Communications Strategy 2025- 2029 Engagement Report

Consultation summary and findings

Banyule
City Council

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Results and consultation summary

This report summarises the feedback from 42 participants received during the exhibition period for Banyule's draft Communications Strategy 2025–2029 ("the Strategy") and outlines the changes made in response.

The consultation was open for four weeks, between 8 May to 8 June 2025. Respondents had the opportunity to complete a survey or contact the Communications Coordinator directly for a conversation. Intercept surveys were also conducted at Bell Street Mall in Heidelberg West.

Data collected has been analysed and used to identify 11 changes to the strategy.

Observations

There is overall support for the strategy's direction

Most of the responses were supportive or somewhat supportive of the strategy's main objectives (91%), with most agreeing that improving the reach of communications and the awareness of Council services is vital. There was also a strong endorsement for focusing on improving communication with underrepresented groups, including younger people and multicultural communities. Many comments noted the outcomes as "admirable" and "well thought out".

Digital and print balance

There was broad support for getting a better digital/print communications balance – with respondents noting that both forms of communication have their purpose and need to be maintained. Some respondents focused on the expense of printed communications and encouraged Council to reduce spending.

Constructive critical feedback

Many of the negative comments from the consultation reflected the issues that the strategy plans to improve – including website usability, trust and transparency of messages, incorporating community into our communications, and simplifying messaging. This means many of the negative comments were supporting the direction or actions the strategy proposes to take.

Other feedback

Some feedback received wasn't relevant for this strategy, but still warranted consideration. For example, some feedback will be used to shape policy and procedural changes (specifically on artificial intelligence and community engagement practices) and will be shared with relevant teams in Council.

Some suggestions couldn't be accommodated due to logistical or budgeting reasons – such as:

- Prioritising the action to develop a framework to better communicate with underserved audiences earlier (no appropriate funding in 2025/26 Budget)
- Starting a community newspaper for non-Council news (costly, resource intense, and is being considered with Action 2 to create a better online Banyule Banner)
- Improving the delivery times of printed publications such as the Banyule Banner and Age In Focus publications (hard to influence changes due limited supplier choice).

Changes to the strategy

Based on the consultation findings and further research, these changes have been made to the Strategy:

Section of strategy	Changes
Outcomes	• Updated the name of the 'proud outcome to 'pride'. • Made more specific mention of the audiences we want to improve our communication with.
Strategic Alignment	• Updated References to 'Council Plan' to 'Banyule Plan' and updated diagrams. • Added more emphasis to the Strategy supporting Theme 1 of the Banyule Plan.
Legislative compliance	• Made small updates to phrasing and word choice.
Key Performance Indicators (KPI) and Reporting	• Added specific measures and benchmarks for each KPI • Changed 'Councillor Awareness' Key wording to 'Awareness of Councillors' for clarity.
Actions	• Rephrased Action 13 to say 'support' behaviour change rather than 'drive' behaviour change. • Updated Action 14 to include a specific mention of video content and managing mis/disinformation as a priority for social media content. • Updated Action 21 to focus on sharing decisions of Council, rather than reporting on Council performance, noting the recent adoption of the Banyule Plan 2025–2029 focuses on the performance reporting methods. • Added a new action to reduce the cost of communications campaigns by using grouped messaging approaches (where possible and practical). Group messaging approaches help bring related Council initiatives/services into a shared messaging framework (eg. capital works, environmental programs, health and wellbeing). This can reduce spending by not creating fewer bespoke campaigns, designs and messages (Action 17).

Project overview

Background

Effective communications are critical to achieving the *Banyule Community Vision 2041* and increasing knowledge, access and appreciation of Council services and activities – and a dedicated Communications Strategy provides a roadmap for how Council will evolve and refine its approach to communications.

The *2019 – 2023 Communications Strategy* helped to guide and improve the organisation's communications. The Strategy set out to achieve six (6) main outcomes to be achieved through 29 actions – many of which were achieved.

Reason for change

A new strategy was needed following the expiry of the previous Communications Strategy. It was also listed as an action in the *Council Plan 2021–2025.*

Prior to any community engagement, in May – June 2024, officers conducted a comprehensive communications survey of the Banyule community and collected a total of 501 survey responses by going door-to-door. A further 66 responses were collected through an online survey.

