

Fast Tracking Neighbourhood Batteries

Stage 1 Engagement Findings

Prepared by Capire Consulting Group Pty Ltd on
behalf of City of Melbourne, City of Yarra, and City of
Port Phillip

30 May 2023



Giving every person a voice.

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Definitions

The following definitions are used in this document.

Engagement: A genuine process to inform decisions, share knowledge and strengthen relationships.

Community: A group of people, the members of which reside in the same geographical area or have a shared background, interest, affiliation, or membership

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1	Capire Consulting Group	CoM, CoY, CoPP	19/05/2023
2	Mollie Rashleigh	CoM, CoY, CoPP	30/05/2023

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1 Introduction

1.1 Report purpose

This report summarises the methodology and engagement findings of the Fast Tracking Neighbourhood Batteries Project stage one engagement. Capire Consulting Group (Capire) delivered this work on behalf of City of Melbourne, City of Yarra and City of Port Phillip. Stage one engagement ran from early March to early April 2023.

1.2 Project background

City of Melbourne, City of Port Phillip and City of Yarra have teamed up to deliver the Fast-tracking Neighbourhood Batteries Project (the Project), intending to tackle the lack of access to renewable energy. While solar power may be abundant, many communities, families and organisations at a local level can't collect, store or share it. This Project will identify the local potential and feasibility of neighbourhood batteries in the inner metropolitan Melbourne area. It will proactively engage and empower local communities to participate in neighbourhood battery projects.

The Victorian Government has funded the three councils through the Metropolitan Partnerships Development Fund Program. The funding enables the councils to undertake community engagement, an assessment of the electrical network, and design work to fast-track the rollout of neighbourhood batteries across these three municipalities. Funding for the installation of batteries will be sought once feasible locations are determined.

Each Council recognises its community's desire for urgent and ambitious action to mitigate and adapt to climate change. The three councils are working together to undertake community engagement to build the community's knowledge around the purpose and benefits of neighbourhood batteries and how communities can participate meaningfully. This includes exploring what the community think about potentially having neighbourhood batteries in their local area, including what might motivate their support or concern them.

The engagement process aims to facilitate the establishment of active communities that feel informed about the nature, purpose and benefits of neighbourhood batteries. A key outcome of the engagement is to build social licence for - and community capacity to engage with - neighbourhood battery projects by developing the communities understanding of the options available and their capability to identify preferred sites and project delivery models.

1.3 Stage one engagement overview

Over four weeks, between early March and early April, the project team sought to inform as many people as possible about the Project, encourage participation and provide resources to assist with enabling informed participation. The engagement aimed to obtain insights into community attitudes about neighbourhood batteries, desirable locations for neighbourhood batteries and how the community would like to be involved.

Before the three councils came together to design and deliver engagement for the Project, the City of Melbourne sought feedback from its community on neighbourhood batteries and potential battery locations. Rather than replicating the engagement again, stage one engagement brought the three Council's engagement around neighbourhood batteries in line with each other. As such, the findings in this report are a combination of the outcomes from City of Melbourne's earlier survey and the engagement activities delivered as part of the stage one engagement.

To learn more about City of Melbourne's previous engagement, visit participate.melbourne.vic.gov.au/power-melbourne

2 Engagement approach

This section summarises the activities undertaken to promote and inform people and to gather community insights.

ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE AND INFORM

Councils promoted the Project and engagement opportunities through a range of channels. Below is a summary of the methods used. Appendix A provides further detail on the specific activities undertaken.



Project webpage

Each Council had a dedicated engagement webpage



Social media

Various posts across existing social medial channels



Emails/letters

To existing databases of interested community members



Adverts

Including radio announcements and adverts on other community webpages



Posters/postcards

Distributed across community facilities and key places of interest



EDM/Newsletter

Distributed via existing databases and networks.

ACTIVITIES TO SEEK INSIGHTS

Table 1 summarises the engagement activities the project team delivered, including the number of participants per activity.

Table 1. Activities used to seek community insights

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION
Survey	Feedback was gathered via each Council's 'Have Your Say' page through a survey. 636 contributions were received (233 from City of Yarra, 92 from City of Port Phillip, and 311 from City of Melbourne).
Mapping tool	City of Yarra and City of Port Phillip gathered ideas for specific sites via a mapping tool on their respective Have Your Say pages. City of Yarra also used the mapping tool at its information sessions. 142 contributions were received (50 from City of Yarra and 92 from City of Port Phillip).
Stakeholder interviews	Key stakeholders from all three councils were identified (by Capire with Councils) and contacted for interviews. Interviews aimed to elicit detailed information and opinions through wide-ranging discussion rather than specific questioning. A total of six interviews were held.
Focus groups	Capire delivered facilitated sessions that allowed information sharing and for participants to hear and discuss diverse perspectives and experiences. Three focus groups, one per Council, were delivered, with 22 participants attending.
Briefings, meetings and information sessions	<p>Short presentations were given to inform targeted stakeholders about the Project and participation opportunities. The Councils delivered these presentations via existing meetings and informal drop-in opportunities. These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yarra Environment Advisory Committee meeting (10 attendees) • 2x Future Melbourne Committee drop-in session (West Melbourne and Carlton) (8 attendees) • Southbank Sustainability Group (13 attendees) • 2x City of Yarra drop-in sessions at Gleadell Markets and North Fitzroy Library (71 attendees). <p>At the City of Yarra drop-in sessions, a Vietnamese and a Mandarin/Cantonese-speaking Bicultural Liaison Officer were present, allowing Vietnamese and Chinese residents to speak to someone about this consultation in their language.</p>

2.1 Community Champion recruitment

During the stage one engagement, the project team invited community members to express their interest in being a Project Community Champion. The Champions will reflect the diversity of the three municipalities, some passionate about neighbourhood batteries and others who might not know much about neighbourhood batteries or have concerns about neighbourhood batteries. The Champions will support the delivery of stage two engagement by promoting the Project with their networks and supporting engagement activities.

2.2 Limitations

The engagement methodology, while robust, also had several limitations that should be acknowledged when reading this report. The following points outline the limitations.

- There were minor differences in how Council's asked questions across their surveys. It has been noted in the report where these differences impacted the project team's ability to combine data efficiently.
- Some participants may have participated in more than one engagement activity; therefore, some views may have been captured more than once.
- In some instances, participants did not answer all questions. This means that some questions received fewer answers than others.
- Demographic information was not captured at all the focus groups; therefore, the reported demographic information was primarily derived from the information provided by survey participants.
- Participants were self-selected to participate in the engagement. While efforts were made to communicate the Project to a broad mix of the community, the views presented in this report should not be considered representative of the whole community.

3 Who participated

Over 800 people participated in the engagement across all three councils. This section outlines the demographic information gathered through the surveys. Demographic information was not collected from all participants who attended an event or participated in an interview.

SUBURB

The surveys collected participants' suburbs. The City of Melbourne survey allowed participants to identify their suburbs based on their connection to the Project. Therefore, it could be where a participant lives, works, studies or visits. Figure 1 illustrates that most suburbs from across the three municipalities had participants. The suburb that had the highest number of participants was Fitzroy North. Melbourne's first community-owned neighbourhood battery is in Fitzroy North, with a highly engaged local community.

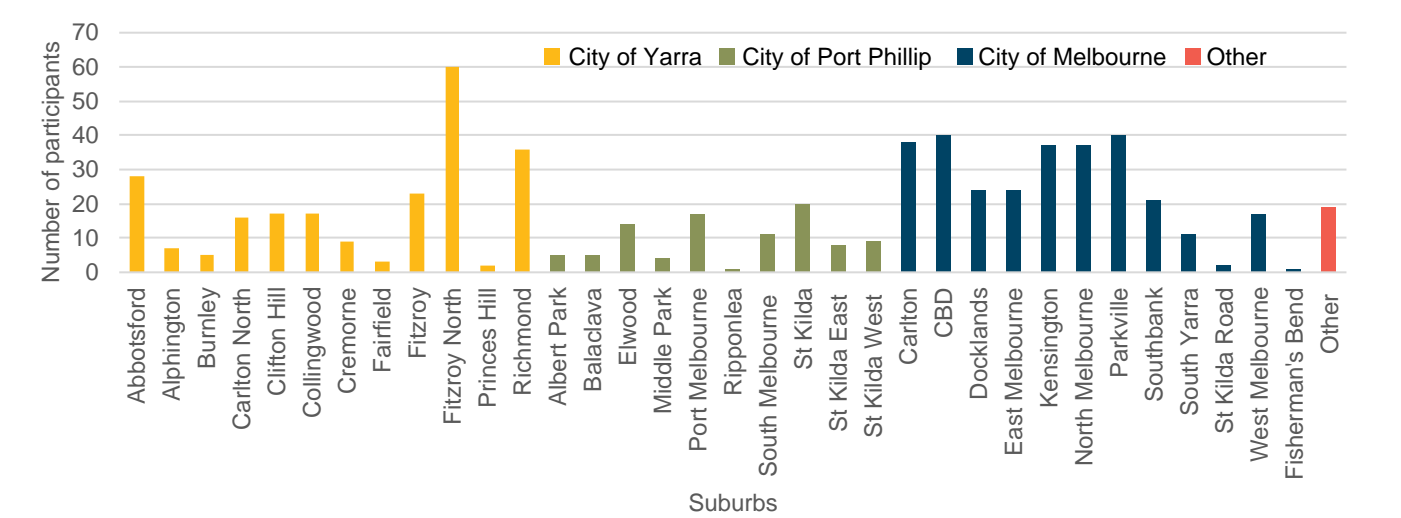


Figure 1. Participants' suburb

CONNECTION TO EACH MUNICIPALITY

The surveys asked participants how they were connected to the relevant municipality. There were some differences in the way the surveys asked this question. The City of Yarra did not have 'volunteer' as an option, and City of Melbourne did not have 'ratepayer' as an option. As illustrated in Figure 2

Figure 2. Participants' connection to the municipality

, most survey participants are residents of their respective municipalities. Participants could select multiple relationship types; therefore, the number of responses exceeds 100%.

