

# Stage 2

# Governance Rules review

Results from Shaping Banyule, community workshops and other feedback  
– June to July 2023



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# 1. Project overview

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In 2022, officers made a commitment to the community and Councillors that in 2023, a Stage 2 review of the Governance Rules (the Rules) would take place, with a focus on the community participation at our Council meetings. It was also identified by Council officers that information about how the community can participate in Council meetings is scattered across several platforms.

The purpose of the Stage 2 review is to seek to understand community views and look for improvements to the way the community can participate in Council meetings by drawing on an evidence-based point of reference from the benchmarking (to understand Council sector trends and expectations the community may have around involvement at our meetings), performing a formal Gender Impact Assessment (GIA), and through a period of community consultation (to understand what our community thinks of our current rules and improvements that can be implemented moving forward).

At the end of the Stage 2 review, a new Chapter 3 will be inserted into the existing Governance Rules which will give clarity to process.

Having Governance Rules in place is a requirement under s60 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, and guidelines on community participation in Council meetings will strengthen the transparency of the opportunities the Community can take part in Council meetings.

## Community Consultation

The period of community consultation was held between **Thursday 29 June 2023 and Thursday 20 July 2023**. The community consultation aimed to building Council's understanding of how the Banyule community want to participate in Council meetings, before Council commit to a new set of Rules. It was also an opportunity to build community awareness and knowledge of Council's governance processes.

The formal period of community consultation included the following engagement methods:

- A Shaping Banyule website detailing: the project history; project timeline; Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs); a link to the community survey for the project; details of community workshops; links to the proposed new Rules; and contact details for the Governance team running the project;
- Postcards with project details placed at several Banyule libraries, community hubs and service centres;
- A social media campaign;
- Two (2) community workshops run by the Governance & Integrity Department; and
- A Stage 2 Governance Rules Review community survey available on Shaping Banyule.

## 2. Engagement Objectives

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Key objectives were identified for engagement with all stakeholders throughout this project.

### Objective 1

To engage with Councillors in the revision of the Governance Rules (Community Participation).

### Objective 2

To engage and consult with the Banyule Community regarding the review of the Governance Rules (Community Participation) and obtain feedback on avenues that support community participation in Council meetings.

### Objective 3

To update Banyule's Governance Rules (Community Participation) and ensure that the Rules have taken into consideration stakeholder feedback received, along with a gender impact assessment lens applied to any changes recommended for final Council adoption.

### 3. Consultation methods and tools to raise awareness

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Three (3) methods of community consultation were delivered as part of this project.

#### Shaping Banyule

Audience: Banyule community members  
*19 June 2023 - October 2023 (project end date)*

#### Workshops

Audience: Banyule community members  
*5 July 2023 and 11 July 2023*

#### Survey

Audience: Banyule community members  
*29 June 2023 - 20 July 2023*

Additional tools were used to raise awareness and encourage engagement throughout the community consultation period.

#### Banyule Banner

Audience: Banyule community members  
*19 June 2023 circulation*

#### Hard copy postcards

Audience: Banyule community members  
*Dissemination week commencing 26 June 2023*

#### Social Media campaign

Audience: Banyule community members  
*30 June 2023 - 19 July 2023*

## 3.1 Shaping Banyule

A home page for the project was created on Banyule's digital engagement platform, Shaping Banyule.

The page provided a project overview, purpose, background (Stage 1 review overview), timeline, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), a 'Get Involved' section outlining ways the Community could participate in community consultation, a link to register for upcoming workshops, a link to participate in the project survey, along with contact details for the team running the project.

The page went live from 19 June 2023 and will stay open and available until project completion. Throughout the period of community consultation, the Shaping Banyule page was viewed more than 760 times ('views' measured between 28 June 2023 and 20 July 2023).

Participation on Shaping Banyule was boosted by a feature article in the Banyule Banner and targeted paid social media campaign posts throughout the community engagement period.

## 3.2 Workshops

Two (2) workshops were delivered during the three-week community consultation period.

To promote participation and access, workshops were scheduled both during the day and after business hours, to provide the community with sufficient opportunity to participate. Participants either registered their attendance at the selected workshop, or attended on the day/night, with a total of 18 participants across both.

- Workshop 1 was held on 5 July 2023 at 6.30pm at 1 Flintoff Street, Greensborough.
- Workshop 2 was held on 11 July 2023 at 12.30pm at the Bellfield Community Hub, Bellfield.

The Governance Department facilitated both workshops and structured them the same to maintain a consistent and fair approach throughout the engagement process. Each session commenced with an introduction and overview of the project. Facilitators provided insight into how the session would run and encouraged participants to maintain respect throughout the session to ensure a safe environment for all in attendance.

Following an introduction to the project, each workshop then moved into an interactive style, with key questions from the online survey captured at various tables around the workshop room, creating 'workstations.' Each workstation represented a method of community participation at a Council meeting.

- Workstation 1: Requests to Speak
- Workstation 2: Public Questions
- Workstation 3: Petitions

Workshop participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with each question using a tool known as a Likert scale. Discussions outside of the questions also took place, with additional comments and feedback captured through officers scribing feedback and workshop participants leaving their direct feedback using markers, post-it notes and large A1 sheets of paper.

## 3.3 Survey

A survey was created to give members of the Banyule community an opportunity to provide direct feedback on the current Rules and the proposed Chapter 3. The survey was open between Thursday 29 June 2023 and midnight on Thursday 20 July 2023, and was split into three sections:

- Requests to Speak
- Public Questions
- Petitions

The survey consisted of up to 40 questions, with the number of questions varying dependent on respondents' answers triggering follow up questions. A total of 38 participants completed the survey.

### 3.4 Other forms of feedback

In addition to receiving feedback via the project survey, officers received three (3) pieces of feedback by email, and one (1) piece of feedback hard copy/in writing.