These responses helped to significantly shape the new Strategy, which evolves on the former Strategy's ambitions while setting a new course of action.

Consultation

Council officers conducted consultations between 8 May to 8 June 2025 to seek feedback on the draft Strategy. The primary objective of the consultation was to validate that the Strategy's intent, direction and actions were correct. The consultation process also provided another opportunity for community and stakeholder feedback on Council's communications in general.

A range of engagement mediums were available for community to provide feedback and comment, including:

- Shaping Banyule survey – online and print
- Intercept survey at Bell St Mall
- Targeted youth survey
- Commentary through social media posts
- Direct contact with Banyule City Council's Communications Coordinator.

Promotions

The survey was promoted through channels, including:

- Shaping Banyule website and Shaping Banyule mailing list
- Banyule eNews (June edition)
- Organic social media posts on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn
- Paid social media posts on Facebook and Instagram
- Display screens
- Postcards at Council's customer service centres, libraries and leisure centres

Note: An editorial decision was made to not include the Communication Strategy's consultation in May 2025 *Banyule Banner* due to a lack of space and the fact it was already featuring three other consultations (Special Charges Scheme Policy, Road Management Plan, and Domestic Animal Management Plan). This was viewed as an oversight by two survey respondents. A few complaints were also received about the name of consultation: "Connecting Banyule".

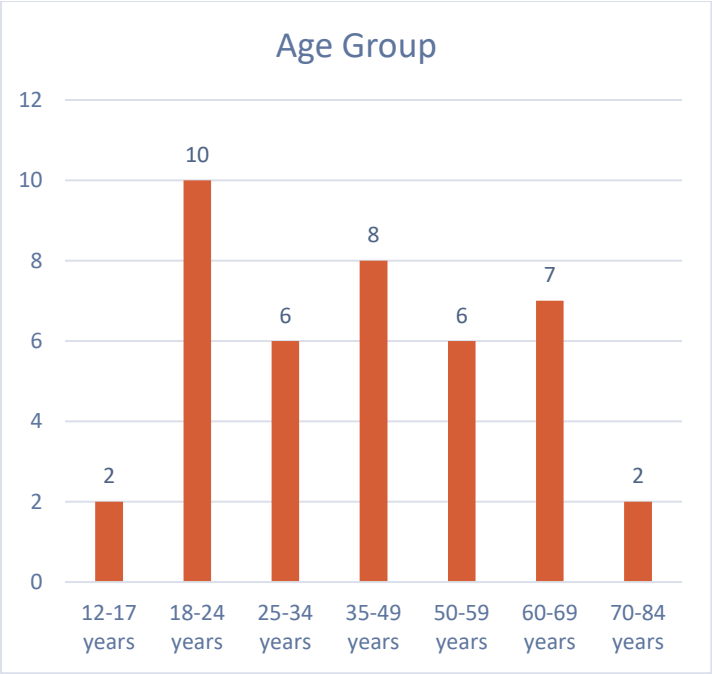
Participation

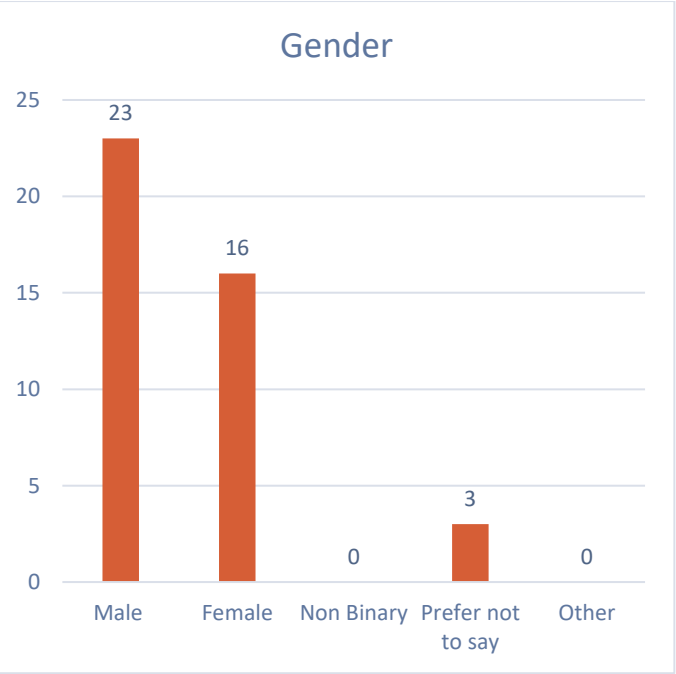
Overall, 42 responses were received throughout the consultation period:

