

YOUR SAY
YARRA



City of Yarra

COMMUNITY **ENGAGEMENT** SUMMARY REPORT

Reimagining Victoria Street

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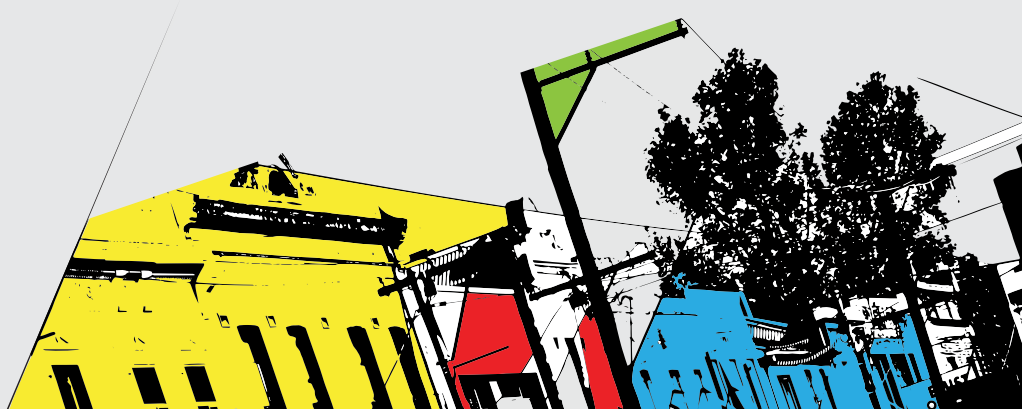
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INTRODUCTION

The overall aim of Reimagining Victoria Street (the project) is to engage with key stakeholders, including residents and traders, to better understand and appreciate the range of views and experiences, in order to develop a shared vision for the future of Victoria Street.

Following extensive consultation across a range of activities, over 400 people contributed over 2300 ideas. These ideas highlight the communities concerns and suggestions for improvement within the precinct, and will assist in the development of strategic recommendations and a shared vision for the future of Victoria Street.

BACKGROUND

In July 2016 Cr Amanda Stone put forward a motion, which was endorsed by Council, asking Officers to report back on a process which would result in a greater understanding and appreciation for the diverse experiences and views of residents, traders and other key stakeholders, in order to develop a shared vision for the future of the Victoria St precinct.

The overall objectives included:

- improved public safety and amenity of the Victoria Street precinct for residents and businesses
- enhanced experience of visitors to the precinct
- minimised harm to people who inject drugs and the wider community.

On 23 August 2016, Council endorsed Reimagining Victoria Street.

Since the project was endorsed by Council, numerous external influences have come into play including:

- the State Government's announcement that it is installing CCTV on Victoria & Lennox Streets
- a coronial inquest into a fatal drug overdose on Hoddle Street with the recommendations announced in February
- increased political support and media interest around the implementation of a Supervised Injecting Facility (SIF) in the Victoria Street precinct
- the advent of Victoria Street Drug Solutions, a resident's group advocating for the implementation of a SIF
- an external stakeholder group – Victoria Street Working Group (VSWG) – running a parallel process that also involves community engagement and the development of an action plan.

This resulted in Council recognising the need to be responsive and adaptable depending on external influences, and bringing forward the community engagement component of the project.

ENGAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

The project's engagement objectives included:

- understanding the issues facing Victoria Street
- providing an opportunity for community (including residents, traders, and visitors) to share their lived experience

COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

A range of communication and engagement activities were undertaken to inform, consult and involve participants across the community.

Broad promotion of the public engagement opportunity was through a range of corporate communication channels and community networks including:

- distribution of postcards directing people to Your Say Yarra online
- corporate communications including Council's website
- advertising of process on Richmond Housing Estate and distribution of 1800 surveys to estate residents
- distribution of 250+ surveys to traders along Victoria Street

- social media promotion via Twitter and Facebook
- Yarra News article, distributed to over 45,000 Yarra households
- formal and informal email networks and e-newsletters.