### 3.5 Banyule Banner

The Banyule Banner, Council's community newsletter, is distributed 8 times per year to approximately 59,000 households and businesses through Australia Post and was used as an additional tool to encourage engagement throughout the community consultation period. In the 19 June 2023 edition, an article was placed in the Banner advising the community that the Stage 2 review was occurring. The article turned the community's attention to our Shaping Banyule page through a QR code. The QR code, once scanned, took people to the project page on Shaping Banyule which included project details and updates. The Governance team's direct contact details were also included in the article.

### 3.6 Hard copy information cards

To raise awareness of the project, 150 hard copy postcards were printed and disseminated across various facilities within the municipality. The information cards provided insight on the purpose of the project and details of the community consultation period, inviting the community to share their thoughts on our Shaping Banyule website.

The information cards were distributed across the following locations:

- Watsonia Neighbourhood House
- Greenhills Neighbourhood House
- Bellfield Community Hub
- Rosanna Library
- Watsonia Library
- Flintoff Street, Greensborough
- Throughout the gallery at the 26 June Council meeting

### 3.7 Social Media campaign

A social media campaign was included as part of the three-week community consultation period for the project.

Campaign one ran from 30 July to 5 July 2023.

Campaign two ran from 7 July to 10 July 2023.

Both campaigns reached a total of over 17,000 people, with a click through rate of 2.79% for campaign one, and 2.55% for campaign two.

*\*'Reached' refers to the number of people who see this ad on their social media feeds.*

*\* 'Click through rate' is the number of 'clicks' the ad receives after being displayed on someone's social media feed. The current benchmark is 1.89%. It can be said that this campaign exceeded the benchmark.*

### 3.8 Other advocacy and stakeholder engagement tools

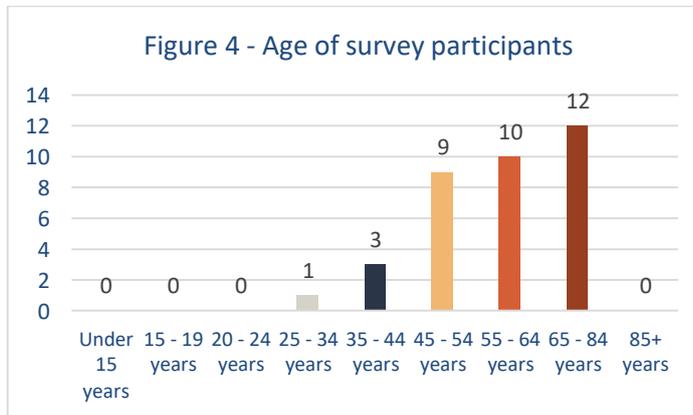
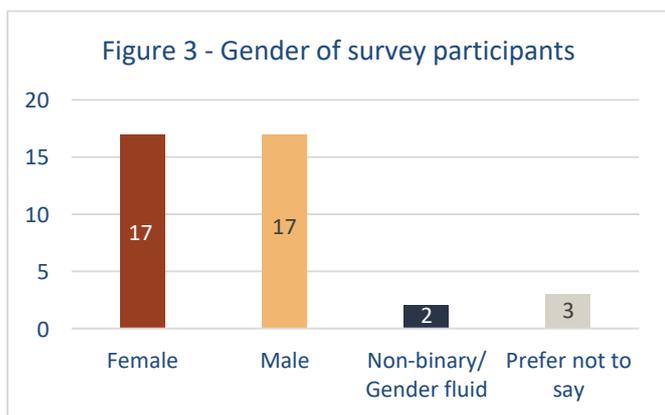
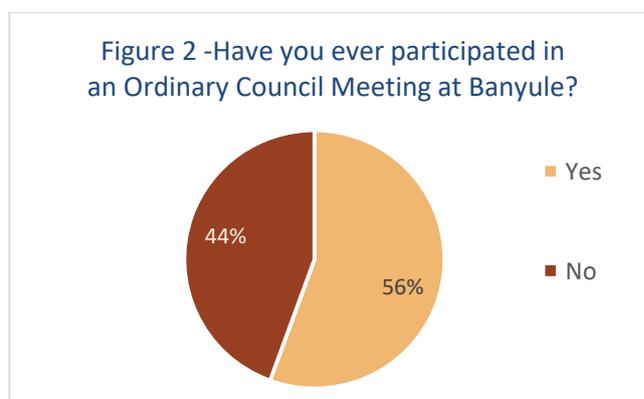
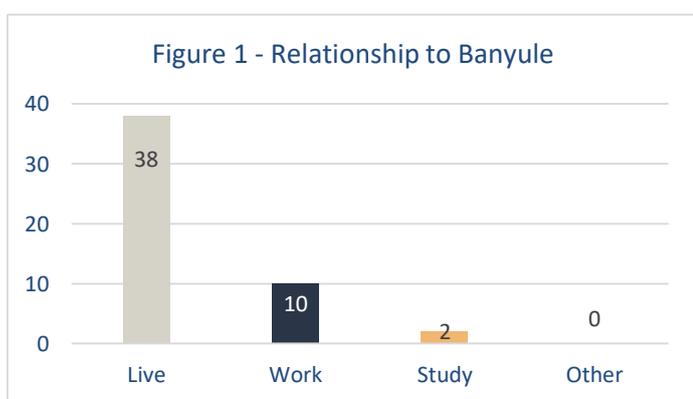
Internal stakeholder networks were also engaged throughout the community consultation period to ensure that awareness amongst a diverse cohort across the Banyule municipality. Advisory and Population Committees

were included in communications through contact officers, to ensure that information about community consultation opportunities flowed through to all community groups.

