

Background

Council manages significant community funds supporting delivery of 57 services to nearly 92,000 residents. The annual spend is confirmed in the Annual Budget endorsed by 30 June each year.

Every four years, following the local body election, Council is also required to review the four-year Revenue and Rating Plan. This falls due in this current cycle.

Since 2021, engagement to support the Annual Budget has consisted of two feedback rounds – initial input in November/December and formal feedback on the Proposed Budget in April.

Phase one engagement is designed to understand:

- Council services most important to our community, and
- the areas and initiatives the community would like Council to invest in

Methodology

Phase one engagement was open from Thursday 7 November to Sunday 8 December 2024 and promoted across numerous Council channels, including:

- a media release published 11 November 2024
- Council newsletters, reaching almost **65,000** recipients¹
- four e-newsletters to Your City Your Voice users with matching interests, reaching **1,956** recipients
- a call to action in the Summer edition of Maribyrnong Messenger, reaching approximately **40,000** households
- posters at each library branch, local community centres and facilities
- displays at the Maribyrnong Aquatic Centre – LED billboards in the pool hall and carpark, digital displays on televisions and gym equipment, and posters throughout the centre²
- Smart Cities Digital Kiosk displays on Nicholson Street in Footscray
- via Council's Advisory Groups and Committees
- social media posts on Council's corporate social media channels.

Social media

Promotion across Council's corporate social media channels achieved a total reach of **7,010**.

Date published	Platform	Reach (views)
11 November	Corporate Facebook	2,767
11 November	Corporate Instagram	1,013
1 December	Corporate Facebook	2,193
1 December	Corporate Instagram	1,037

Table 1. Overview of social media posts

Feedback could be provided via two online tools: The feedback form, which could be completed online or downloaded and emailed back to Council, for residents to submit a budget submission and/or provide general feedback; and the Fund It tool allowing residents

¹ This included Council e-news (992 recipients), Maribyrnong Libraries (50,144 recipients), PossumPost (1,901 recipients), Sports Clubs (52 recipients), Economic Development, Maribyrnong Aquatic Centre (5,278 recipients), and Recreation and Open Space (5,968 recipients) mailing lists.

² On average nearly 3,500 residents visit the Maribyrnong Aquatic Centre each day.

to allocate up to 100 points across 14 Council services to identify what is most important to them.

Community members could also share feedback by email directly to the Finance Team

Overall response

A total of **321** contributions were received, which included:

- **303** contributions via the Fund It tool
- **18** contributions via the Feedback Form.

Your City Your Voice

Nearly 700 people (**646**) visited the project page during the engagement period.

Of **881** visits to the project page, **46.8% (412)** stayed for at least one active minute. A third (**30.7% or 270**) of visits resulted in at least one contribution being made, while **25** people followed the project page³.

There were two main peaks across the engagement period:

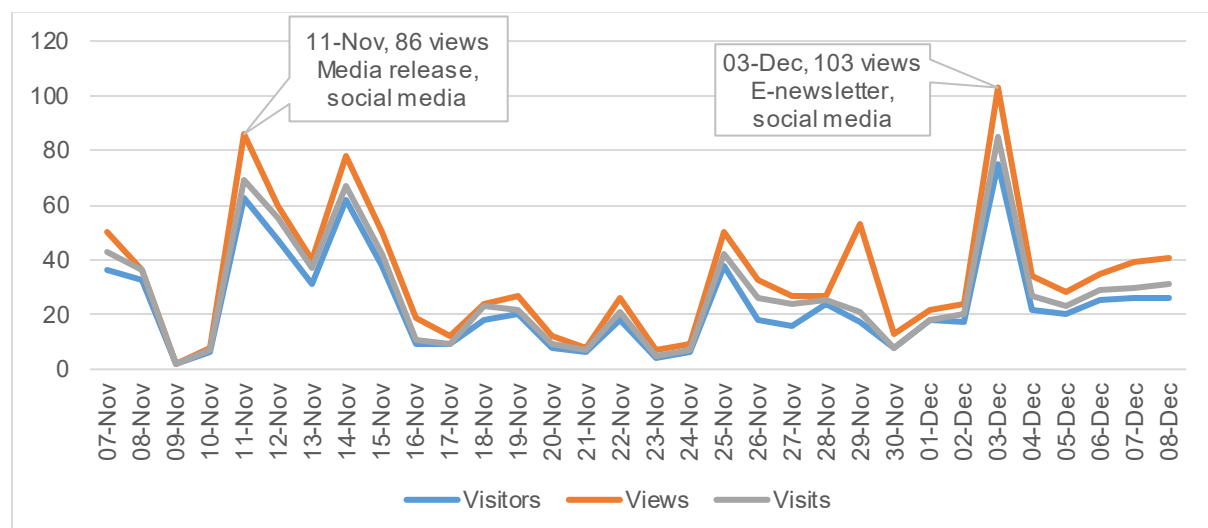


Figure 1. Online engagement performance summary

The first peak from 11-15 November, coincided with initial promotional activities which included a media release and social media posts; and the second, from 3-4 December, followed an e-newsletter reminder to Your City Your Voice users and a second round of promotion via social media.