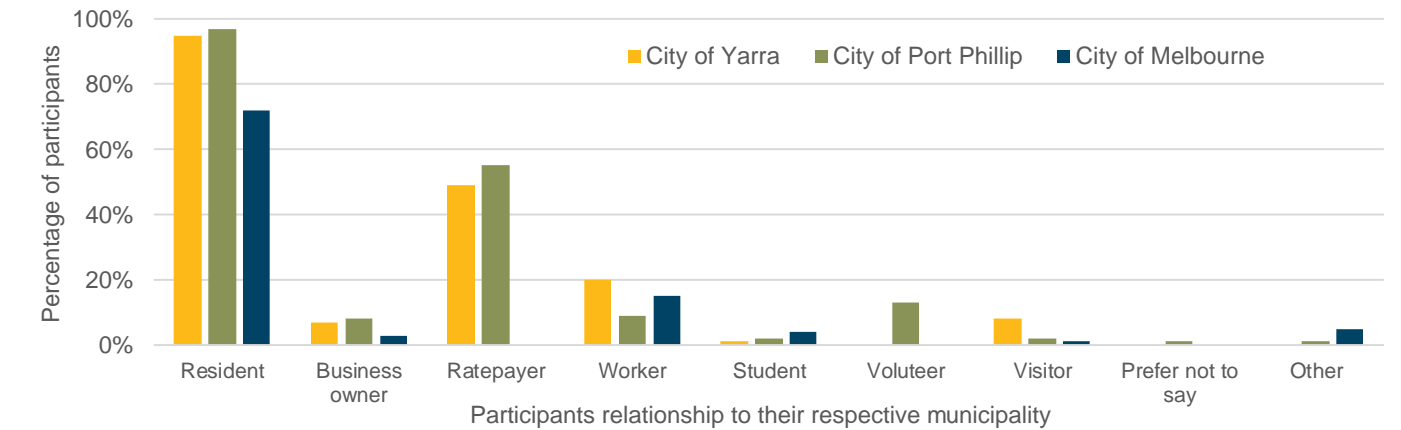


Figure 2. Participants' connection to the municipality

GENDER

Figure 3 illustrates the gender of survey participants within each of the three municipalities was split relatively evenly between males and females, with a small number of participants opting for another descriptor.

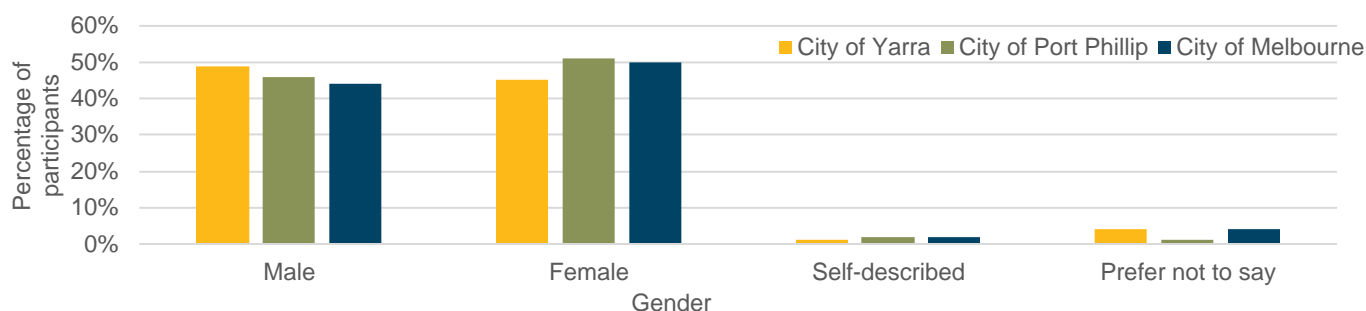


Figure 3. Survey participants' gender

AGE

Figure 4 shows that within each municipality, survey participants represented a diversity of ages. City of Melbourne and City of Yarra had higher proportions of participants aged under 50 years. City of Port Phillip had a higher proportion of participants aged over 50.

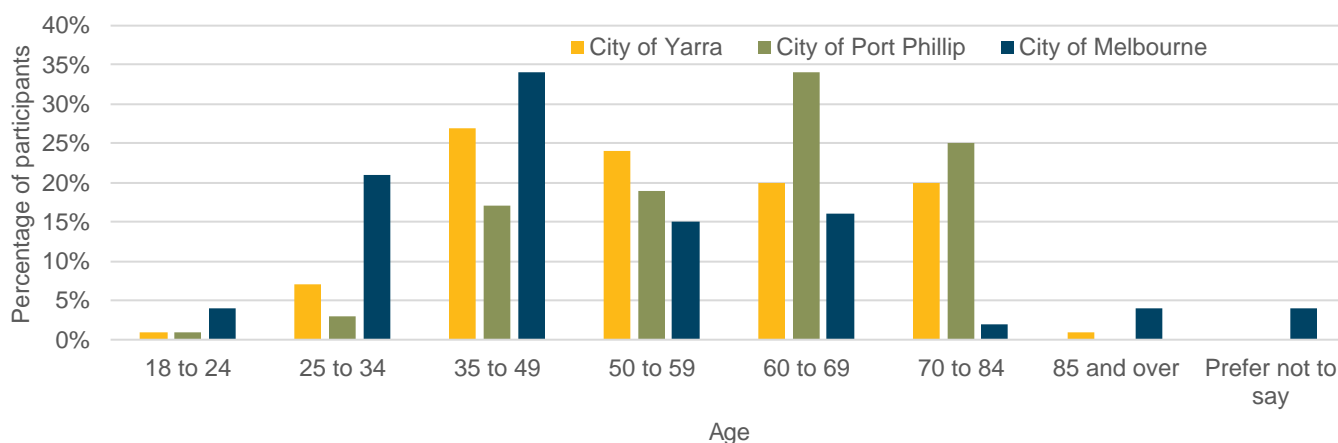


Figure 4. Survey participants' age groups

DIVERSE COHORT REPRESENTATION

The surveys asked participants to select any diverse community cohorts they identify as belonging to. Each survey has slightly different options, and all surveys did not have all the same options. Figure 5 illustrates the proportions of participants that identified which cohorts they belonged to. Where cohorts have no results for some municipalities, this is because those cohorts were not an option in the respective survey.

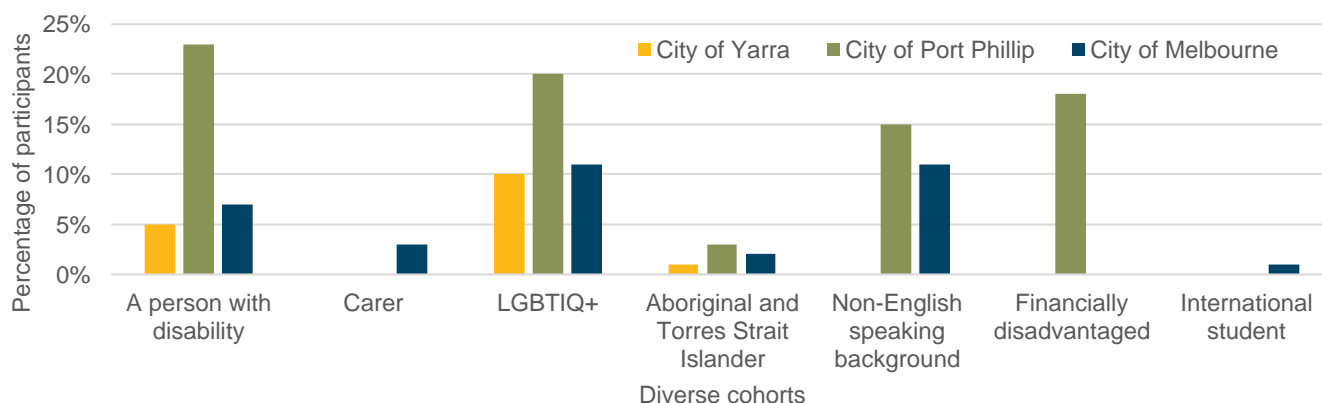


Figure 5. Diverse community cohorts survey participants represent

MOTIVATION FOR PARTICIPATING IN THE ENGAGEMENT

Figure 66 illustrates that most participants across the three surveys think 'having your say' and 'contributing to the future' is important. This was the main reason participants identified they were participating in the engagement.

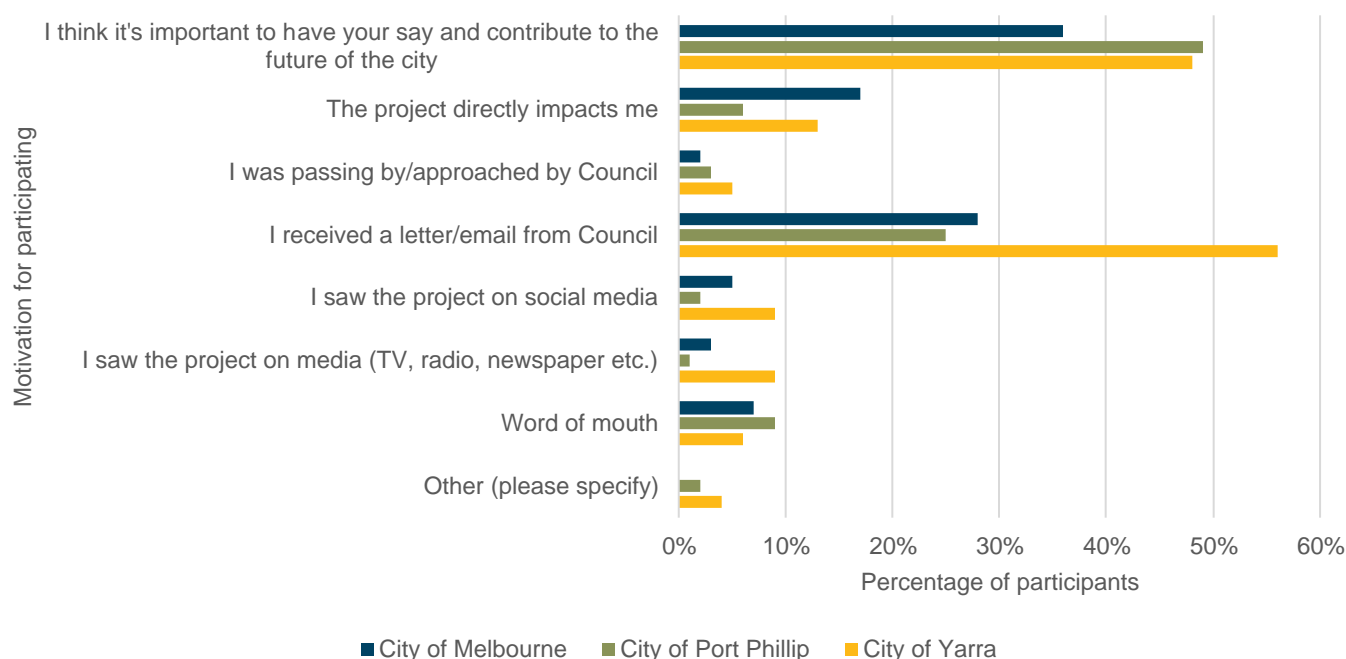


Figure 6. Motivation to participate in the engagement

PRIOR ENGAGEMENT WITH COUNCIL

The City of Yarra and City of Melbourne surveys asked participants to identify their prior level of engagement with their respective councils. Figure 7 illustrates that most participants have contributed once or twice before (55% and 43%). This was followed by participants who indicated this was their first council-led consultation. As such over 75% of all participants in these two Councils had participated no more than once or twice in a council-led consultation.