## 4. Survey participation – diversity

Members of the community completing our Shaping Banyule survey between 29 June and 20 July 2023 were asked a variety of questions at the completion of the survey to understand who provided feedback. These details were captured to support a thorough Gender Impact Assessment.

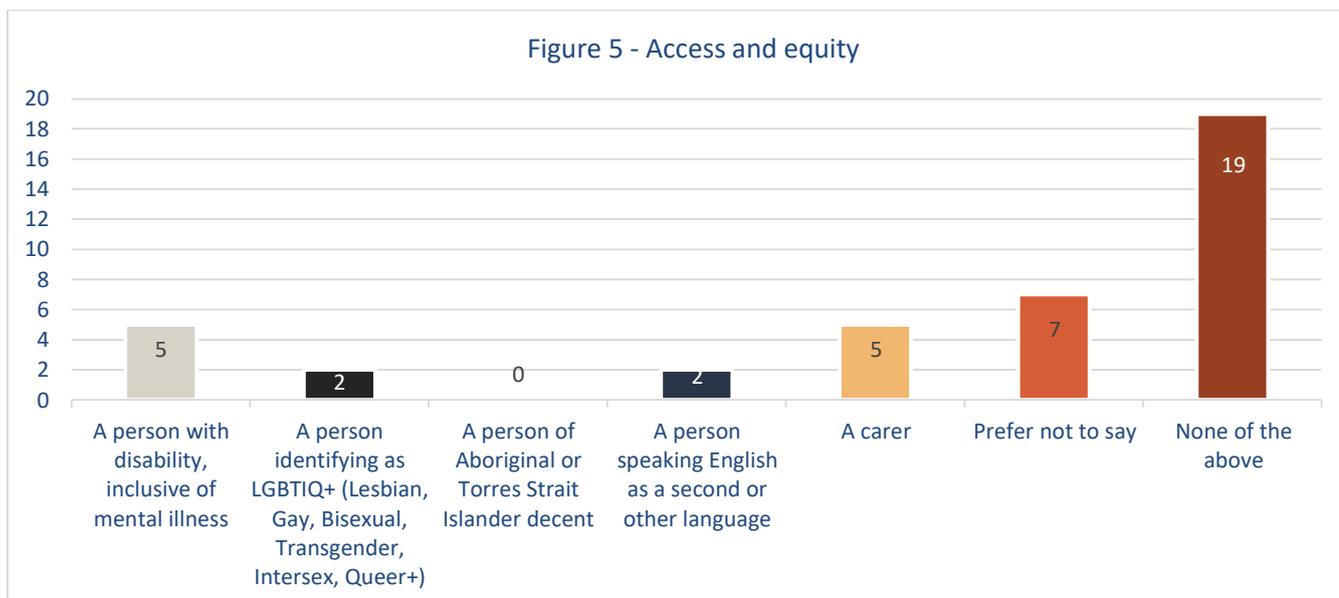
From this data we were able to ascertain that the majority of those that engaged with the survey resided and worked within the Banyule municipality, with 44% of survey participants noting that they had not previously taken part in a Council meeting at Banyule before. Reaching those community members who had not engaged through a formal process before highlights the success of the social media campaign and other tools used to promote awareness throughout the project’s community consultation period.



Of those that completed the Shaping Banyule survey, half identified as male, and half as female. Two survey participants identified as non-binary/gender fluid, and three preferred not to say. All age groups were represented except 85+ and under 25 years.

Most survey participants either preferred not to say or were not able to identify with any access and equity statements captured at the end of the survey. Five identified as a person with a disability, inclusive of mental illness, two identified as members from LGBTIQ+ communities, five as carers, and two as speaking English as a second or other language. There were no survey participants who identified as having Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent.

Figure 5 - Access and equity



## 5. Community consultation findings

A total of 60 pieces of feedback were received during the Stage 2 Governance Rules review consultation period from the survey (38), workshops (18), email submissions (3), and one (1) written/hard copy. The below graphs collate and display together all of the feedback received throughout the consultation period.

While 60 members of the community provided feedback, the mixed style of feedback means that not all Shaping Banyule survey questions were answered by all 60 participants. Data in the tables and graphs below may therefore not equate to 60 pieces of feedback for each question.

Community members that completed the survey on Shaping Banyule were able to complete the survey in its entirety. Contrastingly, those that attended the in-person workshops were presented with key questions from the Shaping Banyule survey. Due to the informal style of those workshops, it was not mandatory for all attendees to answer all questions. When participants did answer, and similar to the online survey, they were asked to indicate their level of agreement with a statement using a Likert scale from 'Strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. Only those that answered the questions have their responses represented in the tables below. Comments received during the workshops also form part of the feedback below and will contribute to officer recommendations.

The format of feedback provided through the three (3) individual email submissions and one (1) written submission, was unique for each submission. People that provided these submissions did not answer all questions in the Shaping Banyule survey. Content from submissions has been collated with survey and workshop data as part of the below analysis.

### 5.1 Requests to Speak

The Requests to Speak section of the community consultation allowed participants to consider the current way Council's Request to Speak process works and highlighted proposed changes. Participants were reminded that a Request to Speak at a Council meeting provides them with the opportunity to have their views heard and to tell Council what they think about meeting agenda items before a decision is made.

Survey participants were asked to state their level of agreement with a statement and were able to choose from either 'agree', 'disagree' or 'don't know/can't say' answers. Participants were also able to provide additional comments with free text answer boxes. A range of yes/no questions were also included throughout the survey, followed by more opportunity to provide comment with free text answer boxes. All questions from the Shaping Banyule online survey are outlined below, followed by what our community told us.

