

Local Law Review Engagement Summary (Phase 1: 20 January to 20 March 2023)

Introduction

The Local Law is reviewed every 10 years and we are now preparing to revise these laws in a new Community Local Law friendly format so they can capture current key issues and so they can commence in July 2024. The Local Law covers a range of diverse topics. From unsightly land, fire safety, animals, roadside reserves and footpath trading to planting on nature strips and building sites. Local laws are designed to enhance community safety, protect property and help make our neighbourhoods and living in the City of Whittlesea 'A Place for All'.

Between 20 January – 20 March 2023, The City of Whittlesea conducted an eight-week community engagement program to gather community and stakeholder feedback on nine key proposed Local Law ideas as well as feedback on the existing Local Law. Council undertook community consultation with people who live, work, study or visit the City of Whittlesea to understand community issues and needs across the municipality. The feedback received will be used to review and update the City of Whittlesea's Local Law to ensure they are both enforceable and reflect local needs.

How we engaged you

The initial community engagement was open for community comment from 20 January – 20 March 2023.

Community feedback was sought online through Council's Engage Whittlesea platform and through direct conversation and activities at community pop-ups and meetings with key stakeholders.

The project Engage page featured nine key proposed local law ideas and invited the community to provide feedback on how important the ideas are, whether they support the ideas, and any offered an opportunity for them to provide further comments.

The project team hosted 22 community pop-ups in high foot traffic locations across the municipality. At the pop-ups, participants were introduced to nine key proposed local law ideas and asked if they would support them by voting yes, they support the idea or no they don't support the idea. Through conversation with the project team participants were given the opportunity to provide further comment.

The community pop-ups held were:

- Gumnut Park, Donnybrook
- Bundoora Square Shopping Centre Precinct, Bundoora
- Pacific Epping Shopping Centre, Epping,
- Westfield Plenty Valley, South Morang
- Doreen Park, Doreen

- Aurora Village Shopping Mall, Wollert
- Community Conversations, Whittlesea Community Activity Centre
- Whittlesea Township, Whittlesea
- May Road Shops, Lalor
- Mernda Junction Coles, Mernda
- Thomastown Recreation and Aquatic Centre (TRAC), Thomastown
- Community Futures Partnership, Fountain View Room Civic Centre, South Morang
- Kirrip Community Centre, Wollert
- Stables Shopping Centre, Mill Park
- Community Festival, Civic Centre Terrace Lawns, South Morang

To ensure language wasn't a barrier to participation the digital engagement could be translated into the top ten languages spoken within the municipality through the translation function on the site. The project team, supported by bilingual aides also held targeted pop-ups at key CALD community group meetings and events. These groups were identified as the ones with the lowest level of proficiency in English and the least likely to be able to access the digital consultation or spoke a language the page wasn't translated into. The CALD community pop-ups held were:

- West African Community Church Group
- Lalor United Football Club
- Punjabi Men's Group
- Northern Holi
- International Women's Day
- Whittlesea Chinese
- City of Whittlesea Cultural Diversity Week Celebration.

The community engagement was promoted utilising a wide range of tactics including:

- Postcards distributed at community-based pop-ups
- Notification to members of the Engage Whittlesea platform
- Social media – we shared posts across Council's channels (Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter)
- Email to key stakeholder groups including the Business Advisory Panel, Youth Advisory Committee, Sporting Clubs and key not for profit organisations
- Signage at key locations related to the nine key proposal local law ideas including Epping Animal Welfare Shelter, pet stores, veterinary clinics, sporting grounds etc.
- Meetings with key internal stakeholders
- Internal Local Law Review staff engagement session

Participation

A total of 1707 people participated in the community engagement. This included 590 online surveys, 1106 participants at community pop-up events and 11 detailed emails.

A snapshot of consultation activities and community participation is below:



1000 survey postcards
printed & distributed
to community
members



22 Pop-up sessions
(**1106** community
members provided
feedback)



37 internal
stakeholder
workshops



2,200 visitors to the
Engage Page
(**6,629** page views)



590 online surveys
completed



134 internal
stakeholders attended
a Local Law Review
Engagement Day



8 Targeted pop-up
sessions for diverse
community groups
(CALD)



11 emails received via
Local Law Review
inbox

Below is a snapshot of the diversity of participation:

LOCAL LAWS | COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION DEMOGRAPHICS

GENDER PARTICIPATION

Female | **58%**

Male | **39%**

Other | **2%**

Identified as LGBTQIA+ | **25** people

AGE RANGE

Ranged from under 15 years to 66+ years.