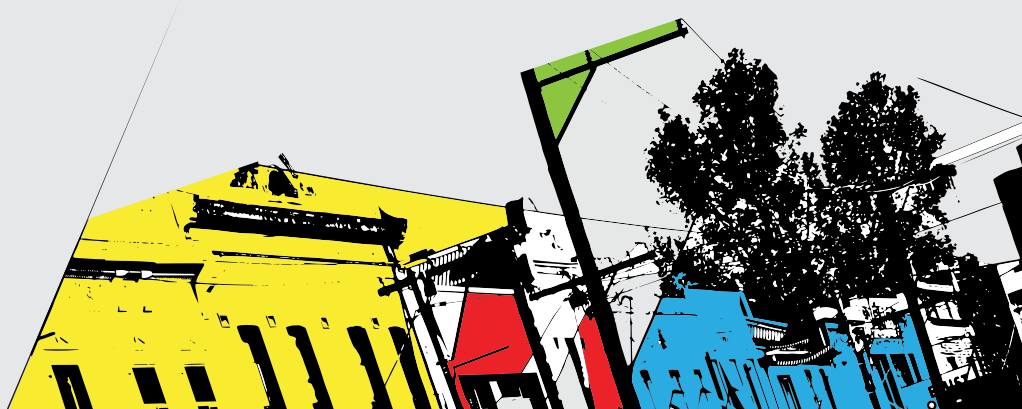
Roughly 400 community members were engaged across a range of methods listed in Table 1 overleaf.

Engagement activities sought responses to two key questions:

- What do you see as the key issues facing Victoria Street?
- What do you think needs to happen to make Victoria Street safer and a more attractive and welcoming place?

“ ...I’VE HAD TO CALL AN AMBULANCE WHEN I WALKED PAST A LADY OVERDOSING IN AN ALLEYWAY. MOST ONLOOKERS SIMPLY WALKED PAST. THIS SORT OF THING HAS BECOME NORMAL IN LENNOX ST.”

– RICHMOND RESIDENT



HOW WE ENGAGED

WHO WE ENGAGED

Your Say Yarra Online portal

- <http://www.yoursayyarra.com.au/victoriastreet>
 - Share your feedback
 - Map your experiences
- 4 February – 5 March 2017

- 89 registered participants
- 489 ideas were contributed
- 1190 page visits

ONLINE

Social Media

Used to promote listening post location and times and direct people to the Your Say Yarra project page. Relevant comments in response to Twitter and Facebook posts were recorded

- Facebook x 72 relevant comments

Written Submissions

Open at any time during the public engagement period

- 27 written submissions via email

Listening Posts

Five posts held in key locations in North Richmond & Abbotsford

- Corner Victoria & Nicholson Sts Abbotsford (x2)
- Richmond West Primary School
- Abbotsford Primary School
- Richmond Housing Estate

18 February – 3 March 2017

- 217+ conversations
- 1280+ ideas

IN PERSON

Targeted engagement sessions

- NRCH Needle & Syringe Program clients
 - Young people (Richmond Soccer Program)
- 27 – 28 February 2017

- 34 participants
- 65+ ideas

Trader surveys

Surveys distributed to traders along Victoria Street

13 – 14 March 2017

- 8 participants
- 60+ ideas

Key Internal Stakeholders

One on one meetings were held with key internal stakeholders

March 2017

- 9 participants
- 50+ ideas

ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES

The engagement process attracted feedback from a cross-section of Yarra's community including residents and traders. It should be noted that this was not a research project, and participation in the engagement activities is not necessarily representative of the entire Yarra community.

The following data focuses on overall responses and the top 10 themes that were identified in the community engagement.

The community was largely concerned with drug use, community safety, crime prevention, and implementing harm

reduction measures to reduce the harm arising from illicit drug use.

Other themes that attracted a large number of responses were economic development, open space, parking and traffic, street cleaning, sustainable transport and urban design.

The themes of drug use, community safety and crime prevention are also reflected in data collected from traders and residents of the Richmond Housing Estate.

This correlates with data collected through engagement for the Council Plan 2017 - 2021 where health and wellbeing issues such as alcohol and other drugs and community safety dominated the community feedback.