### 5.1.1 Statement 1: Requests to Speak must be submitted by 12pm (previously 10am) on the day of the Council meeting.

Subtext under statement: *The Community can submit a Request to Speak when the relevant Council meeting agenda is published on Council's website, 5 days prior to the Council Meeting and closes at 12pm on the day of the Council meeting.*



Of the 41 people that responded to this question, an overwhelming amount (27) felt that extending the cut off time to formally lodge a Request to Speak at 12pm would be favoured, should this change be implemented to the Rules.

#### Why did you choose this response?

Of the 27 that agreed with this statement and provided additional comment, some common themes are noted below:

- Comments that this approach seemed reasonable, fair, or provided more opportunity to speak (6 people).

Of the 10 that disagreed with this statement and provided additional comment, comments received were general feedback on Council processes overall and are therefore not captured as feedback relevant to this statement or for the purpose of this report.

*(If the respondent answered 'disagree', they were then asked)*

#### What do you think is an appropriate time to submit a Request to Speak?

Of those that provided an answer to this question, key themes are noted below:

- 12pm on the meeting day is appropriate (6 people).
- No notice/at the meeting itself (1 person).

### 5.1.2 Statement 2: Requests to Speak may be made on any agenda item listed for that meeting.

Subtext under statement: *Once the agenda is published, members of the public can make a formal request to speak on an agenda item and must speak only to that item.*

Figure 7 - Requests to Speak may be made on any agenda item listed for that meeting



Of the 53 people that responded to this statement, respondents overwhelmingly support (37) being able to Request to Speak on any agenda item listed for that meeting.

### Why did you choose this response?

Of those that provided additional comments to this rule, some key themes are noted below:

- Of those that agreed:
  - Staying on topic with agenda item seems reasonable and keeps focus on issues (8 people).
- Of those that disagreed:
  - A sentiment that there should be an opportunity to speak to any topic outside of the agenda (3 people).

*(If the respondent answered 'disagree', they were then asked)*

### What do you think is an appropriate rule for formal Requests to Speak?

Of those that disagreed and provided an additional comment to this question, key themes are noted below:

- The community should be free to speak on any topic outside of the agenda (6 people).

### 5.1.3 Statement 3: Registered speakers can speak to a maximum of two (2) agenda items per meeting (no change to previous rule).

Subtext under statement: *Once the agenda is published, members of the public can make a formal request to speak to up to two (2) agenda items per meeting.*



Of the 58 people that responded to this statement, overwhelmingly, the community disagree (41) with being able to speak to a maximum of two agenda items per meeting.

#### Why did you choose this response?

Of those that provided additional comments to this rule, some key themes are noted below:

- Of those that agreed:
  - Seems a reasonable rule/provides everyone with an opportunity to speak (6 people).
- Of those that disagreed:
  - May be a desire to speak on more than two agenda items (12 people).
  - This can be perceived as being restrictive (5 people).
  - There needs to be a way of counteracting community members from dominating the meeting, and also giving everyone an opportunity to speak (1 person).

*(If the respondent answered 'disagree', they were then asked)*

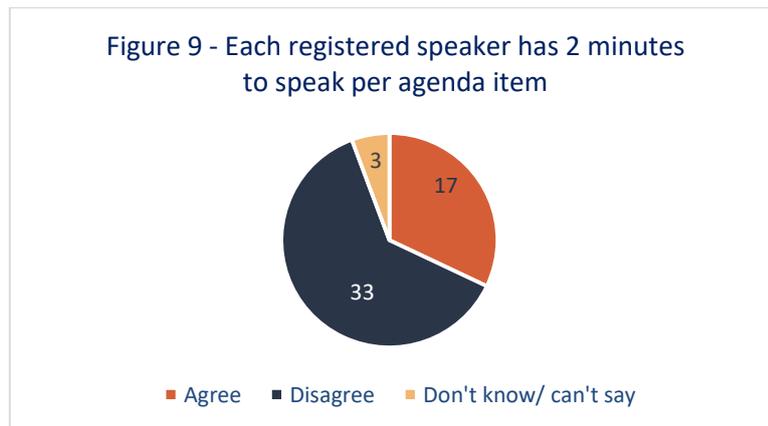
#### What do you think is an appropriate number of agenda items per Council meeting that the community can speak to?

Of those that disagreed and provided an additional comment to this question, key themes are noted below:

- Unlimited (16 people).
- Three/Four (3 people).

#### 5.1.4 Statement 4: Each person registered to speak has a maximum of two (2) minutes speaking time per agenda item (no change to previous rule).

Subtext under statement: *Extension beyond the two (2) minutes is permitted is at the discretion of the Chair.*



Of the 53 participants who answered this question, most disagree with the two minutes speaking time per agenda item.

#### Why did you choose this response?

Of those that provided additional comments to this rule, some key themes are noted below:

- Of those that agreed:
  - Two minutes appears reasonable and keeps the meeting from going on too long (5 people).
  - Keeps the meeting on track and to time/prevents meeting from going on too long (2 people).
  - Having the option to have speaking time extended is good (3 people).
- Of those that disagreed:
  - Three minutes is appropriate (7 people).
  - Two minutes is not enough time at all/too short to get points across (10 people).

*(If the respondent answered 'disagree', they were then asked)*

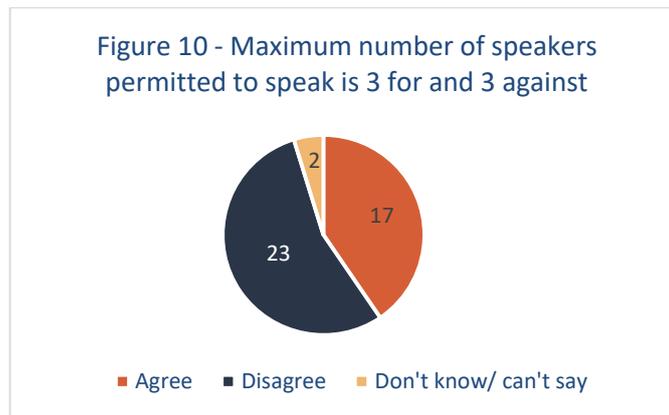
#### What do you think is an appropriate time to speak an agenda item?

