



# **Engaging on the new Homelessness and Affordable Housing Strategy**

## **Engagement Summary Report – Stage 1 Engagement**

June 2025



## Acknowledgement of Country

**Council respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the Kulin Nation. We acknowledge their legacy and spiritual connection to the land and waterways across the City of Port Phillip and pay our heartfelt respect to their Elders, past, present and future.**

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# Introduction

## Project background

We are developing a new Homelessness and Affordable Housing Strategy for our City.

This strategy will set out Council's role in supporting people experiencing or at risk of homelessness to find pathways to secure housing, and in accessing affordable or social (public and community) housing.

The new Homelessness and Affordable Housing Strategy will combine and replace two former strategies:

- Think & Act – Homelessness Action Strategy 2015 – 2020
- In Our Backyard – Growing Affordable Housing in Port Phillip 2015 – 2025.

It will also build on the findings of the review of Think & Act, called Homelessness in Port Phillip (KatLinx Consulting, Aug 2024), which identified an improved way to structure the homelessness section of a new strategy.

## What we set out to achieve

During this engagement, we sought to gain an understanding of our community's priorities around the nature of Council's role in homelessness and affordable housing over the next ten-year period, to help to inform the development of the new Strategy.



This was carried out using a mix of online and face-to-face engagement methods.

## About this report

This report outlines how Council has engaged to date on this project and summarises what we have heard from the community during Stage 1 of engagement. A final report will be produced which will incorporate the findings of Stage 2 of engagement after this is undertaken later in 2025.

While this report is specific to the engagement activities undertaken for the Affordable Housing and Homelessness Strategy, it also considers and aligns the findings to other engagement activities including the deliberative panel undertaken to inform the Plan for Port Phillip 2025–30 and the Community Safety Plan and Roundtable (Appendix 4).

## 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.
- 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 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people with disability, multicultural communities, older people, and others.



- The information and views presented in this report are a summary of the opinions and feedback heard from across the engagement activities. The feedback has not been independently validated. As such, some information may be 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.

## Acknowledgement and thanks

We would like to acknowledge and thank the community members who contributed feedback on this project so far.

In particular, we would like to thank those community members with lived experience of homelessness, accessing social (public and community) or affordable housing, housing or rental stress, or living on a very low or low income, who have generously shared their experiences to better inform this project.



*Figure 1 A community member provides project feedback to a Council Officer, O'Donnell Gardens, Acland Street, St Kilda*

## What we did

Between 22 April – 19 May 2025, a range of communications and engagement activities were carried out to inform the community about this project and to seek their feedback, during Stage 1 engagement.

### Communications and engagement activities



***Have Your Say***  
**website and survey**

A project page on Council's *Have Your Say* engagement website provided information on the process, a timeline, contact details, and a survey.



**Posters and paper-based surveys**

Flyers notifying the community about the project and paper-based surveys were made available at ASSIST and library counters.





	<b>Emails x 19</b>	<p>Emails were sent to 16 partner organisations through the Port Phillip Zero Network, as well as 3 funded organisations that Council has a service agreement with, including posters and surveys to print, notifying them about the opportunity for their clients and service users to participate in the project.</p>
	<b>Newsletter x 3</b>	<p>Information about the project and the opportunity to engage was included in the <i>Have Your Say</i> May 2025 newsletter, delivered to 3,829 subscribers, DiverCity May newsletter, delivered to 14,504 subscribers, and Community Sector News newsletter May edition, delivered to 1,270 subscribers.</p>
	<b>Social media posts x 4</b>	<p>Social media posts were used to promote the engagement, via City of Port Phillip's social media accounts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instagram post (28 April) reach 1,079; 9 likes, 2 comments, 2 saves, 2 shares.</li> <li>• Facebook post (28 April) reach 3,333; 8 reactions, 14 comments, 5 shares, 79 clicks.</li> <li>• Instagram post (14 May) reach 791; 5 likes, 2 saves, 5 shares.</li> <li>• Facebook post (14 May) reach 2,457; 6 reactions, 12 comments, 14 clicks.</li> </ul>
	<b>Workshop x 1</b>	<p>A workshop was held with local community housing organisations and homelessness and housing support agencies, on 29 April, 2025.</p>
	<b>Face-to-face community pop-ups x 4</b>	<p>Four 2hr face-to-face community pop-ups were held at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dundas Place Reserve, Albert Park, 10 May, 10am – 12pm (13 participants)</li> <li>• O'Donnell Gardens, Acland Street, St Kilda, 14 May, 3pm – 5pm (8 participants)</li> <li>• Carlisle Street, Balaclava (outside St Kilda Library), 15 May, 12pm – 2pm (8 participants)</li> <li>• Bay Street, Port Melbourne (outside Port Melbourne Library), 17 May, 2pm – 4pm (5 participants)</li> </ul>



**Phone  
interviews x 6**

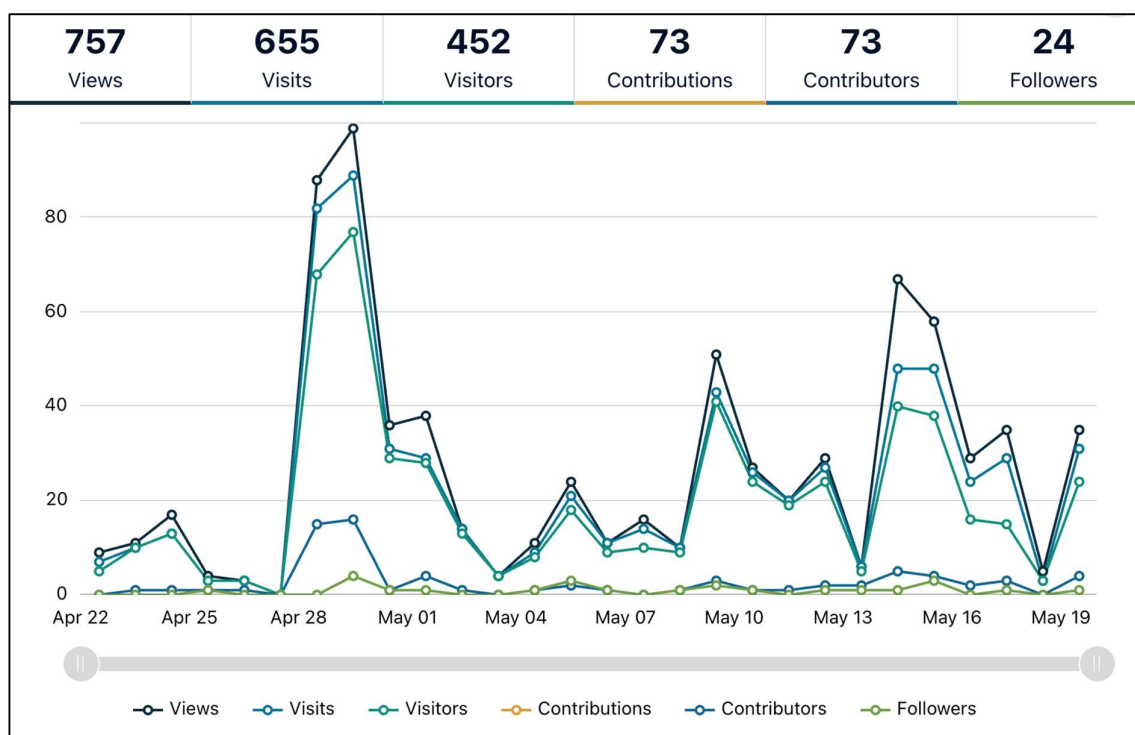
Six phone interviews were carried out, with:

- One person with lived experience to inform our understanding of homelessness and housing.
- Three CEOs of community organisations to clarify view on the nature of Council contributions.
- Two benevolent private developers interested in, proposing or providing affordable and social housing.