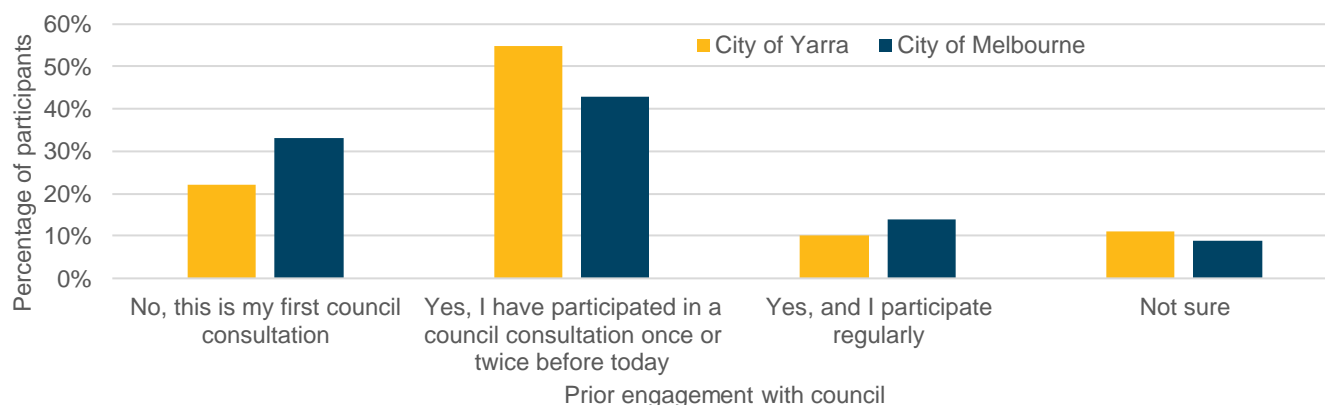


Figure 7. Survey participants' previous engagement experience

4 Findings

The following section summarises the key feedback collected from across the engagement activities under the following engagement topics:

- **Community attitudes** towards neighbourhood batteries (and renewable energy projects more broadly), including motivations and barriers towards the Project.
- **Locations**, including what makes a good location and ideas for future locations.
- **Future involvement**, including how participants would like to be involved or benefit from a neighbourhood battery and how they would like to continue to be involved in this Project.

A series of sub-sections within each topic depict the findings under the key themes. Quotes from participants have been included to illustrate sentiment. Please note that the data illustrated within each graph has been rounded to the nearest whole number.

4.1 Community attitudes

In determining the community's attitudes concerning neighbourhood batteries, the engagement explored:

- Current levels of renewable energy uptake and support, including solar power, going all-electric, and purchasing renewable energy through energy providers.
- Current understanding of neighbourhood batteries and support for them, including the perceived benefits and concerns.
- Current interest in switching to a renewable energy plan linked to a neighbourhood battery, including motivations to switch.

The following section summarises the findings under each of these topics.

4.1.1 Current levels of renewable energy uptake and support

THERE IS SUPPORT FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY ACROSS ALL THREE COUNCILS

All councils asked participants to indicate their level of support towards the transition to renewable energy sources. Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each of the following statements:

- Urgent action is needed on climate change.
- It is important to move away from fossil fuels and transition to renewable energy.
- Neighbourhood batteries are an important part of the solution to transitioning to more renewable energy.
- I want to be able to access more affordable renewable energy.

As Figure 8, **Error! Reference source not found.** and Figure 10 show, each statement received high levels of support across the three municipalities. Support for neighbourhood batteries as an important part of the solution received strong support but also had the highest proportion of participants who were unsure or disagreed.

Feedback gathered through the focus groups and interviews were consistent with the survey data. Some references were made to neighbourhood batteries being only part of the solution and the need for more information on how neighbourhood batteries can have a sustainable business model to support growth, ongoing maintenance, etc.

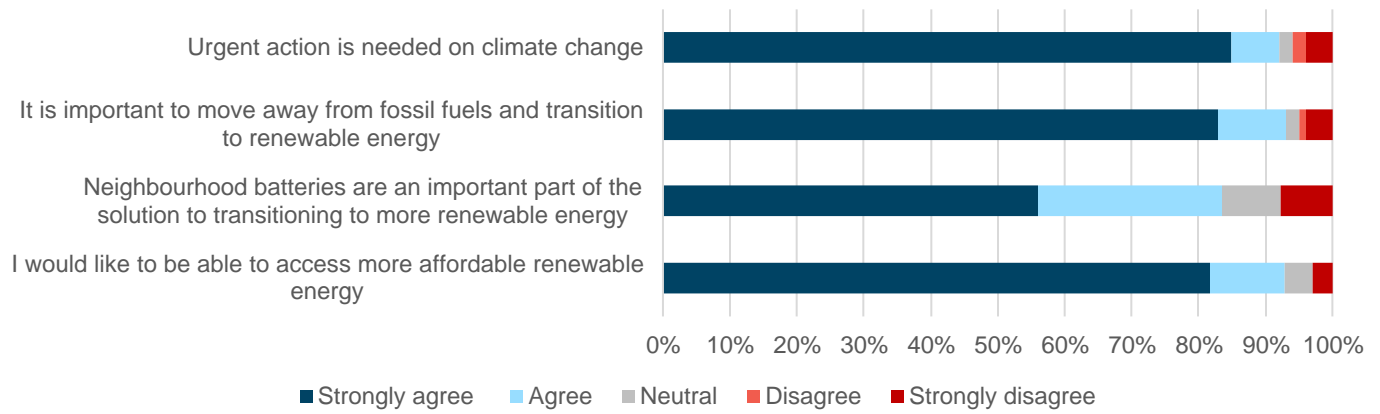


Figure 8. City of Yarra participants' levels of support for the renewable energy transition

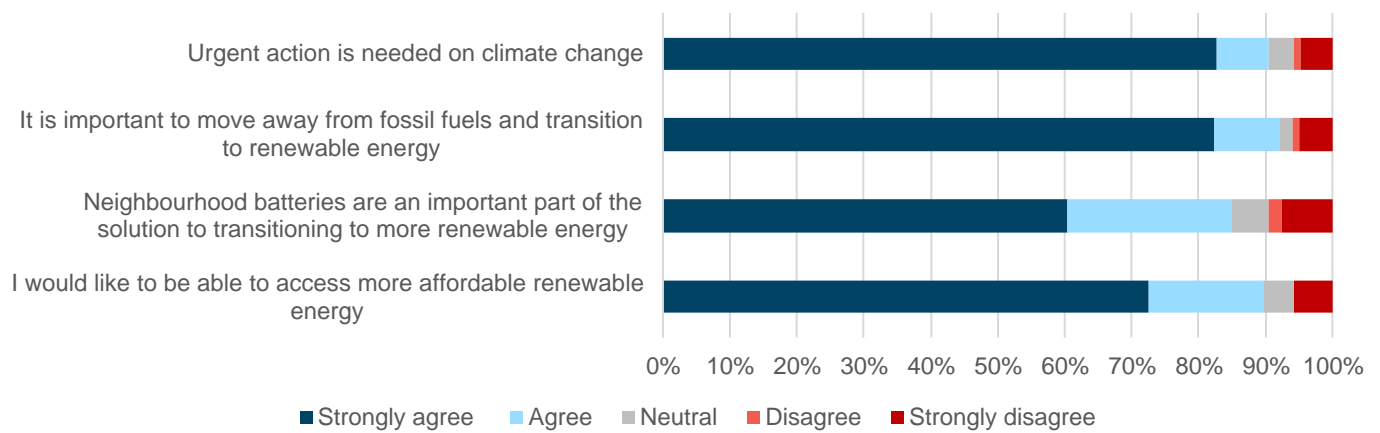


Figure 9. City of Port Phillip participants' levels of support for the renewable energy transition

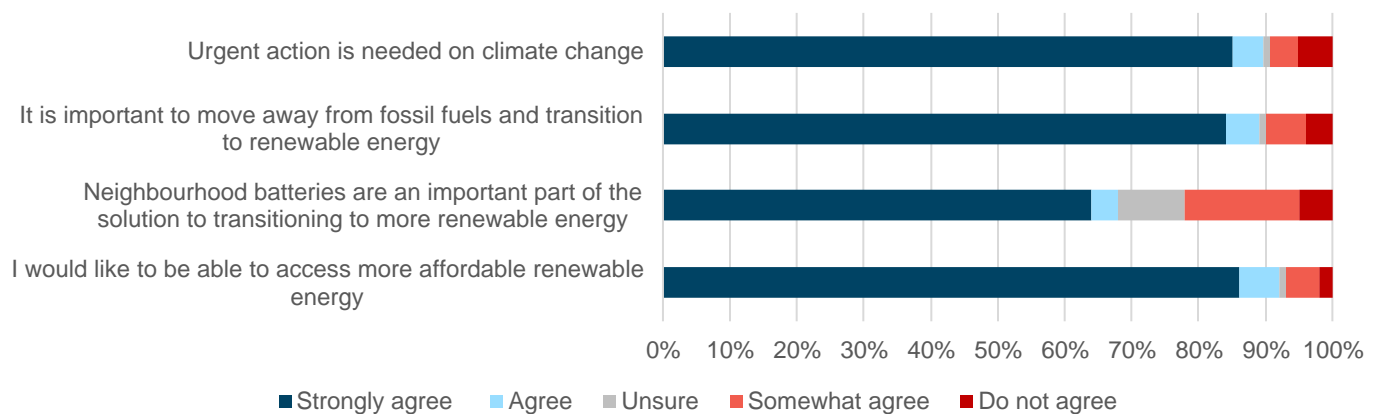


Figure 10. City of Melbourne participants' levels of support for the renewable energy transition

A HIGH PROPORTION OF PARTICIPANTS WITH SOLAR ENERGY ALONGSIDE PARTICIPANTS WHO ARE NOT ABLE TO HAVE SOLAR

City of Yarra and City of Port Phillip asked participants if they had solar power. If participants indicated 'yes', they were also asked if they have a solar battery. As shown in Figure 11, Yarra and Port Phillip had a high proportion of participants with solar energy (40% and 43%). They also had a high proportion of participants who could not have solar. Of those participants who do have solar power, a small proportion had a solar battery, with most saying they could not (see Figure 12).