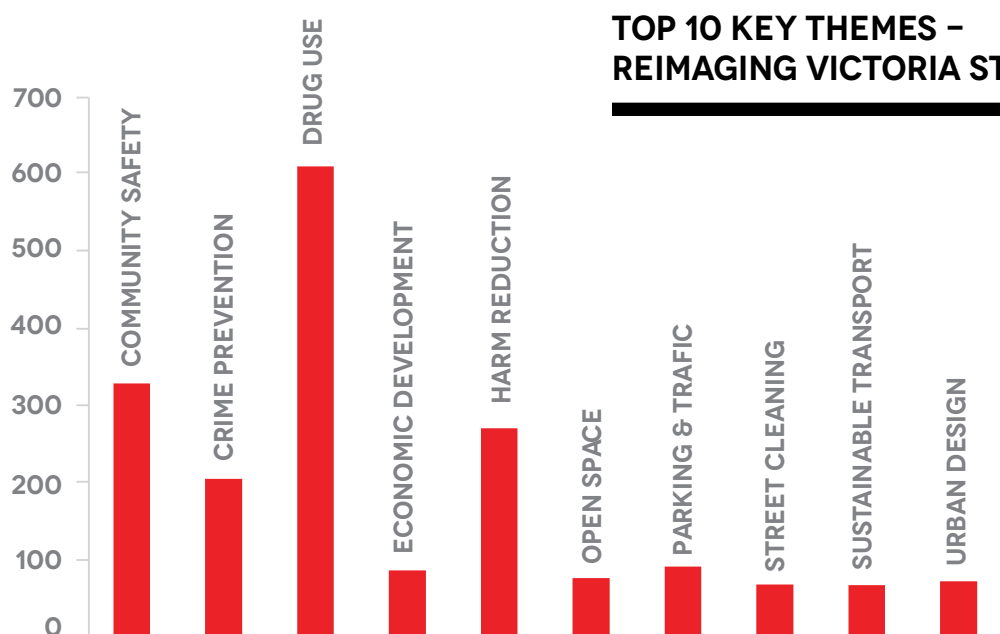
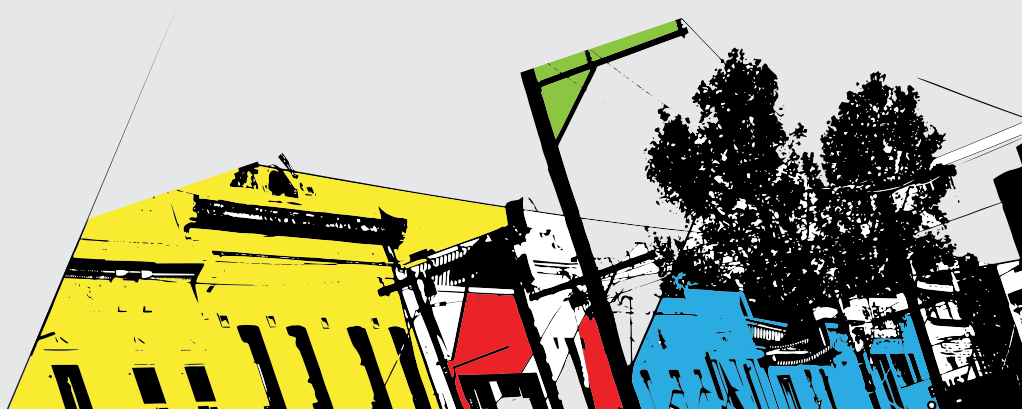


Figure 1
Overall
Community
Themes



Within each theme there were a range of issues identified by the community:

THEMES (# COMMENTS)	KEY ISSUES
Drug use (610)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dealing • Discarded syringes and other drug litter • Issues arising from public injecting such as overdose
Community safety (329)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Antisocial behaviour such as fighting • Drug affected people • Loitering
Harm reduction (271)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of supervised injecting facilities • The need for a holistic approach to drug use
Crime prevention (206)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased policing • Implementation of CCTV
Parking & traffic (92)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traffic management & flow • Amount & cost of parking
Economic development (87)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve shop fronts including removal of shutters • Decrease footpath trading
Open Space (77)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased street trees • Increased facilities including public toilets & drinking fountains • Improved management of spaces including public toilets and parks
Urban design (73)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tram stops • Removal of seating and benches
Street cleaning (69)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased service levels including laneways • More litter bins
Sustainable transport (68)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance of bike lanes • Access to public transport • Wider footpaths • Safer pedestrian crossings

Once overall responses are broken down into key issues and suggestions for improvement, it can clearly be seen that drug use and community safety are the two biggest concerns for the community (Table 2).

