



Governance Rules

Review 2025

Engagement Summary Report

August 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're reviewing our Governance Rules to enhance the overall effectiveness of decision making and meeting procedures at the City of Port Phillip.

These rules, which govern the procedures for Council meetings, play a critical role in ensuring transparency, accountability, and the overall effectiveness of decision-making within Council. By providing clear guidelines for how meetings are conducted, the Governance Rules are fundamental to maintaining a well-functioning and effective governance framework.

The City of Port Phillip is recognised for having some of the highest levels of community engagement and public involvement in Council meetings across the local government sector. This strong participation enriches our democratic processes by ensuring decisions reflect the values and concerns of our community. Under the current meeting rules, however, this high level of engagement has led to meetings frequently running overtime. This poses potential risks to the health and safety of attendees and may impact the quality of decision-making. Council is committed to upholding transparent and inclusive public participation while balancing occupational health and safety responsibilities. We are committed to working towards a more effective meeting structure that supports meaningful community input without compromising wellbeing or efficiency.

About this report

This report outlines how Council has engaged and summarises what we have heard from the community.

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.



What we did

Between 8 July to 3 August 2025, a range of communications and engagement activities were carried out to inform the community about this project and to seek their feedback.

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.



Social media posts x 2 Social media posts were used to promote the engagement, via City of Port Phillip’s social media accounts:

- Facebook post (14 July) – views: 3,506, likes: 23, comments: 42, shares: 3, link clicks: 14.
- Instagram post (14 July) – views: 15,10, likes: 16 comments



Newsletter x 1 Information about the project and the opportunity to engage was included in the *Have Your Say* July 2025 newsletter, delivered to over 3,300 subscribers.

Table 1 Communications and engagement activities carried out across the project

Project reach and participation

At least 7001 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 4 August 2025, where 180 unique visitors visited the project page. We heard from 83 participants via the survey and 4 via email.

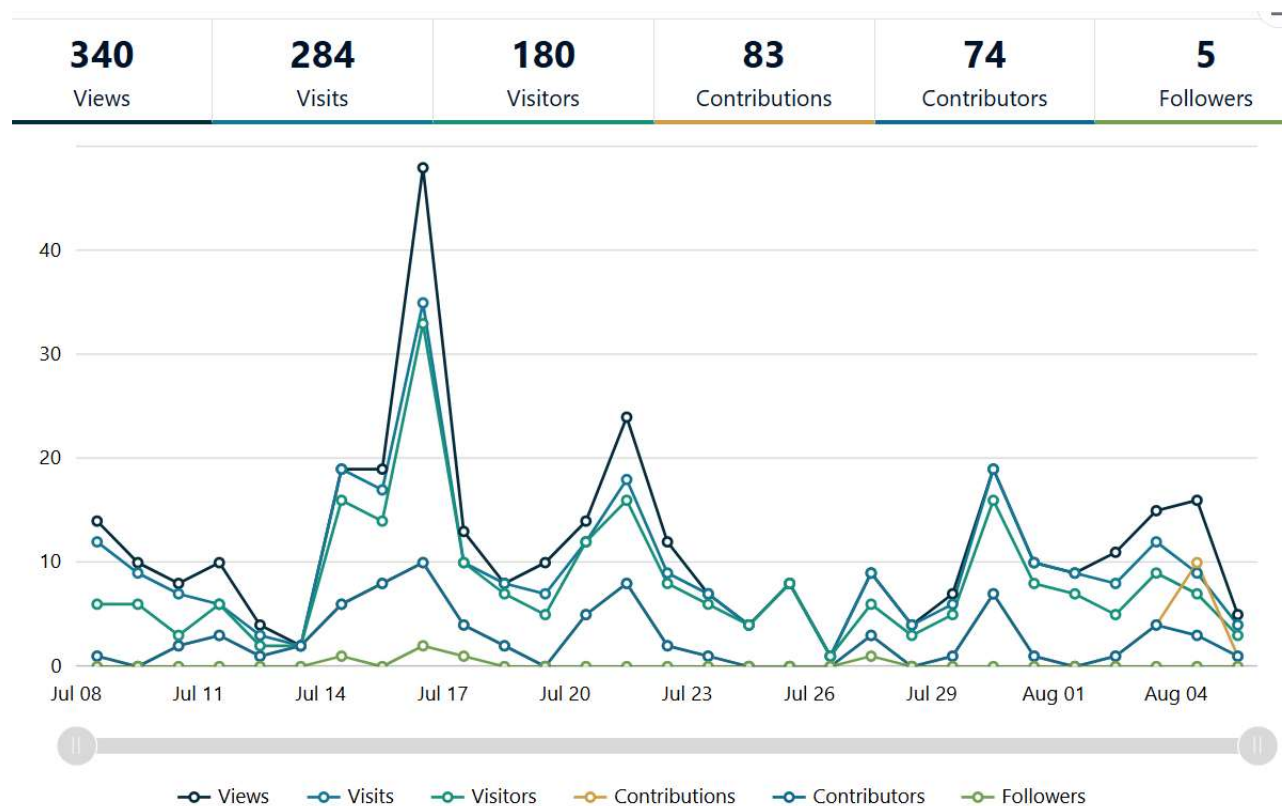


Figure 2 Project page overview, "Council Meetings Governance Rules Review 2025", Have Your Say

Who we heard from

Demographics

Gender

Participants were asked to provide some demographic information when filling out the survey. As shown in Figure 3, 46 participants (55%) identified as female (woman or girl) 34 participants (41%) identified as male (man or boy), 3 participant (4%) identified as non-binary.

