



## Local Government Citizen Juries – Case Studies

The following examples are drawn from some recent experiences of jury/panel processes in local government in Victoria. For further case studies refer to the Deliberative Democracy Hub on the VLGA website: [www.vlga.org.au](http://www.vlga.org.au).



## Case study: City of Yarra: Liveable Yarra People's Panel

As part of the Council's 'Liveable Yarra' project, the Council hosted a four-session deliberative forum on the question of: *What advice would you give Council on rewriting the Planning Scheme?*

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### What was the purpose of this engagement?

Council endorsed a review of the Planning Scheme in October 2014 and a program was developed to rewrite the Scheme. Community consultation and engagement was required as part of this rewrite.

Mindful of some of the challenges surrounding traditional consultation and engagement processes, the Council established the *Liveable Yarra* project to facilitate a different type of conversation with Yarra's community – one component of the project was a series of deliberative forums – known as the People's Panel. Other components of the project were targeted workshops, advisory committee meetings and a baseline survey.

### Applying the method

The Liveable Yarra People's Panel was made up of a group of 60 community members selected to represent the Yarra community. Some of these were selected from those who responded to a letter sent at random to 5000 people; others through an EOI process. A core group of 43 members were primarily selected due their limited engagement with

Council previously and, together, they largely reflected the demographics of the Yarra community (on factors including age, sex, ethnicity, English language proficiency, location, housing tenure and type). An additional 17 panel members were selected on the basis of their previous engagement with Council on issues relevant to the deliberation.

The Panel met four times over August/September 2015 and were facilitated through a series of discussion where issues, solutions and potential trade-offs were discussed. Over the course of the four sessions, the Panel developed a vision and a series of propositions over each of four policy areas: people and housing, business and employment; the built environment; and access and movement.

### Results and impacts

In November 2015, Council resolved, unanimously, to receive and note the Panel's advice and supported it being used to inform the planning scheme rewrite; Panel members spoke to the report at the meeting. The Council report noted that a number of the propositions represent policy directions that deviated from [then] current Council policy. The report notes that: *Together with trade-offs articulated by the Panel, the collation of this intelligence from the community represents an opportunity for Council to guide a different conversation of the future liveability of Yarra.*



## Further information

The City of Yarra has a comprehensive website with details about the Panel and its outcomes and links with other components of the Liveable Yarra project. <http://www.yarracity.vic.gov.au/planning--building/Yarra-planning-scheme/liveable-yarra-project/>

Most of the information here is drawn from a comprehensive summary report about the Panel process, which includes detail about the design of the process, its delivery and the lessons learned: Capire Consulting Group and the City of Yarra, 2016, [\*Liveable Yarra: Better planning for people and places, Engagement Summary\*](#).

A report to Council about the advice of the Panel can be found in the Council meeting papers for 24 November 2015 <http://www.yarracity.vic.gov.au/your-council/meetings/2015-council-meetings/>

There is also useful article in *Planning News* (Vol 41 (10) November 2015), the Journal of PIA Victoria, entitled '[Deliberative engagement framework to rewrite a planning scheme](#)' - written by Liz Mackevicius who was then Research and Policy Co-ordinator - City Strategy, at the City of Yarra. Reproduced with kind permission of PIA Victoria *Planning News*.



## Case study: Surf Coast Shire Council Community Panel (Spring Creek)

Surf Coast Shire ran a Community Panel as part of their community engagement for a precinct structure plan

### What was the purpose of this engagement?

The Shire's Spring Creek Structure Plan (PSP) project was established to prepare a PSP for a growth area known as "Spring Creek". The development of the PSP was a mandatory requirement under the Urban Growth Zone in that area; a PSP serves as a masterplan for how land is to be developed. The Shire developed an engagement program to facilitate early stakeholder engagement in the process. One element of the program involved the establishment of the Community Panel.

### Applying the method

A 32-member Panel was established; half of the Panel members were stakeholders (landowners and community group members); and half were randomly selected people from the local community, who represented the local demographic. The latter group was selected from a pool of people who nominated to be part of the Panel. Young people (15-24yrs) were not initially captured in this process and nominations were, therefore, sought directly from a local secondary school.

The Panel met on four occasions during August 2015 and was tasked with answering the question: *How do we design for urban growth that is in balance with the surrounding environment?*

The Panel operated under a number of agreed guidelines, one of which

was that the Panel recommendations must have at least 80% agreement. The panel members heard expert evidence in developing their recommendations.

Council papers (September 22, 2015) note that: *In order to give the Community Panel a meaningful level of authority, Council agreed to incorporating the Panel's recommendations unless there was a good reason why they couldn't be included.*

### Results and impacts

The Council received the Panel's report at its September 2015 meeting. A further report at Council's November 2015 meeting outlined a draft framework for the Spring Creek Urban Growth Area and the response to the Community Panel's report. The report noted that the majority of the Panel's recommendations could be achieved.

