# Community Engagement Report

Parking Policy Development

# Contents

# Project background

Despite being one of the smallest municipalities in Victoria by area, the City of Port Phillip is one of the most densely populated and most visited places in metropolitan Melbourne.

With more than twice the average population density for metropolitan Melbourne, significant employment areas such as St Kilda Road and the growth area of Fishermen's Bend, and nearly three million visitors per year, the pressure on the City of Port Phillip's transport infrastructure poses a considerable challenge for Council as the City continues to grow.

Although well serviced by public transport, planning for and managing future congestion and parking arrangements are essential to maintaining sufficient road access and smooth traffic movement through the City of Port Phillip in the coming years.

To that end, in September 2018, Council endorsed the 10-year Move, Connect, Live Integrated Transport Strategy which prioritises the development and implementation of both a new Parking Permit Policy and Parking Controls Policy.

With these new policies, Council seeks to address the City of Port Phillip's broader growth and transport challenges, while also developing approaches which are clear and easy to follow, fair and equitable, practical to implement across the City's nine neighbourhoods, and adaptable as needs change.

With previous community consultation having taken place around parking management within the City of Port Phillip, Council wishes to build on this previous research to further its understanding of community and other stakeholder attitudes and behaviours in relation to parking.

This will contribute to the refinement of a Council parking policy and inform ongoing engagement with the community and other key stakeholders on this issue. Council sought to understand travel and parking habits, needs, preferences and attitudes among City of Port Phillip residents, specifically in relation to:

- Parking Permits and how they are used
- parking conditions and controls
- principles for defining parking precincts
- the hierarchy of parking needs
- other key policy settings.

Council contracted independent market and social research company JWS Research to conduct the research project.

# Research methodology

Qualitative research was conducted in the form of face-to-face focus group discussions with residents and one-on-one in-depth interviews with stakeholders of the City of Port Phillip.

Six focus groups were conducted with residents of the City of Port Phillip, from the 3rd to 11th June 2019, structured into three clusters:

- Older mixed houses and apartments – including residents of St Kilda, St Kilda West, Balaclava, East St Kilda Elwood and Ripponlea.

- Older and single family dwellings – including residents of Port Melbourne, Albert Park and Middle Park.

- Mixed use and growth areas – including residents of St Kilda Road, Sandridge, Wirraway, Montague and South Melbourne.

For each cluster, two focus groups were conducted, one among younger residents aged 18 to 40 years and one among older residents aged 40 years and over. Each focus group involved five to nine participants.

In-depth interviews were conducted with stakeholders of the City of Port Phillip from the 14th to 24th June 2019. In total, five stakeholders were interviewed, including foreshore club representatives and community service agency representatives.

The stakeholder interviews were designed to provide an in-depth assessment of stakeholders' needs, how permits are used, attitudes towards different conditions on permits and how changes to parking policy settings will impact organisational operations and ability to deliver services.

Note: Qualitative research is exploratory in nature, and so the qualitative findings within this report are indicative only and are not necessarily fully representative of the target populations.

# Engagement results

## Summary of feedback

### Residents' views on parking in general

This section of the focus group discussions explored residents' parking situations, views and opinions on parking in the City of Port Phillip and the notion of parking as a shared resource.

### Key findings:

- On-street parking can be notoriously difficult to locate in the City of Port Phillip.

- Growing population and demand is seen to be putting a strain on parking supply.

- Residents are conflicted over the right to parking in the City of Port Phillip. Some feel it is their right as residents, others feel scarce parking is part of living in an inner-city area.

Fair access to parking in the City of Port Phillip is influenced by a succession of factors that contribute to increased competition for on-street parking. According to residents. These include:

- Population growth within the City of Port Phillip and throughout Greater Melbourne.

- New residential development to cater for population growth.

- More visitors coming into the City of Port Phillip.

- Commuters driving part way into the city parking close to public transport.

- Under-utilisation of off-street parking.

| Population growth | New residential developments | More visitors | Commuters driving part way | Under-utilisation of off-street parking | More competition for on-street parking |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
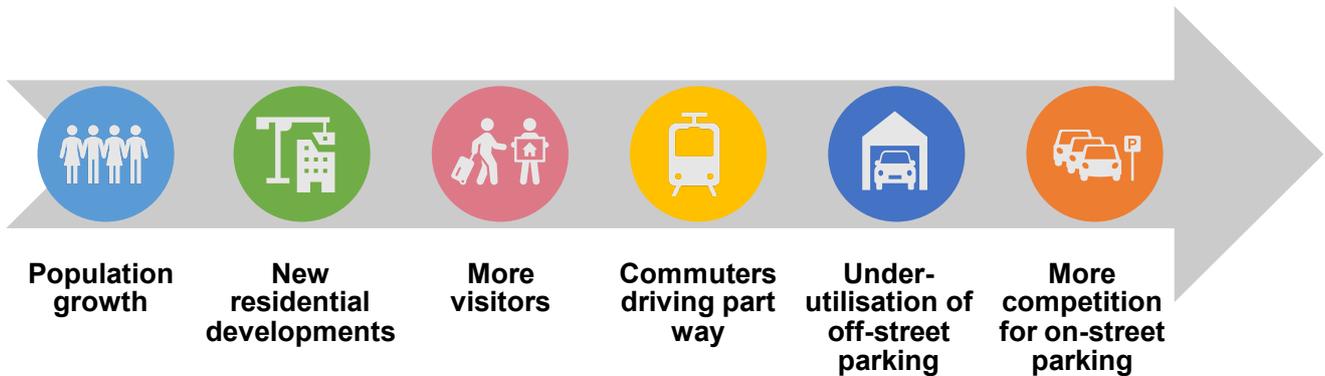
"It's a bit frustrating when you get home on a hot night at 8 pm and you're unable to park because people are still out at the beach." (Mixed use and growth areas, older)