Findings

Fund It tool

The Fund It enables users to allocate 100 points to the services of most importance to them from a list of 14 Council services areas.

For the previous two engagements, the 'cost' for each service was set at 20 points per service. This was adjusted this year to enable users to allocate their points on a sliding

³ Following a project allows community members to easily keep track of projects and receive alerts whenever updates are made.

scale, providing greater insight into the value of those services to the community. The categories are randomised to reduce bias.

A description of the services and examples of Council's progress in each area, taken from the 2023/24 Annual Report, is also provided to support informed feedback.

Of **303** contributions, the services that ranked in the top five and their point allocation were:

- open space **88.1% (267 points)**
- cycling and pedestrian infrastructure **80.2% (243 points)**
- city amenity and safety **74.6% (226 points)**
- sustainability and the environment **69.9% (212 points)**
- community centres and libraries **67.6% (205 points)**.

As in the previous engagement on the Annual Budget 2024/25, Open Space again took top place.

The key change was a decreased value on Sustainability and the Environment which moved down from second to fourth ranked service.

Cycling and Pedestrian infrastructure moved into second place (previously 3rd), followed by City Amenity and Safety (previously 4th) and community centres and libraries took the fifth slot (previously sixth).

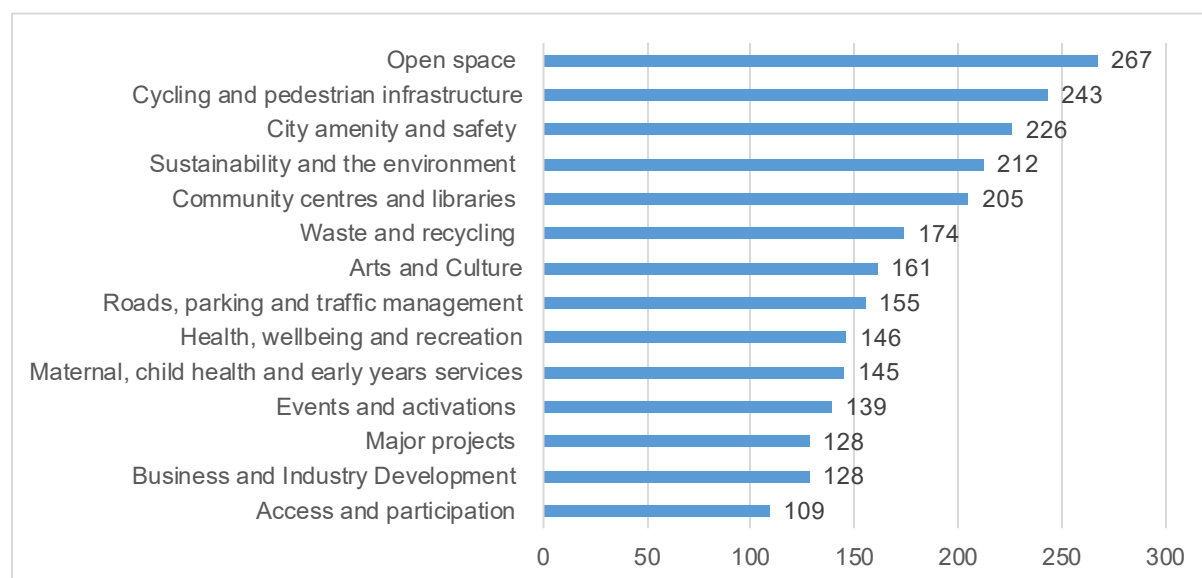


Figure 2. Service categories in order of importance by points allocated – Fund It tool

Formal Feedback Form

Of **18** contributions, **77.8% (14)** provided general feedback while **22.2% (4)** submitted a budget proposal.

Submissions proposed infrastructure projects at open space reserves, city amenity upgrades, support for community-managed neighbourhood houses, and changes to Council's meeting procedures.

Question: Council delivers a variety of services across a range of areas. Rank your top five priority areas from the list below.

Of **14** contributions, the highest prioritised services were cycling and pedestrian infrastructure (score of **10.64**), open space (score of **9.93**), and sustainability and the environment (score of **6.86**)⁴.