Of those that disagreed and provided an additional comment to this question, key themes are noted below:

- Three minutes (8 people).
- Four minutes (2 people).
- Five minutes (4 people).
- Ten minutes (1 person)

### 5.1.5 Statement 5: The maximum number of speakers permitted to speak to a single agenda item is three (3) speakers for and three (3) speakers against (no change to previous rule).

*Subtext under statement:* May be increased at the discretion of the Chair.



Participants disagree with the 3 speakers for and 3 speakers against rule. While the data from the Shaping Banyule survey shows that more people disagree with the statement than agree, commentary in the workshop was more in support of the statement, leading to an even position of agreeing and disagreeing with the statement.

#### Why did you choose this response?

Of those that provided additional comments to this rule, some key themes are noted below:

- Of those that agreed:
  - Seems reasonable/fair, room for reasonable disparity of views (7 people).
  - Reasonable, however Chair of meeting should have discretion (2 people).
- Of those that disagreed:
  - Unfair/unreasonable/limiting (2 people).
  - Everyone should be able to speak/be heard (9 people).
  - Can be perceived as undemocratic (2 people).

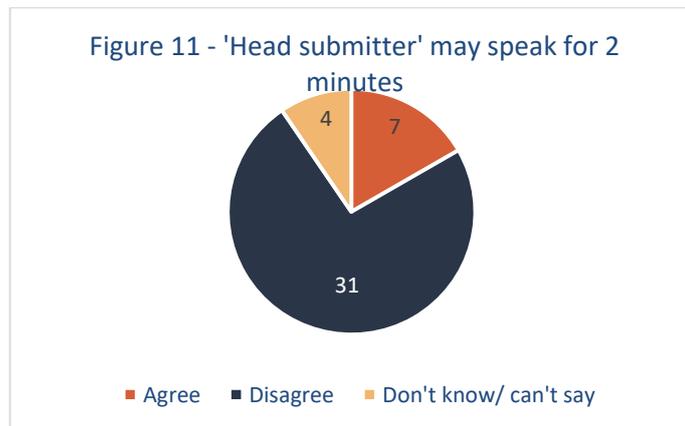
*(If the respondent answered disagree, they were then asked)*

#### What do you think is an appropriate number of speakers permitted to speak for and against each agenda item?

Of those that disagreed and provided an additional comment to this question, key themes are noted below:

- All speakers, unlimited, and acknowledged in minutes of meeting (10 people).
- Four people (1 person)
- Up to six for and six against (1 person).
- Two for and two against (1 person).
- 10 people (1 person).
- Mayor or Chairperson discretion (1 person).

### 5.1.6 Statement 6: The 'head submitter' speaking on behalf of a group of individuals who share the same view, is entitled to speak for a maximum of two (2) minutes (new rule introduced).



From the feedback provided, the community strongly disagree that a 'head submitter' speaking on behalf of a group of individuals who share the same view, should be entitled to speak for a maximum of two minutes.

#### Why did you choose this response?

Of those that provided additional comments to this rule, some key themes are noted below:

- Of those that agreed:
  - This approach and time is sufficient (4 people).
- Of those that disagreed:
  - Overall sentiment that a 'head submitter' is a good idea, however a general feeling that two minutes is insufficient and longer time is required (21 people).

*(If the respondent answered disagree, they were then asked)*

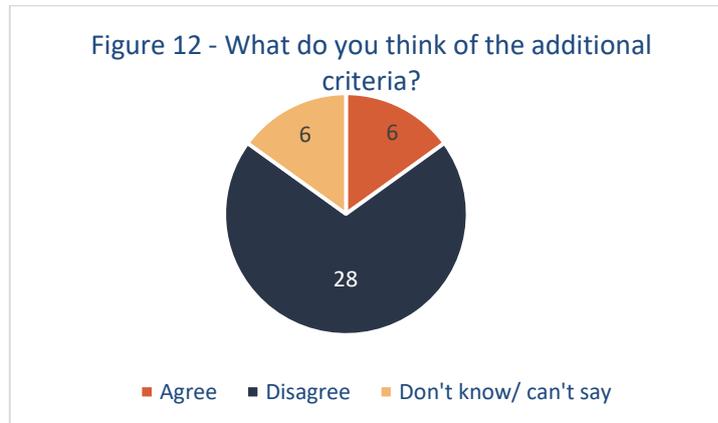
#### What do you think the maximum time for a 'head submitter' to speak on behalf of a group should be?

Of those that disagreed and provided an additional comment to this question, key themes are noted below:

- Longer time permitted for 'head submitter', five minutes more appropriate (9 people).
- Longer time permitted for 'head submitter', three minutes more appropriate (6 people).
- Longer time permitted for 'head submitter', four minutes more appropriate (3 people).
- Longer time permitted for 'head submitter', ten minutes more appropriate (3 people).

### 5.1.7 Statement 7: We have introduced additional criteria in the Rules to provide greater clarity on what types of questions will be accepted or not accepted during the Request to Speak process (additional rules introduced).

#### Tell us what you think of the additional criteria.



Participants identified a strong 'disagree' sentiment overall when asked about the additional criteria introduced for greater clarity on the Request to Speak process. Additional comments provided throughout the consultation process, however, identify feedback on specific elements of the criteria.