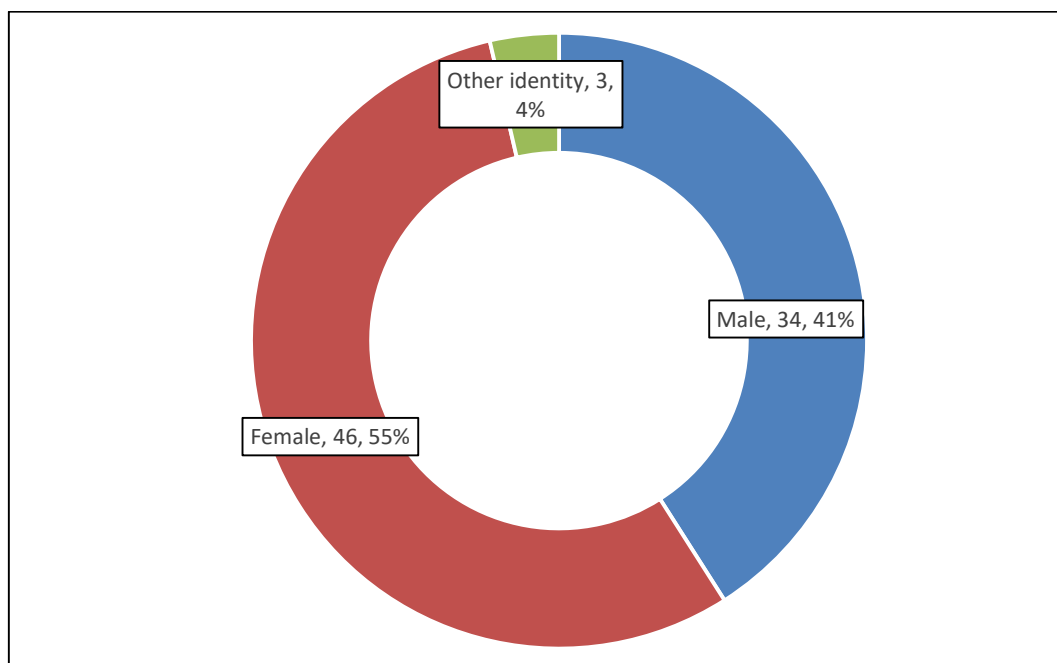


Figure 3 Participation by gender

Age

Participants who completed the survey were asked to provide their age, with the age bracket most selected being 35– 49 years old, with 26 responses (31% of participants). The second most frequently selected age bracket for participants was 60–69 years (23 responses, 28% of participants).

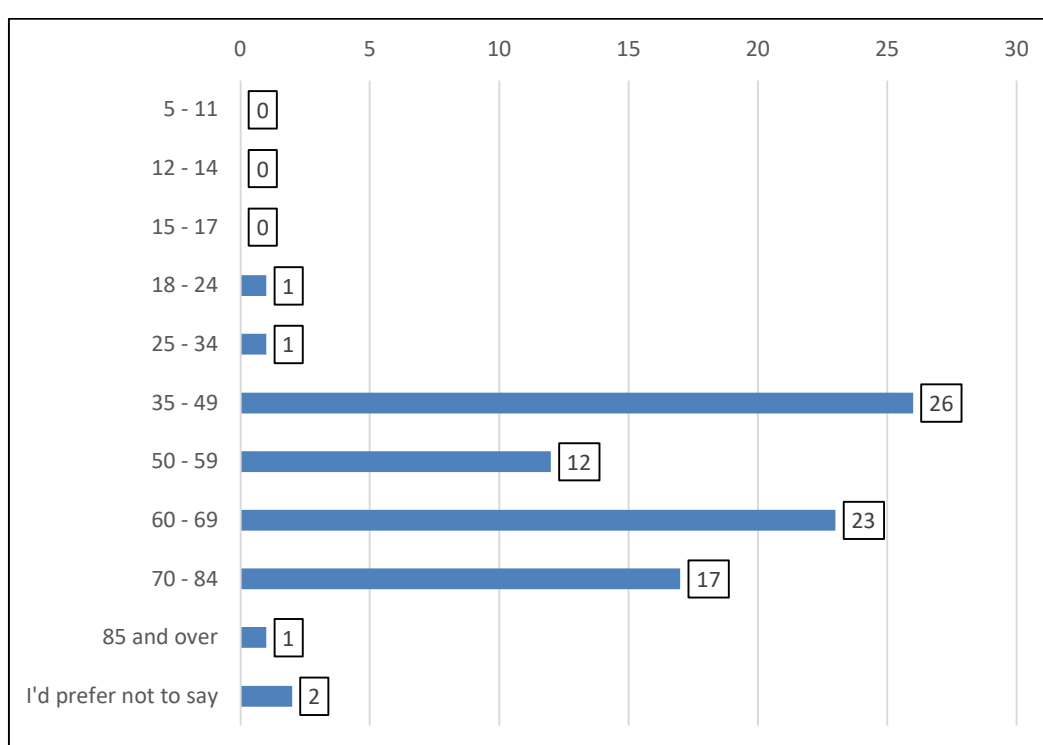


Figure 4 Participation by age

Suburb of residence

Survey and community pop-up participants were asked to provide their suburb of residence. St Kilda and Albert Park were the most selected suburbs, each having 17 participants (20%). Participation from other suburbs can be seen in Figure 5.