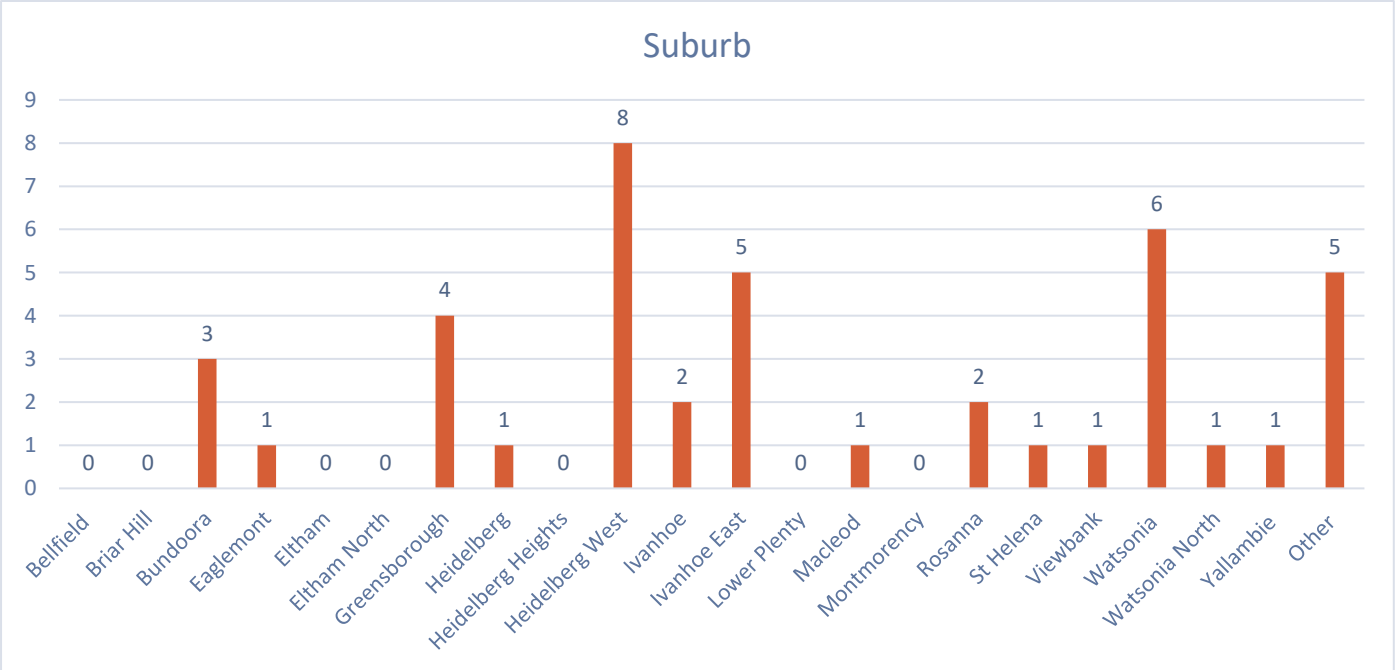
- 35 submissions through the online Shaping Banyule consultation
- 1 submission through the printed Shaping Banyule consultation
- 6 informal responses through intercept surveys

Profile of respondents:

Participation was roughly balanced across age groups and gender, with slightly more male than female respondents.





