



SUPPORTING POSITIVE AGEING IN PORT PHILLIP

# Engagement Summary Report

January 2026





## 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 emerging.

### Postal Address

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

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Italiano (Italian): 03 9679 9814

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please phone 03 9679 9814.**



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- TTY users dial 133677, then ask for 03 9209 6777
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# Introduction

## **Project background**

Council is committed to helping older residents age positively, staying connected, independent, and well-supported in our community.

In line with this commitment, we're proposing to increase our direct investment in Council-funded aged care services each year and provide services designed locally to better meet the needs of our community.

At the same time, we're considering stepping back from delivering Commonwealth-funded aged care services. This change responds to national reforms that are making it harder for councils—especially those with smaller programs—to continue delivering these services effectively.

If Council decides to step back from these Commonwealth-funded services, the Australian Government will ensure other qualified providers continue to deliver them.

We understand that aged care has already seen many changes, and that more updates can feel uncertain. Our priority is to ensure older people and their families continue to receive high-quality, compassionate support that reflects their needs.

### **About the Engagement**

To guide this decision, Council ran an engagement program to hear directly from older residents, families, and service users. The approach included:

- Sharing clear information about the proposed changes and why they are being considered.
- Providing multiple ways for people to give feedback—online surveys, phone conversations, and community sessions.
- Asking questions about how people feel about moving from traditional funded services to a model focused on early support and prevention.
- Exploring ideas for new ways to keep older residents connected and supported.

## **What we set out to achieve**



The purpose of the engagement project was to:

- Gather feedback on proposed changes to aged care services.
- Understand how the Port Phillip community feels about shifting from traditional funded services to a model focused on early support and prevention, helping people stay independent for longer.

Explore new opportunities to support older community members through the proposed approach, ensuring everyone feels connected and cared for.

## Previous engagement

In November 2023, the City of Port Phillip engaged with community members on proposed changes to aged care services in response to Commonwealth reforms. The consultation ran from 8 November to 9 December and focused on transitioning in-home care to accredited providers under the new Support at Home Program, while retaining community-based services and introducing a “Community Connector” role. Feedback from this engagement informed Council’s implementation planning in early 2024.

## About this report

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of our community engagement approach, outline who we heard from, and summarise what we learned. The findings in this report will be used to inform how Council progresses to support the community through this change.

## 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 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 in a planned engagement process. It does not necessarily include events, meetings, surveys, petitions, 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 5 November and 7 December 2025, we delivered a range of communications activities to let people know about this project and invite them to participate.

## Communications activities

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

Activity	Detail	Reach
 <b>Client letter</b>	We sent a letter to clients of our Aged Care services via express post on Monday 10 November to let them know about the proposal. This included a survey and reply paid envelope.	254 clients
 <b>Emails</b>	Two email alerts were sent to <i>Have Your Say</i> page followers on 12 November and 2 December. This included those who had ‘followed’ the ‘Have Your Say’ engagement webpage from the engagement which took place in November 2023.  Emails were also sent to partner organisations to alert them to the proposal.	28 <i>Have Your Say</i> webpage followers  2 partner organisations
 <b>Newsletters</b>	Project information and an invitation to engage was included in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Shape Our City engagement newsletter x 2 (18 November, 9 December)</li> <li>- Community Sector News (14 November)</li> </ul>	Shape Our City: 4,315



- Library newsletter (21 November)

Community Sector News: 1,261

Library newsletter: 6938



**'Have your say' webpage**

Council's dedicated engagement website, *'Have your say'* included a page for this project, with information on the process, a timeline, contact details, and opportunities to engage.

733 views  
459 visits

**Information in community spaces**

Information and surveys were left in community spaces, such as ASSIST customer service desks, libraries and the Hop on Hop Off Community Bus

N/A

Members of the Aged Care team attended activities to provide information about the proposal.

- Social support lunch
- Social support end of year activity

25

**Councillor networks**

Councillors were invited to share information via their networks at the beginning of the engagement period.