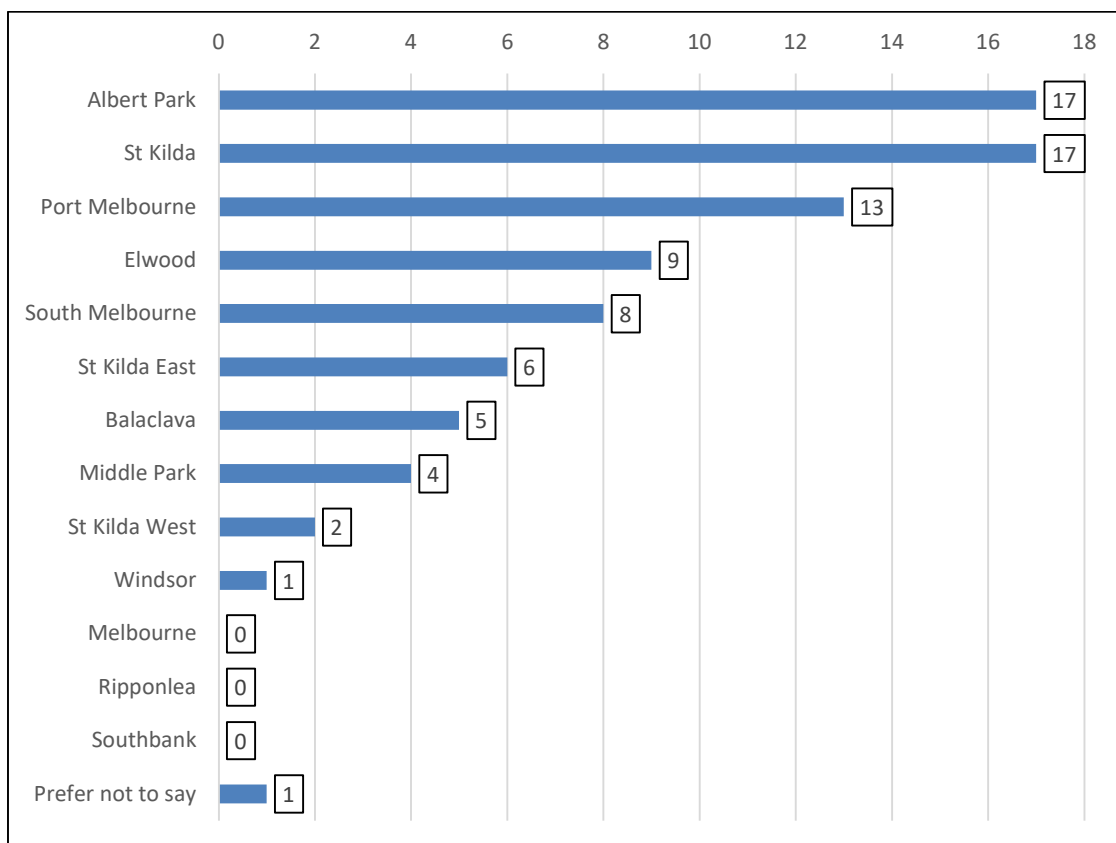


Figure 5 Participation by place of residence

Diversity statements

Survey 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. From most to least common, these were:

- “None of these apply to me” (53 responses, 64%)
- “I identify as LGBTIQ+” (11 responses, 13%)
- “I’d prefer not to say” (9 responses, 11%)
- “I speak a language other than English at home” (7 responses, 8%)

- “I am a person with disability” (7 responses, 8%)
- “I am from an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander background” (1 response, 1%).

Prior feedback on Council projects

Survey participants were also asked whether they had provided feedback on any other City of Port Phillip projects in the past 12 months. 52 participants (63%) said ‘yes’, 28 (34%) said ‘no’, and 3 (3%) were unsure, as shown in Figure 6.