These statics were consistent with the interview and focus group participants.

City of Melbourne did not ask this question given the very high levels of apartment residents and renters and the known low level of solar uptake across the municipality.

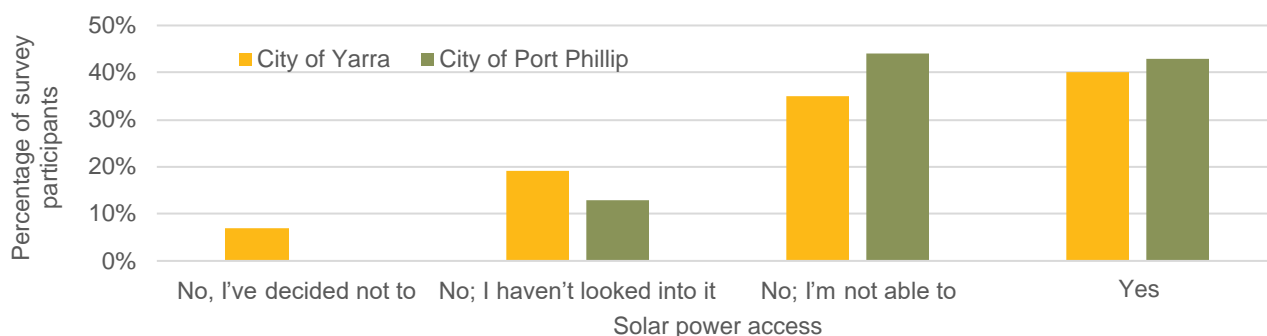


Figure 11. Number of participants with solar power

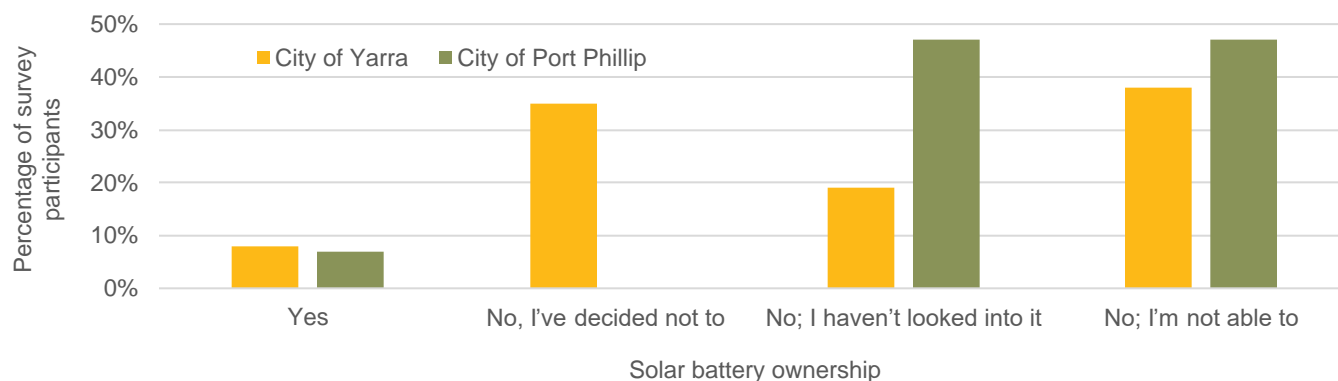


Figure 12. Number of participants with solar batteries

MANY PARTICIPANTS ARE IN THE PROCESS OF SWITCHING TO AN ALL-ELECTRIC HOME

The City of Yarra and City of Port Phillip asked participants if they lived in an all-electric home. The results across the two municipalities were similar. Figure 13 illustrates that a small proportion live in an all-electric home while many were in the process of switching their appliances to electric. City of Melbourne did not ask this question given the very high levels of apartment residents and renters.

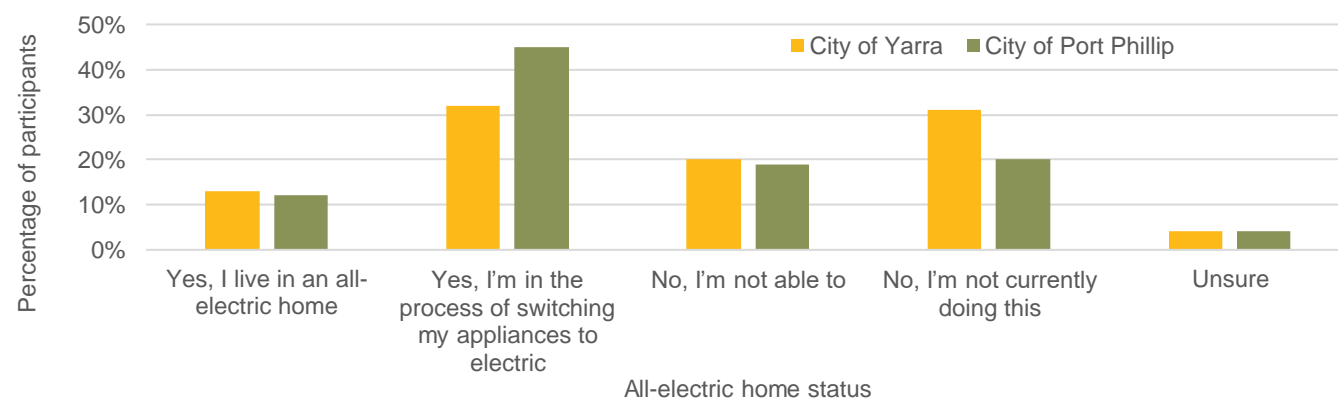


Figure 13. Number of participants going all-electric in their home

APPROXIMATELY HALF OF THE PARTICIPANTS CURRENTLY PURCHASE GREEN ENERGY OR RENEWABLE ENERGY

All three Councils asked participants if they currently purchase GreenPower or renewable energy. As Figure 14 shows, 44% to 58% of survey participants currently purchase GreenPower or renewable energy.

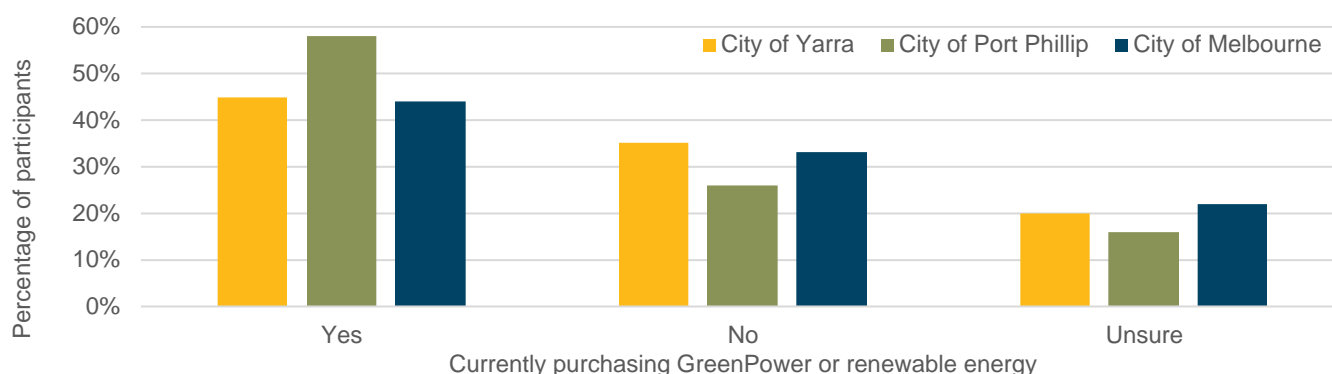


Figure 14. Number of participants currently purchasing Greenpower/Renewable energy

4.1.2 Current understanding of neighbourhood batteries and support

MOST PARTICIPANTS HAD LIMITED UNDERSTANDING OF NEIGHBOURHOOD BATTERIES

All three councils asked participants to describe their current understanding of neighbourhood batteries. Figure 16 shows that most participants believed they had a minimal to medium understanding at best of neighbourhood batteries.

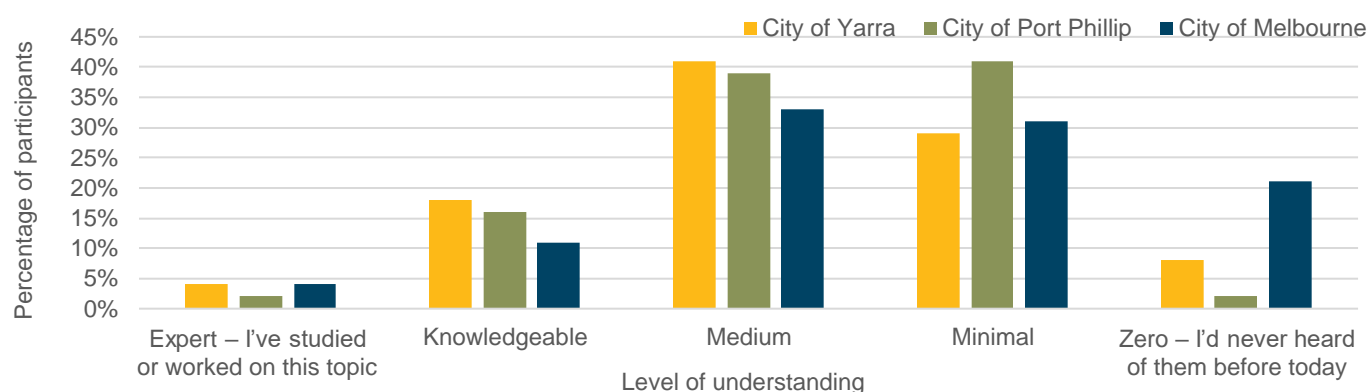


Figure 15. Survey participants' level of understanding of neighbourhood batteries

MOST PARTICIPANTS ARE SUPPORTIVE OF A NEIGHBOURHOOD BATTERY IN THEIR AREA

There were slight differences in how each Council asked whether participants would support having a neighbourhood battery in their area. As such, the City of Melbourne data is presented in a different graph. Both Figure 16 and Figure 17 show that overall, participants supported having a neighbourhood battery in their area. The overwhelming majority of these were strongly supportive.