*Table 1 Communications and engagement activities carried out across the project*

## Project reach and participation

At least 3,829 people have heard about this project to date, via the Have Your Say newsletter and Council’s social media. Figure 2 showing an overview of interactions with the *Have Your Say* project page to 19 May 2025, where 452 unique visitors visited the project page. We heard from 151 participants throughout this engagement process, with 73 participants completing the online survey, 22 participants completing hard-copy paper-based surveys, 34 participants at community pop-ups, one targeted interview with a community member with lived experience, five submissions received from partner organisations and housing providers, and a further 16 emails received from community members.



# Who we heard from

## Demographics

### Gender

Participants were asked to provide some demographic information when filling out the survey, and this information was also gathered at community pop-ups, with 143 responses. As shown in Figure 3, 89 participants (62%) identified as female (woman or girl) 43 participants (30%) identified as male (man or boy), 5 participants (4%) identified as non-binary, and one participant (1%) used a different term.

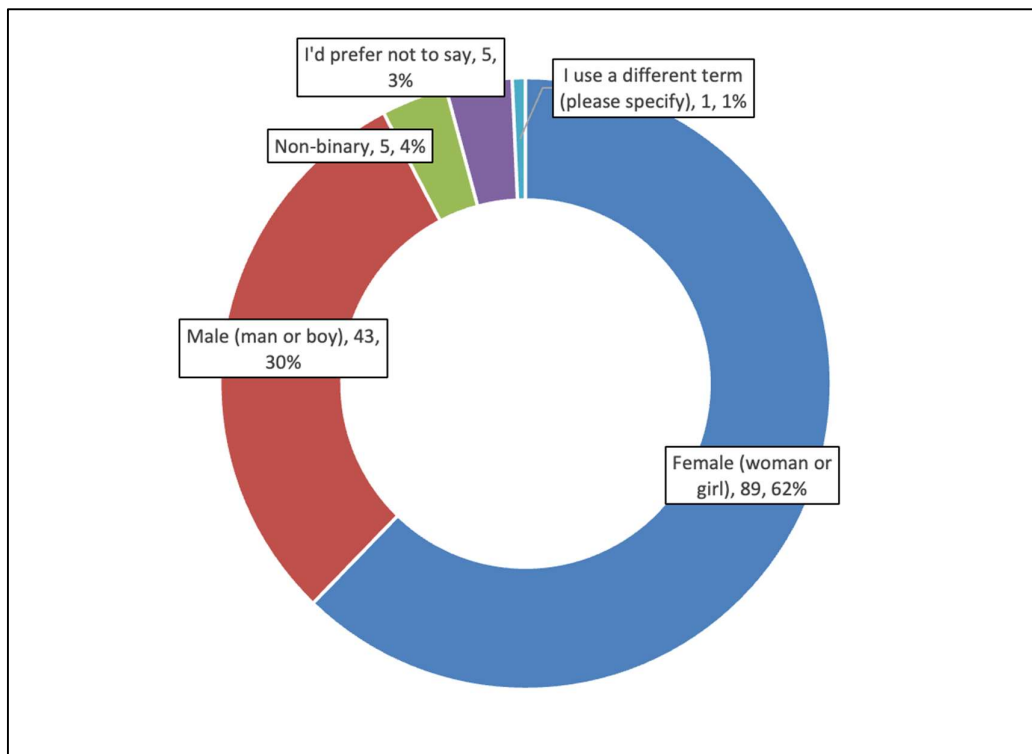


Figure 3 Participation by gender – survey and community pop-up participants

## Age

Participants were asked to provide their age, with 125 responses. The age bracket that participants were most likely to select being 35– 49 years old, with 33 responses (26% of participants). The second most likely age bracket for participants to select was 25 – 34 years (30 responses, 24% of participants) 2 participants (less than 2%) were aged under 18.

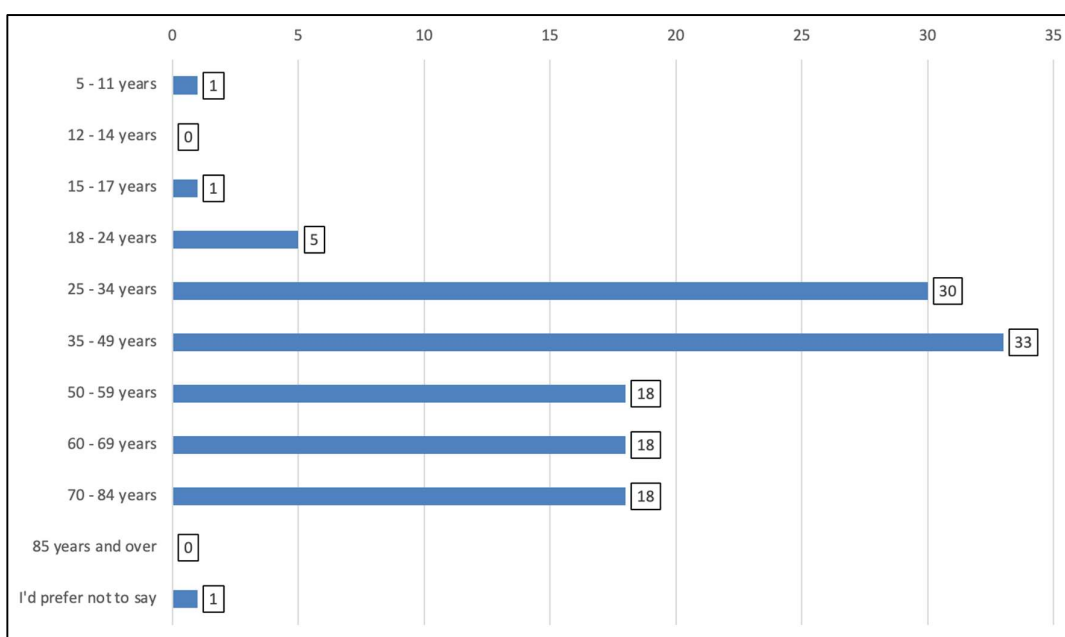


Figure 4 Participation by age – survey and community pop-up participants

## Diversity statements

Participants were asked to indicate if they identified with a series of statements to understand participant diversity and were able to select as many statements



as applied to them. 102 responses were received. From most to least common, these were:

- "None of these apply to me" (66 responses, 65%)
- "I identify as LGBTIQA+" (25 responses, 25%)
- "I am a person with disability" (14 responses, 14%)
- "I'd prefer not to say" (12 responses, 12%)
- "I speak a language other than English at home" (8 responses, 8%)
- No participant responses selected the statement "I am from an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander background".

### **Suburb of residence**

Participants were asked to provide their suburb of residence, with 118 responses. 25 participants (21%) said they live in St Kilda, followed by Albert Park (16 participants, 14%) and St Kilda East (12 participants, 10%). Participation by suburb can be seen in Figure 5. Other places outside the City of Port Phillip that participants identified were Beaumaris, Brunswick (2 participants), Brunswick West, Caulfield North, Chadstone, Malvern, McKinnon, Northcote, North Fitzroy, Preston, Richmond, Sydney and Thornbury.