### Further information

Information about the PSP and the Panel's contribution to its development can be found

at: [http://www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au/My\\_Property/Building\\_Planning/Planning/Strategic\\_Projects\\_Studies/Spring\\_Creek\\_Structure\\_Plan](http://www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au/My_Property/Building_Planning/Planning/Strategic_Projects_Studies/Spring_Creek_Structure_Plan)

Council meeting papers can be found

at: [http://www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au/My\\_Council/Agendas\\_Minutes/Council\\_Agendas\\_Minutes](http://www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au/My_Council/Agendas_Minutes/Council_Agendas_Minutes)



## Case study: Shire of Nillumbik Community Panel on rate capping

As part of a broader community engagement plan on the issue of rate capping and its implications for Nillumbik, in terms of services, infrastructure and finances, the Shire convened a Community Panel to discuss rate capping and future budget priorities.

### What was the purpose of this engagement?

In May 2015, Council resolved to implement a community engagement plan to inform Nillumbik's response to rate capping. The first stage in the community engagement process was to establish a community panel.

### Applying the method

Membership of the panel was open to any interested member of the Nillumbik community and 39 local people volunteered to participate. It was established through an open invitation to participate promoted through print and online media, through Council's talkback panel, the rates brochure and direct letters to community organisations.

The Panel was not structured to represent the demographic profile of Nillumbik. Rather, the panel's recommendations provided one set of perspectives for Council to use along with information derived from other engagement process on rate capping – these included testing the panel's recommendations with the wider community through the annual community survey and an online survey on the Council website.

The panel met on four occasions in September/October 2015 and considered these questions: *Are the current service levels about right,*

*too high or too low? Are the infrastructure investment levels about right, too high or too low?* It considered a range of information regarding the services and infrastructure provided by Council, the structure of Council's finances and the challenges faced.

Through its deliberations, the panel worked towards a final set of recommendations which were considered and adopted in the final session. These included some principles to help guide Council in its decision-making about rate capping, together with explicit recommendations on some services and on the conditions under which Council should seek a variation from the cap.

### Results and impacts

The panel's recommendations were reported at the October 2015 Council meeting and it was agreed that Council would proceed to the next stage of the engagement process.

More than half (59%) of respondents to the annual community survey agreed with the Panel's recommendations - as did 60% of participants in the online survey.



The combined outcomes of this engagement plan helped inform Council's decision to keep rates within the 2.5% rate increase cap in the 2016-17 financial year.

### **Further information**

Councils' rate capping engagement plan was discussed at the May 2015 meeting of Council (page 27). The recommendations of the community panel are reported to Council in October 2015 (page 37ff).

See: <http://www.nillumbik.vic.gov.au/Council/Minutes-and-agendas>

See also: <http://www.nillumbik.vic.gov.au/News/Council-endorses-broad-consultation-on-rate-capping>



## Case study: Marrickville Infrastructure Jury

The Marrickville Infrastructure Jury was formed to analyse the Council's existing infrastructure and to assess the relative priorities of new capital projects.

### What was the purpose of this engagement?

The Marrickville Infrastructure Jury was convened to consider the Council's infrastructure needs. This was part of a broader community consultation in relation to a proposed additional 3% special rate increase, over and above a 2.4% rate increase determined by IPART (a body similar to the ESC in Victoria). Council was seeking to address its annual infrastructure asset renewal funding shortfall.

Specifically, the Jury was asked to consider:

1. *What level of infrastructure quality do we want to pay for in Marrickville?*
2. *What are our local priorities for investment?*

### Applying the method

Three thousand invitations were sent out to Marrickville residents and business owners, selected at random. From those who responded, a 30-member jury, representative of the wider community was convened. The Jury met during September – November, 2014.

The Jury made a series of recommendations including the minimum acceptable condition for a range of infrastructure; this would have served to reduce the Council's shortfall for asset renewal from \$5.06m to

\$2.35m, a saving of approximately \$2.7m per annum. Council received the report in November 2014.

### Results and impacts

On the basis of the Jury's recommendations, Council resolved to proceed to community consultation on a special rate variation that would help meet part of the \$2.35m shortfall.

The Jury was reconvened in 2015 to be advised of the progress with their recommendations and to share community feedback about a proposed 3% special rate increase. The Jury completed a supplementary report in early February 2015, which supported the proposed special rate variation.

### Further information

The work of the Jury is summarised on the Council website at: <http://yoursaymarrickville.com.au/marrickville-infrastructure-jury>

In the context of rate capping, the way in which the Marrickville Council used its Infrastructure Jury to inform and support its application to vary its rate cap, is a useful reference. The rate variation process is slightly different in NSW but Marrickville's successful application (2015-16) and the response of IPART to that application, is worth a look. Both the



application and the determination can be accessed  
here: [http://www.ipart.nsw.gov.au/Home/Industries/Local\\_Govt/Special\\_Variations\\_and\\_Minimum\\_Rates/Applications\\_Determinations](http://www.ipart.nsw.gov.au/Home/Industries/Local_Govt/Special_Variations_and_Minimum_Rates/Applications_Determinations)

Further background detail about the Jury (and a community survey conducted about the special rate variation) can be found in the Council minutes of 17 February 2015: <http://www.marrickville.nsw.gov.au/en/council/elected-council/business-paper-archives/council-meetings/>





## Case study: City of Melbourne - People's Panel

The City of Melbourne's People's Panel was convened to consider the Council's first 10-year financial plan.

