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Targeted Conversation #4: Governance and democracy

Moreland City Council: Community Panel

6:30pm - 9pm Tuesday 1st June, Online via Zoom

Overview of the day

This session was the fourth of six targeted conversations with the Community Panel, on the topic of “**Governance and democracy**”. To focus the discussion, the Panel was presented with a relevant problem and remit, posed as two questions, that had been developed by Council. These are shown below:

Problem: Council needs to do more work with residents and ratepayers to ensure they are active participants in Council’s decision-making processes and can shape outcomes that best serve the needs of the community.

Remit:

1. What actions would increase the community's trust in Council?
2. What different and innovative ways could community and Council work together to deliver projects when Council has financial limitations and so that Council is less reliant on rates?

The session included:

- An introduction to the session and topic
- Presentations from Gilbert Rochecouste and Jessamy Nicholas
- An opportunity to make sense of the information provided
- A working session to review and provide feedback on the proposed actions put forward by Council, in the context of the Community Vision.

Panel members were also briefed on a supplementary activity to provide further feedback on their priority recommendations on how Council can work with the community to build trust.



Presentations

Gilbert Rochecouste, Founder and Managing Director, Village Well

Gilbert's presentation looked at local democracy through the lens of 'place'.

Gilbert started off by explaining the wisdom that lies in the community, and the value of public participation. He then presented the three key pillars of local democracy: citizenship, equal rights and justice; representation and accountability; and citizen initiative and participation.

Gilbert described the concepts that bolster successful community engagement, as well as an overview of the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation. He explained that engagement empowers the community, and recognises the skills, experience and assets that are embedded in a place. Gilbert went into detail on how authentic communication with the community must ensure that every voice is heard. He clarified that this must include listening to a representative group of the community that includes marginalised communities, must be transparent and accountable, and must ensure that the community is given clear and accessible information.

He ended the presentation with examples of successful collaboration between governments and local communities from around the world, including the case-study of Block Captains in New Orleans.

Jessamy Nicholas, Manager Community Engagement, Moreland City Council

Jessamy's presentation built on the points put forward by Gilbert by focussing the conversation on Moreland, and the issue of building trust between the community and Council. Jessamy put forward the position that Council needs to do more work with the community to ensure that they are active in Council's decision-making processes.

Jessamy first introduced the Moreland councillors, and outlined the insights Council has gained on community perceptions through looking at community data. She presented the Community Engagement branch of Moreland Council, and the goals that they are working towards. She then introduced the challenges and lessons that have come out of the COVID-19 pandemic, and Council's commitment to improve communication and engagement with the community.

Finally, she posed the remit questions for the session, as well as Council's proposed actions to increase trust and their proposed actions for council and community to work together to deliver projects.

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The presentations were followed by questions from the Panel. Questions centred around the transparency of community advisory groups in Moreland, and the reasons why Moreland is the third most complained about Council - a point that Jessamy had brought up in her presentation.

Activity 1 - Sense-making

The first activity was used to consolidate the information from the two presentations. In small groups, the Panel was asked to reflect on the presentations and respond to the questions:

- What actions would increase the community's trust in Council?
- What different and innovative ways could the community and Council work together to deliver projects?

The Panel then came together to report their thoughts.

Activity 2 - Refining opportunities and prioritising

Following a break, the group was introduced to the second activity:

- Reviewing the actions proposed by Council outlined by Jessamy
- Providing feedback and changes to those actions
- Identifying their top 3 actions, along with a rationale

This activity was completed by the Panel in smaller groups with close consideration of the strategic directions that were outlined in their Community Vision document. These strategic directions were:

1. Council collaborating with businesses in Moreland in the format much like this Community Panel Project and inviting businesses outside of Moreland to widen the scope of discussions.
2. Reach out to groups that haven't previously participated or less likely to participate in community discussions, eg. youth, CALD-culturally and linguistically diverse groups , mothers (working/stay-at-home) etc.

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3. Improving means of communication about the council's actions that trickle down through all levels of the Moreland community. Eg. social media, letters, billboards, radio/tv broadcasts
4. Provide an avenue for more community/council interaction and communication. Eg. more in-person meetings and seminars, employing a *lottocracy/demarcy to help the council come to a decision on matters that affect the people of Moreland
*government by decision-makers who have been randomly selected by sortition (lot) from a pool of eligible citizens.
5. Encourage community-led forums, groups and organisations. Eg. advertise community facebook groups to the wider community, subsidise the people that run such groups for their continuous efforts, provide accessible grants for larger-scale community-led endeavours
6. Employ people to bridge the gap between the community and the council; paid secondment roles, both short- and long-term
7. Transparent data on accessibility and diversity amongst businesses and organisations in Moreland accessible to everyone. This could come in the form of a website or a database (at a library or community centre)
8. Changing the format of community satisfaction surveys to make them more accessible to everyone (links from social media promotions, physical copies that can be collected at community centre)
9. Provide new and inclusive spaces for local businesses, creatives and performers to collaborate (close streets for festivals, create community hubs that are open every weekend)

The proposed activities to increase trust as outlined by Jessamy were:

1. Pop-ups across wards for Councillors to talk with the community.
2. More communications about who our Councillors are, their interests and why they work for Council and community.
3. Council Officers to increase attendance at pop ups and other events around Moreland.
4. Roster for Council Officers to "shadow" Customer Service staff.
5. Pilot an expo style community engagement events in Council's activity centres to invite discussion about multiple projects at the same time.
6. Pop up Customer Service Centres in public spaces.

