options around the Market, including public transport upgrades, and improved traffic conditions to address congestion around the Market.



## Support for the proposed priority

We asked people to rate how supportive they were of this proposed priority for the Market in 2026–30. Of the 351 people who responded to this question, the majority (309 people/88%) rated their support as ‘supportive’ or ‘very supportive’ indicating strong overall agreement.

### Proposed priority 3 – A sustainable & resilient Market



## Priority implementation

We asked if there is there anything else the Market could do to support this priority. 251 respondents provided a mix of open-ended feedback or additional suggestions relating to the proposed priority.

A predominant theme related to environmental sustainability, namely to reduce the amount of single-use plastic used by traders, increasing and/or promoting recycling efforts and incentivising sustainability initiatives for shoppers and traders.

There was a mix of feedback in relation to transport, with some respondents noting the importance of shopping by car, and others calling for incentivisation and better facilities (such as bike racks) for those that cycle, walk or catch public transport.

Some respondents commented that this should not be a priority for the Market, noting the importance of the prior two priorities, supporting long-term traders, and remaining relevant and accessible for the local community.

- *“A more sustainable and resilient market is great but again the market needs to stay a market not become a retail shopping centre – there has to be a distinct difference.”*
- *“Resiliency of SMM depends on resiliency of stallholders, again costs play a large role.”*
- *“More information about water, organic food waste management would give me joy to know.”*
- *“I don’t have a solution, but improving traffic flow and incentivising active travel will be key.”*

## Proposed priority 4: An Authentic, Welcoming Market

### **A market:**

- where everyone is welcome, respected, and feel included in all aspects of the market community
- that celebrates, protects and showcases its rich history and the people that have made this market a village
- that recognises and acknowledges traditional owners of the land
- that prioritises visitor safety and market cleanliness.

### **We will achieve this by:**

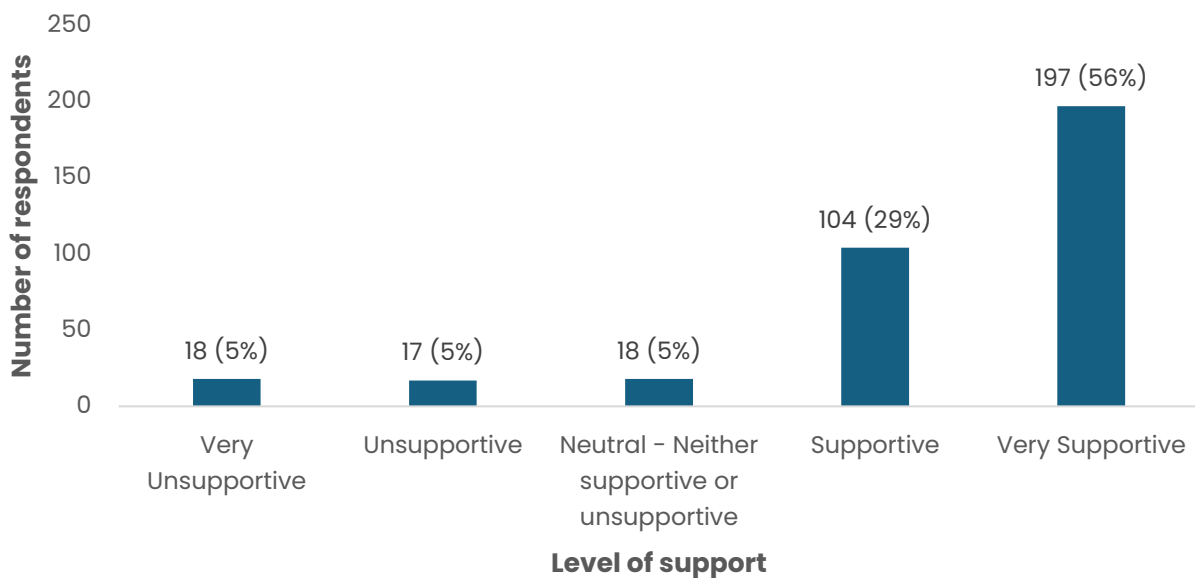
- Developing and implementing an inclusivity and accessibility plan
- Developing and implementing an overarching retail and public space precinct plan

- Aligning to the Council’s Reconciliation Action Plan and strengthening our relationship with the Wurundjeri Corporation to embed the rich cultural history of the land and first nations people into the Market’s future
- Archiving the history of the Market and developing a storytelling program to acknowledge and celebrate the Market’s history for generations to come.

### Support for the proposed priority

We asked people to rank how supportive they were of this as a proposed priority for the Market in 2026–30. Of the 354 people who responded to this question most participants (301 people/85%) were supportive of the proposed priority for the Market. The majority rated their support as either ‘supportive’ or ‘very supportive’ indicating strong overall agreement.