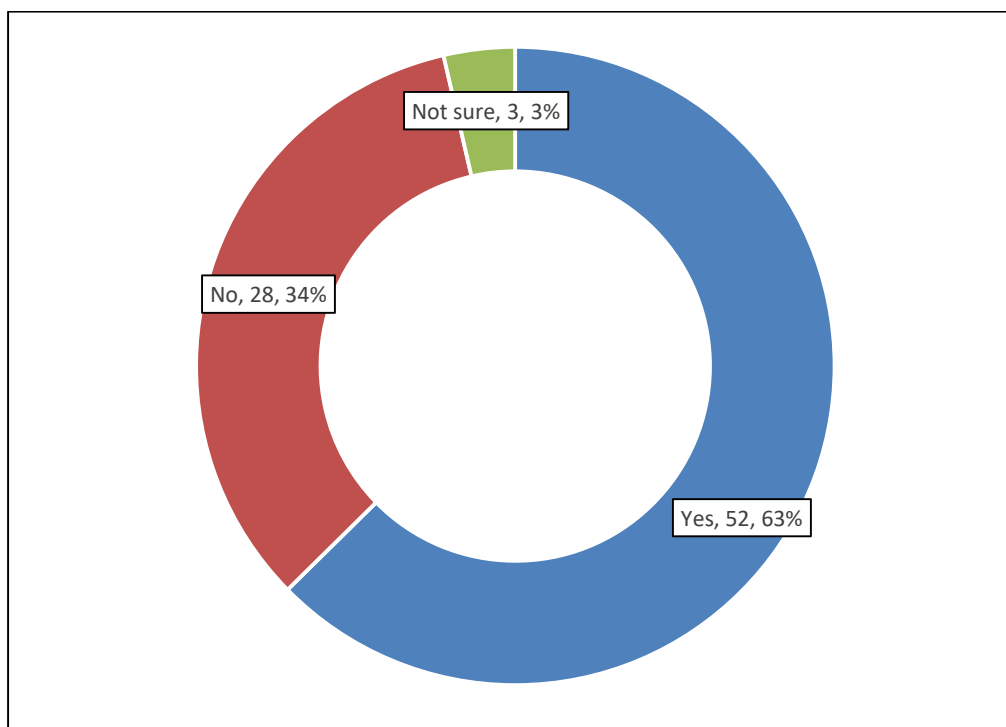


Figure 6 Participant prior feedback on other City of Port Phillip projects in the past 12 months

What we heard

Reducing public speaking time at Council Meetings

Participants were asked if they agree or disagree with reducing public speaking time at Council Meetings from three minutes to two minutes per speaker. 50 participants (62%) said they disagree, 29 participants (36%) agree and 2 participants (2%) said they are not sure.

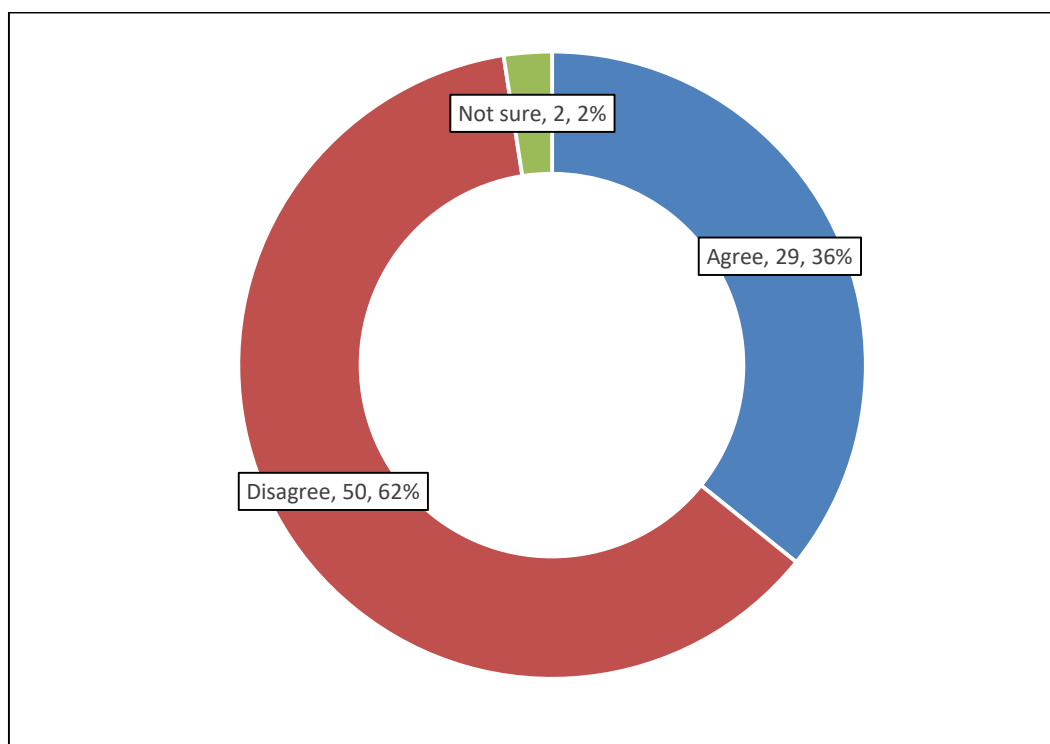


Figure 7 Participant responses – Do you agree or disagree with reducing public speaking time at Council Meetings from three minutes to two minutes per speaker?

Number of signatures of petition or joint letter

Participants were asked if they agree or disagree with increasing the number of signatures needed from 5 to 10 for a petition or joint letter to be discussed at a Council meeting. 44 participants (53%) said they agree, 35 participants (43%) disagree and 3 participants (4%) said they are not sure. Full responses are shown in Figure 8.

