Draft Budget 2026/27 and Long-term Financial Plan Community Engagement Report

This report provides information on the community consultation for the Draft Budget 2026/27 and Long-term Financial Plan project and reports on the engagement outcomes. The consultation opened on Friday 17 April and closed at 11.59pm on Sunday 17 May 2026.

Executive Summary

- As part of the process of developing the Budget 2026/27, we exhibited the draft document for community to provide feedback on between Friday 17 April and Sunday 17 May 2026.
- The community could provide feedback online via the Your Say Yarra webpage or in-person at one of our pop-up and targeted stakeholder events.
- The consultation was promoted via our social media platforms with 431 people engaged with the post on our social media channels (including social media advertisements)
- We also promoted via our Council email newsletters including Yarra Life, Your Say Yarra email newsletter, Yarra Business News, Yarra Environment News, Yarra Leisure news and Yarra Libraries email newsletter. This reached a total of 43,942 subscribers.
- A total of 573 people provided feedback (516 online and 57 in person).
- Submissions reflected strong support for environmental investment, community services and local amenity with mixed views on parking and spending priorities, with an overall emphasis on practical improvements that enhance everyday liveability.
- The final budget added targeted additional funding for community groups, environmental management and local emergency response, alongside practical neighbourhood investment such as pedestrian safety design, drainage improvements and ongoing electric vehicle infrastructure trials.

Engagement approach

Project background

Every year Council develops a Budget that outlines funding for the next financial year and how it will benefit Yarra's community.

The Budget includes funding for waste and recycling, roads, parks and infrastructure upgrades, local wildlife and biodiversity, the running of our libraries and leisure centres, and support for local businesses and community.

As part of the process of developing the Budget 2026/27, we exhibited the draft document for community to provide feedback on between Friday 17 April and Sunday 17 May 2026.

Level of community influence

1. The community could influence Council's decision to finance certain projects listed within the draft Budget through their comments. These proposed projects within the draft Budget have been identified through the community sharing their priorities within past Annual Budgets and Council Plan engagements
2. The community could highlight other areas or projects that may require funding based on their personal experience

3. The community could identify gaps in funding to projects that can be considered as part of future Annual Budgets.

Standard objectives (same for all consultations)

Engagement objective	Measure of success
Inform the community (and any previous participants if applicable) about this project and let them know how they can share their feedback.	Reach is reported on at the end of the engagement and includes: • visitors on the Your Say Yarra page • people engaged on our social media channels (including ads) and email campaigns through Council's e-newsletters.
Reach out to directly impacted community members and invite them to participate and have their say.	**If place based:** • Postcards (with QR codes linking to the project page on Your Say Yarra) sent to residents and businesses within 200m radius of the location • Letters delivered to non-resident property owners **If municipal-wide:** Identified stakeholders who are most affected and invited them to participate in the consultation.
Seek feedback from the community and receive valuable responses to the engagement questions.	• Approximately 5% of visits to the project page results in the user providing feedback • Responses received relate to the topic and help finalise the project.
Make the engagement as accessible and inclusive as possible to allow everyone in the community an opportunity to participate.	• Project officers actively sought to remove any known barriers to allow all those affected to participate. • Simple and inclusive language was used and interpreters (when required) and translated content (online and print) were offered. • An alternative feedback method was offered in addition to the online feedback method • The physical locations for pop ups were accessible to people living with a disability.
Share with participants how their feedback helped contribute to the final decision made by Council.	• Community and stakeholders were updated on the outcome of the consultation and how their feedback helped inform the final decision. • Engagement Report was published on the Your Say Yarra engagement website.

Engagement methods:

- Online feedback tool hosted through the Your Say Yarra engagement platform
- 3 x place-based pop-ups at the following locations:
    - Richmond Library on Tuesday 28 April 2026
    - Collingwood Leisure Centre on Wednesday 29 April 2026

    - Bargoonga Nganjin, North Fitzroy Library on Saturday 9 May 2026
- Targeted stakeholder engagement with the following groups:
    - Alphington Bowls Club
    - BAHN Twilight Market (Belgium Avenue)
    - Annette's Place Advocacy Road Map event
    - Learning Bank, Victoria Street, Richmond
- An online information session on Tuesday 5 May 2026 was available for community members to register to attend. Due to lack of interest, this was cancelled.

Engagement promotion

Highly impacted stakeholder	Promotion and reach
Advisory committees	Email to secretariat about scheduled engagements to invite participation and promote to their networks.
Multicultural advisory committee	Spoke to committee members to get their feedback on the Budget.