N/A

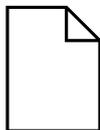
## Engagement activities

Between 5 November and 7 December 2025, we delivered a range of community engagement activities to collect ideas and feedback from the community.



Activity	Detail	Participation
 <p><b>Survey</b></p>	<p>The survey invited feedback on the proposal and ideas for services, and collected demographic information. It was available online, in print at libraries and ASSIST desks, mailed to clients, and distributed at community locations such as the Hop On Hop Off bus. The survey was offered in English and translated into Russian, Greek, Italian, and Simplified Chinese.</p> <p>A copy of the survey can viewed at Appendix 1, page 23)</p>	<p>150 surveys received (total)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 74 online</li> <li>- 76 hard copy (2 Simplified Chinese, 1 Greek)</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Library drop-in sessions</b></p>	<p>Participants could speak with the project team and/or complete an online or printed survey. These were held at Albert Park Library (11 November 1.30-2.30), Emerald Hill Library (19 November 1-2pm), Port Melbourne Library (27 November, 11am-12noon) and St Kilda Library (1 December, 10am-11am).</p>	<p>19 attendees</p>
 <p><b>Former Older Persons Advisory Committee meeting</b></p>	<p>A meeting was held with committee members of the former Older Persons Advisory Committee (OPAC) on 25 November.</p>	<p>1 meeting (5 attendees)</p>

### **Submissions**



This includes emails and letters that were sent to Council, as well as uploads to *Have Your Say* webpage.

6 submissions  
(5 via email, 1 upload to *Have Your Say* webpage)

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### **Non-Council activities**

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#### **Petition**



We received a petition on 2 December that was sent to a Councillor regarding the proposal.

1 petition  
(34 signatures)



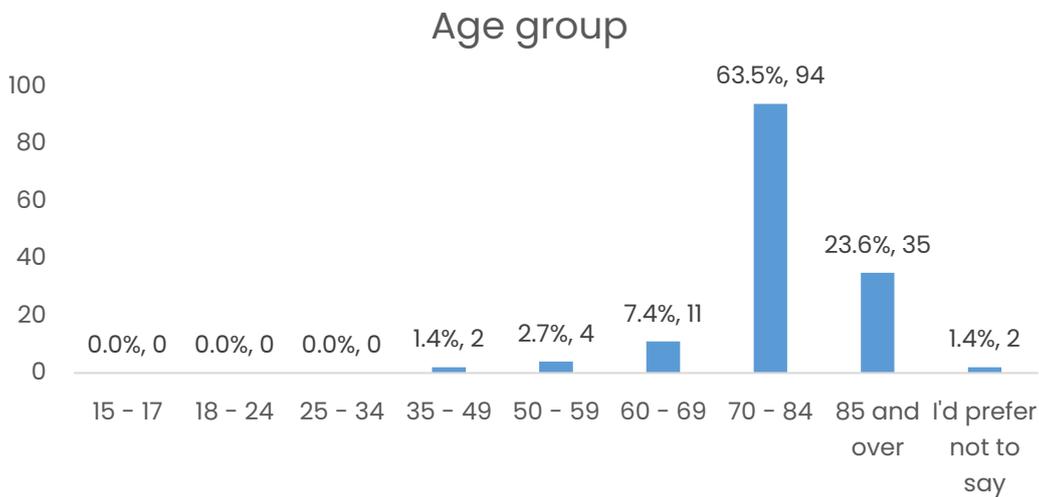
# Who we heard from

## Demographics

We collected demographic information through the survey to better understand who we were hearing from. People who gave feedback at information sessions, meetings, or via other channels were not asked for this information. The data shown here therefore reflects survey participants only, not all engagement activities.