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The proposed activities for the community and Council to work together as outlined by Jessamy were:

1. Moreland Connector program: Council translates and sends messages to Connectors (individuals representing different cultural and linguistic groups), who distribute the information.
2. Advisory committee review: embed mechanisms to increase the impact of committee advice.
3. Pilot a 1-2 year citizen's assembly in partnership with the Neighbourhood Houses Network.
4. Youth Ambassadors Program: 12 young people aged 12-24 years from all wards, cultural backgrounds and gender identities.
5. The services people are most satisfied with are library services, services supporting community diversity and services around arts and cultural opportunities. Council works with community to link engagement projects to these services.
6. Introduce more deliberative engagement processes around projects and issues of high interest and importance to the community.

Following this work, the group came back together for a brief discussion.

Activity 3 (supplementary activity)

It was agreed at the session that the Panel would be given the opportunity to provide further feedback on the top 3 recommendations provided by the group, following a review and consolidation of the input from tonight's session.

Questions and comments

At the end of the session, the Panel members were invited to ask questions or provide comments on the sessions through Menti.

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What's coming up next?

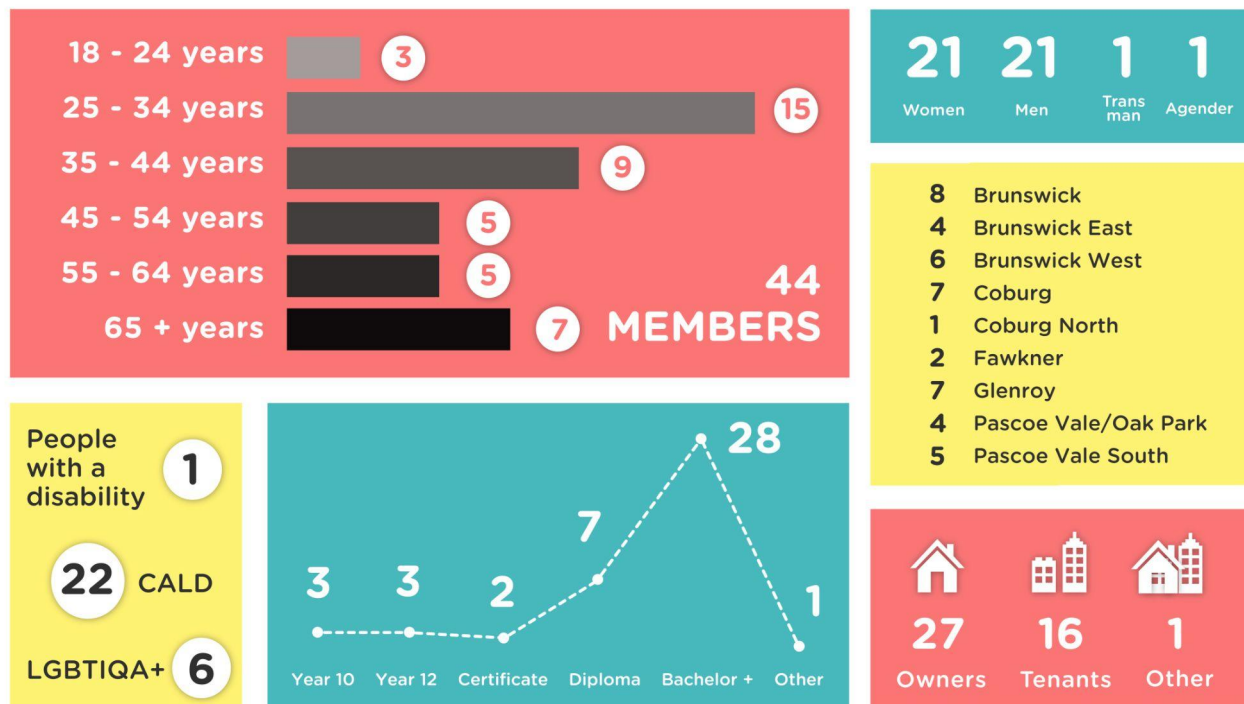
The next session will take place at the same time on Tuesday 8th of June. It will focus on the topic of **Getting around**.

Demographics of the Community Panel

IMAGINE MORELAND COMMUNITY PANEL



The Imagine Moreland Community Panel was randomly selected to form a representative sample of the community



Recruitment and stratification undertaken by Deliberately Engaging

There were 36 members of the Community Panel present at this meeting, with no apologies.