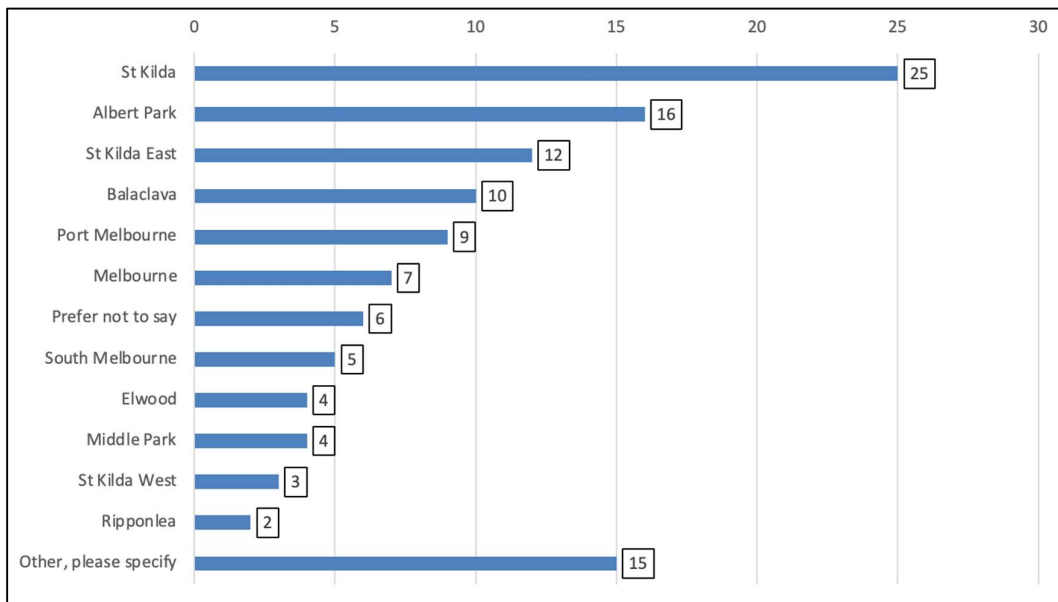
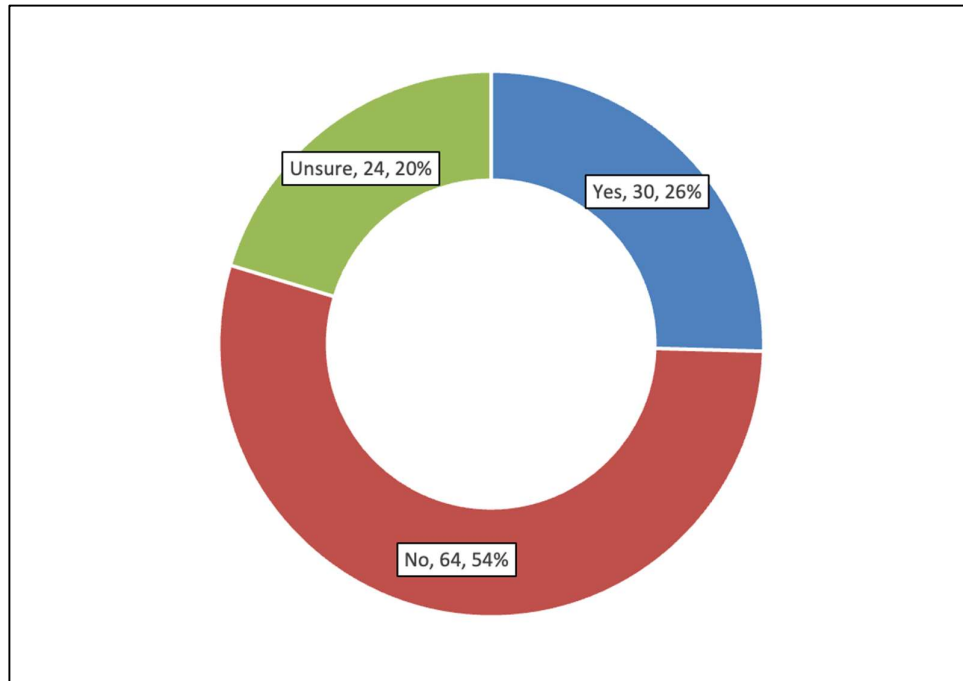


Figure 5 Participation by place of residence – survey and community pop-up participants

### Prior feedback on Council projects

Participants were also asked whether they had provided feedback on any other City of Port Phillip projects in the past 12 months, with 118 responses. 64 participants (54%) said 'no', 30 (26%) said 'yes', and 24 (20%) were unsure, as shown in Figure 6.



*Figure 6 Participant prior feedback on other City of Port Phillip projects in the past 12 months – survey and community pop-up participants*

## Connection to the City of Port Phillip

Survey and pop-up participants were asked to identify their connection to the City of Port Phillip. 115 responses have been recorded, which includes connections provided by those community members who emailed, where they have identified it. Participants were able to select as many statements as applied to them. 97 participants (84%) said they live in the City of Port Phillip at a fixed address, and 8 participants (7%) said they live in the City of Port Phillip but don't currently have a fixed address. All responses can be seen in Table 2.



Statement	Number of responses	% of participants
I live in the City of Port Phillip at a fixed address	97	84%
I pay rates in the City of Port Phillip	33	29%
I work in the City of Port Phillip	29	25%
I access services in the City of Port Phillip	27	23%
I visit the City of Port Phillip	16	14%
I work for a homelessness service or community housing organisation which is based in/active in the City of Port Phillip	11	10%
I travel through the City of Port Phillip	10	9%
I live in the City of Port Phillip but don't currently have a fixed address	8	7%
I used to live, work, visit or travel through the City of Port Phillip but don't anymore	8	7%
I own a business in the City of Port Phillip	7	6%
I am a private developer interested in/currently providing private affordable housing or social (community) housing in the City of Port Phillip	1	1%
Other	7	6%

Table 2 Participant responses – What is your connection to the City of Port Phillip?  
– survey and pop-up participants

## Participants with lived experience

Survey participants were asked whether they had lived experience of homelessness, accessing social (public and community) or affordable housing, housing or rental stress, or living on a very low or low income, who have generously shared their experiences to better inform this project. 86 survey participants shared that they had lived experience, with a breakdown of these responses found below in Table 3.



Lived experience	Number of responses	% of survey participants
Personal experience of living with homelessness	47	49%
Yes – I am currently homeless	7	7%
Yes – I have been homeless in the past	19	20%
Yes – someone I know (family member or friend) is currently homeless or has been homeless in the past	26	27%
Other	7	7%
Personal experience of social (public and community) housing	53	56%
Yes – I have applied for social (public or community) housing in the past	9	9%
Yes – I have lived in social (public or community) housing in the past	7	7%
Yes – I currently live in social (public or community) housing	12	13%
Yes – someone I know (family member or friend) is currently living in social (public or community) housing or has applied for or lived in social (public or community) housing in the past	36	38%
Other	5	5%
Personal experience of affordable housing	40	42%
Yes – I have applied for affordable housing in the past	8	8%
Yes – I have lived in affordable housing in the past	9	9%
Yes – I currently live in affordable housing	11	12%
Yes – someone I know (family member or friend) is currently living in affordable housing or has applied for or lived in affordable housing in the past	26	27%
Other	3	3%
Personal experience of housing or rental stress	59	62%
Yes – I am currently living with housing or rental stress	23	24%



Yes – I have lived with housing or rental stress in the past	41	43%
Personal experience of living on a very low or low income	76	80%
Yes – I am currently living on a very low income	21	22%
Yes – I am currently living on a low income	17	18%
Yes – I have lived on a very low income in the past	34	36%
Yes – I have lived on a low income in the past	27	28%

*Table 3 Participant responses – Lived experience – survey participants*

Survey participants who shared that they had lived experience of homelessness, accessing social (public and community) or affordable housing, housing or rental stress, or living on a very low or low income had key perspectives to offer into our understanding of this topic. Perspectives and priorities from these participants will be highlighted through the following sections of the report in recognition of their experience and knowledge.

Survey participants who shared that they had lived experience were asked if they were happy to be contacted by the project team about their survey responses, with 34 participants agreeing. We thank these participants, and the project team will be reaching out to these participants during Stage 2 engagement to help further inform our understanding of the issues in the development of the Strategy.



# What we heard

## Prioritising Council's roles in homelessness and affordable housing

Council can play a role in homelessness and affordable housing in a number of ways. Participants were presented with the following roles and were asked to select the three which they feel are most important for Council to prioritise:

- Offering cash and land contributions to community housing providers to support them increasing the stock of affordable housing
- Offer people experiencing or at risk of homelessness information on local homelessness services
- Advocating to the State Government for powers to establish an affordable and social housing planning mechanism to require developers to contribute to the provision of social housing
- Supporting the redevelopment of ageing public housing properties by Homes Victoria
- Working with and assisting benevolent private developers to deliver affordable rental and community housing
- Advocating to the Commonwealth and State Government to strengthen rights and supports for renters
- Other (please say what).



Responses can be seen in Figure 7, with the most frequently selected role being “Advocating to the State Government”.