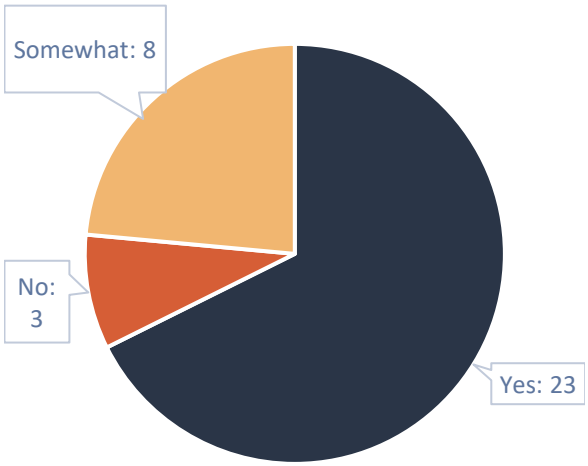
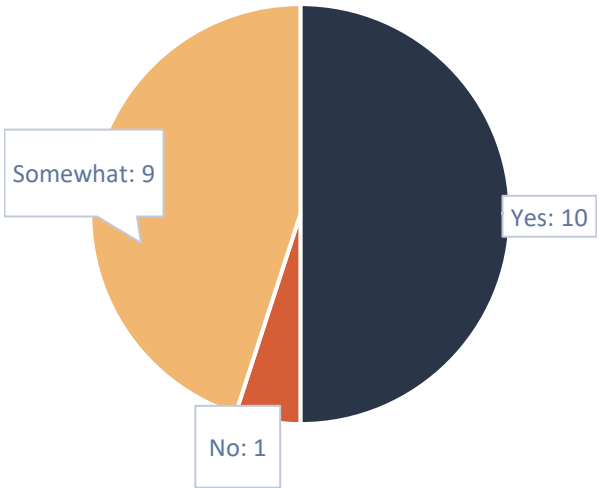


Feedback

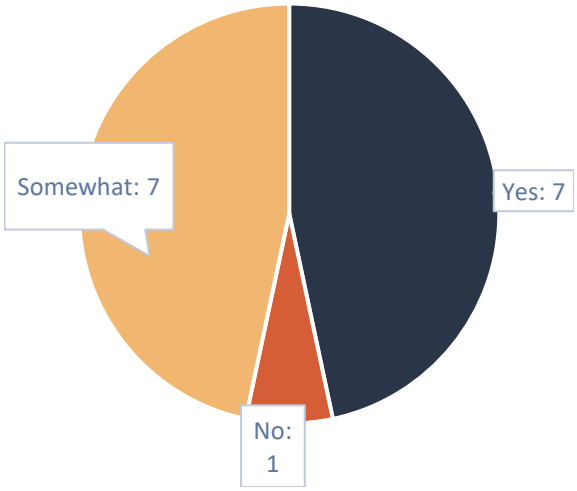
The consultation was structured to ask participants if they:

1. generally agreed with the draft outcomes for improving our communications
2. supported the actions outlined in each category

Participants then had the option to provide general comments on each section. Overall, the feedback was positive and there was broad support for the strategy and proposed actions. Additionally, many of the negative comments from the consultation reflected the issues that the strategy plans to improve. Below is a summary of the results and comments that were collected from the online, print and intercept surveys.

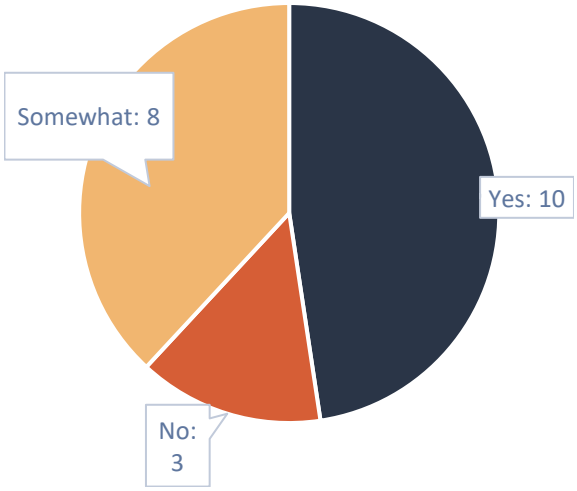
Direct responses to questions	Summary of comments
Do you support the draft outcomes for improving our communications (34 responses)	
	• Most people agreed that improving reach and awareness is vital, particularly ensuring more people understand what Council offers. • There was strong endorsement for focusing on underrepresented groups, including younger people and multicultural communities. • Several comments strongly supported improving the website's usability and structure. • There was a clear desire for plain language, intuitive navigation, and better site architecture. • Many found the outcomes "admirable," "well thought out," and "a good high-level overview." • Comments like "basically covers all aspects" and "diversity is good" reflected support for the broad direction.
Do you support the actions for Digital Transformation and Accessibility? (20 responses)	
	• Action 3 (website 'guides') and Action 7 (website platform review) received strong support, especially if done using user-centred design and improved architecture rather than a full expensive overhaul. • People consistently mentioned that the current site is hard to navigate, inconsistent, and not intuitive. • Strong support for a central events platform. • Lots of support for more digital, but not at the expense of the Banner - citing accessibility, digital fatigue, and the unique nature of physical content. • Some participants support moving more content online to reduce printing costs, especially in a cost-of-living crisis – but also wanted to keep print as an option.