#### Proposed priority 4 – An Authentic, Welcoming Market



## Priority implementation

We asked if there was anything else the Market could do to support this priority. Over 200 respondents provided a mix of open-ended feedback or additional suggestions relating to this proposed priority.

The predominant themes related to support for celebrating and sharing the history and culture of the Market, not modernising or changing the Market unnecessarily and providing a market / venue that is accessible and inclusive for all.

Some respondents noted the need to improve onsite amenities and facilities, while others noted the need to provide a diverse offer and affordable grocery prices to suit diverse community needs.

- *“Would like the old worldly charm look and feel of the market to stay as it is. It’s what gives it its charm.”*
- *“Very supportive of the history and culture of the market being celebrated with a more visual presence.”*
- *“It is essential to continue to acknowledge our indigenous heritage with the market. It would be great to have a program that encourages more indigenous stall holders. It should also be a priority to encourage diversity amongst stall holders from both an ethnic and LGBTIQ+ perspective.”*
- *“Train the traders to be more inclusive.”*

## Other priorities

We asked if there any other priorities for the Market in the next five years that have not been captured in the previous questions. Of the 419 survey respondents, 133 (31.7%) provided a response to this question.

The key themes in responses to this question were:

- Keeping product pricing affordable
- Remaining relevant for the local community
- Improving cleanliness of the Market

- Increased grocery / fresh produce related offers (more stalls, more variety)
- Increasing trading days and hours
- Addressing traffic and vehicle congestion in surrounding streets and car parks

Below is a summary of the types of feedback we received.

- *“Open other days of the week or late night to stop the crowd crush. Locals have to put up with traffic and tourist central all weekend that prohibits enjoyment of the suburb – and no local benefits.”*
- *“More fresh affordable food not fashion.”*
- *“Can anything be done to keep prices lower? At present going to the market is a luxury. You pay for the privilege.”*
- *“Keeping the vendors competitive and prices of food produce and raw ingredients competitive with the supermarkets.”*
- *It would be good to mention the architectural style and potential improvements in layout, design, amenity without losing the randomness of the place.”*

## Changes to the Market

We asked what other new things or changes respondents would like to see at the Market in the next five years. Of the 419 survey respondents, 170 (41%) provided a response to this question. Key themes remained consistent with previous questions.

- Addressing traffic and vehicle congestion
- Increasing trading days and hours
- Maintaining market authenticity
- Improving internal accessibility and moveability (addressing queues and congestion, increased seating etc)

Below is a summary of the types of feedback we received.

- *“Open on Thursdays.”*
- *“Safer access for frail or disabled patrons.”*
- *“More parking and better traffic flow – pedestrianisation would be fine if there were a clear flow of traffic more than the existing car park ramp.”*
- *“I’d like to see the market be more open and ventilated. It can feel quite cramped within the market, so I often stick to just the exterior stalls because they’re more comfortable to browse.”*
- *“I want to see the market maintained and not turned into a shopping centre.”*

## Stalls, products, or services

We asked if there was any stalls, products, or services respondents felt are missing from the Market. The key themes and responses to this question included:

- Indian grocery / food
- Middle Eastern grocery / food
- Men’s clothing and accessories
- Specialty grocery stalls for dietary needs (e.g. gluten free, dairy free, vegan offers)
- Increased grocery / fresh produce offer (less restaurants and general retail)
- More affordable grocery / fresh produce
- Onsite cobbler / shoe repair
- Second-hand / vintage stalls

Some examples of responses to this question included:

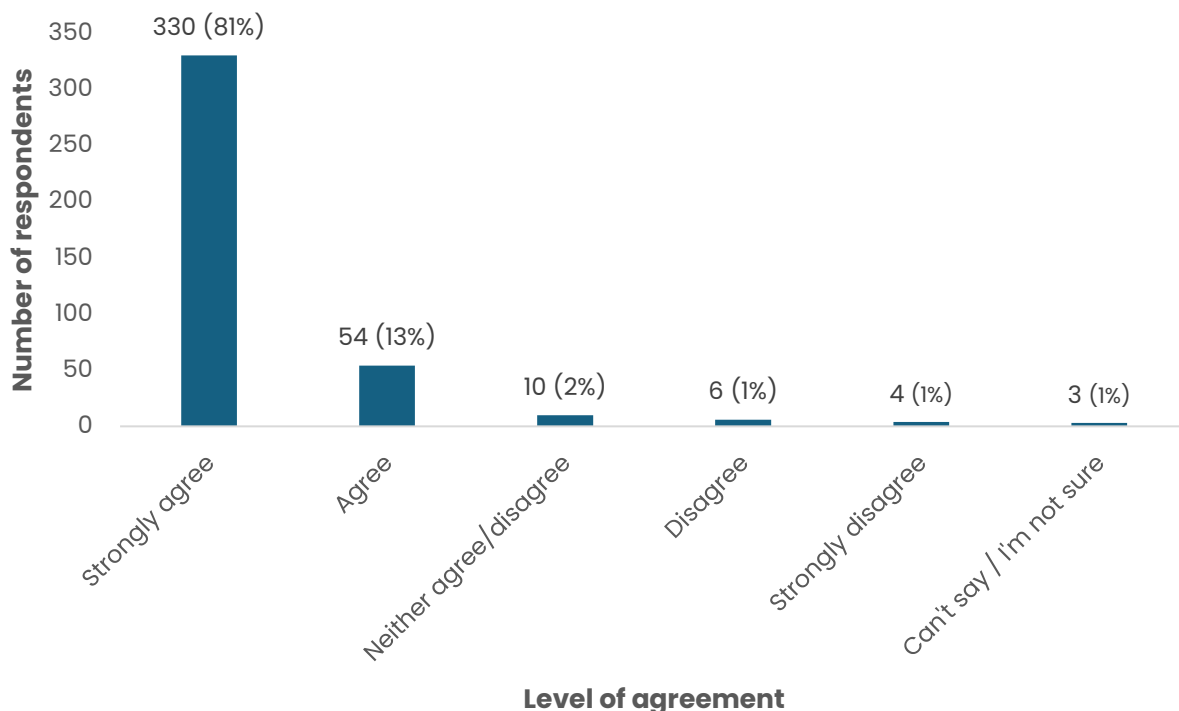
- *“Need small hardware outlet, Manchester, and fresh pet food (another pet store even). Focus on affordability, lowering costs for stallholders and thus shoppers.”*
- *“The market needs affordable fruit and veg.”*

- *“Would love a Middle Eastern style deli/food outlet, falafel etc. That’s missing a bit on the southside. Hardware – That’s a big gap locally.”*
- *“I wonder if there could be a section of second-hand stalls? Like even if it was just a group of 3–5 stalls that anyone could apply to hire and sell second-hand clothes or other items. In the name of community and sustainability, that could be cool.”*
- *“More stores that are dedicated to dietary requirements – like having an amazing gluten free bakery or an Italian store that is dedicated to gluten free home made products. ”*
- *“Need a menswear shop with basics, denim, belts etc.”*

## Market benefit to locals

We asked people to what extent they agreed with the statement: “The availability of South Melbourne Market is a significant benefit to local residents.”

Of the 419 survey respondents, 407 (97%) provided a response to this question. 330 people (94%) of respondents agree or strongly agree that South Melbourne Market is a significant benefit to local residents.



## Community pop-ups

Four pop-up activations were held during the engagement period. Over 120 people provided open-ended feedback, ideas and comments regarding the Market's five-year strategic plan. Feedback themes and key issues were consistent with survey responses. The key themes were:

- Remaining relevant for local residents / community (not tourists)
- Addressing traffic congestion and pedestrian safety on surrounding streets, roundabouts and pedestrian crossings
- Need for increased car parking / improved access to car park entries
- Addressing internal congestion and access
- Increased focus on grocery stalls (less restaurants, coffee and general retail)
- Affordability – remaining competitive with supermarkets
- Cleanliness

## Trader workshop

A dedicated workshop was held with South Melbourne Market traders during the engagement period to hear their feedback, ideas and challenges in relation to the next five years.

The most prominent themes have been captured below:

- Addressing congestion and improving accessibility and customer flow
- Increasing trading days and/or hours
- Market mix – provision of necessities and essential shopping for regular shoppers, and staying competitive to supermarkets (affordability)
- Customer focus – maintaining local community loyalty
- Improving the efficiency of back-of-house, storage areas and the organisation of the loading bay



- Onsite amenities; increasing the number of toilets onsite, increased cleaning and maintenance and provision of dedicated trader bathrooms.

## Differences in feedback across genders

Priorities for the Market were consistent across women, men, and non-binary respondents, showing a shared vision for a Market that remains local, accessible, and community focused.

## Next steps

Insights from this community engagement project and the findings in this report will be used to inform the development of the 2026–30 South Melbourne Market Strategic Plan. The draft Plan will go to Council for adoption in early 2026.

For more ways to have your say and keep up to date on local projects, visit [haveyoursay.portphillip.vic.gov.au](https://haveyoursay.portphillip.vic.gov.au). You can also subscribe to our newsletter for updates on this and other projects.

## Thank you

We would like to thank the community, traders and other participants who took part in this engagement project, and helped shape the future of the South Melbourne Market.