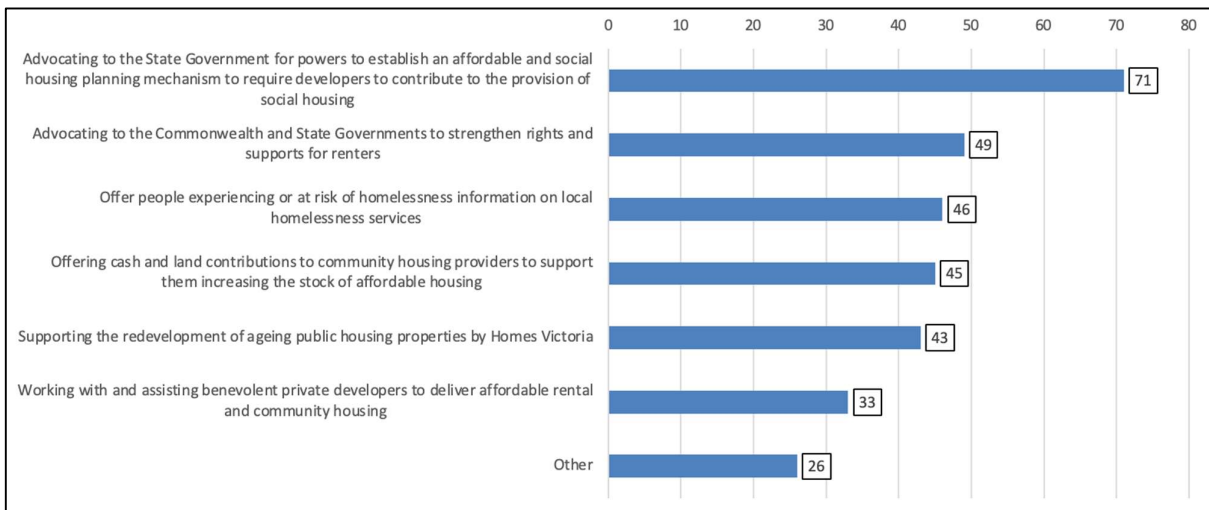


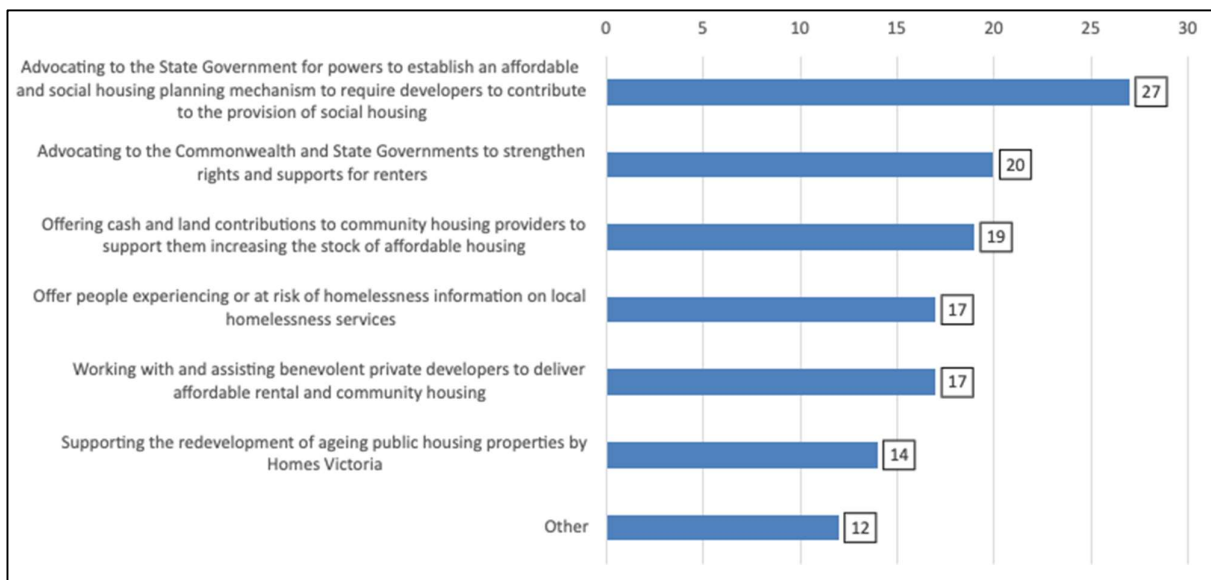
Figure 7 Council can play a role in affordable housing and homelessness in a number of ways. Select the three which you feel are most important for Council to prioritise – survey and community pop-up participants

A sample of ‘Other’ responses included introducing stronger financial disincentives such as vacant property tax for property owners whose property remains vacant for more than 12 months, not creating further barriers and burdens to homeless people such as fines or local law move-on orders, supporting zoning adjustments such as state government activity centre propositions to unlock land for denser development automatically, changing heritage and planning policy to create more medium density affordable housing, and increasing support and aid in obtaining housing.

For survey participants who shared that they had the following lived experiences: currently homeless, been homeless in the past, someone they



know (family member or friend) is currently homeless or has been homeless in the past, the most frequently selected role was the same, however 'Offering cash and land contributions to community housing providers to support them increasing the stock of affordable housing' and "Working with and assisting benevolent private developers to deliver affordable rental and community housing' were prioritised slightly higher as compared to the total participant responses, as seen in Figure 8 below.



*Figure 8 Council can play a role in affordable housing and homelessness in a number of ways. Select the three which you feel are most important for Council to prioritise – survey participants with lived experience of homelessness*



## Level of support for actions Council is currently taking

Survey participants were shown six actions that Council is currently taking, and were asked for each, 'Do you support Council continuing this approach?', with available responses ranging from 'Strongly support' to 'Strongly oppose'.

### Action 1

*"Council currently provides cash and land contributions for:*

- A project developing supported social housing for people who are experiencing homelessness (including rough sleeping).*
- Community housing projects addressing affordable housing needs for other priority needs groups."*

As seen below in Figure 9, 79% of survey participants supported Council continuing the approach outlined in Action 1 (53% Strongly support, 26% Support).

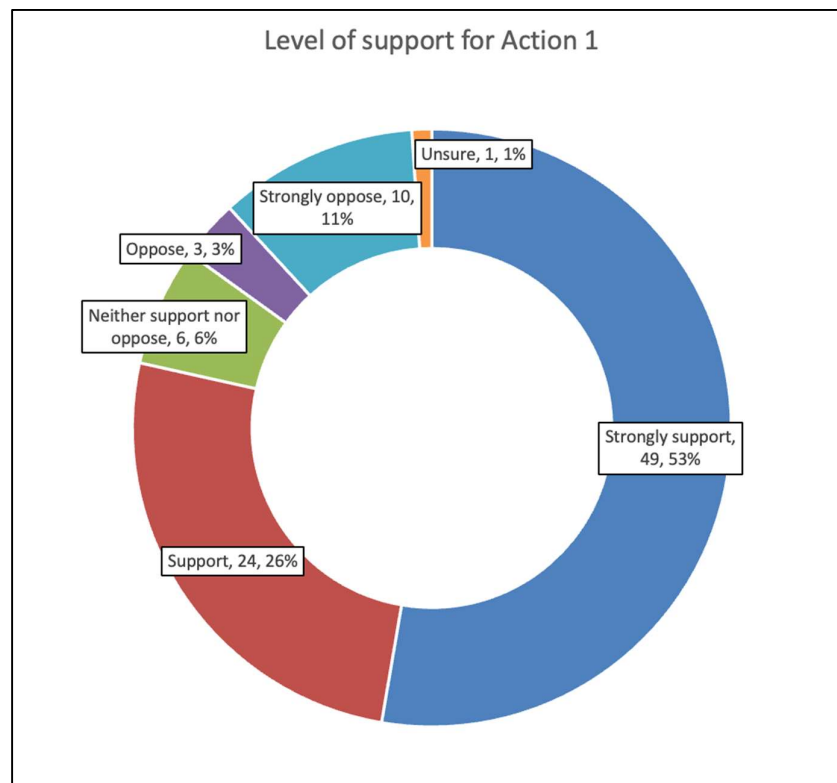


Figure 9 Do you support Council continuing this approach? – Level of support for Action 1 – survey participants

For survey participants who shared that they had the following lived experiences: currently homeless, been homeless in the past, someone they know (family member or friend) is currently homeless or has been homeless in the past, the level of support for Council continuing the approach outlined in Action 1 was similar – 77% – however, the percentage of responses of Strongly support was higher, at 62%.