Engagement promotion:
431 people engaged with the post on our social media channels (including social media advertisements)
Council email newsletters including Yarra Life, Your Say Yarra email newsletter, Yarra Business News, Yarra Environment News, Yarra Leisure news and Yarra Libraries email newsletter. This reached a total of 43,942 subscribers.
Promoted via Yarra Life which is distributed to every household in Yarra (over 60,000 properties).
News story on Yarra City Council's website.
Postcards and other printed collateral available at events and postcards were distributed to 23 Council venues. These include town halls, neighbourhood houses, seniors' centres, libraries and leisure centres.
The consultation was promoted via the digital screens located at customer service centres, libraries and leisure centres
The consultation was promoted in the Yarra Estates e-newsletter
Promotional posters were translated into Vietnamese and Chinese and made available at pop-ups and placed in the relevant sections of the libraries.

Engagement results

Your Say Yarra project page:

- **Visitors** – The number of unique visitors that saw the page.
- **Responses** – The number of feedback responses that were submitted.

Visitors	Responses
1,931	493

In person engagement opportunities:

In-person event	Approximate number of people we spoke to	Responses
Alphington Bowls Club on Thursday 23 April 2026	10	n/a
Richmond Library on Tuesday 28 April 2026	6	n/a
Collingwood Leisure Centre on Wednesday 29 April 2026	11	n/a
Annette's Place on Saturday 2 May 2026	22	n/a
BAHN Twilight Market on Monday 11 May 2026	4	n/a
Bargoonga Nganjin, North Fitzroy Library on Saturday 9 May 2026	4	n/a
TOTAL	57	

Overall results

A total of 573 people participated in the consultation through both online and in-person engagement activities. This included 493 responses submitted through the Your Say Yarra and 57 people reached through in-person events. Participation also included feedback received through other Oracle (8) and direct emails (15).

Who did we hear from?

Demographic data was collected via the 493 Your Say Yarra online responses received.

What gender do you identify as?	Numbers	Percentage
Man	153	31.03%
Woman	262	53.14%
Self-described	28	5.66%
I prefer not to say	50	10.14%
Total	493	100%
What is your age range?	**Numbers**	**Percentage**

Under 11	-	-
12 to 17	1	0.20%
18 to 24	32	6.49%
25 to 34	161	32.66%
35 to 49	162	32.86%
50 to 59	60	12.17%
60 to 69	41	8.32%
70 to 84	30	6.09%
85 and older	-	-
I prefer not to say	6	1.22%
Total	493	100%
What suburb do you live in	**Numbers**	**Percentage**
Abbotsford	19	3.85%
Alphington	41	8.32%
Burnley	4	0.81%
Carlton North	20	4.06%
Clifton Hill	33	6.69%
Collingwood	22	4.46%
Cremorne	5	1.01%
Fairfield	25	5.07%
Fitzroy	25	5.07%
Fitzroy North	47	9.53%
Princes Hill	3	0.61%
Richmond	43	8.72%
I live outside of Yarra (182 of which related to Darebin & Merri Creek Management Committee funding)	206	41.62%
Total	493	100%
Select all that apply. I am….	**Numbers**	**Percentage**
Someone who speaks a language other than English at home.	51	10.34%
A person who was born overseas	80	16.23%
A person living with a disability.	52	10.55%
A member of the LGBTIQA+ community.	139	28.19%
Someone of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent.	11	2.23%
None of the above.	212	43.00%

I prefer not to say.	60	12.17%

Are you providing this feedback on behalf of an organisation?	Numbers	Percentage
Yes	43	8.72%
No	450	91.28%
Total	493	100%

What we heard and how we responded

Community submissions strongly reaffirmed the importance residents place on waterways, green space, neighbourhood safety and essential community services. In response, the final budget incorporates targeted additional funding to support, local community groups, environmental management and local emergency response, alongside practical neighbourhood improvements.

The final budget includes targeted uplifts in local community grants:

- $16,000 to support homework club delivery in Fitzroy and Collingwood,
- $10,000 additional funding for Heidelberg State Emergency Service (SES) to support local emergency response capacity; and
- $4,188 additional funding of the Merri Creek Management Committee, supporting ongoing environmental management and community programs.