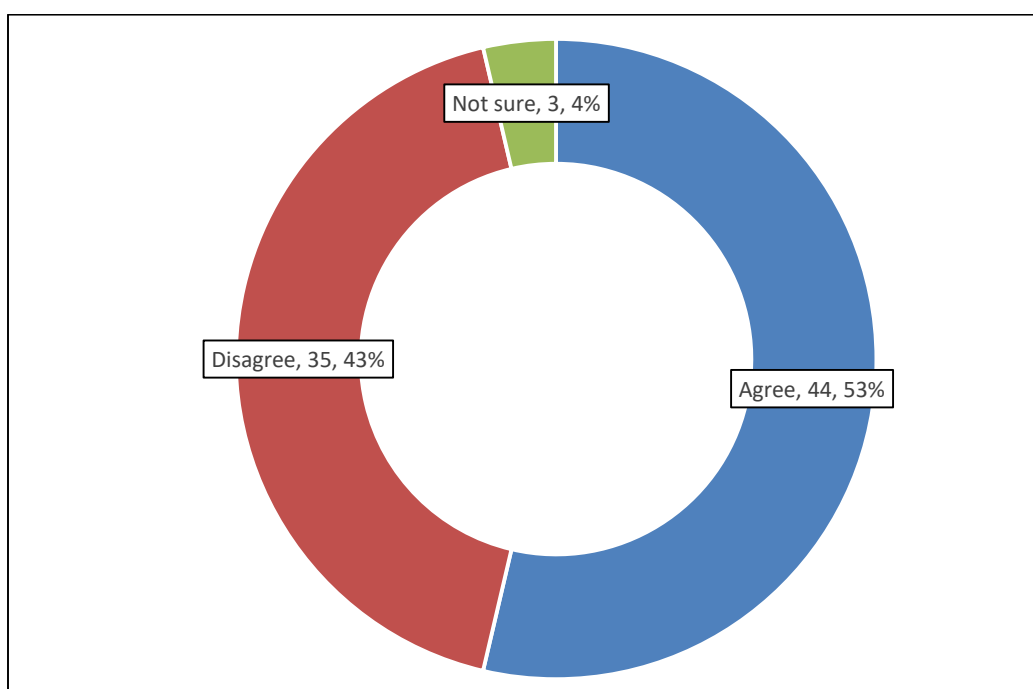


Figure 8 Do you agree or disagree with increasing the number of signatures needed from 5 to 10 for a petition or joint letter to be discussed at a Council meeting?

Number of speakers of petition or joint letter

When asked if participants agree or disagree that only the person who submitted a petition or joint letter should be allowed to speak about it at Council meetings the majority of participants disagree with 54 (67%) followed by 21 agree (26%) and 6 not sure (7%).

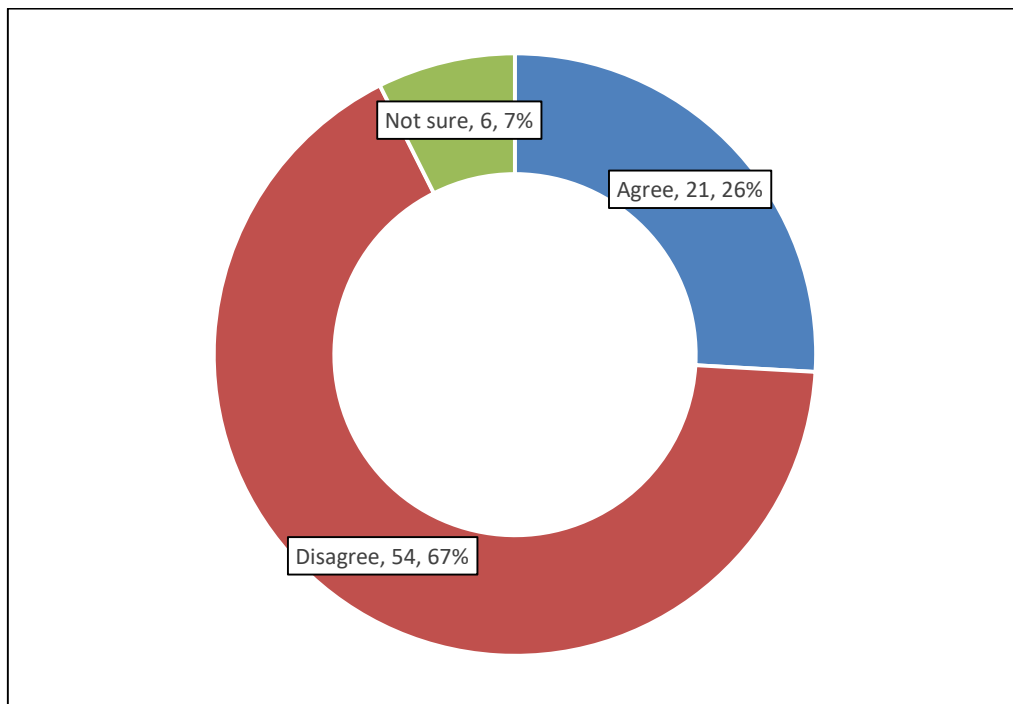


Figure 9 Do you agree or disagree that only the person who submitted a petition or joint letter should be allowed to speak about it at Council meetings?