In keeping with this, implementation of harm reduction initiatives (primarily a SIF) and crime prevention are the top two suggestions for improving issues arising from illicit drug use and perceptions of safety within the precinct (Table 3).

“ I CURRENTLY LIVE IN THE COOKE COURT HOUSING ESTATE AND THE AMOUNT OF CRIME AND DRUGS IS GETTING UNBEARABLE.”

– RICHMOND PUBLIC HOUSING TENANT

TOP 10 KEY ISSUES –
REIMAGING VICTORIA STREET

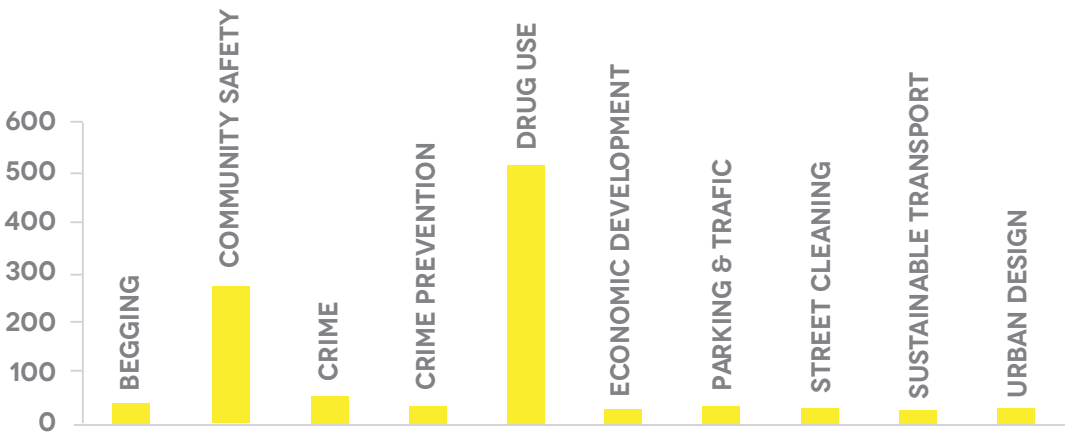
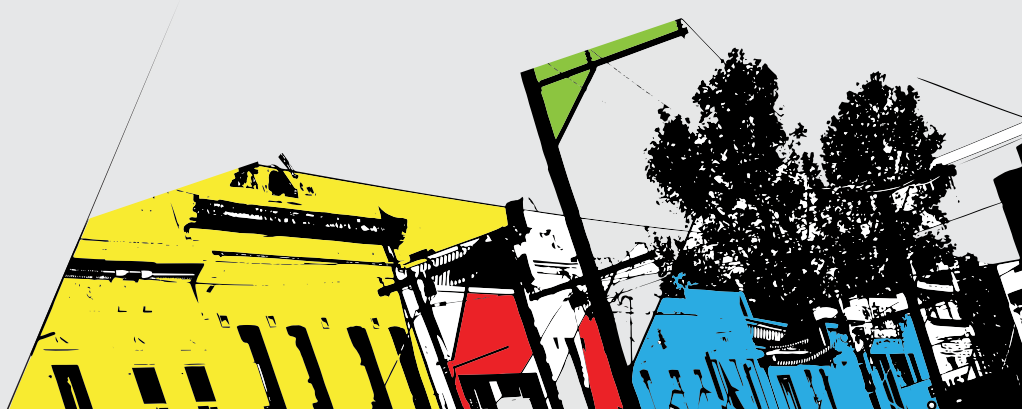