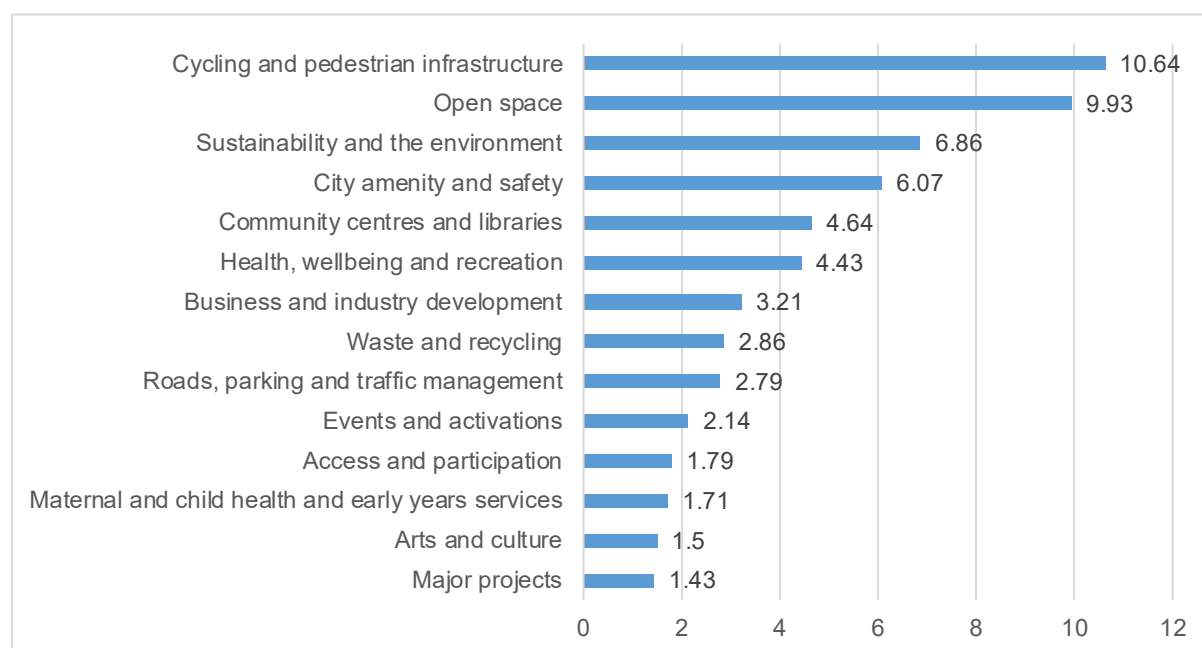


Figure 3. Service categories in order of importance by score – Form tool

Question: Are there any services you think might be missing?

Of **14** contributions, **28.6% (4)** offered views on additional services for: middle years and young people, heritage preservation, as well as climate emergency advocacy and action (as distinct from sustainability and environment services).

Question: Are there any services you would prefer were not delivered by Council?

Of **14** contributions, **78.6% (11)** were satisfied with the Council services listed.

21.4% (3)⁵ identified events and activations (**2**), arts and culture (**1**), and maternal and child health and early years (**1**), as services they would prefer Council not deliver.

Question: Would you support Council retiring some assets in favour of multi-purpose facilities?

Of **14** contributions, **50% (7)** supported retiring assets in favour of multi-purpose facilities, **21.4% (3)** did not support this, while **28.6% (4)** were unsure.

Respondents in support noted:

⁴ The score is the sum of the weight of each ranked position, multiplied by the response count for the position choice, divided by the total contributions.

⁵ One respondent provided two suggestions.

- the reduced running costs of assets and potential for savings
- multi-purpose facilities are more sustainable
- improved use of space and Council infrastructure
- more efficient delivery of Council services
- poor condition of current assets needing upgrading.

Respondents opposed noted:

- satisfaction with service-specific assets
- concern that while consolidating efforts minimises costs, it doesn't necessarily equate to better service quality
- concern about the cost to consolidate (i.e. accommodating multiple services may require building larger assets).

Question: If you have any general comments in relation to budget spending, please share them here.

Of **ten** contributions, comments were:

- prioritising safe and protected bike lanes and delivering the Bicycle Strategy (**3**)
- improving intersection safety and lighting and clarifying road markings (e.g. Ashley Street) (**2**)
- greater crime prevention initiatives in parks and streets (**2**)
- upgrading sports facilities and open space (**2**)
- expanding and improving Kingsville Tennis Club infrastructure to meet growing population demands (**2**)
- revitalise Footscray Mall to address safety concerns (**1**)
- improving oversight and construction standards for townhouses (**1**)
- allocating funds to restore and maintain heritage sites like Pipemakers Park (**1**)
- integrating climate adaptation measures across Council's operations to address challenges like heatwaves and extreme weather (**1**).

Demographics

Of **303** contributors to the Fund It tool, where data was collected:

- **88.8% (269)** identified as residents
- the majority were aged between 30 and 49 **71.3% (216)**
- most were from Footscray **33.7% (102)**, followed by Yarraville **12.9% (39)** and West Footscray **11.6% (35)**
- **13.5% (41)** identified as a member of the LGBTIQ+ community, **9.9% (30)** spoke a language other than English at home, **4.3% (13)** identified as a person with a disability, and **3.3% (10)** identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.