The amount of time that Councillors can speak during Council meetings

Participants were asked whether they agree or disagree with setting a maximum amount of time that Councillors can speak during Council meetings.

51 (63%) saying they agree followed by disagree 26 (32%) and not sure 4 (5%).

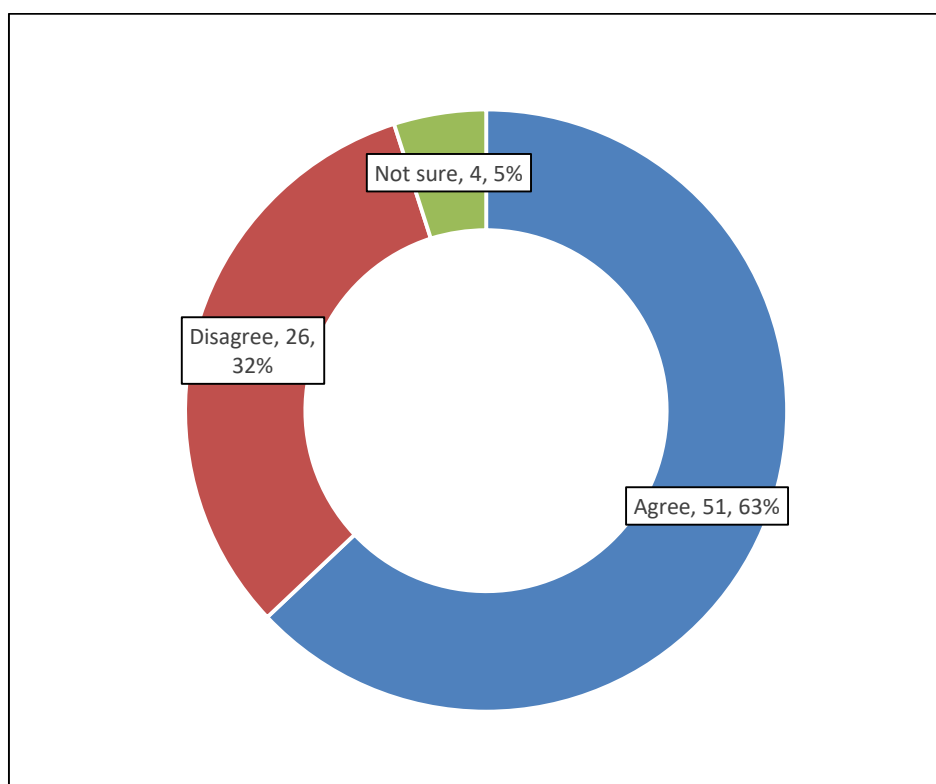


Figure 8 Do you agree or disagree with setting a maximum amount of time that Councillors can speak during Council meetings?

Do you have any comments about the amount of time that Councillors can speak during Council meetings?

Participants who answered the question about Councillor's speaking time were asked to comment. Note that only 28 respondents commented out of 81 who responded to the last question.