### Age

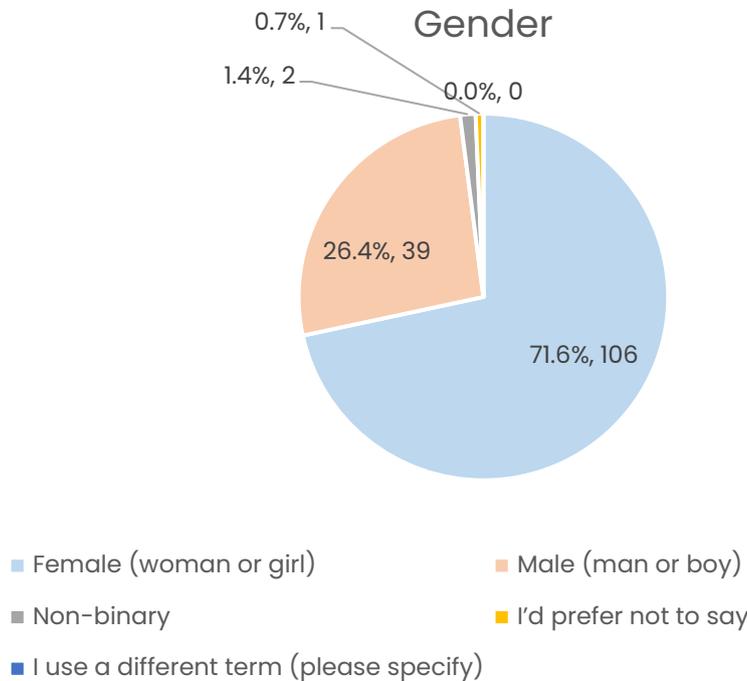
We asked survey respondents to share their age group. Of the 148 people who answered this question, most respondents were aged 70–84, representing 63.5% (94 people). A further 23.6% (35 people) were aged 85 and over, and 7.4% (11 people) were aged 60–69. No respondents were under 34 years of age.



### Gender

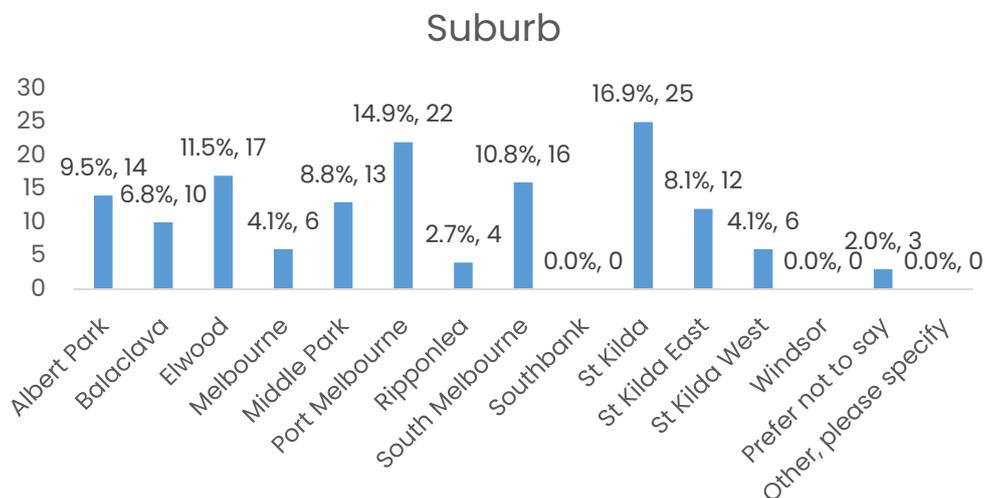
We asked respondents to share the gender they identify with. Of the 148 people who answered this question, 71.6% (106 people) identified as female (woman or girl), and

24.6% (39 people) identified as male (man or boy).



## Suburb

We asked respondents to share their suburb of residence. Of the 148 people who answered this question, the largest numbers were from St Kilda (16.9% or 25 people), Port Melbourne (14.9% or 22 people), and Elwood (11.5% or 17 people). No respondents were from Southbank or Windsor.