Table 2: Key Issues



TOP 10 SUGGESTIONS – REIMAGING VICTORIA STREET

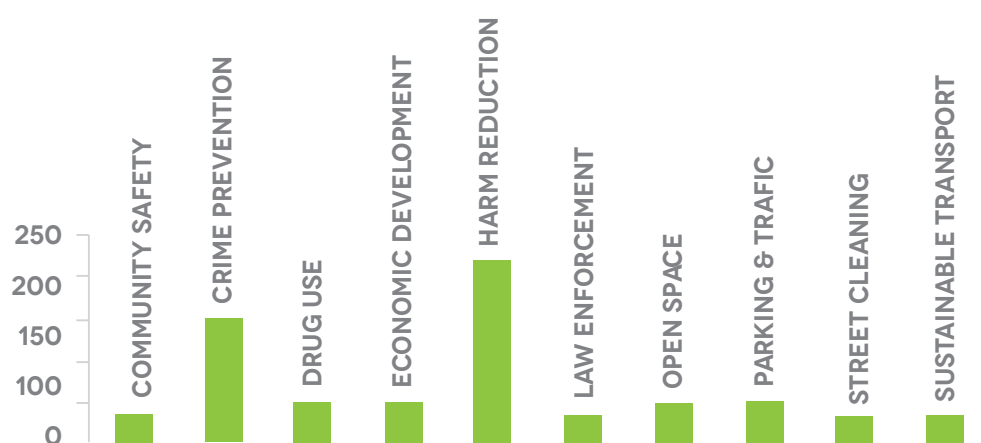


Table 3:
Suggestions for
Improvement

Leading themes for traders (Table 4) included community safety, crime prevention, drug use and parking & traffic.

TOP 10 KEY THEMES – TRADERS

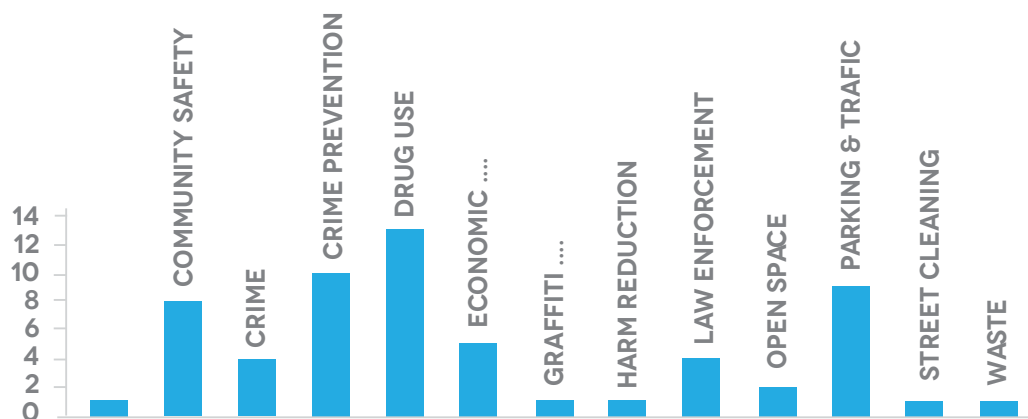


Table 4:
Trader
Surveys

Key themes for Richmond Housing Estate residents (Table 5) included community safety, crime prevention and drug use.