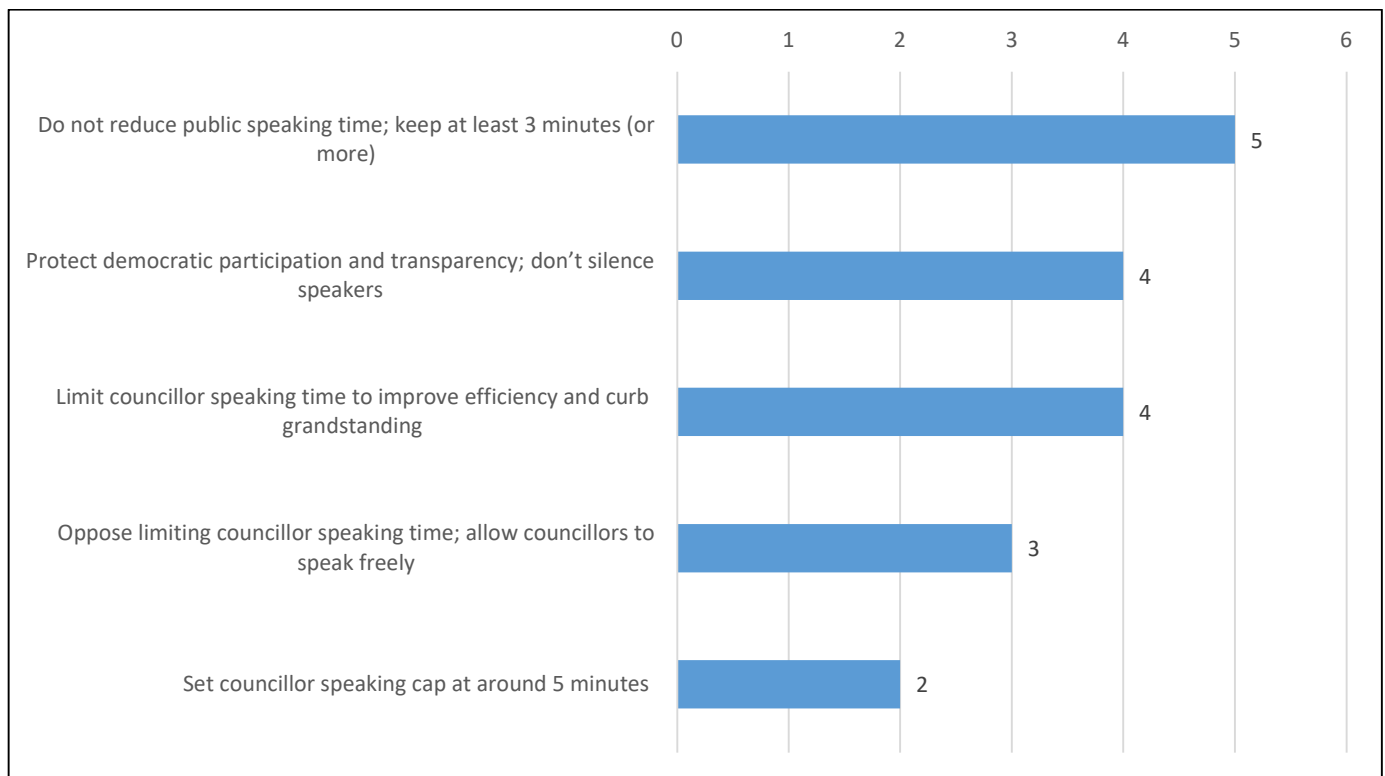


Figure 8 Do you have any comments about the amount of time that Councillors can speak during Council meetings.

Do not reduce public speaking time; keep at least 3 minutes (or more) was the most common theme (5 comments).

"Reducing the amount of time members of the public can speak is anti-democratic and a lack of transparency." (Elwood resident)

"You cannot give any context in 2 minutes and I think it's disappointing if this time is not kept at 3 minutes." (Albert Park resident)

Protect democratic participation and transparency; don't silence speakers was the second most common theme (4 comments).

"It is always disconcerting when politicians, who hold such privileged positions in our society and purport to represent their constituents, appear to slink away from scrutiny. Sunlight is the best disinfectant. Any move by councilors to reduce transparency is a move closer to a slippery slope which leads inevitably to the intoxicating temptation that corruption brings." (Albert Park resident)

"Community participation is the foundation of our democracy, especially at the local government level. By this participation I mean both Councillors and residents. We need to be encouraging more community participation, and not attempting to stifle it." (Port Melbourne resident)

Limiting councillors speaking time to improve efficiency and no grandstanding was second equal with the previous theme (4 comments).

"Councillors talk for way too long, often without adding any value to the meeting. The meetings are way too long as it is, meaning the community is required to stay tuned for an unreasonable amount of time if they want to see the outcomes." (Albert Park resident)

"As a regular speaker at council meetings ... I'm constantly amazed at the inability of councillors to keep to any sort of time limits ... If I can express myself in 2 minutes ... why can't the councillors?" (Port Melbourne resident)

Oppose limiting councillor speaking time; allow councillors to speak freely ranked third with 3 comments.

"Councillors represent their communities and if they think that an issue needs more time to discuss, that should be allowed. It is sufficient to rely on the discretion of the Mayor or Chair to ensure that the meeting proceeds efficiently"
(St Kilda resident)

"Councillors should be able to express themselves and 'self managing' the time they speak. They are elected to represent their constituents and it is important that they should not be time limited. They are old enough not to speak to say nothing!" (St Kilda resident)

Set councillor speaking cap at 5 minutes had 2 comments.

"I think not letting councillors get on a rant is a good idea but as an elected official I would want them to be able too speak freely. I understand council officers may feel meeting is long but it's their job. Consider allowing 5min per councillor." (St Kilda West resident)

"ALL Councillors should be allowed to speak up to 5 minutes. Then extra time required by any speaker should be asked of the Chair." (Albert Park resident)

Do you have any comments about the draft Governance Rules

Respondents were asked if they have any comments about the draft Governance Rules. Most comments were about strengthening governance, enhance participation and managing meetings. These themes and some verbatim comments are below. There were 25 comments in response to this question.