## Diversity and inclusion

We asked respondents if they identified with any of the following statements:

- *I am a person with disability* – 36 responses
- *I speak a language other than English at home* – 21 responses
- *I identify as LGBTIQ+* – 3 responses
- *I am from an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander background* – 2 responses

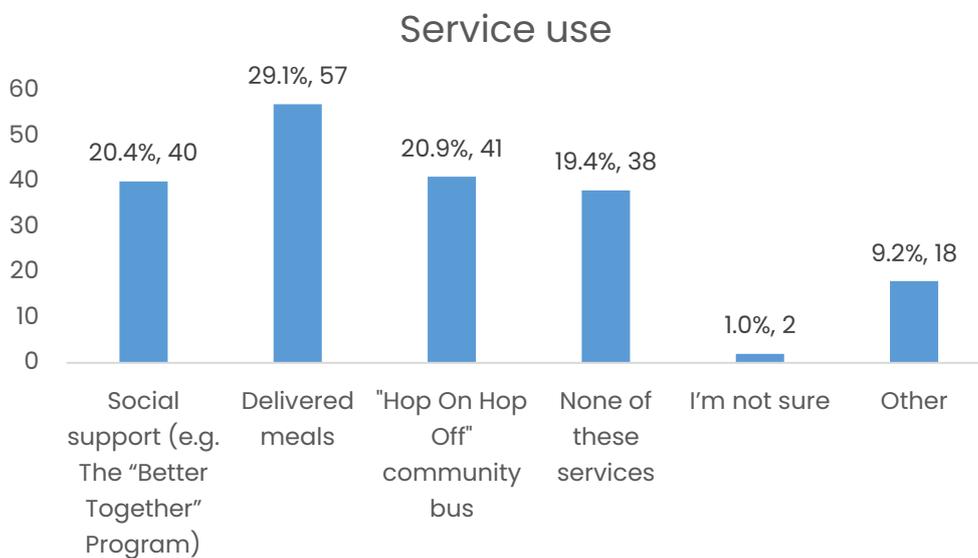
In addition, 6 people preferred not to say, and 87 indicated that none of these statements applied to them.

## Targeted groups

For this engagement, we were particularly interested in hearing from clients of our Aged Care services. We also invited broader community, community groups and organisations to participate.

## Services received

We asked respondents which services they currently access from Port Phillip Council. Respondents were provided with the following options to select in the survey – social connection services, delivered meals, hop on hop off bus service or other. Across all responses, a total of 196 people accessed services listed in the survey. The largest group (29.1% or 57 people) receive delivered meals, followed by 20.9% (41 people) who use the Hop On Hop Off bus service, and 20.4% (40 people) who access social support programs, such as Better Together. Additionally, 15% (29 people) accessed two or more services listed in this survey. Furthermore, 19.4% (38 people) said they do not receive any of these services. A further 9.2% (18 people) reported receiving other services, including social activities, transport options like South Port Day Links, use of community venues for meetings, library programs, walking groups, meal delivery, home maintenance, balance classes, and rental subsidies for local clubs.



## Groups and organisations

Of the 150 people who responded to this question, most (98.7% or 148 people) did not represent a group or organisation. Two people responded as a people representative of Jewish Care and the Port Melbourne Probus Club.

# What we heard

We invited clients and community members to share their views through a range of engagement activities, as outlined in the previous ‘What we did’ section. All feedback, regardless of how it was collected, has been collated and summarised below.

## Feedback

### Question 1. Do you have any feedback or concerns you'd like to share about the proposed changes to services?

We received 154 comments from participants in response to this question, outlined below. These have been summarised below under four themes, in order of most to least feedback received.

Participants told us they view these services as essential and that they want essential services to continue without interruption, especially social support programs and delivered meals. Many were worried (68 respondents) about service gaps during any changes and wanted current arrangements to remain stable.

Some (29 respondents) asked about the quality and range of social programs from other providers, and a few (28 respondents) were concerned that social groups might break apart if several agencies were involved. A few others (5 respondents) welcomed ideas like expanding the Linking Neighbours program.