TOP 10 THEMES –
RICHMOND HOUSING ESTATE

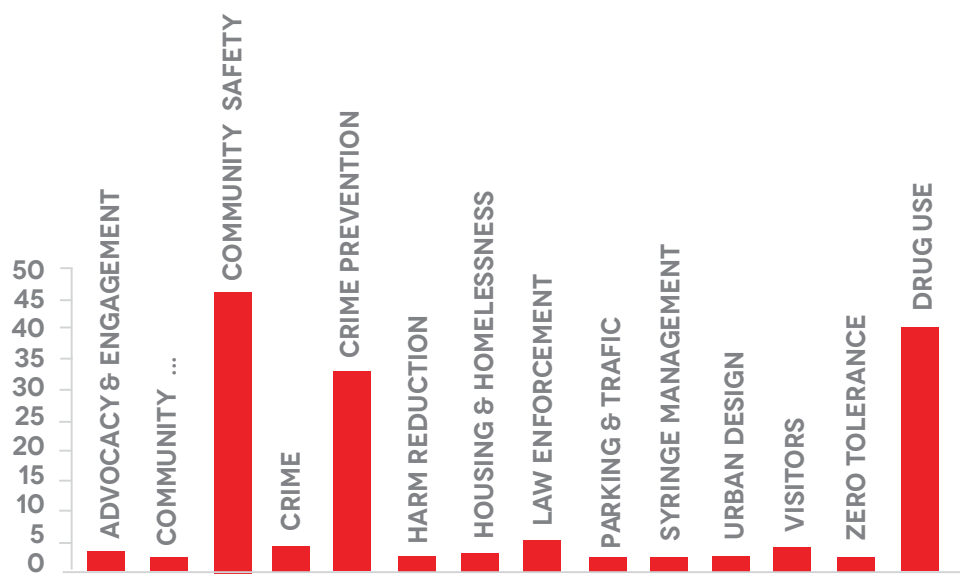
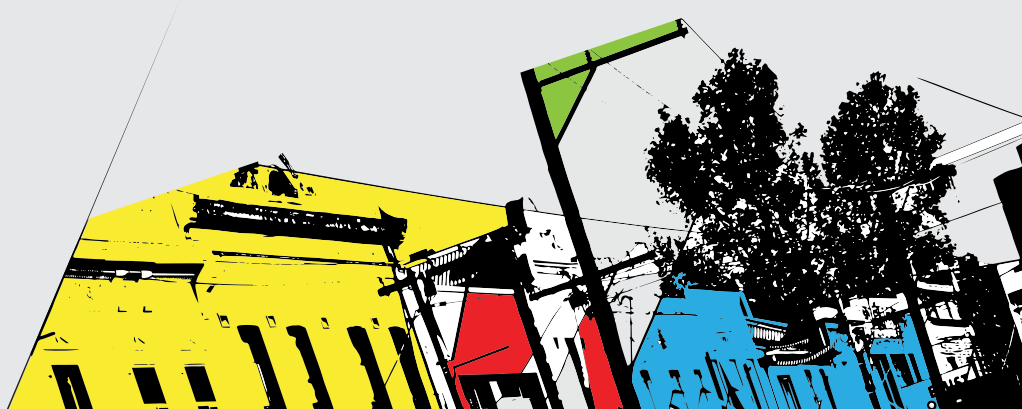


Table 5:
Richmond
Housing Estate

Implementation of harm reduction strategies were a low priority for both groups, although again it should be noted, contributions are not necessarily representative of the community.

“ A WALK DOWN VICTORIA ST NOW INVOLVES RUNNING THE GAUNTLET THROUGH DRUG AFFECTED PEOPLE WHOSE BEHAVIOUR HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY THREATENING AND DISTRESSING OVER THE YEARS.”

– RICHMOND RESIDENT



APPENDIX 1

Qualitative feedback from the local community collected during the Reimagining Victoria Street community engagement project:

"We fear for our safety on a regular basis, mainly as we see open drug dealing occur and vacant houses being used as injecting sites and then the on effects of the drugs with roaming shells of humans threatening violence or public disorder. We have called the police many times in the interest of public safety."

– Abbotsford resident

"I've had to call the police when junkies decide that the front of our apartment building is a great place to deal drugs and shoot up. The police seem like they couldn't care less, and reluctantly drive past the front of my house while there are people still there, dealing drugs with needles hanging out of their arms. I've had to call an ambulance when I walked past a lady overdosing in an alleyway. Most onlookers simply walked past. This sort of thing has become normal in Lennox St."

– Richmond resident

"I currently live in the Cooke Court housing estate and the amount of crime and drugs is getting unbearable."

– Richmond public housing tenant

"Drug addicts freely use and deal heroin. Despite police patrols, there has been no noticeable improvement. This is the main reason leading to blatant robbery incidents. This area is no longer safe."

– Victoria Street trader

"My day to day reality is feeling intimidated by the drug activity around me. I cannot sit in the new park near Victoria and Lennox because it's likely someone is openly injecting or dealing. I have to walk around dealers in Victoria St because they are doing their business and will not move. Just two weeks ago I was having coffee with a friend when a physical altercation between a user and a dealer spilled from the footpath into the coffee shop."

– Richmond resident and business owner

"Just before Christmas a close friend of mine was robbed at knife point, they took his clothes, left him in his underwear to walk home."