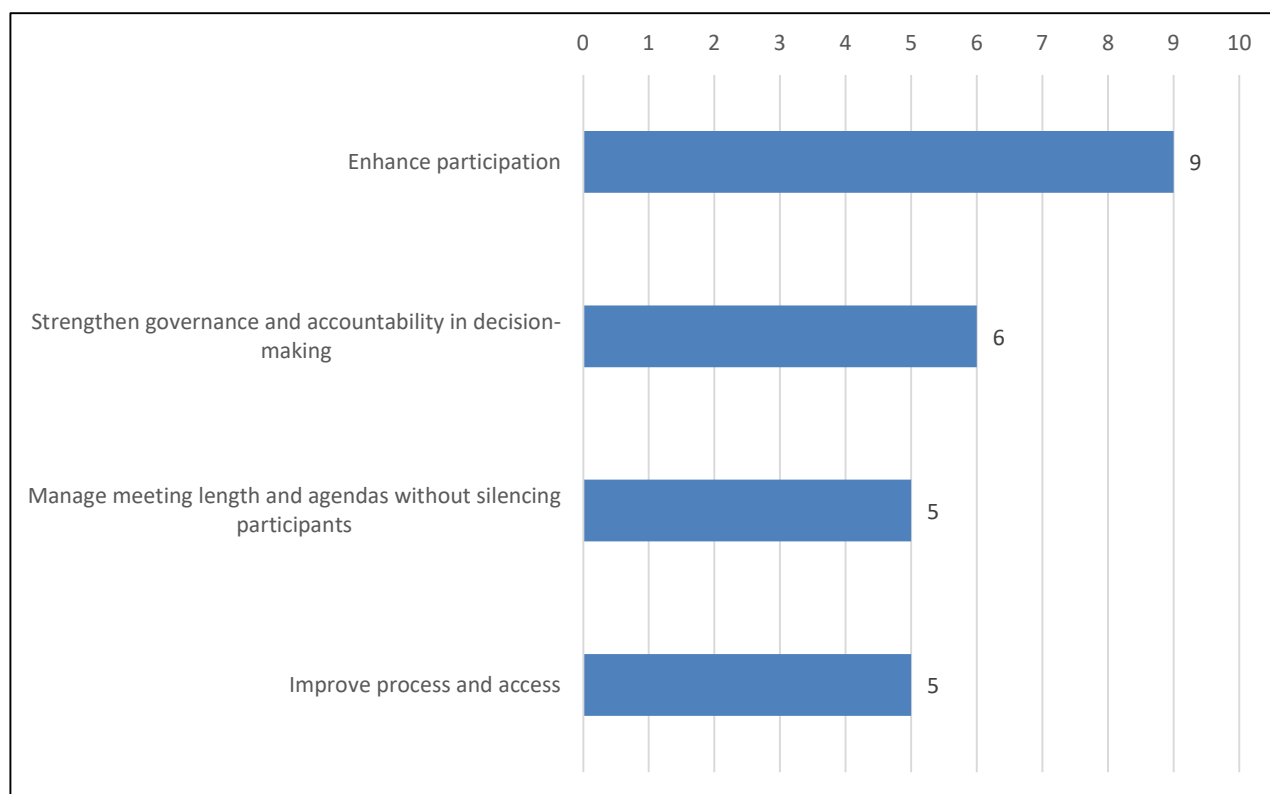


Figure 9 Do you have any comments about the draft Governance Rules

Enhance participation was the top theme (9 comments)

"I am very pleased to see the introduction of deputations ... allow for two to three speakers ... allow up to 10mins for a group deputation." (St Kilda resident)

"There should be opportunity for three people to have say 2 minutes each ... Also why not try a supplementary public question time as allowed for in the Hobsons Bay City Council meetings?" (Albert Park resident)

Strengthen governance and accountability in decision-making was the second most common theme (6 comments).

"Reducing the amount of time members of the public can speak is anti-democratic and a lack of transparency." (Elwood resident)

"You cannot give any context in 2 minutes and I think it's disappointing if this time is not kept at 3 minutes." (Albert Park resident)

Manage meeting length and agendas without silencing participants was the third most common theme (5 comments).

"No Council meeting should go beyond 11 PM ... If the meeting goes beyond 11 PM, then postpone any remaining Motions till the following meeting." (Albert Park resident)

"More time, when needed ... The basic job of council is to listen ... If you can't manage your time, then you're trying to put too many things on one agenda." (St Kilda resident)

Improve process and access was third equal common theme (5 comments)

"That is far too many changes, including minor and typographical changes, for any person to reasonably comment on in full." (Balaclava resident)

"DO NOT agree with public submission time to attend meeting to close earlier than 4 pm. I Believe it should stay the same." (Elwood resident)

Email feedback

We received 4 pieces of feedback via email. Below is a summary of all emails received.

Email summary:

People want Council to be open, easy to understand, and welcoming to public voices. They ask the Council to keep meetings truly open, respect those who attend, and not limit how many people can speak especially on petitions, because different signers have different reasons. They also want clearer ways to take part, like a simple “public question time” linked to agenda items. Several suggest trying these ideas for a set period, then reviewing what works, and even inviting local high school students to watch so young people learn how Council works.

A big theme is accountability. People Participants want Rule 24.3 brought back. This provides guideline so that any big proposal changing services, spending new money, signing contracts, or using lots of staff time first requires an officer report and returns to the next meeting before a final vote. They say this short pause helps the community see what’s happening and give feedback, instead of rushing decisions.

Overall, the message is:

- be transparent
- cut the jargon
- keep meetings open
- allow multiple petition speakers
- add a clear question time
- test improvements
- include young people
- and keep strong checks in place for major decisions.



Next steps

Thank you to everyone who provided their feedback on the Draft Governance Rules 2025. The engagement findings from this engagement will now be used to further inform Council decision-making on this project.

We will continue to keep the community updated on the progress of the project via the dedicated project page at <https://haveyoursay.portphillip.vic.gov.au/governance-rules-2025>