As well as targeted local investments:

- $75,000 for the design of traffic and pedestrian safety improvements across Clifton Hill and Abbotsford (Yambla/Ramsden Streets slow point, The Esplanade crossing, and Lulie Street crossing);
- $25,000 for drainage improvements at Smith Reserve, Fitzroy; and
- $20,000 to continue the pole-mounted electric vehicle charging trial.

Overall, the budget reflects the key priorities identified through community consultation and delivers focused investments to support liveability across Yarra.

Feedback Theme 1: Waterways and Environmental Management	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• Strong and consistent support for continued funding of the Merri Creek and Darebin Creek Management Committees • Recognition of our role in biodiversity protection, water quality, and community engagement • 55% of submissions on this theme were from outside of Yarra however feedback from all responders were consistently in support of continued funding of the Merri Creek and Darebin Creek Management Committees	• In scope, relates to Council environmental investment and partnerships • Community feedback informed the decision to maintain funding and provide an additional $4,188 uplift to the Merri Creek Management Committee • This supports ongoing delivery of biodiversity outcomes, waterway health and community programs • Council will continue to deliver these outcomes through community grant partnership agreements and environmental strategies
Feedback Theme 2: Open Space and Greening	

What did we hear	Our response
• Strong support for investment in parks, tree planting and greening initiatives • Requests for new open spaces in dense areas and improved quality and maintenance of existing parks • Feedback on specific sites (e.g. Quarries Park, Edinburgh Gardens, Cremorne open space) • Desire for more informal “third spaces” for community connection	• In scope, aligns with Council’s capital works and operational programs • The budget maintains significant investment in open space upgrades, tree planting and greening programs • Feedback will inform ongoing prioritisation of capital works and maintenance programs • Site-specific requests will be considered through future planning, design processes and capital works programs

Feedback Theme 3: Local Amenity and Maintenance (including graffiti)

What did we hear	Our response
• Mixed views on spending for graffiti removal and cleanliness • Some support for maintaining clean and safe streets • Others suggested reallocating funding towards environmental or community programs • Requests for improved maintenance of streets, parks and public spaces	• In scope, relates to operational service delivery • Current funding levels reflect the need to maintain clean, safe and welcoming public spaces • Feedback will inform ongoing service reviews and prioritisation of maintenance activities • Investment levels will continue to be balanced against other competing priorities in future budgets

Feedback Theme 4: Transport, Parking and Accessibility

What did we hear	Our response
• Highly mixed views on parking, including strong support for and opposition to free parking • Concerns about lost revenue, congestion and sustainability impacts • Requests for improved parking enforcement and management • Strong support for active transport, including cycling infrastructure and walkability • Calls for improved public transport and reduced reliance on cars	• Partly in scope, spans policy, strategy and operational areas • Feedback on parking will be considered through Kerbside and Parking Strategy and future parking reviews • The budget continues to support active transport infrastructure and safer streets • Broader transport issues (e.g. public transport) will continue to be addressed through advocacy with State Government

Feedback Theme 5: Safety and Local Infrastructure

What did we hear	Our response

• Strong focus on pedestrian safety, crossings and traffic calming • Requests for improved lighting and safer shared spaces • Concerns about safety near schools, parks and busy roads • Demand for ongoing investment in local infrastructure	• In scope, relates to capital works and service delivery • Community feedback informed targeted funding including $75,000 for pedestrian and design of traffic safety improvements • Ongoing investment in road safety studies and infrastructure improvements will continue • Safety outcomes will be delivered through capital works programs and transport planning frameworks • The budget maintains significant investment in open space upgrades, tree planting and greening programs • State-managed roads will continue to be addressed through advocacy

Feedback Theme 7: Emergency Services and Community Safety	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• Support for local emergency services, particularly SES • Recognition of the role of volunteers and community preparedness • Request for continued operational funding support	• In scope, aligns with Council's role in community safety • Community feedback informed $10,000 additional funding for Heidelberg SES • Funding supports ongoing operational capacity, training and equipment

Feedback Theme 8: Financial Sustainability and Governance	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• General support for financial discipline and long-term planning • Requests for greater transparency in budget allocations and decision-making • Suggestions for improved revenue generation and cost management (e.g. waste, parking) • Concerns about value for money and prioritisation of spending	• In scope, relates to Council's financial planning framework • The budget has been developed in line with Council's Financial Sustainability Strategy • Feedback will inform future improvements to budget communication and transparency • Revenue and cost pressures will continue to be addressed through ongoing financial planning and service reviews • Issues captured through Annual Budget, Long-Term Financial Plan and governance processes