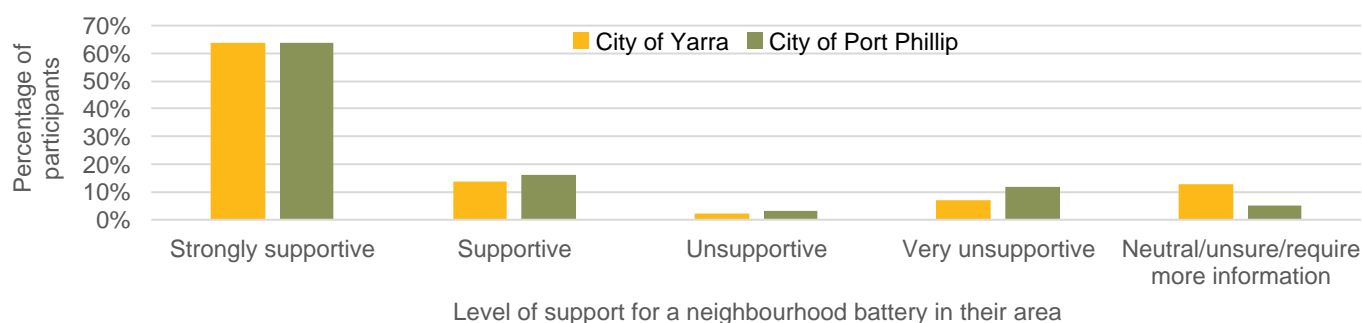


Figure 16. Survey participants' level of support for neighbourhood batteries

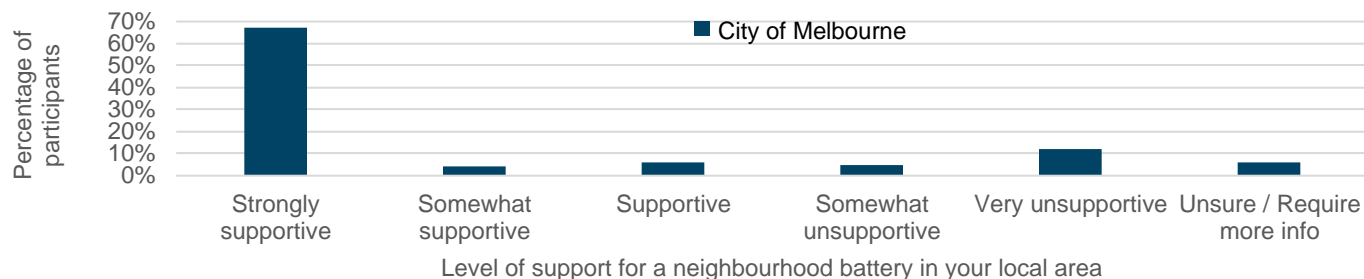


Figure 17. City of Melbourne survey participants' level of support for neighbourhood batteries

PARTICIPANTS SEE INCREASING THE AMOUNT OF RENEWABLE ENERGY AVAILABLE IN THEIR NEIGHBOURHOOD AND RESPONDING TO CLIMATE CHANGE AS IMPORTANT BENEFITS

City of Yarra and City of Port Phillip asked participants to rank six potential benefits of neighbourhood batteries. As shown in Figure 18 and Figure 19, the benefit that received the highest first preference was 'increasing the amount of renewable energy available'.

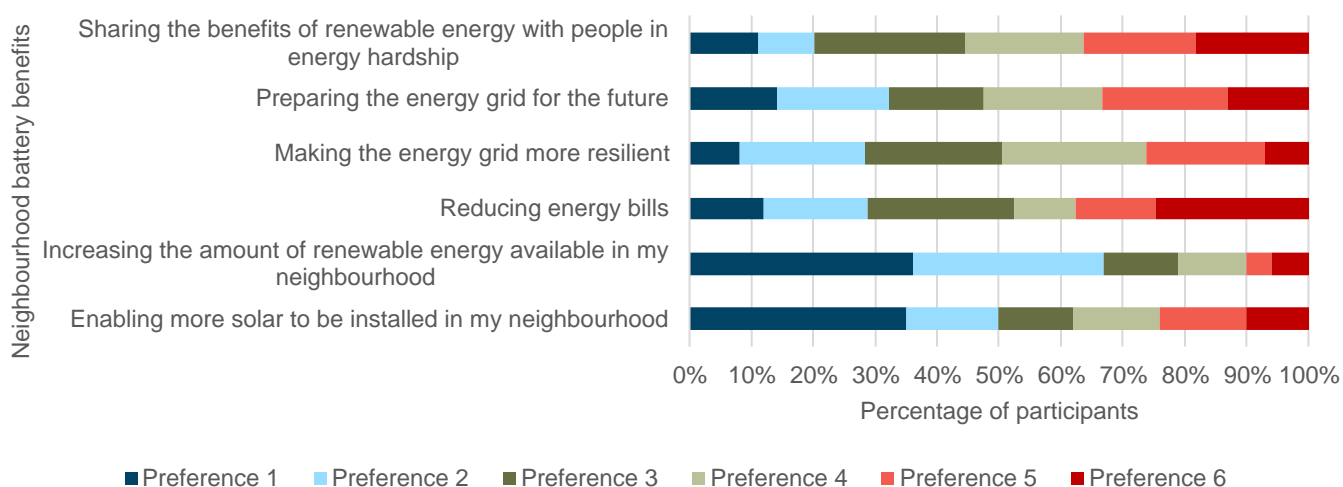


Figure 18. City of Yarra ranked neighbourhood battery benefits

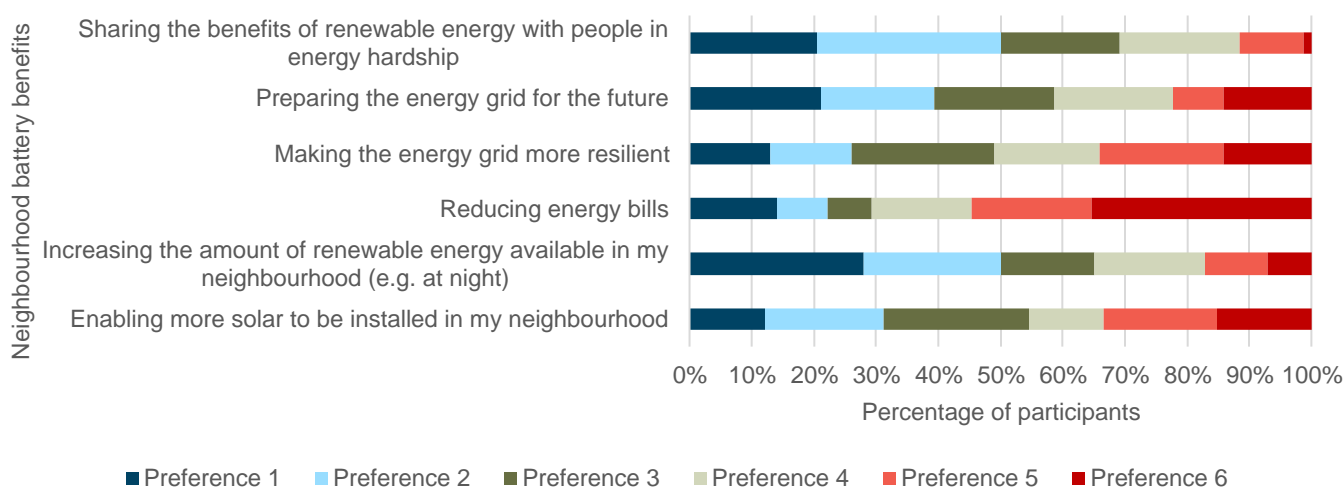


Figure 19. City of Port Phillip ranked neighbourhood battery benefits

Across the engagement activities, participants identified various benefits from neighbourhood batteries being located locally. The following section summarises the findings from each of the three municipalities.

City of Yarra participants discussed how having a neighbourhood battery in the area might improve affordability and accessibility to renewable energy. This was particularly important to those participants who either couldn't afford a home battery, lived in an apartment, or had a small rooftop. Participants discussed how they improve environmental

awareness and reduce demand for fossil fuels and gas dependency. Other participants discussed how having a neighbourhood battery could help build a sense of community, including street activation with local art displayed on the batteries and demonstrate a collaborative response to climate change.

City of Port Phillip participants discussed having a neighbourhood battery in their local areas as an important response to climate change and building the resilience of the energy grid. Participants discussed neighbourhood batteries as community solutions and how they enable electricity sharing for the community to benefit from.

City of Melbourne participants discussed how neighbourhood batteries would ensure grid stability and ensure the Council are taking visible and rapid climate action. They shared that they would support reducing the cost of living for low-income residents by sharing locally generated solar that could be stored overnight.

"It is important that the option for renewables is available for everyone, including those who may not be able to install solar, or who may not have the funds to invest in a full system of their own." – City of Yarra participants

"I have solar panels, but not a battery – too expensive at the moment. But it seems to me that, as a society, we should be shifting our renewable/sustainability efforts to the community rather than individual level" – City of Yarra participants

"Because this is real, practical action that will lower emissions in my own neighbourhood as well as creating resilience and a sense of togetherness." – City of Port Phillip participant

"I think it's good for people in the city that can't install panels on their roof or a battery in the garage to be able to take action as a community." – City of Melbourne participant

SOME PARTICIPANTS ARE CONCERNED ABOUT ONGOING MAINTENANCE, SAFETY AND LONG-TERM INVESTMENT COSTS

Across the three municipalities, participants raised some concerns about neighbourhood batteries. Concerns included ongoing maintenance, safety, visual impacts, uncertainty around health impacts and how existing Heritage Overlays may be a barrier. These concerns primarily came from participants who are unsure about neighbourhood batteries or who are supportive but have concerns.

A few participants felt neighbourhood batteries were a low priority compared to other local issues, and questions were raised about the use of Council funds to deliver neighbourhood batteries. These views were particularly held by those participants who do not support neighbourhood batteries.

Across the various sessions there were questions asked about what the benefit or motivator was for those with solar to export to the battery. A small number of participants discussed whether they would be worse off if they exported their solar as they would be sharing their investment with other homes and businesses.

"Community batteries in Australia are currently not able to deliver financial returns to the community. Unfortunately, energy retailers are better suited to owning and operating these batteries for network reliability/grid management" – City of Yarra participant

"I am supportive in principle but need much more information" – City of Melbourne participant

"Is it reliable, affordable and available and really necessary?" – City of Melbourne participant

THERE IS A GENERAL DESIRE TO LEARN AND UNDERSTAND MORE ABOUT NEIGHBOURHOOD BATTERIES

Participants across the three Councils raised questions regarding the financial and operational models. Participants wanted to understand how neighbourhood batteries would impact energy costs, and potential financial returns. Some participants also want more information on safety, noise, appearance and the whole-of-life environmental impacts.