The top 4 ages for participation:

36 - 45 years | **26.25%**

66+ years | **14.47%**

26 - 35 years | **14.12%**

Under 15 years | **9.55%**



CALD PARTICIPATION

A diverse range of local community groups were involved with:

Participants | **132** people

Across **5** CALD Groups

LANGUAGE

Speaks a language other than English at home

11.5%



FIRST NATIONS PARTICIPATION

A total of **13** participants identifying as an Aboriginal person or Torres Strait Islander



SUBURB PARTICIPATION

All suburbs participated with the top 3 being:

Doreen | **13.95%**

South Morang | **13.65%**

Mill Park | **10.37%**

ACCESSIBILITY

Respondents who reported needing help in their day-to-day lives due to disability or caring for those needing assistance:

Living with a disability | **33** people

Carer Responsibilities | **40** people



CONNECTION TO CITY OF WHITTLESEA

The top 3 contributors:

Ratepayers | **28.59%**

Working locally | **5.21%**

Renter | **3.10%**



Above L-R: Punjabi Men's Group at Galada providing feedback on the Local Law review; and project team..

What we heard

Community Pop Ups



Above L-R: Local Law review stall at Community Festival; Rydell shares his feedback at the Doreen Summer Series event; and Local Law review stall at the Community Festival

The table below summarises the number of votes from community in relation to each proposed local law idea and breaks down the number of adults and under 18-year old's who participated.

Five of the of the proposed local law ideas scored over 90% support, three had over 80% support and one had over 70% support.

PROPOSED IDEA	ADULTS		UNDER 18		OVERALL	
	YES (%)	NO (%)	YES (%)	NO (%)	YES (%)	NO (%)
Enforcing collection of dumped/abandoned shopping trolleys	96	4	91	9	96	4
Preventing derelict and dilapidated buildings	95	4	87	13	95	5
Strengthening dog attack laws	94	6	89	11	94	6
Smoking definition to include vapes and e-cigarettes	92	8	92	8	92	8
Dumping of hard rubbish	92	8	86	14	91	9
Managing dogs on sporting grounds	89	11	83	17	89	11
Allowing recreational use of firepits	85	15	86	14	86	14
Increasing nature strip maintenance requirements	84	16	84	16	85	15
Preventing long term parking and storage of trailers, caravans and boats on Council land	73	27	74	26	73	27

Community sentiment around the proposed Local Law ideas captured at community-based pop-ups

Digital engagement Engage Page

Respondents were presented with the nine key issues that have proposed local law ideas. Participants were given the opportunity to rate how big each issue was, choose how appropriate they felt the current local law for each issue was and finally if they supported the proposed ideas or changes to the local law.