– Richmond worker

"A walk down Victoria St now involves running the gauntlet through drug affected people whose behaviour has become increasingly threatening and distressing over the years. We often see outbreaks of violence with passers-by fleeing for safety... We are strongly supportive of a safe injecting facility within the precinct. Such a facility should have associated support services capable of improving the circumstances of drug users, keeping them safer and making them less likely to use on the streets."

– Richmond resident

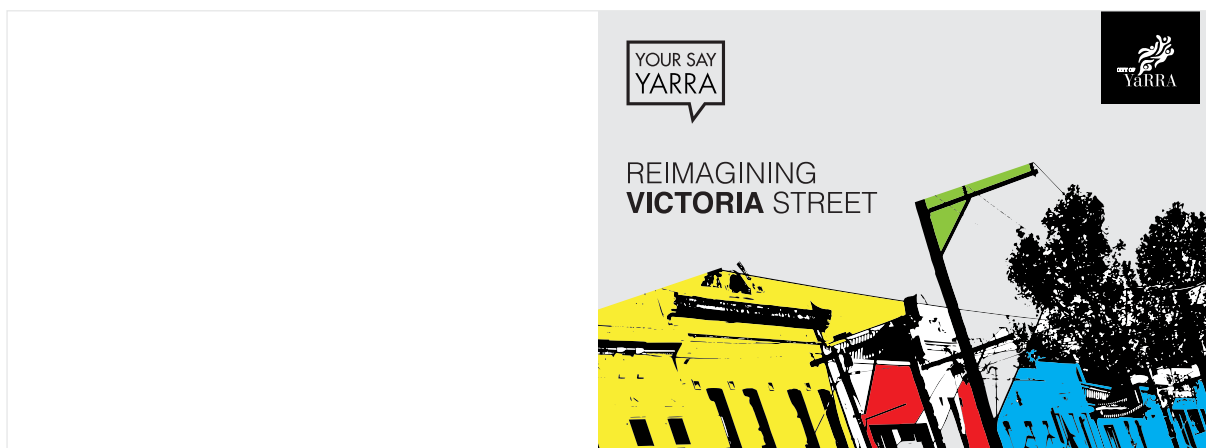
"At present (the drug problem) is possibly at its worst. Police presence is not visible and witnessing drug affected people, drug practices (ie taking, selling etc) and people begging for money etc has increased and is almost a daily occurrence. The car park in the 12 Shelley Street building is commonplace for injecting and more recently what appeared to be preparing and bagging drugs for distribution."

– Richmond resident

“ MY DAY TO DAY REALITY IS FEELING INTIMIDATED
BY THE DRUG ACTIVITY AROUND ME...”
– VICTORIA STREET TRADER

APPENDIX 2

PROMOTIONAL POSTCARD



Yarra Council wants to hear your experiences of living, working and visiting Victoria Street in Richmond.

Victoria Street is a vibrant dining, shopping and cultural destination. The area also faces challenges in relation to public safety, liveability and prosperity, often due to drug-related activity. Addressing these complex issues will take a collaborative effort.

We're asking you to share your experiences and ideas for making the area a safer, more attractive and welcoming place for all.

There is a number of ways you can get involved.

HAVE YOUR SAY

In person

Speak to Council staff in person at the corner of Victoria and Nicholson streets (outside Quint Cafe) at the following times:

- **Saturday 18 February** from 10am to 12pm
- **Wednesday 22 February** from 5.30pm to 7.30pm

Vietnamese and Chinese interpreters will be available.

Online

www.yoursayyarra.com.au/victoriastreet

Email victoriastreet@yarracity.vic.gov.au

Phone 9205 5555

Feedback is due by **Friday 3 March 2017**.

Vietnamese translation

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TRADER SURVEY

SURVEY



Victoria Street traders are asked to complete the survey below. You are welcome to complete the survey in your own language.

Return your survey by **Friday 3 March 2017** to:
Yarra City Council: PO Box 168, Richmond VIC 3121

Name: _____ Business type: _____

Phone number: _____ Email address: _____

What do you think are the most important challenges facing Victoria Street?

What do you think needs to happen to make Victoria Street safer?

What do you think could be done to make Victoria Street a more attractive and welcoming place?