Respondents also said trusted relationships with staff and peers are very important for reducing loneliness and supporting mental health. Many preferred Council-run services and questioned whether new providers could keep the same quality and safety

standards. Other feedback included concerns about transport access and the cost of services.

Theme	Service Continuity and Program Activities
Total references:	67
What Respondents said	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- People are worried that social support and meal delivery services might stop. These services are very important for clients.</li> <li>- There are concerns about how people will access services during the change.</li> <li>- Some asked about what social programs other providers offer.</li> <li>- People raised risks about gaps in services during the transition.</li> <li>- Many want current services to stay the same and avoid any breaks.</li> <li>- People want support services to continue in the future. They also said there are not enough community support services in the local area.</li> <li>- Some gave positive feedback about the Linking Neighbours program growing.</li> <li>- There are concerns that services might become broken up if too many providers are funded to deliver them.</li> </ul>

Theme	Connection & Relationships (clients and staff members)
Total references:	25
What Respondents said	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- People said it is very important to keep trusted relationships with other clients who attend the services. They also appreciate the connection with current staff who deliver the programs.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Many clients said these friendships are a big part of the social connection program.</li> <li>- People said the social connection programs helped clients feel better and stop them from feeling lonely.</li> <li>- Feed back also showed that clients were concerned about maintaining friendships with clients after the program changes.</li> </ul>
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Theme	Quality and Safety of services through agencies other than Council.
Total references:	43
What Respondents said	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- People were worried about how quality will be maintained for external agencies. They asked about safety and how new providers will be monitored.</li> <li>- There are concerns that service standards and quality of care might drop if other agencies deliver services.</li> <li>- A few people said they trust that with strong quality checks and clear rules, outsourced services could still be safe.</li> <li>- Many prefer services delivered by Council and asked if outside providers know the local area well.</li> </ul> <p>People are worried that service quality could go down and questioned if providers have the ability and quick response needed to deliver these support services.</p>

Theme	Transport and Accessibility
Total references:	10



<p>What Respondents said</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Respondents voiced their concerns regarding the reduction of the hop on hop off bus service.</li> <li>- Feedback was provided regarding accessibility of public transport and suitability for people utilising ambulatory aids.</li> <li>- Respondents raised concerns about whether the door to door transport services within the social connection service would continue if the service transitioned to another provider, with respondents noting that door to door transport support was required to enable clients to access social connection services.</li> <li>- Feedback was also provided regarding how courteous the bus drivers were.</li> <li>- Respondents also requested clearer bus schedules to be displayed at the bus stops and in flyers.</li> </ul>
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Theme	Cost / client co-contribution / funding
Total references:	12
<p>What Respondents said</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Respondents spoke about concerns regarding increased costs associated with the delivery of services</li> <li>- Questions were also raised regarding how co-contributions were set for Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) services and whether they would pay more, for the service.</li> <li>- Respondents also provided feedback regarding the rates which are paid to Council, and how these funds are directed to services delivered.</li> </ul>

## Question 2:

### Do you have any suggestions for services or supports that would help you, or other older people, live at home or stay socially connected in Port Phillip?

We asked respondents if they have suggestions for services. We received 116 responses to this question and categorised them into a range of themes, outlined below.

Community feedback (55 comments) focused on practical and social supports that enable older people to live independently and stay connected. The most frequent suggestions included maintaining and expanding social connection programs (29 comments), providing practical help at home such as cleaning, gardening, and minor maintenance (20 comments), and improving accessible transport options to support participation in activities (13 comments). Respondents also emphasized the need for clear, printed communication and regular updates, stronger navigation support through community connectors, and lists of trusted providers.