"We're no different to any other suburb, except for six months of the year when it's warm, then it's a huge problem. You can't go (park) out beyond the water." (Older and single family dwellings, older)

## Parking controls

This section of the focus group discussions explored residents' views towards the various issues relating to parking controls. Reactions towards an excerpt from Council's Move, Connect, Live Integrated Transport Strategy were also tested, so as to understand if the language matches community expectations in this area.

## Key findings:

- Attitudes towards parking appear to differ by age. Older residents tend to think of driving as a necessity for freedom and are more likely to want to continue use of cars in the future. Conversely, younger residents tend to be more open to adaptation and appreciate the need to reduce reliance on cars.

- The general consensus is that residents should take precedence in future management of parking, however there are differing opinions on how fairness should be approached and regulated.

- Some issues more common in certain areas. Residents in certain areas call for more rigorous parking controls on corporate offices, and better monitoring and segregation of workers and residents.

## Certain priorities regarding parking management are raised, including:

- Properly enforcing new development to provide adequate parking – while such regulations may already be in place, it may be a case that this needs to be better communicated to residents. People also point to examples where builders have simply gone to VCAT and had planning scheme requirements for parking removed. Unfortunately, such happenings may be beyond Council's control.

- There are consistent calls to increase patrolling efforts in certain areas around the City of Port Phillip – residential areas where there appears to be a high volume of parking offences, yet relatively low enforcement is often cited. Heightened efforts may ultimately deter those parking wrongfully and could free-up more spaces for use by residents.

- A potential issue is that some residents who have access to off-street parking are unable to use it – this can be due to faulty car stackers in new buildings or hard to reach or hard to park in spots on older properties. Encouraging residents who have access to off-street parking to use it is an issue that is considered a priority. Residents face this issue themselves or point to instances in their area where it is occurring.

"I feel like Port Phillip wants it to be a car free zone, people just walk and take public transport everywhere. Not everyone can walk everywhere, some people really aren't that close to the shops, some people have to drive to get there." (Older mixed houses and apartments, younger)

"I use the carpark in the building, I would be fine for us to pay for street parking provided they limited the number of permits and they patrol it. People are parking in all sorts of places, they park up on the corner." (Mixed use and growth areas, older)

## Parking Permits

This section of the focus group discussions explored residents' views towards the various issues relating to Parking Permits, including testing the idea of a voucher-based system for Parking Permits, using the City of Melbourne's existing voucher system as an example. Discussions also explored attitudes towards the notion of reducing the number of permits available for eligible households and the idea introducing a tiered-pricing structure for permits.

# Parking Policy Development

## Key findings:

- There is a potential willingness amongst the community for the number of permits per eligible household to be reduced.

- A proposed voucher system for Visitor Parking Permits may can be hard to understand. Residents are not yet convinced they will be better-off.

- Tiered-pricing for permits will require clear justification. Residents are generally unclear on how tiered pricing for permits could help free up more parking spaces.

Above all, residents call on Council to be flexible and holistic in its approach to issuing permits. The issue is seen to be a 'grey area'. As such, rigid regulations could prevent fair access to permits for some households.

If the number of permits given to eligible households is to vary, residents want Council to consider the following:

## Choice:

- Do residents have the option to park off-street?

- Are residents simply choosing not to use their parking?

- Those with no option should be given priority to permits.

## Household structure:

- How many eligible drivers are living in the household?

- What are the occupations of residents? Does their work require them to have a certain type of vehicle?

## Type of building:

- Newer buildings should provide access to parking for residents.

- Older buildings may be less likely to have access to parking as driving habits have changed.

Positive aspects of moving to a voucher system raised by residents include:

- A way of ensuring cars do not sit in one spot for a long period. The system potentially encourages those who aren't residents to move their cars.

- A potential way to reduce the number of visitors to a given area.

- The potential to reduce people from on-selling their permits to non-residents. However, vouchers could still be sold to office workers.

- The system works well for those who don't use visitor permits often. In these situations, residents will be better off financially.

- The system would mean that visitor permits are not held on to for long periods. A single-use system negates the possibility of visitors forgetting to return permits to residents.

Concerns of moving to a voucher system raised by residents include:

- The system will reduce the flexibility that residents are currently afforded. People are resistant to having to assign permits to visitors selectively and are also worried it will deter friends and family from visiting.

- The vouchers will be hard to manage and could easily be wasted. For example, if someone is given a three-hour voucher and they end up staying for longer, they will need another voucher.