4.1.3 Current interest in switching to a renewable energy plan linked to a neighbourhood battery

PRICE AND TRANSPARENCY ARE THE BIGGEST MOTIVATIONS FOR SWITCHING ELECTRICITY PROVIDERS TO A RENEWABLE ENERGY PLAN LINKED TO NEIGHBOURHOOD BATTERIES

City of Yarra and City of Port Phillip asked participants if they would be interested in switching to a renewable energy plan linked to a neighbourhood battery. Most participants said they were interested in switching (69% for Yarra and 81% for Port Phillip).

All Councils asked participants to consider what would motivate them to switch to a renewable energy plan linked to a neighbourhood battery. As shown in Figure 20, Figure 21 and Figure 22, the motivations which received the highest ranking were:

- Price: At least as cheap or cheaper compared to other green plans
- Transparency: Guaranteed 100% renewable energy

During the focus groups and interviews, participants also discussed the need for a clear community benefit. That benefit could be that renters, small business owners, and others who would otherwise not be able to access renewable energy have a viable option. Participants also want transparency within this process to ensure the battery's community benefit aspect is integral to the program.

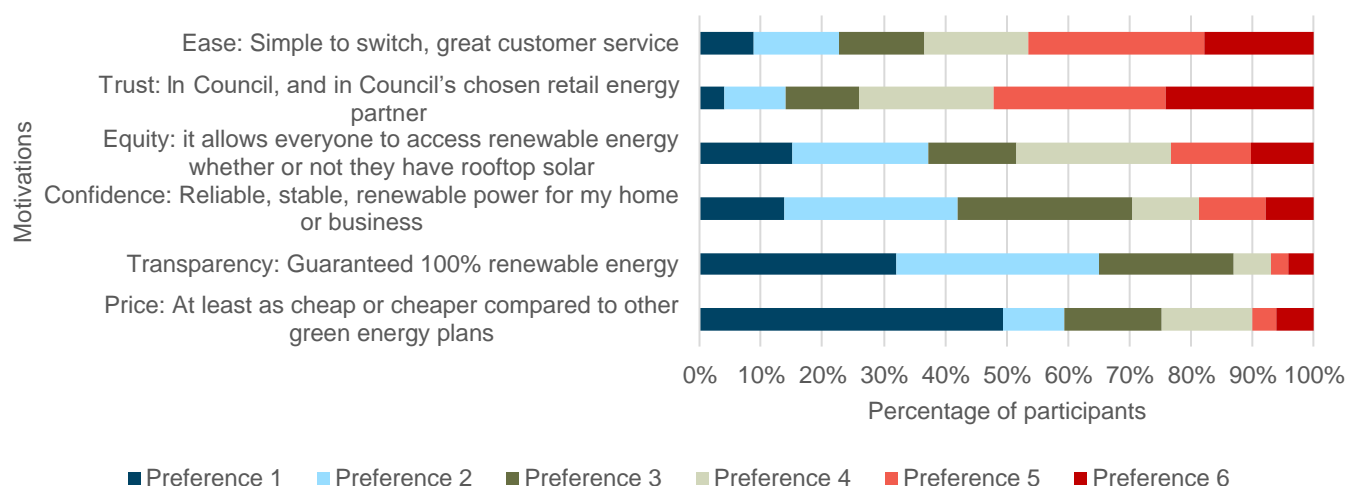


Figure 20. City of Yarra participants' motivations for switching electricity provider

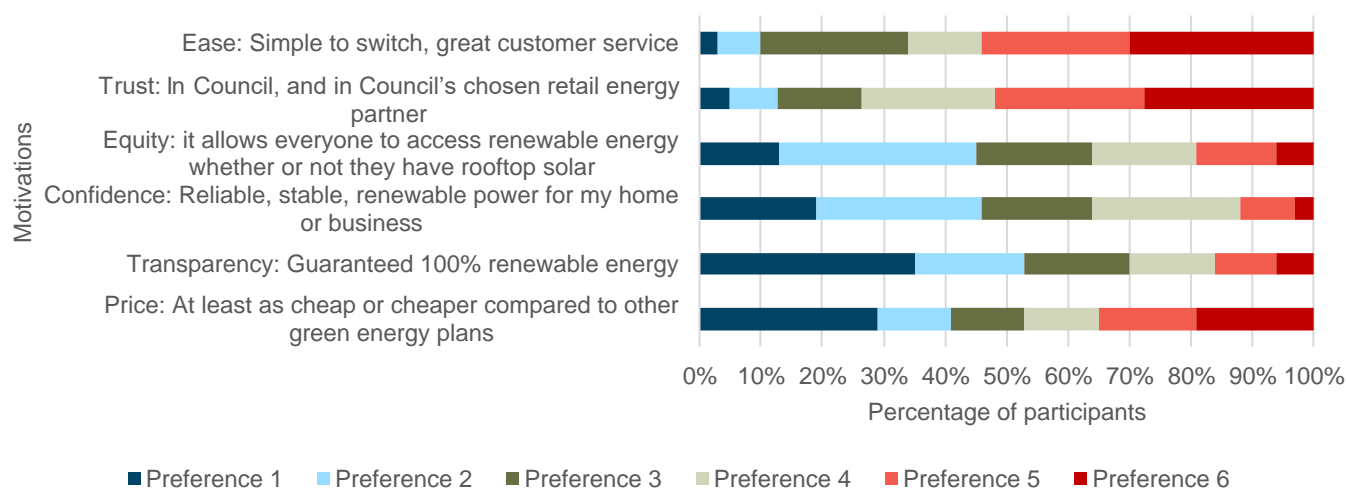


Figure 21. City of Port Phillip participants' motivations for switching electricity provider

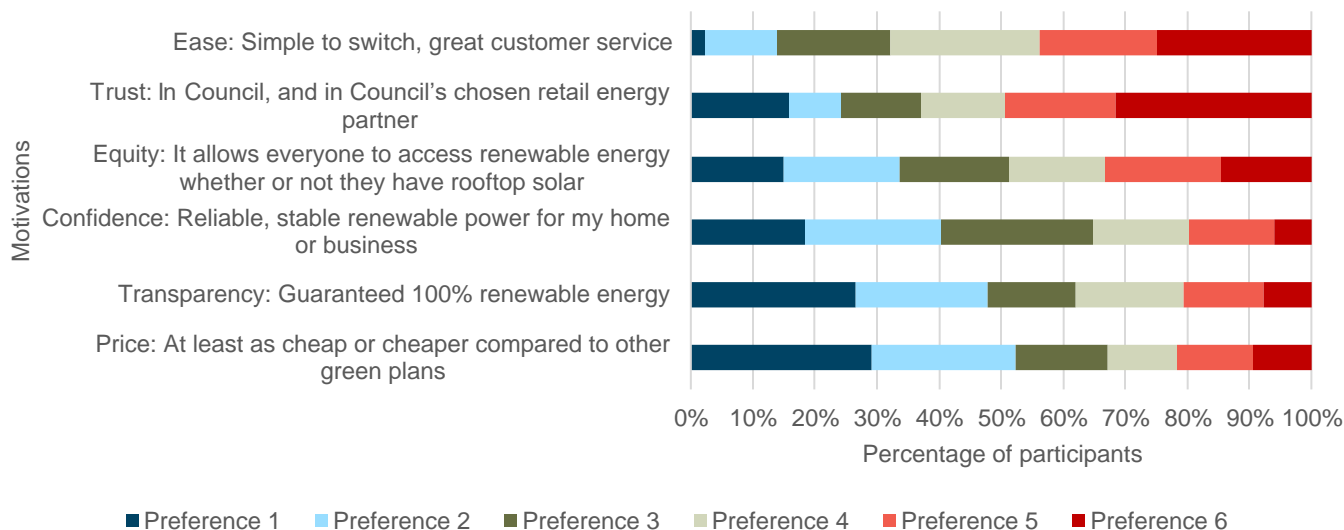


Figure 22. City of Melbourne participants' motivations for switching electricity provider

4.2 Locations

All Council's asked participants to share their views on where neighbourhood batteries should be located. As part of this the engagement explored:

- the types of spaces that should be considered
- general considerations when selecting sites
- specific sites (these have been shared separately with the project team for consideration).

The following section summarises the findings from the engagement for each of these topics.

4.2.1 The types of locations that should be considered

City of Yarra and City of Port Phillip asked participants to identify which spaces they would prefer to see neighbourhood batteries located in. As shown in Figure 23, all types received high levels of support. Most participants preferred locating neighbourhood batteries within the existing electricity grid infrastructure.

The City of Melbourne did not specifically ask this question. Its survey focused on testing five locations at council-owned buildings for the first Power Melbourne batteries. Participants could share additional locations, like the cities of Yarra and Port Phillip. Other locations in Melbourne included being attached to a community facility such as a community hub or library and in public spaces like train stations, flyovers and traffic islands.

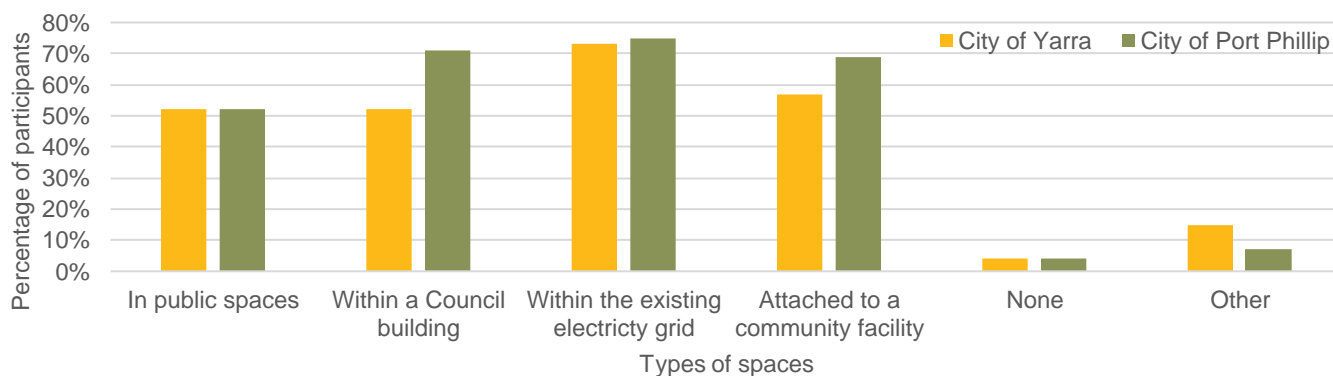


Figure 23. Preferred locations for neighbourhood batteries

4.2.2 General considerations when selecting sites

The following section summarises the findings for this topic against each of the municipalities.