#### Why did you choose this response?

Of those that provided additional comments to this rule, some key themes are noted below:

- Of those that agreed:
  - Reasonable criteria (2 people).
- Of those that disagreed:
  - Criteria is complex/restrictive/can be perceived as undemocratic (9 people).
  - Impartiality by Chairperson must be guaranteed when disallowing speakers (2 people).
  - Criteria is not written in plain English/consideration for CALD (culturally and linguistically diverse) community (1 person).
  - General concern around criteria:
    - (16) (b) – deals with a particular aspect of the subject matter already addressed by a previous speaker.
    - (16) (d) – it is defamatory, indecent, abusive, offensive, irrelevant, trivial, or objectionable in language or substance.
    - (16) (e) – it is aimed at embarrassing a Councillor or a member of Council staff.
    - (16) (f) – 'it is a submission that is directed at an individual Councillor or member of Council staff' overall.  
(8 people).

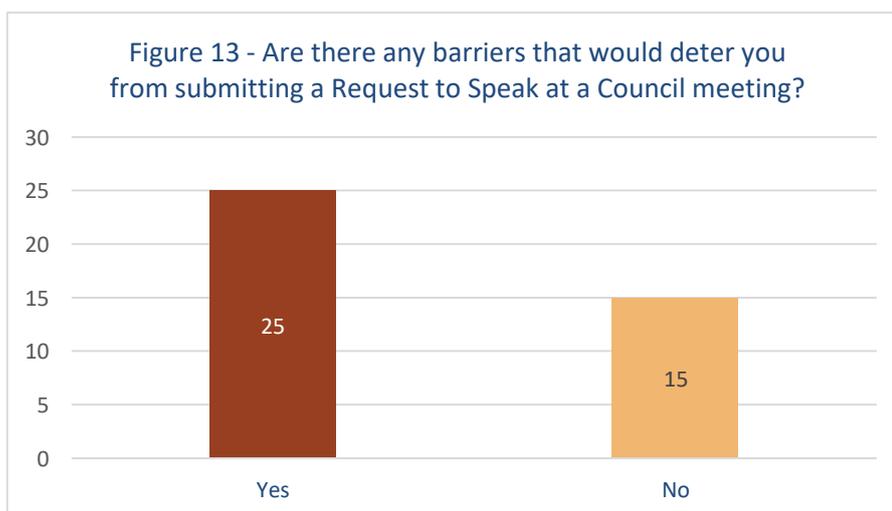
*(If the respondent answered disagree, they were then asked)*

## What do you consider to be appropriate criteria for submissions to be accepted and not accepted during the Request to Speak process?

Of those that disagreed and provided an additional comment to this question, key themes are noted below:

- General concern that criteria may restrict voice of community (4 people).
- General concern around criteria:
  - (16) (b) – deals with a particular aspect of the subject matter already addressed by a previous speaker.
  - (16) (d) – it is defamatory, indecent, abusive, offensive, irrelevant, trivial, or objectionable in language or substance.
  - (16) (e) – it is aimed at embarrassing a Councillor or a member of Council staff.
  - (16) (f) – ‘it is a submission that is directed at an individual Councillor or member of Council staff overall.(3 people)
- All requested speaker names should be noted in meeting minutes (1 person).

### 5.1.8 Are there any barriers that would deter you from submitting a Request to Speak at a Council meeting?



*(If the respondent answered yes, they were then asked)*

#### What are the barriers you are experiencing?

Of those that answered 'yes' and provided additional comments, some key themes are noted below:

- Concern around Council impartiality (4 people).
- Lack of understanding around the entire process (4 people).
- Internal timelines/deadlines (4 people).
- Introvert/discomfort overall (2 people).

### 5.1.9 What can Council do to help you participate more easily?

**Table 1 – Themes and comments on how Council can support participation of members of the public during the Request to Speak process.**

<b>Barriers (themes)</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Timelines/deadlines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tight Council timelines.</li></ul>
Lack of awareness on process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create an attitude of gentle encouragement.</li><li>• A clearer criteria/process needed.</li></ul>
Request to Speak categories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A neutral category to speak – instead of just speaking ‘for’ or ‘against’.</li></ul>
Criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Simplify language.</li><li>• Allow community to speak on any topics relating to the community.</li></ul>
Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Should be able to speak at the beginning of a meeting.</li><li>• Allow virtual participation (phone, email, online, at both service centres).</li><li>• Have speaking/question time at beginning, middle and end.</li></ul>

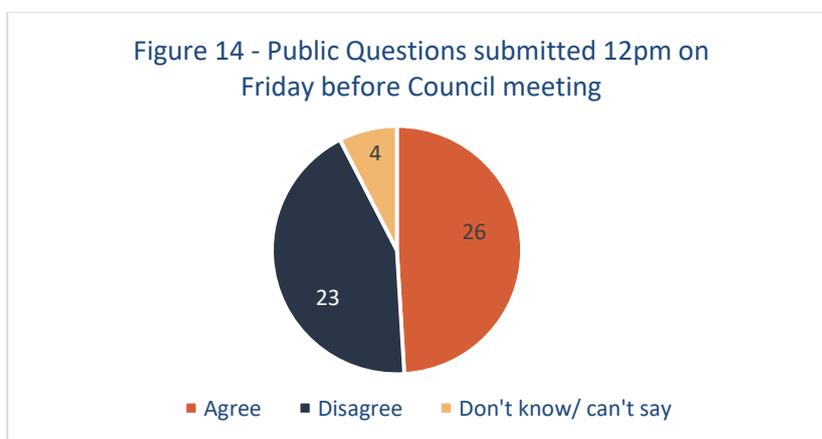
## 5.2 Public Questions

The Public Question section of our community consultation turned participants' minds to the current Public Question process and highlighted proposed changes. Participants were reminded that Public Question time is an opportunity for the community to ask questions directly to Council on matters of strategic policy, advocacy, or representation, and that questions and answers are recorded in the minutes of the meeting (on the public record).