When asked if there was anything further they would like to share about their response, or any different opportunities they would like to tell us about, 41 responses were received.





A sample of the responses received included a desire for a clear plan for housing estate sites to be returned as 100% genuine public housing, citing no need for sites such as Barak Beacon estate to be demolished, for Council to detail how cash contributions are used to make sure they aren't swallowed up in administrative costs, a desire for women seeking safety from domestic violence to be a prioritised group for housing support, a desire for a one-stop shop phone number if residents are concerned about the safety of a person experiencing homelessness, and a need to ensure that support goes beyond a roof as the entire community is impacted by situating people with high needs within a neighbourhood.

## Action 2

*"Another way Council currently supports people experiencing or at risk of homelessness to find pathways to secure housing is by providing two Council staff to:*

- Coordinate local service delivery with health and homelessness services to support and find housing for people experiencing homelessness via the Port Phillip Zero program.*
- Nominate older persons, with at least three years residency or prior residency, to be nominated for housing in five public housing estates."*

As seen below in Figure 10, 83% of survey participants supported Council continuing the approach outlined in Action 2 (43% Strongly support, 40% Support).

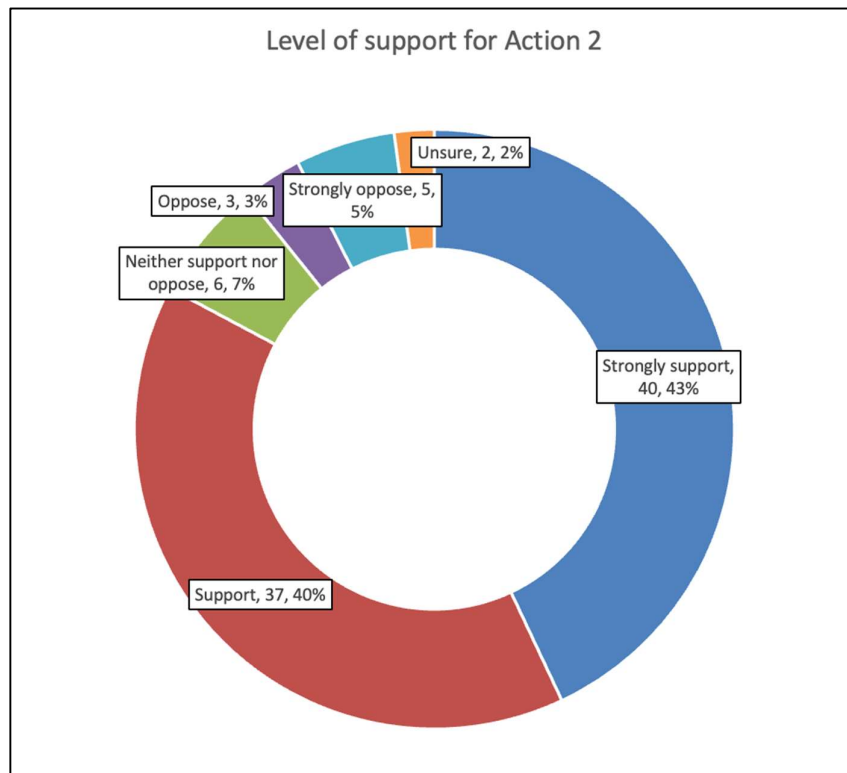


Figure 10 Do you support Council continuing this approach? – Level of support for Action 2 – survey participants

For survey participants who shared that they had the following lived experiences: currently homeless, been homeless in the past, someone they know (family member or friend) is currently homeless or has been homeless in the past, the level of support for Council continuing the approach outlined in Action 1 was similar – 82% – however, the percentage of responses of Strongly support was lower, at 36%.

When asked if there was anything further they would like to share about their response, or any different opportunities they would like to tell us about, 22 responses were received.



A sample of the responses received included support for a holistic, compassionate approach that looks after the health and wellbeing of our homeless population and vulnerable older residents, making our community stronger as a whole, a perceived need for more than two Council staff, and supply of social workers and community workers to support the existing resources, a need to prioritise safety, dignity, and community wellbeing in housing, in particular women's safety, a feeling of reluctance for Council to be funding housing, and recognition that housing is a human right, not a privilege and that many long-term homeless residents have significant connections over decades to the area.

### Action 3

*"Council currently plays a role in supporting renters in the City of Port Phillip by advocating to the Commonwealth and State Governments to strengthen the rights and supports for renters."*

As seen below in Figure 11, 85% of survey participants supported Council continuing the approach outlined in Action 3 (58% Strongly support, 27% Support). This action received the highest level of support of all six actions.

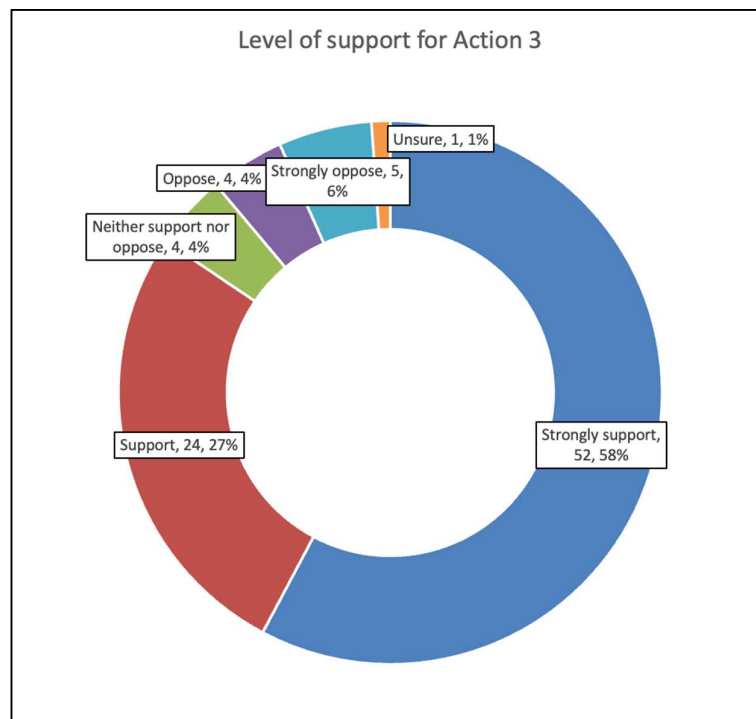


Figure 11 Do you support Council continuing this approach? – Level of support for Action 3 – survey participants

For survey participants who shared that they had the following lived experiences: currently homeless, been homeless in the past, someone they know (family member or friend) is currently homeless or has been homeless in the past, the level of support for Council continuing the approach outlined in Action 1 was the same – 85% – however, the percentage of responses of Strongly support was higher, at 62%.

When asked if there was anything further they would like to share about their response, or any different opportunities they would like to tell us about, 24 responses were received.



A sample of the responses received included support for measures to address rental availability such as rent caps, rent freezes, taxing empty properties and enforcing additional council fees on empty properties, support for Council continuing its advocacy on behalf of renters, the pressures of land tax increases on landlords, and clamping down on landlords who neglect the upkeep of their properties.

## Action 4

*"Council is currently advocating to the State Government for powers to establish an affordable and social housing planning mechanism which would encourage the inclusion of affordable housing in new developments."*

As seen below in Figure 12, 78% of survey participants supported Council continuing the approach outlined in Action 4 (50% Strongly support, 28% Support).