<b>Theme (most to least)</b>	<b>Number of comments</b>	<b>What the Community Said</b>
Positive endorsement of existing services and practical help at home	37	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General Appreciation for services delivered currently by Council.</li> <li>• Many (20 comments) requested specific in home support services such as shopping and cleaning.</li> <li>• Respondents requested Council to continue to deliver what is working well.</li> </ul>

Social connection programs	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desire to expand or maintain group activities that reduce isolation (e.g., social groups, outings, library-based sessions).</li> <li>• Some respondents (30 comments) stressed the need for transport support to enable participation for community members who are not able to independently access activities</li> </ul>
Accessible transport services	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A total of 13 respondents expressed a desire for Council to expand the community bus options; including ensuring public transport is usable for people with mobility aids, and improved community bus schedules, with clearer routes.</li> </ul>
Community connector / Navigation support	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A total of five respondents expressed a desire for further assistance to help navigated My Aged Care.</li> </ul>

## Differences in feedback across genders

Male respondents showed broadly similar priorities as female respondents however there were some differences in the responses. Responses from females were more likely to focus on social connection programs, requests for printed and accessible communications and focused on improved promotion of

existing services. Males, on the other hand, proportionally highlighted practical help at home, accessible transport services, and navigation support more often than females. Almost three-quarters of respondents were female, which may mean overall feedback leans more towards priorities such as social connection and communication needs.

## Petition

A petition signed by 34 residents and community members was submitted to the City of Port Phillip requesting the continuation of funding for the Social Inclusion Program (Better Together) in the 2026–27 budget.

The petition emphasizes that:

- The City of Port Phillip’s Plan for Port Phillip and Council strategies commit to enhancing social equity, building inclusive communities, and reducing loneliness and isolation.
- The Social Inclusion Program is one of the few community-led services delivering these outcomes, particularly for older people, people with disabilities, and culturally diverse communities.
- There are no specialist aged care providers that can deliver this program.
- Defunding the program would undermine Council’s ability to meet its commitments and reduce community access to critical support.
- The petition calls on Council to maintain existing funding for the Social Inclusion Program from 2026–27 without reduction or elimination, aligning with the endorsed 2025–35 Council Plan.



## Appendix 1. Survey

### Supporting Positive Ageing in Port Phillip Feedback survey

The provision of aged care support services has been a key service of Victorian local Councils for 40 years, with the City of Port Phillip being a long-term provider of aged care services to older people in the community.

Unfortunately, policy reforms over a number of years, are making it increasingly difficult for local government, particularly smaller service providers like Port Phillip, to continue to operate sustainably in a market-based environment. Council is committed to helping older residents live independently and stay connected to their communities.

In line with this commitment, we're proposing to increase our direct investment in Council-funded aged care services over the next decade—with services designed locally to better meet the needs of our community.

We believe this proposal will allow us to focus on more flexible, locally tailored supports—including for older residents who may not currently qualify for My Aged Care.

We recognise that aged care has already undergone several changes in recent years, and we understand that more changes may feel unexpected or unsettling.

We would greatly value your feedback. Please take a few moments to complete this short survey.

Once you've completed your survey, please return it by **5pm on Sunday the 7 December 2025** to:

*Aged Care Services team*

*St Kilda Town Hall*

*99A Carlisle St, St Kilda 3182*

Or email a copy to: [positiveageinginportphillip@portphillip.com.au](mailto:positiveageinginportphillip@portphillip.com.au)



If you would like to provide your feedback directly, please contact us:

Phone: 03 9209 6882

Email: [positiveageinginportphillip@portphillip.com.au](mailto:positiveageinginportphillip@portphillip.com.au)

If you need an interpreter, please call TIS National on 131 450 and ask them to call City of Port Phillip on 03 9209 6777.

**1. Do you or someone you care about use any of the following services currently provided by the City of Port Phillip?**

Please select all that apply.