### What was the purpose of this engagement?

The City of Melbourne's jury (known as the People's Panel) was convened to provide advice to Council about their first-ever financial plan (an estimated \$4b in expenditure). The Panel was just part of a broader engagement strategy (July - August 2014) that included community events across the city, including pop-ups and a budget simulator. Information gathered during the broader community engagement was presented to the People's Panel to inform their recommendations.

### Applying the method

Invitations were sent from the Lord Mayor to 6000 ratepayers selected at random; 1000 young people via the University of Melbourne; and 500 business managers/owners. Six hundred people responded and from these a stratified sample of 43 was selected to represent a broad cross-section of the City of Melbourne community. The Panel met five times (full days) between August and October 2014.

Council undertook to listen to the Panel's views and consider all recommendations when developing its 10 year financial plan. As part of this commitment, Council met with the Panel and formally responded to all recommendations.

### Results and impacts

The Panel formally presented its recommendations to at a special Future Melbourne Committee meeting in November 2014. This Council's 10-year financial plan was endorsed in June 2015 and includes the People's Panel's recommendations and Council's responses to them. The Council notes that the Plan was heavily influenced by the recommendations made by the Panel taking on board the majority of the 11 key recommendations made. The Panel's recommendations have also influenced the Council's Draft Asset Management Strategy and action in the Council Plan.

### Further information

The City of Melbourne has a comprehensive website outlining all of the engagement surrounding the 10-year financial plan, including the Panel. It includes FAQs about the Panel process, together with engagement reports and evaluations, media clips and videos. The site also includes the final 10 year financial plan adopted by Council. <http://participate.melbourne.vic.gov.au/10yearplan>

The experience of jurors involved in the People's Panel - and of a councillor - is captured as part of a panel discussion hosted by the City of Melbourne in 2015, on the topic of *Can citizens' juries rebuild trust & solve hard problems?* A video recording of the event can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3p1JrZPh8VA>



The newDemocracy Foundation also has extensive information on the People's Panel hosted on its website, including the design concept for the Panel. See <http://www.newdemocracy.com.au/ndf-work/183-city-of-melbourne-people-s-panel>



## Case study: City of Darebin - Citizen's Jury

In 2014, the City of Darebin convened a Citizen's Jury to consult the community on how best to use the Council's [then] recently established infrastructure fund.

### What was the purpose of this engagement?

As part of its 2013/14 budget, the Council established an infrastructure fund ; Council also made a commitment to invite the community to be involved in decision-making about those projects to be funded.

### Applying the method

In April 2014, an invitation was sent from the Mayor to 3000 randomly elected properties in Darebin, inviting residents to be part of a jury to decide: How should we best spend \$2 million to improve our community through the use of infrastructure funding ?

From the pool of accepted invitations, a 31-member jury was convened which reflected the demographics of the Darebin population. The Jury met across four Saturdays (full days) (May-August 2014). Across these sessions, they heard presentations from subject matter experts (both internal and external to Council) identified by the Jury. The Darebin community was also invited to submit their ideas to the Jury to consider and many were included in the final set of 8 recommendations developed for Council's consideration. Council officers provided costings and comments on the community submissions received.

One of the early tasks for Jury members was to settle on the criteria they would use to determine those projects to be recommended. The Jury was united in ensuring that their recommendations addressed disadvantage in the Darebin community.

Included in the Jury invitation was an indication that the Council's approach as one of "all or nothing"; in other words, Council would either accept all of the Jury's recommendations or none of them. This precluded the Council from "cherry-picking" projects and encouraged the Jury to frame their recommendations in such a way, that their acceptance by Council was likely.

There was a formal presentation to Councillors and a celebration of the Jury's work in August 2014 – Jury members were invited to bring along family members too.

### Results and impacts

Council unanimously approved the Jury's recommendations in September 2014. The projects recommended were identified for inclusion and delivery in the capital works program to the value of \$1m in each of 2014/15 and 2015/16 budgets.



In March 2015, the Council convened a meeting for Jury members to hear about the Council's progress with implementing their recommendations.

Jurors were invited to participate in a formal evaluation of the Jury process, including issues around recruitment, the information provided and their experience of the day-long sessions.

### **Further information**

A short profile about the Jury can be found on Darebin's website here: <http://www.darebin.vic.gov.au/en/Your-Council/How-council-works/Council-Initiatives>

The project design and the Jury's report can be found at <http://newdemocracy.com.au/ndf-work/182-darebin-participatory-budgeting-citizens-jury>

A report to Council about the Jury's recommendations and the Jury process is a useful starting point to learn about this process – see the Council meeting minutes of 15 September 2014: <http://www.darebin.vic.gov.au/en/Your-Council/How-council-works/Meeting-Agendas-and-Minutes/Council-Meetings>

A reflective piece from Annie Bolitho, one of the facilitators of the Darebin process, *Fresh conversations, new stances: deliberative democracy and participatory budgeting*  
<http://apo.org.au/resource/fresh-conversations-new-stances-deliberative-democracy-and-participatory-budgeting>