- A voucher system will cost them more than a current visitor permit. Some people use permits quite frequently and the current system means that permits are affordable. This is a particular concern for those living in permit-only areas.

- The system can appear complex on face value. Communications to residents would need to clearly explain how the system works.

"It's a way to reduce the number of visitors, but it's much more expensive." (Mixed use and growth areas, younger)

"I have visitors, my son has visitors… If you're going to make it hard for my visitors, they won't come." (Older and single family dwellings, older)

## Principles for defining parking precincts

This section of the focus group discussions explored residents' considerations for moving from a location-based Parking Permit system to a precinct-based system, and unprompted and prompted attitudes towards Council's predefined principles for defining parking precincts. A map of parking precincts in the City of Yarra was presented as an example.

## Key findings:

- The existing location-based system is more intuitive.

- However, the proposed precinct-based system may be fairer.

- Precinct boundaries should be based on use, density, capacity and movement.

## Existing location-based system:

Positive aspects of the existing location-based permit system raised by residents are that it is an intuitive system based on proximity to residential address and involves minimal walking distance between their residence and vehicle.

Concerns of the existing location-based permit system raised by residents are that there are greater restrictions on where residents can park. It is also disadvantageous for residents in certain streets; that is, shorter roads, those sectioned into different street names, those with no permit parking, and those in high-density areas, as there is greater competition for space.

## Proposed precinct-based system:

Positive aspects of the proposed precinct-based permit system raised by residents are that residents would have more options for where they can park, and using colour coding could make it easier for people to recognise boundaries.

Concerns of the proposed precinct-based permit system raised by residents are that it would open up the area to others who were previously restricted, essentially shifting the problem. Residents may need to park further away from their property, particularly those on the edge of precincts. Some are also concerned that fluctuation of demographics and land uses may impact upon the density of precincts, so would require constant monitoring and re-evaluating.

Among the most important things Council should take into consideration when defining boundaries for parking precincts, residents cite:

- the number of registered cars and current valid permits

- residential density; that is, volume of houses and units, number inhabitants

- existing parking facilities and capacity for off-street parking

- deliberation given to specific demographic characteristics and needs; that is, elderly and disabled

- practical walking distance from car space to place of residence

- sufficient street lighting at night

- amount and nature of nearby businesses

- proximity to foreshore, parks and other public outdoor attractions

- schools (consideration of peak times and use for parking out of hours)

- medical centres.

## Hierarchy of parking needs

This section of the focus group discussions explored how residents prioritise parking needs for both local streets and main streets or shopping strip areas. Participants were asked to prioritise groups and cohorts in order of who should be given most priority to parking, to least, in terms of both residential areas and main streets or shopping strip areas.

## Key findings:

- Residents in residential areas are prioritised. As ratepayers, residents and particularly those without access to off-street parking, should be given priority above all others.

- Attitudes towards car share companies differ by age. Younger residents tend to have a greater understanding of car share as a concept, making them more receptive to the benefits of assigning parking to these companies. Older residents tend to hold a weaker understanding of the concept and see them as taking up valuable space.

- Older residents are more likely to reject additional uses for parking. Residents are hesitant to support the use of car spaces for alternative purposes and tend to place more value on parking space. Their reluctance lies in the belief that as the population continues to grow, even more parking spaces will be needed, and that reducing carparking might be detrimental to local businesses.

Residents prioritise access to parking spaces in different ways. Perhaps expectantly, residents with and without access to off-street parking tend to be prioritised in residential areas. However, when it comes to main streets or shopping strip areas, views can vary, as can be seen when reviewing the priority setting by residents in the focus groups.

Groups which tend to be given **higher priority in residential areas** include:

- residents without access to property parking

- residents with access to property parking

- visitors (including family, friends, tradespeople, visitors to businesses)

- car share companies (that is, spaces reserved only for car share companies such as GoGet and Flexicar).

Groups which tend to be given **lower priority in residential areas** include:

- pick and drop off zones (ride share or private)
- employees and owners of local businesses
- parking for bicycles and scooters
- commuters (people who park near public transport).

Groups which tend to be given **higher priority in main streets or shopping strip areas** include:

- visitors (including family, friends, tradespeople, visitors to businesses)
- employees and owners of local businesses
- residents without access to property parking
- pick and drop off zones (ride share or private).

Groups which tend to be given **lower priority in main streets or shopping strip areas** include:

- residents with access to property parking
- car share companies (that is, spaces reserved only for car share companies such as GoGet and Flexicar)
- parking for bicycles and scooters
- commuters (people who park near public transport).

Generally, residents appear reluctant to support utilising carparking spaces for alternative purposes. Hesitancy is driven by:

- A perception that more parking spaces will be needed as the City of Port Phillip population continues to grow.
- A concern that reducing carparking in certain areas makes people think twice about visiting. This can be to the detriment of local businesses.
- Lesser value placed on the alternatives. People tend to place more value on parking space over more trees or larger footpath areas.

"Is it worth losing four car spots? I'd rather park than have more palm trees." (Older dwellings and single family dwellings, younger)