YOUR SAY YARRA



REIMAGINING VICTORIA STREET

TRADER SURVEY

Improving Victoria Street, Richmond

Yarra Council is working to make Victoria Street a safer, more attractive and welcoming place for all, and we need your help.

Victoria Street is a vibrant shopping, dining and cultural destination. However, the area also faces challenges in relation to public safety, liveability and economic prosperity, often due to drug-related activity.

We want to hear about your experiences and ideas for making Victoria Street a safer, more prosperous and welcoming place for the whole community.

For more information, contact Yarra Council directly on 9205 5555 or via our interpreter service on 9280 1939.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

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For information in your language, please call 9280 1940 and quote the REF number below. | 欲知有關版本的資訊，請致電9280 1932並報上下列REF號碼。 | Για πληροφορίες στα Ελληνικά, παρακαλούμε καλέστε το 9280 1934 και αναφέρετε τον αριθμό REF που ακολουθεί. | Per informazioni in italiano siete pregati di chiamare il numero 9280 1931 e di citare il numero di riferimento (REF number) sottoriscritto. | 欲知普通話版本的信息，請致電9280 1937并報上下列REF號碼。 | Para información en castellano, llame al 9280 1935 y cite el número de REF. De más adelante. | Để biết thông tin bằng tiếng Việt, xin hãy gọi số 9280 1939 và nói số REF dưới đây. | للمعلومات باللغة العربية، يرجى الاتصال بالخلايا بأرقام 9280 1930 والاشارة الى رقم المرجع REF المذكور أدناه. | REF 17032

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YOUR SAY YARRA



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ONLINE PROJECT PAGE (FRONT PAGE)




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REIMAGINING VICTORIA STREET



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Reimagining Victoria Street

Yarra Council is working to make Victoria Street a safer, more attractive and welcoming place for all.

The Victoria Street Precinct in Richmond and Abbotsford is a vibrant dining, shopping and cultural destination. However, the area also faces challenges in relation to public safety, liveability, community connectedness and economic prosperity, often the result of drug-related activity.

The issues in Victoria Street are difficult and complex. Addressing them will take a collaborative effort from the all levels of government, Victoria Police, health service providers and the community.

Community consultation

From 6 February to 6 March 2017, we asked you to share your experiences of living, working and visiting Victoria Street and the surrounding area and your ideas for making it a safer, more attractive and welcoming place for all.

There were a number of ways that the community got involved:

Online - 330 pins on our online map and more than 70 submissions online and via email.

In person - we spoke to hundreds of residents, traders and visitors at five community listening posts held on Victoria Street (two), Richmond Housing Estate, West Richmond Primary School and Abbotsford Primary School.

Social media - we received more than 70 posts on the Yarra Council Facebook page.

Next steps

We are now reviewing and analyzing all the community feedback received. We will provide a summary of the key themes and ideas on this webpage soon.

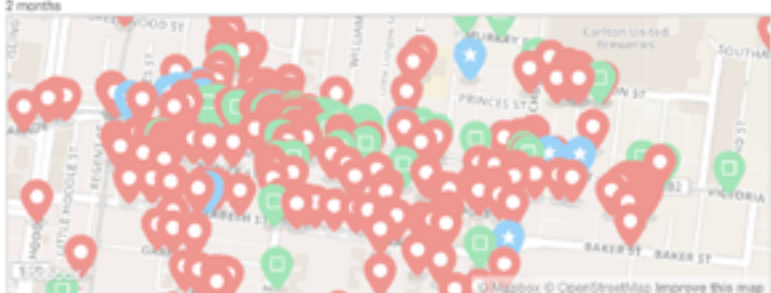
This consultation is the first step in what we hope will be a process for positive change.

Ultimately, your contributions will help us develop a series of recommendations that will guide Council's ongoing work and advocacy for improving Victoria Street.

MAP YOUR EXPERIENCE

Map your experiences

2 months



In February- March 2017 we asked you to share your experiences of living, working and visiting Victoria Street and the surrounding area, and your ideas for making it a safer, more attractive and welcoming place for all.

Click on the map to view comments from the community.

CLOSED: This consultation has concluded.