Issue Rating

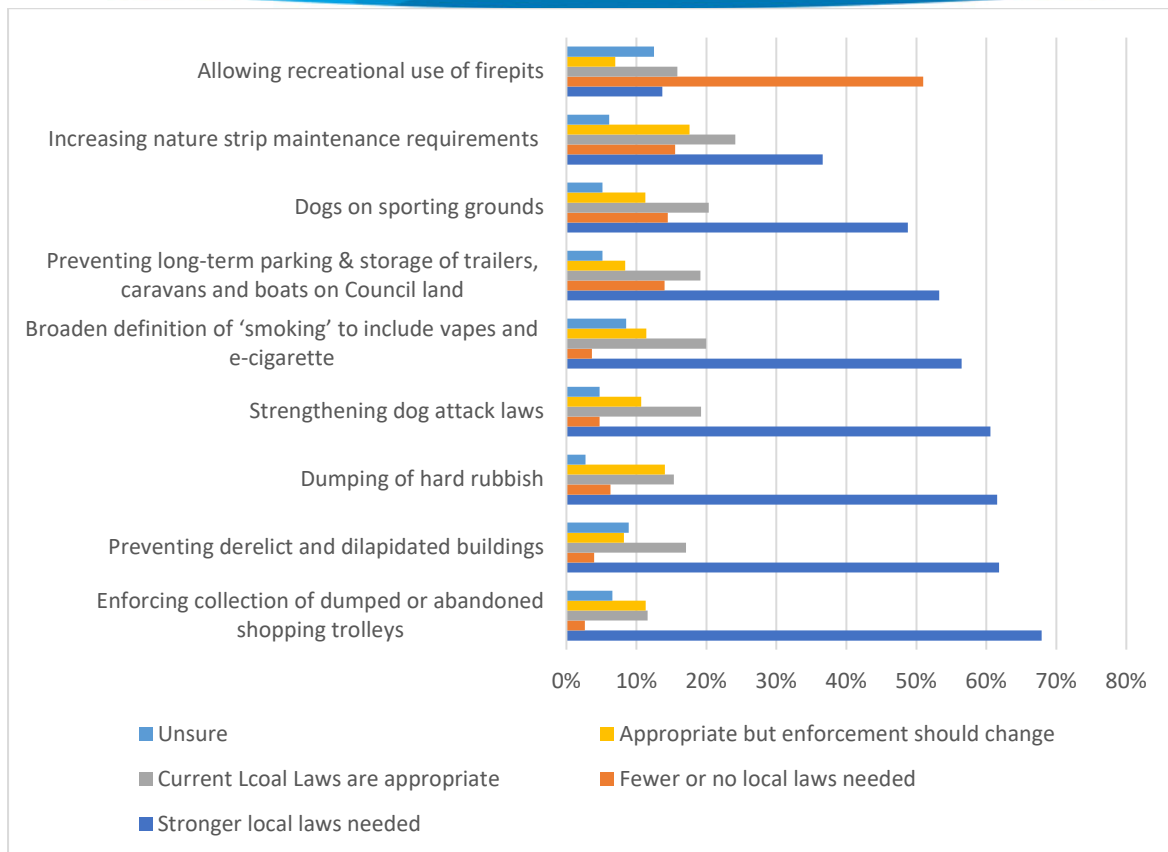
The nine issues are presented below in order of how big each issue was overall. Respondents were asked to rate each issue from 1 (not a big issue) to 5 (really big issue). *Dumping of hard rubbish* was the highest rating with most people rating it 3 or above as a 'big' to 'really big' issue. *Allowing recreational use of fire pits* was not seen as a big issue to most respondents.

ISSUE	AVERAGE RATING OUT OF 5 <i>(1 not an issue – 5 really big issue)</i>
Dumping of hard rubbish	3.91
Enforcing collection of dumped or abandoned shopping trolleys	3.42
Strengthening dog attack laws	3.35
Broaden definition of 'smoking' to include vapes and e-cigarette	3.30
Increasing nature strip maintenance requirements	3.28
Preventing long-term parking & storage of trailers, caravans and boats on Council land	3.13
Dogs on sporting grounds	3.01
Preventing derelict and dilapidated buildings	2.99
Allowing recreational use of firepits	2.20

Issue rating captured through digital consultation

Appropriateness of current local law

Community was asked how appropriate the current local law was for each of the nine issues. The below graph outlines the results. Majority of respondents feel that stronger local laws are needed across eight of the nine issues. In response to the issue of “allowing recreational use of firepits”, most respondents felt that fewer or no local laws were needed.



Community sentiment around the appropriateness of the current local law captured through digital consultation

Support of proposed changes

Respondents shared if they supported the proposed change. More than 50% of respondents supported the proposed changes to all the nine issues. The highest level of support was for broadening the smoking definition to include vapes and e-cigarettes. With the lowest level of support being for nature strip maintenance changes.

PROPOSED IDEA	YES (%)	NO (%)	UNSURE (%)
Broaden definition of smoking to include vapes and e-cigarettes	88	8	4
Preventing derelict and dilapidated buildings	79	11	10
Allowing recreational use of firepits	77	15	8
Enforcing collection of dumped/abandoned shopping trolleys	76	13	11
Strengthening dog attack laws	73	17	10
Dumping of hard rubbish	67	20	13
Managing dogs on sporting grounds	62	31	7
Preventing long term parking and storage of trailers, caravans and boats on Council land	59	30	11
Increasing nature strip maintenance requirements	53	31	16

Community sentiment around the proposed Local Law ideas captured through digital consultation

"The council should maintain the strips in streets that are not privately owned. Council needs to lead by example"

“We need more facilities for boat, trailer and caravan storage. House blocks and new housing developments are getting smaller along with residential roads getting narrower and yet councils still don't provide adequate storage facilities within their council area.”