<b>Select all that apply</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Social support (e.g. The “Better Together” Program)
<input type="checkbox"/> Delivered meals
<input type="checkbox"/> “Hop On Hop Off” community bus
<input type="checkbox"/> None of these services
<input type="checkbox"/> I’m not sure
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please tell us below)

**2. Are you responding on behalf of a group or organisation?**

<b>Select one answer only</b>
<input type="radio"/> No
<input type="radio"/> Yes (please tell us the name of the group or organisation below)

## About the proposed changes

In February 2024, Council decided to stop providing in-home aged care services. Since then, new national rules and the Aged Care Act 2024 have significantly change how aged care is delivered. The main challenges are:

1. Despite best efforts, Council continues to be unable to meet aged care service targets set by the Commonwealth Government. One of the challenges in meeting these targets is that only older people who have been assessed and deemed eligible for Commonwealth funding can access these aged care services. There is strong competition from larger and specialist aged care providers for the referrals and customers



available, and it is difficult for Council as a small service provider to influence these.

2. The way the Commonwealth funds the aged care services Council provides is changing. Instead of receiving upfront funding, Council may soon only be paid for services delivered after they're provided. This is different from what Council thought was likely when it made changes in February 2024.

3. The Aged Care Act 2024 introduces a new approach focused on the rights of older Australians. It aims to improve the quality, safety, and accessibility of aged care. It also introduces a risk-based system for monitoring services, with stronger rules for providers. Breaking these rules could lead to financial penalties. While Council provides a quality service, to meet the new rules, Council would need to change how it runs aged care services and invest further in governance and compliance measures.

These changes have made it necessary for Council to rethink how we support older residents.

Your services should not change under this proposal but rather may be delivered by a different provider of your choice. Below is a summary of proposed service changes:

<b>Council would continue to deliver:</b>	<b>Another Aged Care provider would deliver:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hop-on Hop-off bus program</li> <li>• Social Connection Programs through an expanded Linking Neighbours program.</li> <li>• Community Connector Service.</li> <li>• As well as other programs that support older people such as Seniors Festival</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivered Meals</li> <li>• Social Support – the “Better Together” program</li> <li>• Community Transport that supports older people to get to the “Better Together” activities.</li> </ul>



We are proposing to provide initiatives that aim to strengthen social connections and improve wellbeing for older people in our community. This would include:

- A larger **Linking Neighbours** program; including social activities such as coffee mornings, exercise programs, day outings to places such as the theatre, live music, the movies etc
- Continued **Community Connector** services; to help older people and their families in Port Phillip understand what supports are available.
- Continued **Hop on hop bus service**; to help older people and those with access needs get to popular destinations in Port Phillip.
- A dedicated **'Positive Ageing' Team** at Council; to develop and implement programs that support older people in Port Phillip.

**3. Do have any feedback or concerns you'd like to share about the proposed changes to services?**

Please share your feedback below.

**4. Do you have any suggestions for services or supports that would help you, or other older people, live at home or stay socially connected in Port Phillip?**

Please share your ideas below.

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## About you.

Please tell us a little bit about yourself so that we can understand who we're hearing from. Visit [haveyoursay.portphillip.vic.gov.au/privacy-policy](https://haveyoursay.portphillip.vic.gov.au/privacy-policy) to learn how your information will be used.

**5. Please indicate your age group.** Required

<b>Select one answer only</b>
5 - 11
12 - 14
15 - 17



18 - 24
25 - 34
35 - 49
50 - 59
60 - 69
70 - 84
85 and over
I'd prefer not to say

**6. Which gender do you identify with?** Required

<b>Select one answer only</b>
Female (woman or girl)
Male (man or boy)
Non-binary
I'd prefer not to say
I use a different term (please specify)

**7. What is your residential suburb?** Required

<b>Select one answer only</b>
Albert Park
Balaclava
Elwood
Melbourne
Middle Park
Port Melbourne
Ripponlea
South Melbourne
Southbank
St Kilda
St Kilda East
St Kilda West
Windsor
Prefer not to say
Other, please specify



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8. **Please tick any of the statements that apply to you.** Required

Select as many as apply

Select all that apply
I am from an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander background
I speak a language other than English at home
I am a person with disability
I identify as LGBTIQ+
I'd prefer not to say
None of these apply to me

9. **Would you like a copy of your answers emailed or posted to you?**

If yes, please write your email or postal address below.

Thank you for completing this survey.