IN THE CITY OF YARRA, FUTURE LOCATIONS NEED TO CONSIDER SOUND, VISIBILITY, ACCESS, MAINTENANCE AND SAFETY

Participants often held positive perceptions of the visibility of batteries and were supportive of public spaces, such as parks and median strips, as they felt creating a tangible reminder of climate change promoted pride and a sense of shared ownership/responsibility. An interviewee highlighted the value of the visibility of the batteries adding to a sense of ownership and could spark conversations about renewable energy.

There was some concern that the batteries would take up valuable 'recreation space' for people and wildlife if located in open space. Some concerns were raised regarding public locations noting potentially reduced access along footpaths. With fears of batteries being used as a hiding spot for crime in public spaces or concerns of fallen branches and consequential fires. The interviews mirrored the survey results, focusing on safety and access.

Those who supported batteries within council buildings and the existing electricity grid infrastructure stated that it was due to energy efficiencies, improved access, safety, and management/maintenance. Several participants also expressed the need for batteries to be accessible to public housing residents.

Participants discussed the preference for batteries to be located either along the railway line/roads or in car parks to allow electric vehicles to recharge. Additional suggestions included beside public toilets, attached to commercial buildings (rooftops or empty office space), private residential complexes and multistorey developments.

Some participants stated that they needed to know more about the size, appearance, noise, and safety considerations before making a recommendation.

At Yarra's drop-in sessions participants were invited to identify specific sites on a map. Most participants selected locations in their own street or neighbourhood. Others selected public, commercial or residential buildings that they knew of, and thought would be suitable. Several participants identified sites away from their neighbourhood because while they supported neighbourhood batteries, they didn't want one near their house.

"Because they're accessible to all and visibility promotes pride and sense of shared ownership/responsibility." - City of Yarra participant

"I believe if they are well designed, they should be on display to give people an understanding of what they do and their benefits." - City of Yarra participant

"As a pedestrian, I already have to navigate around signage for vehicles, electric poles, garbage bins, outdoor dining, bikes and scooters, don't add batteries to the footpaths." - City of Yarra participant

"It really depends on what they look like and how much space they take and the noise it makes. What do they look like? Because if they're ugly, they should be 'hidden' to an extent." - City of Yarra participant

"I prefer in car parks as it would better utilise open space than storing private motor vehicles. Could also be used as an EV charging point at commercial charging rates." - City of Yarra participant

IN THE CITY OF PORT PHILLIP, PARTICIPANTS FELT FUTURE LOCATIONS SHOULD NOT IMPACT OPEN SPACE AND SUPPORT COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP

Many participants stated they did not want neighbourhood batteries located within parklands as they preferred these areas to remain reserved for flora and fauna and not have built infrastructure encroaching on these spaces. Participants preferred community facilities as ideal locations as they are perceived as more appropriate for creating community benefit.

Some participants stated they didn't have a preference and would be guided by the technical assessment of sites.

"Need to retain public green spaces and don't want reduced green spaces." – City of Port Phillip participant

"If it belongs to the community then the community should be able to see it, interact with it, and understand it rather than have it hidden away." – City of Port Phillip participant

"Within/amongst joined properties and behind the meter. Work to reduce grid connections and get rid of un-needed power poles." – City of Port Phillip participant

"Wherever the engineers say is best. I don't really care." – City of Port Phillip participant

"I think the more people who see the batteries and learn about them, the more people are likely to be involved." – City of Port Phillip participant

IN THE CITY OF MELBOURNE, LOCATIONS SHOULD BE VISIBLE TO BUILD AWARENESS AND PROMOTE COMMUNITY BENEFIT WHILE ALSO CONSIDERING EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION TO SHARE THE BENEFITS.

The City of Melbourne has proposed to install the first Power Melbourne batteries at council-owned buildings, including Queen Victoria Market, Southbank Library, Library at The Dock, Kensington Recreation Centre, and Council House 2.

Overall, participants were supportive of the proposed locations. Participants expressed support for the batteries to be in these public spaces as they are visible, add to the value these community spaces already provide and are easily accessible for maintenance. However, even those supportive of the locations identified the need for additional locations to be identified in the more residential areas of the municipality, particularly East Melbourne and for more equitable distribution to support shared community benefit. Some of the concerns raised by participants included the locations being CBD focused and too focused on commercial areas rather than residential. Some participants discussed the need to consider socio-economic factors to ensure any financial benefits are reaching those who most need it.

Participants across the various engagement sessions supported the use of public facilities and spaces. Participants discussed how the batteries can help build awareness and act as a reminder of the importance of energy sources. A neighbourhood battery in a location visible to the community was highlighted to have a wider community reach regarding the project and the transition to renewable energy.

"Great idea to start with council buildings like these. From here it would be great to see them expanded to areas with public housing and lots of apartment buildings." – City of Melbourne participant

"I agree with these locations, and other council locations like libraries, because that there should be lower barriers to install them in these locations." – City of Melbourne participant

"Sounds good, could be a good opportunity to include kids exhibits / learning resources about how electricity is produced and stored" – City of Melbourne participant

"Need more on top of poorer residential buildings where current embedded networks are price gouging the residents who can't choose their own provider" – City of Melbourne participant

4.3 Future involvement

Councils wanted to understand how the community would like to be involved in or benefit from a neighbourhood battery. Cities of Yara and Port Phillip participants were asked to rank the ways they would be interested in being involved in or benefiting from a neighbourhood battery. As Figure 24 and Figure 25 show participants from both councils chose switching their electricity plan to a neighbourhood battery plan to get access to renewable energy as their first preference, followed by switching electricity plan to a neighbourhood battery plan to lower their bills.

City of Melbourne survey participants answered this question with an open answer. Key responses were to become a host site, supplying batteries, investing, and supporting to deliver a pilot project in a CALD neighbourhood. Face-to-

face engagement activities tested the options used in the City of Yarra and City of Port Phillip surveys. Participants preferred switching electricity plan, installing solar, and owning or investing in a share.

All Councils asked survey participants about being part of future community engagement opportunities. Most participants want to be kept up to date with email updates. There was also strong interest in attending future workshops (both online and in-person) and being able to provide feedback online.

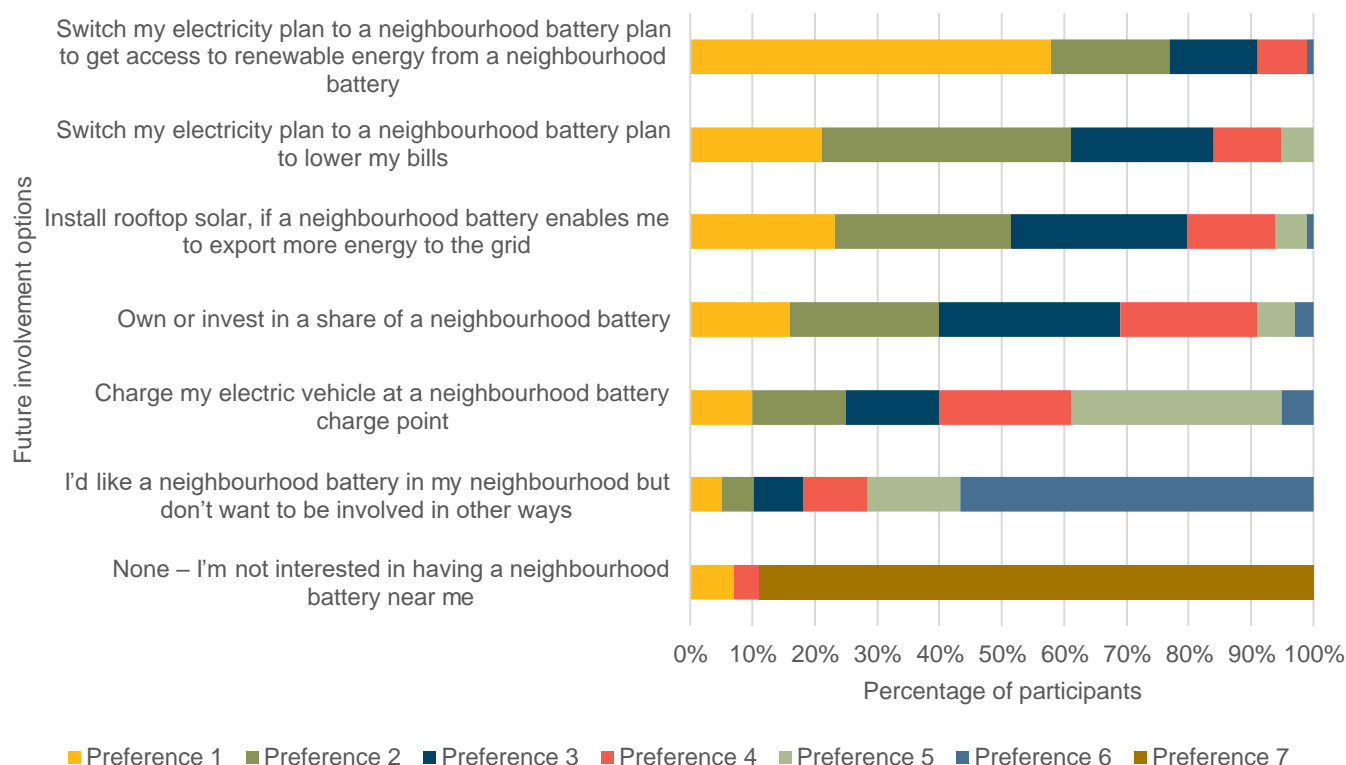


Figure 24. City of Yarra participants' interest in benefiting from a neighbourhood battery