***Do you support the actions for Content Development and Campaigns?* (15 responses)**



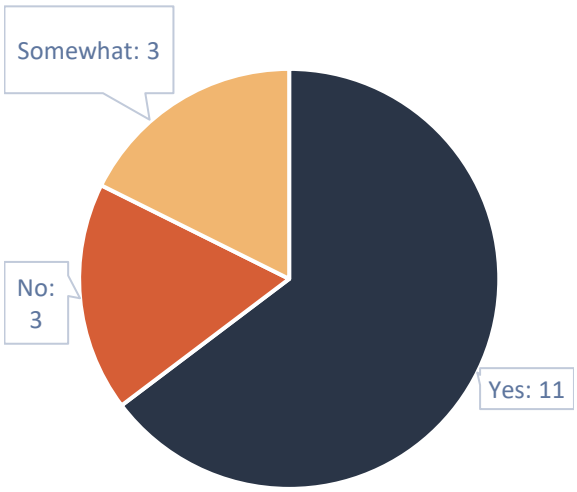
- One detailed comment strongly supported Action 14 for Council to take a firm and strategic approach in countering disinformation.
- There was positive mention of Councillor involvement in campaigns and communications - suggesting this improves local connection and legitimacy.
- A repeated concern across other sections also appeared here: "Stop spending money, cut costs."
- Strong desire for honest, transparent, and firm messaging.
- Support for better-targeted, more visible social media campaigns.

***Do you support the actions for Community Engagement and Inclusion?* (21 responses)**



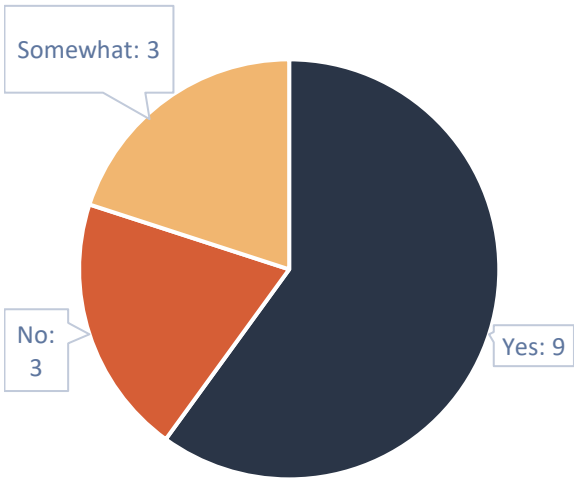
- A small but vocal group expressed frustration, suggesting engagement is a tick-box exercise with predetermined outcomes.
- Multiple comments across the survey (including in this question) suggested the strategy is not doing enough to engage younger people or design for future generations.
- Strong support for transparency, follow-up, and tangible feedback loops.
- Caution about performative engagement and over-reliance on digital tools – eg. This survey wasn't available in the *Banyule Banner*.

***Do you support the actions for Branding and Visual Identity?* (17 responses)**



- Several respondents explicitly stated support for Actions 28–32 **(**capital works branding, audit of sub-brands, signage standards, visual identity rollout, first nations artwork).
- There was general agreement that updating signs, murals and visual elements is a way to refresh and modernise Council's image.
- Notes about old, damaged or outdated signage that needs attention – and that an overhaul "is about due".
- Some respondents concerned about costs.
- Some suggestions that Council doesn't need branding.

Do you support the actions for Internal Capability and Tools?



- Comments overall were very supportive of these actions.
- Internal capability seen as essential for successful delivery of the whole strategy.
- 1 strong comment called for Council to be better prepared to communicate in an emergency.
- A few comments emphasised that tools aren't enough – success is depending on the right culture, people and leadership.