Survey participants were asked to state their level of agreement with a statement and were able to choose from either 'agree', 'disagree' or 'don't know/can't say' answers. Participants were also able to provide additional comments with free text answer boxes. A range of yes/no questions were also included throughout the survey, followed by more opportunity to provide comment with free text answer boxes. All questions from the Shaping Banyule online survey (Public Question section) are outlined below, followed by what our community had to say.

### 5.2.1 Statement 8: Public Questions must be submitted by 12pm on the Friday before the Council meeting (no change to previous rule).

*Subtext under statement:* Public Questions can be submitted any time up to 12pm Friday before the Council meeting.



While it is clear of a divide between the community, marginally most members of the community agree with the Friday 12pm deadline for Public Questions.

#### Why did you choose that response?

Of those that provided additional comments to this rule, some key themes are noted below:

- Of those that agreed:
  - Belief that this is sufficient/reasonable time (8 people).
- Of those that disagreed:
  - This is restrictive/more flexibility required (4 people).
  - Verbal questions should be permitted at beginning of meeting (1 person).
  - Should be allowed up to the morning of the meeting day (2 people).

*(If the respondent answered disagree, they were then asked)*

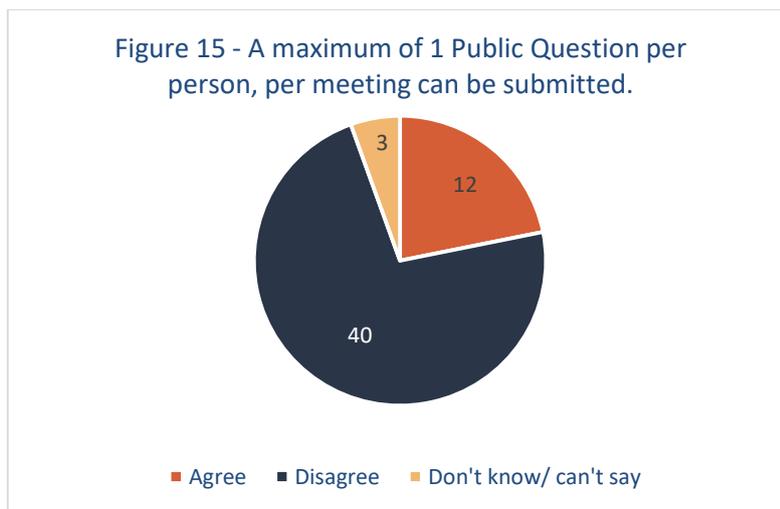
### What do you think is an appropriate deadline for submitting a Public Question?

Of those that disagreed and provided an additional comment to this question, key themes are noted below:

- Questions should be accepted at the meeting (1 person).
- 12pm on the meeting day (5 people).
- Morning or 10am on meeting day (2 people).

### 5.2.2 Statement 9: A maximum of one (1) Public Question, per person, per meeting can be submitted (no change to previous rule).

*Subtext under statement:* One (1) Public Question per person, per meeting, can be submitted.



Overwhelmingly, it appears the community strongly disagree with the maximum of one Public Question being asked per person, per meeting.

### Why did you choose that response?

Of those that provided additional comments to this rule, some key themes are noted below:

- Of those that agreed:
  - Reasonable/sufficient time (2 people).
- Of those that disagreed:
  - One question per meeting is limiting/restrictive (11 people).
  - At least two questions/multiple needed (5 people).

*(If the respondent answered disagree, they were then asked)*

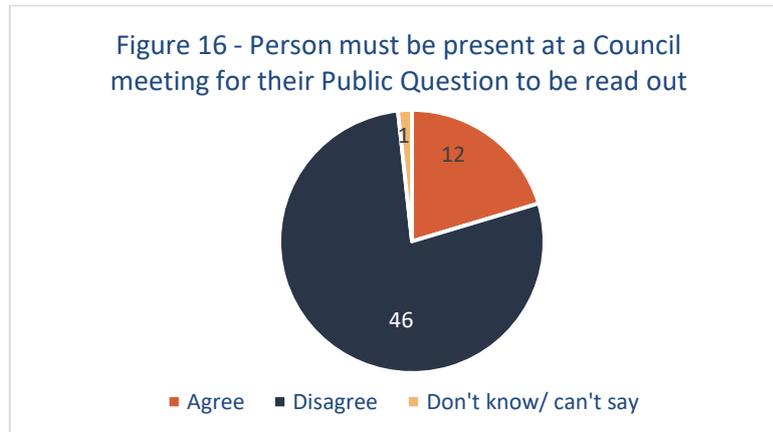
### What do you think is an appropriate number of Public Questions to be submitted per person, per meeting?

Of those that disagreed and provided an additional comment to this question, key themes are noted below:

- Two (6 people).
- Three (9 people).
- Five (1 person).
- No limit/unlimited (5 people).

### 5.2.3 Statement 10: If submitting a Public Question, the person must be present at the Council meeting for their question to be read out (new rule).

*Subtext under statement:* All Public Questions and answers will be recorded in the meeting minutes regardless of physical attendance at a Council meeting.



Overwhelmingly, the community disagree with the proposed new rule that a person must be present at a Council meeting for their question to be read out.

#### Why did you choose that response?

Of those that provided additional comments to this rule, some key themes are noted below:

- Of those that agreed:
  - Creates an element of accountability (2 people).
- Of those that disagreed:
  - Not all community members can attend in person/can be perceived as excluding certain members in the community (accessibility needs, family or work commitments) (7 people).
  - Doesn't consider members of the community become unwell and cannot attend (1 person).
  - Members should be able to join remotely (1 person).
  - All questions should be read out (3 people).
  - This is restrictive/limiting (3 people).