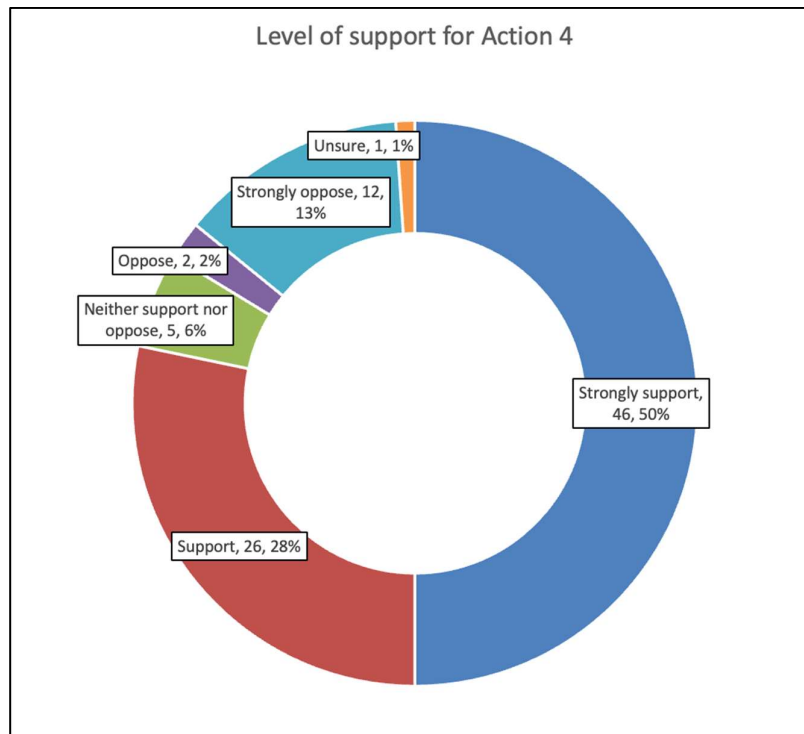


Figure 12 Do you support Council continuing this approach? - Level of support for Action 4 – survey participants

For survey participants who shared that they had the following lived experiences: currently homeless, been homeless in the past, someone they know (family member or friend) is currently homeless or has been homeless in the past, the level of support for Council continuing the approach outlined in Action 1 was higher – 85% – and the percentage of responses of Strongly support was higher, at 56%.

When asked if there was anything further they would like to share about their response, or any different opportunities they would like to tell us about, 28 responses were received.



A sample of the responses received included support for public housing for those with no income, rather than social or community housing, concern that housing priced at 10 per cent below market rent is still not affordable to the community, support for inclusion of affordable and social housing to be mandated rather than just encouraged, support for Council land that is currently used for social housing to remain 100% social housing, and support for changes to laws around heritage to encourage more medium density development.

## Action 5

*"Council currently supports the redevelopment of ageing public housing properties by Homes Victoria which are no longer fit-for-purpose to increase social housing."*

As seen below in Figure 13, 64% of survey participants supported Council continuing the approach outlined in Action 5 (39% Strongly support, 25% Support).

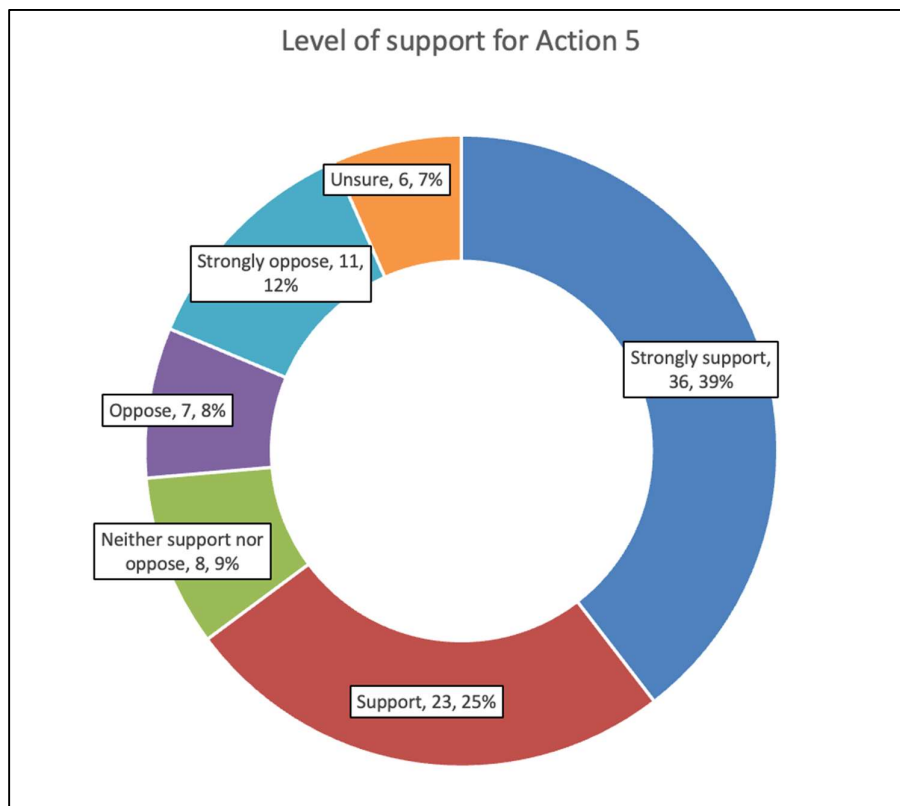


Figure 13 Do you support Council continuing this approach? – Level of support for Action 5 – survey participants

For survey participants who shared that they had the following lived experiences: currently homeless, been homeless in the past, someone they know (family member or friend) is currently homeless or has been homeless in the past, the level of support for Council continuing the approach outlined in Action 1 was higher – 67% – and the percentage of responses of Strongly support was higher, at 49%.

When asked if there was anything further they would like to share about their response, or any different opportunities they would like to tell us about, 34 responses were received.





A sample of the responses received included concern around community housing perceived to be abandoned and empty where it's unclear what is happening with development, concern around what happens to residents in the interim during replacement or renovation, support for prioritising this housing for older residents, a need to increase housing stock, and a need for proper standards of safety, design and community wellbeing within these developments.

## Action 6

*"Council is currently working with and assisting two benevolent private developers to deliver affordable rental and community housing in Fishermans Bend and St Kilda, in partnership with community housing organisations."*

As seen below in Figure 14, 77% of survey participants supported Council continuing the approach outlined in Action 6 (46% Strongly support, 31% Support).

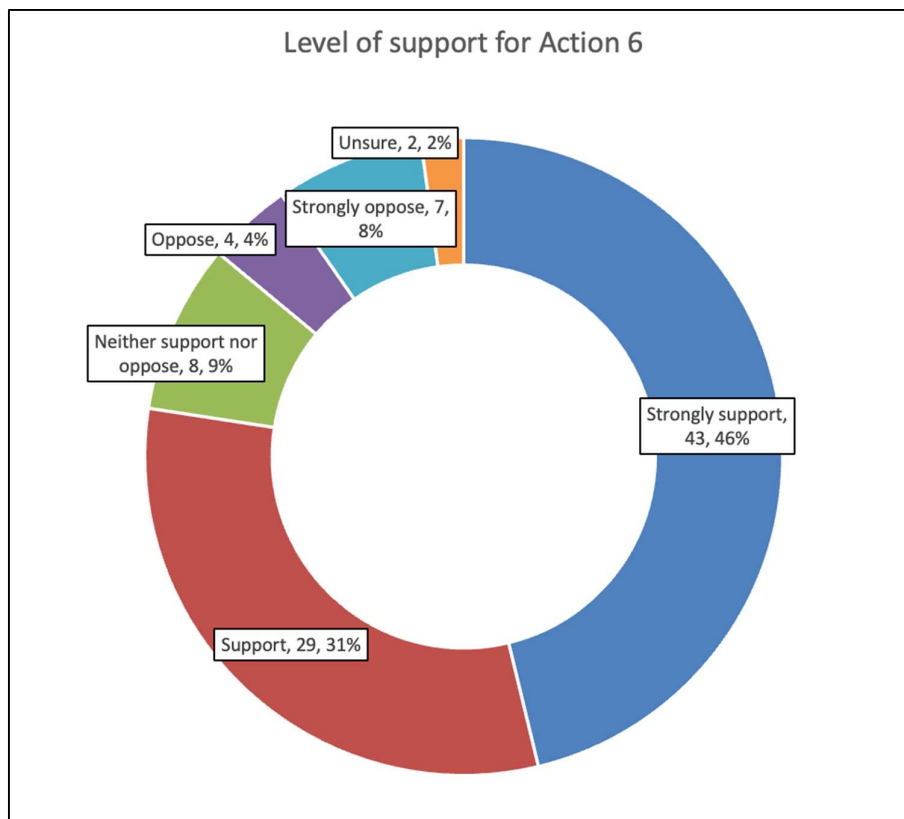


Figure 14 Do you support Council continuing this approach? – Level of support for Action 6 – survey participants

For survey participants who shared that they had the following lived experiences: currently homeless, been homeless in the past, someone they know (family member or friend) is currently homeless or has been homeless in the past, the level of support for Council continuing the approach outlined in Action 1 was higher – 82% – and the percentage of responses of Strongly support was higher, at 54%.