[illegible]

"We need more hard rubbish to be collected"

80 respondents gave further comments on the issue of “Prevention of derelict and dilapidated buildings”



"If these buildings are occupied the people should be supported."

"This is a great proposal. Sick of developers purposefully allowing properties to become derelict so that they have justification to remove them. Please implement this and have much higher fines / consequences for land developers"

"Becoming a major issue here in Mernda/Schotters Road with multiple houses derelict for an extended period, graffitied, vandalised and attracting squatters."

124 respondents gave additional comments on the issue of "Dumping and abandonment of shopping trolleys."



"Not all mechanisms introduced such as brakes and coins work. Retailers need to promote returning them and fine people that take them."

"Easy way to report to organize collection"

"Coin operated trolleys and trolleys with locking wheels can be difficult or dangerous for people with disabilities and the elderly - those who need them most. Require shops to collect them, but don't make shopping less safe for people."

139 respondents gave additional comments on the issue of "Dog attack laws".



"Dogs should not be allowed in parks or on common roads unless they are leashed."

"Within means, it's also the responsibility of the individual not to provoke or pat dogs over someone's fence/gate"

"I agree that no animal/pet should attack another animal or person however, I believe that each situation needs to be assessed individually."

Additional topics/issues and feedback received

As part of the online survey and in person pop-up sessions, participants were invited to provide responses to new ideas and any other additional topics and issues for consideration.

The content of the feedback received was reviewed and the sentiment assessed. Majority of the feedback related to community safety concerns and amenity rather than to the Local Laws, including:

- Increased surveillance around parks and walking tracks, addressing safety and dogs off leash.
- Better street lighting at night
- Insufficient off-street parking in residential areas
- Trees on private property (leaf litter, nuisance from fruit and gum trees)
- Increased waste collection options (biannual, or annual hard rubbish collection, collaborating with charities and establishing regular hard rubbish drop off points)
- Address amenity-related pollution (lighting, noise and/or fume)
- More resident consultation about trees (appropriate types of trees)
- Council to better maintain parks and grasslands
- Increasing the number of dog off-leash parks, supporting banning dogs on sporting ground if other options are available
- Not enough or no truck parking areas/depots in the municipality, some feedback included further options for caravan storage.

Feedback that related to the review of current and new Local Laws included:

- Review of permitted street trading activities
- Review of permitted sex-work activities
- Smoke caused from open-air burning and woodfire heaters
- Introduction of hooning laws
- Increase signage around sporting areas related to animal behaviour – specifically sporting grounds should not become off-leash areas and dogs must be on a leash in all public places
- Increase signage relating to smoking around Council buildings
- Illegally parked cars on footpaths and nature strips
- Limit the movement and parking of large trucks and commercial vehicles in residential streets (some feedback included banning trucks)
- Stricter guidelines for building sites regarding maintaining crossovers and clean, safe public walkways
- Increased regulation of fencing / confinement of dogs and other animals
- Fire management and better control over developers

Issues considered 'out-of-scope' for the Local Law Review included any animal-related actions from the Domestic Animal Management Plan, policies, guidelines and permits and the setting of fines, fees and charges as well as the application and enforcement of the Law.

Next steps

Thank you again to everyone that participated in the community engagement by sharing feedback and sharing your thoughts on the nine proposed local laws.

Feedback gathered from the community is being used to create a draft Community Local Law and has fed into the development of other related plans and strategies including the draft Nature strip Guidelines.

The draft Local Law will be presented to Council on 27 June 2023 for further consultation at <https://engage.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/LocalLawReview> from 28 June – 20 July.

The draft Community Local Law will also be presented in person and available for further comment at the upcoming “Safer Communities Roadshow” scheduled at the following locations and times:

- Thursday 6 July 2023 – Brookwood Community Centre (Doreen) (6:00 – 8:00 pm)
- Sunday 9 July 2023 – Galada Community Activity Centre (Epping North) (2:00 – 4:00 pm)
- Wednesday 12 July 2023- Civic Centre Great Hall (South Morang) - (1.00pm - 3.00pm)
- Thursday 13 July 2023 – Whittlesea Community Activity Centre (Whittlesea) (6:00 – 8:00pm)
- Sunday 16 July 2023 – Barry Road Community Activity Centre (Thomastown) (10:00am – 12:00pm)

We encourage you to register and follow the project Engage page at:

<https://engage.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/LocalLawReview> to keep updated on the project.