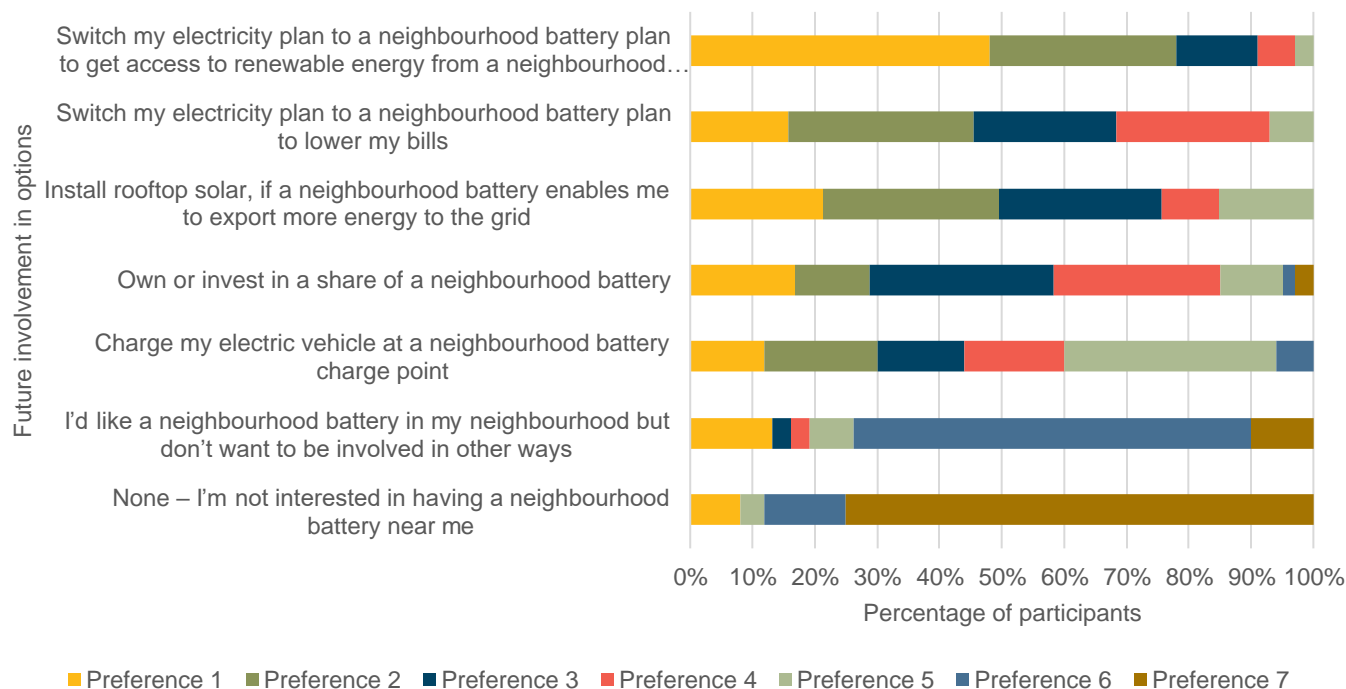


Figure 25. City of Port Phillip participants' interest in benefiting from a neighbourhood battery

5 Conclusions and next steps

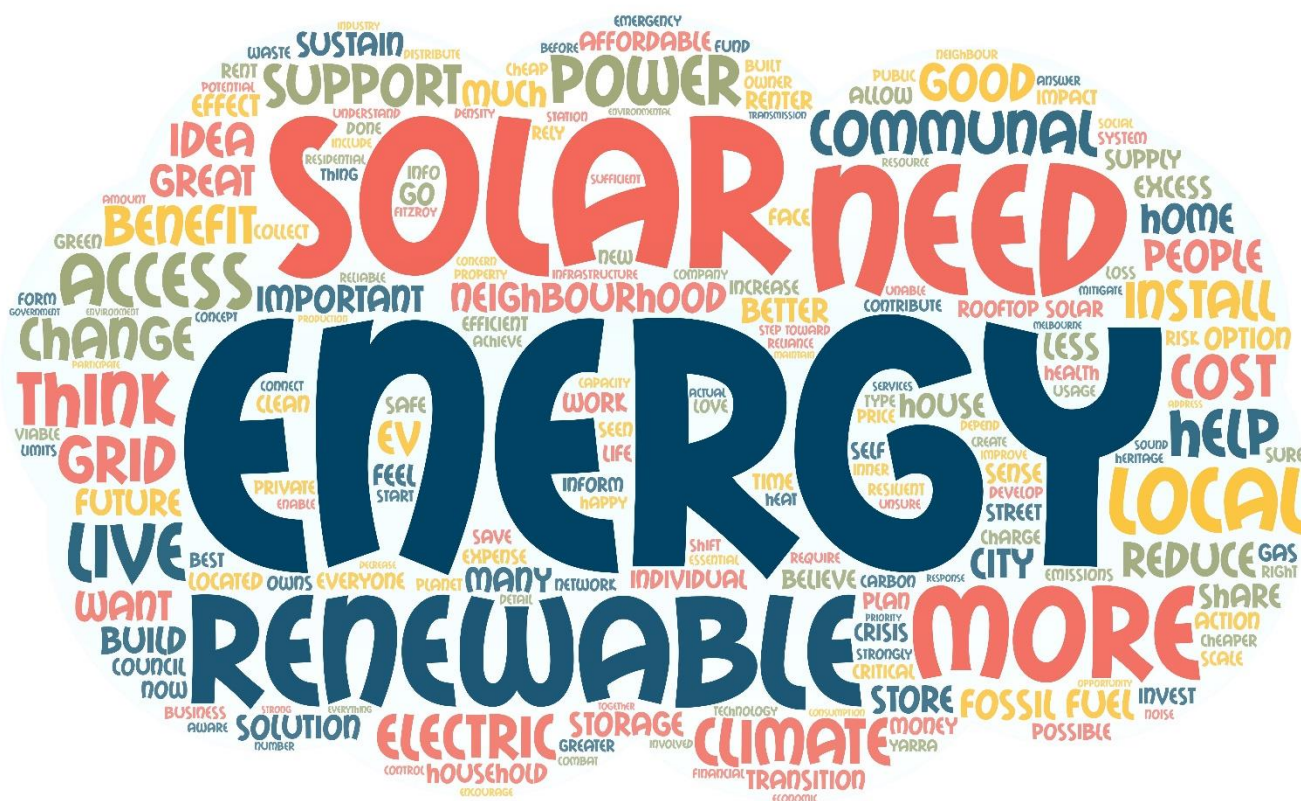


Figure 26. Word cloud of open answer responses concerning levels of support for neighbourhood batteries

KEY COMMUNITY INSIGHTS

Overall, there is high support for renewable energy across the three municipalities. There is a good understanding of neighbourhood batteries, and many participants see neighbourhood batteries as an important part of the solution. While many participants (41% of City of Yarra and City of Port Phillip participants) have solar, many cannot, for various reasons. While City of Melbourne didn't ask this question, they know solar uptake in the City of Melbourne is low due to building structure or property ownership. Participants agree that increasing access to renewable energy via neighbourhood batteries for those that cannot have solar or readily access affordable renewable are key benefits.

Most participants were supportive of having a neighbourhood battery in their local area. They feel increasing the amount of renewable energy available in their neighbourhoods and responding to climate change are important benefits.

While some participants are concerned about neighbourhood batteries, such as maintenance, safety and long-term investment costs, there is an interest and willingness to learn more.

Approximately half of the participants currently purchase Green Power or renewable energy. Most participants expressed interest in switching to a renewable energy plan linked to a neighbourhood battery. Price and transparency are the biggest motivations for switching electricity providers to a renewable energy plan linked to neighbourhood batteries.

KEY INSIGHTS ON WHERE TO LOCATE NEIGHBOURHOOD BATTERIES

Participants want Council to consider a range of aspects when thinking about where to locate neighbourhood batteries. Participants do not want neighbourhood batteries to impact public open spaces. They want locations to consider sound, visibility, and any health impacts. They should be in places that are visible to build awareness and promote community benefit and ownership. The location also needs to consider maintenance access needs.

HOW PARTICIPANTS WANT TO STAY ENGAGED

Participants are keen to continue to learn about neighbourhood batteries and be part of the project. This includes continuing to be part of the community engagement but also how they can be involved in the delivery of neighbourhood batteries in the future. The main way participants want to be involved in the future delivery of neighbourhood batteries is by switching electricity plan to a neighbourhood battery plan.

NEXT STEPS FOR THE PROJECT

The engagement findings captured through the stage one engagement will be drawn on by the project team to inform their work around determining different options and locations for neighbourhood batteries.

Stage two engagement is planned for mid-2023 where the team will be undertaking further engagement with the communities around areas with high neighbourhood battery potential.



Appendices

Appendix A. Promotion and engagement activities

Table 2. Activities used to inform people about the Project

COUNCIL	City of Melbourne ¹	City of Yarra	City of Port Phillip
PROJECT WEBPAGE	participate.melbourne.vic.gov.au/power-melbourne received: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3,667 views • 2,468 visits • 356 contributions 	yoursayyarra.com.au/neighbourhoodbatteries received: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,353 views • 876 visitors • 304 contributions 	haveyoursay.portphillip.vic.gov.au/neighbourhood-batteries received: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 590 views • 334 visitors • 104 contributions
SOCIAL MEDIA	Post by Lord Mayor Sally Capp via LinkedIn	Two Instagram and three Facebook posts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3,602 impressions • 105 engagements • 13% engagement rate 	
EMAILS / LETTERS	Emails to Participate Melbourne's existing followers and subscribers and those who completed the 2022 survey. Neighbourhood Partners, Community Animators and other customer facing staff promoted with personal endorsement to neighbourhood contacts.		
ADVERTS	RMIT and the University of Melbourne job postings promoted internally to students. Community Hub and individual Neighbourhood portal webpage adverts.	Radio announcements were aired on 2 local community radio stations, 3CR and 3ZZZ, in Italian, Greek, Vietnamese, Mandarin, Cantonese, Arabic and Vietnamese.	
POSTERS / POSTCARD	<p>Posters provided digitally to teams across CoM and externally</p> <p>Hard copy posters to all libraries (9 locations) and flyers at F2F events</p>	<p>Postcards were printed out and placed in the customer service centres, libraries and leisure centres (10 buildings).</p> <p>Posters were at the five libraries and three leisure centres. Translated posters in Vietnamese and Chinese were displayed in the relevant sections at the libraries.</p>	
EDM / NEWSLETTER	<p>Melbourne News EDM reached 3,159 subscribers resulting in 547 clicks.</p> <p>Business EDM Promotion to universities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RMIT student club leaders through RUSU Student Union Newsletter • University of Melbourne staff via an all-staff e-news, Sustainability COP webpage. <p>Cross-promotion by teams engaging on Heat Safe City and Urban Forest Precinct Plans.</p>	<p>Email newsletters reached 16,813 subscribers resulting in 318 clicks. Newsletters went to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YSY subscriber list • Yarr Life • YSY EDM • Environmental e-newsletter • Leisure e-newsletter • Libraries e-newsletter <p>The Project was mentioned in the Feb/March edition of Yarra News, a pamphlet delivered to 52,000 residents in Yarra.</p>	

¹ This also includes data from the CoM engagement that ran from 26 September to 4 November 2022.

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