When asked if there was anything further they would like to share about their response, or any different opportunities they would like to tell us about, 32 responses were received.



A sample of the responses received included ensuring housing is safe, liveable and high quality and avoids poor-quality developments, concern around focusing housing supply in St Kilda, support for Council funds going to not-for-profit developers over for-profit developers, support for rigorous processes and management of these developments, prioritising development sites close to reliable public transport, and support for separating yearly funding for these organisations from the budget process due to a perception the community needs to continually fight for funding for these measures.

## Other ideas on how Council could support people experiencing homelessness

When survey and pop-up participants were asked whether they had any other ideas on how Council could support people experiencing homelessness, 62 responses were received. These responses have been grouped into themes as seen in Table 4. The themes that were touched on most often in responses to this question were opposing punishing/criminalising people sleeping rough (16 responses, 26%) and working with other service providers (16 responses, 26%).



Theme	Number of responses	% of responses
Opposing punishing/ criminalising people sleeping rough	16	26%
Working with other service providers	16	26%
Advocacy/ lobbying	13	21%
Concern for wellbeing of people sleeping rough	11	18%
Incentivising owners of vacant properties, including through rates/tax	8	13%
Addressing/increasing support for those experiencing drug addiction	7	11%
Addressing/increasing support for those experiencing mental health challenges	7	11%
Increasing funding	6	10%
Destigmatising homelessness	5	8%
Assisting people living with homelessness to find employment	4	6%
Helping people experiencing homelessness to feel valued/part of community	3	5%
Measures to increase connections/community resilience/ compassion	3	5%
Other	8	13%

*Table 4 Participant responses grouped by theme - Do you have any other ideas on how Council could support people experiencing homelessness? – survey and community pop-up participants*

‘Other’ responses included giving consideration to whether land can be returned to Bunurong people to support housing for First Nations people, leaving homelessness and housing for State and Federal Government to address, and ensuring renovation of social housing being of secondary concern.



Here is a sample of some of the verbatim comments received:

- *"Destigmatise homelessness where ever possible eg. Removing or challenging comments made on councils social media correlating homelessness and crime. Challenge assumptions about homelessness through social media campaign."*
- *"I actually think there needs to be a piece around making connections with those in the community who have not experienced homeless or housing insecurity to change community attitudes that are harsh and unfair. A storytelling piece with some of the local faces maybe?"*
- *"Advocating for rental caps and making sure that houses in the councils area are actually meeting minimum rental standards."*
- *"A roving van where they could have a wash, wash their clothes, have a hair cut and info given to them about this so they don't have to mind read where and when it is. And a roving medical/dental van. Yes, do the work with developing strategies and housing but it's also the absolute on the ground stuff that I don't see happening."*
- *"Never, ever criminalise sleeping rough! It is really not ok."*
- *"Incentivising landlords to fill properties at affordable rent, within a 100m radius of my home there are 3 residential properties that have been empty for at least 2 years, one empty for 5 years!"*



- *“Connecting with mental health, addiction and family violence organisations to identify gaps from their perspective and any opportunities to better connect housing services with other social and health services.”*
- *“Homelessness and housing are ultimately State responsibilities, but the City of Port Phillip (CoPP) must ensure that every person has the opportunity for safety, dignity, and hope.”*

## Other considerations

When survey and pop-up participants were asked whether there was anything else they thought was important for Council to consider when planning this Strategy, 76 responses were received. Feedback received via the 16 emails from community members have also been grouped into themes in this section for a total of 92 responses. These responses have been grouped into themes as seen in Table 5.

The themes that were touched on most often in responses to this question were opposing punishing/criminalising people sleeping rough (23 responses, 25%), working with other service providers (19 responses, 21%) and advocacy/lobbying (19 responses, 21%).



Theme	Number of responses	% of participants
Opposing punishing/criminalising people sleeping rough	23	25%
Working with other service providers	19	21%
Advocacy/ lobbying	19	21%
Mechanisms to increase availability of affordable housing	17	18%
Measures to increase connections/community resilience/ compassion	16	17%
Increasing availability of social housing and crisis accommodation	15	16%
Increasing funding	15	16%
Addressing/increasing support for those experiencing mental health challenges	11	12%
Addressing/increasing support for those experiencing drug addiction	9	15%
Safety/wellbeing of those in public, affordable and crisis accommodation	9	15%
Concern for wellbeing of people sleeping rough	8	9%
Destigmatising homelessness	8	9%
Adequate planning of social/public housing that considers safety/impact on community	8	9%
Helping people experiencing homelessness to feel valued/part of community	5	5%
Other	21	23%

*Table 5 Participant responses grouped by theme - Is there anything else you think is important for Council to consider when planning this Strategy? – survey participants, community pop-up participants, formal submissions and emails from the community*

‘Other’ responses included a perceived need for Council to consider how their actions are contributing to rent and mortgage stress, to consider the perspective and role of First Peoples on this issue, to consider the intertwined relationship of domestic violence and homelessness, to ensure the Strategy is



accessible, inclusive, takes a collaborative approach and includes people with lived experience and specialist homelessness services, and a perceived need for a new definition of affordable housing as affordable housing is still not affordable to many in our community.

Here is a sample of some of the verbatim comments received:

- *"Ensuring all programs and places are evaluated so that they can improve and can contribute to advocacy work."*
- *"A collaborative approach including people with lived experience of experiencing homelessness, as well as consultation with specialist homelessness services in the area to address need in a trauma informed approach."*
- *"I would encourage the council to consider how we can better support people sleeping rough with compassion and care. I want to live in a community where vulnerable people are cared for, not discarded."*
- *"People deserve dignity and safety now, not just promises. Council must stay accountable and ensure the community can see and trust the results."*
- *"Council shouldn't support developments that don't support housing the people in our community."*





- *"According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, on any given day Victorian homelessness services turn away 96 people; and the top three reasons for homelessness in Victoria are financial difficulties, family and domestic violence."*
- *"It's important to invest in support services like outreach workers, mental health support, and job readiness programs that helps people transition out of homelessness, not just survive it short-term."*
- *"Ensure that social housing is mixed through new developments and is not standalone social housing but integrated in with private dwellings."*
- *"Council may need to enhance inclusive policy and community involvement protocols, including lived-experience voices in policy. For example take a step beyond for this survey to strengthen inclusive planning. Where possible, the council might consider to run a community education campaign to help people reduce their stigma and promote more local support."*



## Next steps

Thank you to everyone who provided their feedback during Stage 1 of this project. The engagement findings from this engagement will now be used to further inform development of the draft Homelessness and Affordable Housing Strategy.

Stage 2 engagement is proposed to take place from 22 August – 18 September, where the community will have an opportunity to review the draft Homelessness and Affordable Housing Strategy and provide feedback.

During Stage 2 engagement, participants with lived experience who were happy to be contacted to help further inform our understanding of the issues in the development of the Strategy, will be contacted by the project team to help further inform our understanding.

We will continue to keep the community updated on the progress of the project via the dedicated project page at [www.haveyoursay.portphillip.vic.gov.au/homelessness-and-affordable-housing](http://www.haveyoursay.portphillip.vic.gov.au/homelessness-and-affordable-housing)



# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Workshop summary – homelessness and affordable housing agencies (29 April 2025)

The following is a brief summary of a workshop with local community housing organisations and homelessness and housing support agencies, held on 29 April, 2025.

The main points raised during this discussion were:

- Cash and land contributions were highlighted as being especially important, but all roles are important as they are all different and therefore difficult to prioritise.
- Council should play a role in destigmatising homelessness and run an education campaign on the services Council already provide.
- General support for coordination efforts such as Port Phillip Zero, though some comments suggest it is sometimes too theoretical, and hard to access hands-on case work.
- Not enough affordable housing across the City of Port Phillip. Currently, lower-cost rental stock is still priced very high and not affordable for low-income earners. This also makes it difficult to recruit staff as most community workers can't afford to live in St Kilda.
- Generally, advocating for the rights of and support for renters was not seen as a priority role, noting that other organisations fill this role, i.e. Consumer Affairs,



Tenants Victoria and the Commissioner for Residential Tenancies. However, it was emphasised that, in contrast, advocacy for social housing is supported.

- Strong support for Council advocating for State Government to establish social and affordable housing planning mechanisms to encourage inclusion of affordable housing in new developments.

## Appendix 2: Interview summary – person with lived experience (15 May 2025)

The following is a brief summary of an interview with a person with lived experience, held on 15 May, 2025.

The main points raised during this interview were:

- Top priorities for Council were seen as cash and property contributions to community housing organisations, advocacy for planning mechanisms, and working with benevolent developers.
- Supports more transitional housing, dedicated long-term community housing, specific support for particular vulnerable groups, and social cohesion activities.
- Supports community education around homelessness and its causes.
- Supports frontline support for health questions, such as via a telephone service.
- Sees a need to build independent collective support networks in the community and via organisations to support renters get into home ownership, such as via cooperative or shared equity housing.



- Supports having a planning permit to include social housing in new developments.
- Sees an opportunity to promote opportunities to benevolent developers and get more onboard.
- Sees a need for more practical after-hours services and outreach.

### Appendix 3: Interview summary – two benevolent private developers interested in, proposing or providing affordable and social housing (30 April 2025)

A brief discussion was held with two benevolent private developers interested in, proposing or providing affordable and social housing, on 15 May, 2025.

When asked whether they supported Council continuing the approach of working with and assisting benevolent private developers to deliver affordable rental and community housing, in partnership with community housing organisations, both said they supported this.

One developer outlined that they supported the current project facilitation support role that the Affordable Housing Program Coordinator from the City of Port Phillip provides, with the second developer agreeing that developers needed continuation of the project facilitation support role from the City of Port Phillip.



## Appendix 4: Deliberative Engagement (February 2025)

In February 2025, the City of Port Phillip undertook a deliberative engagement panel to inform the Plan for Port Phillip.

The results highlighted the need to support those experiencing homelessness:

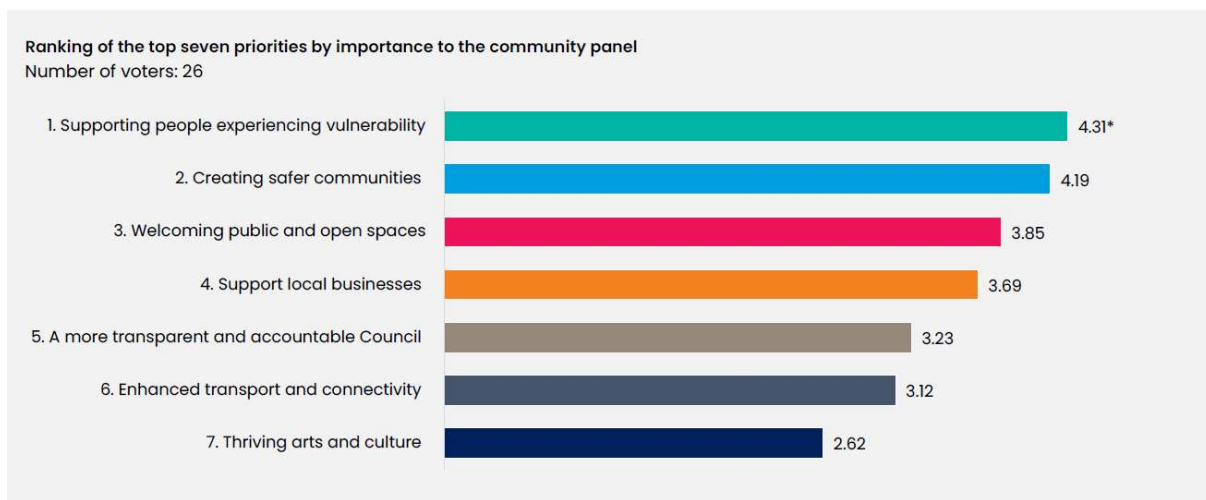
### Ranking of the community panel's 4-year priorities

The community panel ranked the top seven priorities.

The seven priorities were developed by combining each group's final top three priorities. In some cases, broader priorities (e.g. 'Community safety') were separated into more specific issues for clarity.

To rank the priorities, panel members voted individually using the online platform Slido. They were challenged to reflect on the perspectives of others and the findings from past engagements to ensure the final ranking truly represented the broader community.

The results of the vote (shown below) provide a clear picture of the panel's collective priorities for Council action over the next four years.



\*As panel members voted, points were given to priorities based on where they were ranked (i.e., first ranked received 7 points, second received 6 points, and so forth). This number represents the average points received by each priority.

25

They also made a number of recommendations regarding Council's top priorities (including creating safer communities and supporting people experiencing vulnerability):

## Priority 1: Supporting people experiencing vulnerability

### Definition

Make it easier for those in our community who need help to access support services (youth outreach, addiction support, etc.) as a critical prevention measure.

### Rationale

The community panel agreed supporting vulnerable people is a key priority because access to housing, crisis support, and mental health services is essential for community wellbeing.

The panel wants Council to expand housing and support services, improve crisis response, and ensure people in distress can easily access help.

These recommendations were supported by at least **75%** of the community panel.

### Recommendation 1

**Increase funding for support services (e.g. drug and alcohol, homelessness, domestic violence).**

#### Rationale

Current support services are overwhelmed and unable to meet growing community needs.

Additional funding can help achieve goals like zero homelessness and better case management.

Investing in prevention is more effective and cost-efficient than reactive measures.

Increased support can address root causes of issues like substance abuse and domestic violence.

### Recommendation 2

**Provide more accommodation for rough sleepers (for example, new investment and using empty Council buildings).**

#### Rationale

Investing in housing saves the community money by reducing costs associated with homelessness.

Using empty Council buildings can provide immediate shelter solutions, despite potential additional costs. Other Councils have successfully implemented similar strategies, proving it's feasible.

## Priority 2: Creating safer communities

### Definition

Take a long-term and holistic approach to improving public safety by working closely with residents, other levels of government and community organisations.

### Rationale

The panel prioritised community safety because well-maintained public spaces and support for vulnerable people help reduce crime and anti-social behaviour.

The panel wants the Council to improve public infrastructure, increase safety measures, and work with the community and government to address the causes of unsafe behaviour.

These recommendations were supported by at least **75%** of the community panel.

### Recommendation 1

**Invest more in understanding the root cause of unsafe areas. Identify what causes unsafety so it can be tactically addressed.**

#### Rationale

Understanding root causes of unsafety enables targeted, proactive and effective solutions.

Poor infrastructure (e.g., inadequate lighting) can contribute to people feeling unsafe.

Collaborating with the community to address safety concerns can lead to better outcomes.

### Recommendation 2

**Create spaces that are safe, open and inclusive through well-designed and maintained amenities with appropriate lighting, to make sure our public spaces are activated.**

#### Rationale

Enhancing public spaces with better lighting and amenities provides vulnerable individuals more opportunities to thrive.

Accessible health and fitness infrastructure encourage community well-being and inclusivity.

Improved, maintained and fit-for-purpose infrastructure that fosters a safer and more welcoming environment for all residents (including footpaths, walkways and toilet blocks).