*(If the respondent answered disagree, they were then asked)*

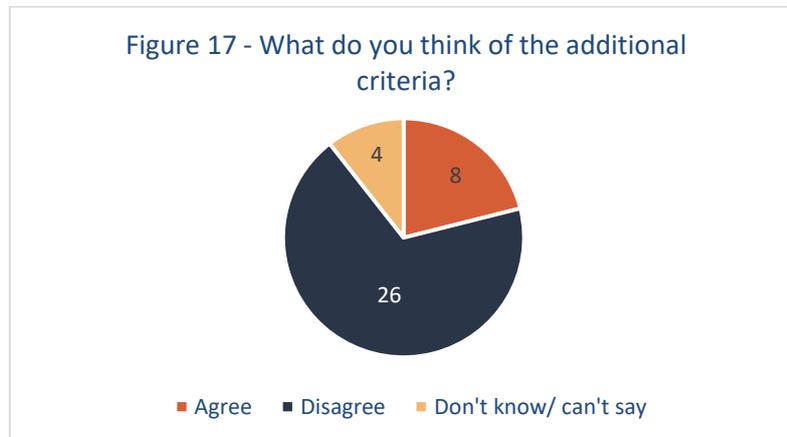
#### What do you think is an appropriate approach to Public Questions and answers being read out at a Council meeting?

Of those that disagreed and provided an additional comment to this question, key themes are noted below:

- Community members should be able to read their questions out too (4 people).
- This does not include CALD (culturally and linguistically diverse) community members (1 person).
- Public Questions should be read out at the beginning of the meeting (2 people).
- All Public Questions should be read out regardless of someone attending the meeting (9 people).

## 5.2.4 Statement 11: Officers have introduced additional criteria to accept and not accept Public Questions, with a view to making it easier for the community to understand Public Questions that will be accepted and not accepted (additional rules introduced).

*Subtext under statement:* Tell us what you think of the additional criteria.



There was a high level of disagreement when asked about the additional criteria introduced for greater clarity on the process surrounding Public Questions. Comments received throughout the consultation process explore feedback on specific elements of the criteria.

*(If the respondent answered disagree, they were then asked)*

### Why did you choose that response?

Of those that provided additional comments to this rule, some key themes are noted below:

- Of those that agreed:
  - Comment around what is 'irrelevant' or 'trivial' (1 person).
- Of those that disagreed:
  - General comment and concern on section 13 that it could be interpreted as being 'restrictive' (3 people).
  - General concern around criteria:
    - (e) - Is aimed at embarrassing a Councillor or a member of Council staff or relates to the personal views or actions of an individual Councillor or Member of Council Staff (1 person).
    - (f) Relates to the conduct or performance of a Councillor or Member of Council Staff (1 person).
    - (g) - Relates to personnel matters, personal hardship of any resident, ratepayer, industrial matters, contractual matters, proposed developments, legal advice, matters affecting security of Council or Council property, or any other matter which Council considers would prejudice Council or any person, or would require on the advice of the Chief Executive Officer or is determined to be an unreasonable diversion of Council resources to prepare a response for public question time (doesn't understand logic behind not being able to ask question on proposed developments) (1 person).

- (h) - It cannot be answered without disclosing confidential information as defined by section 3 of the Act or confidentiality requirements under any other Act that Council adheres to (1 person).
- (j) - Relates to legal privilege information or a matter that relates to law enforcement activity that is currently under investigation (1 person).
- (k) – has been previously asked and answered by Council in the last 12 months through a formal Public Question (comment that 12 months is too long) (4 people).

*(If the respondent answered disagree, they were then asked)*

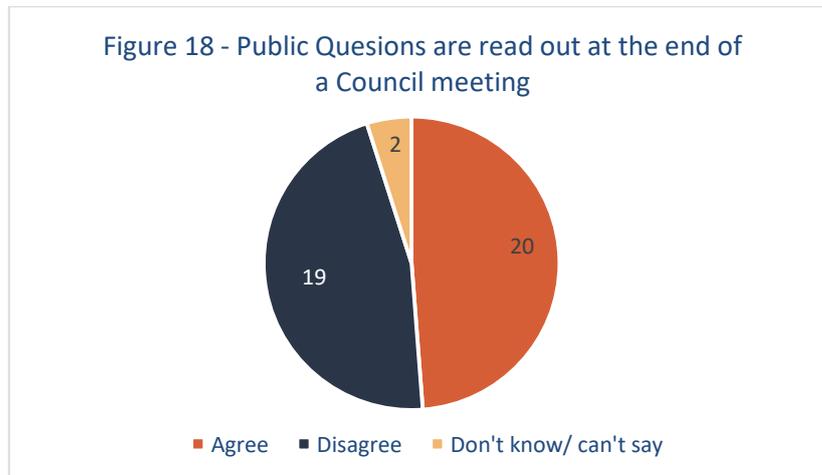
**What do you consider to be appropriate criteria for Public Questions to be accepted and not accepted?**

Of those that disagreed and provided an additional comment to this question, key themes are noted below:

- General comment that ‘minimal’ criteria is better (5 people).
- Section 13 (k) criteria being reduced (1 person)
- Comments about criteria noted above being unnecessary or a lack of understanding as to why all of the included criteria is necessary.

**5.2.5 Statement 12: Public Questions are read out at the end of a Council meeting (no change to previous rule).**

*Subtext under statement:* Public Questions that have been submitted to Council are read out and answered by a member of Council staff at the end of a Council meeting.



While responses received to this question evidence an even split across the community, comments received echo a level of disagreement towards questions being read at the end of a meeting.

**Why did you choose that response?**

Of those that provided additional comments to this rule, some key themes are noted below:

- Of those that agreed:
  - A sentiment that the end of the meeting is appropriate so that those members of the public attending to hear discussion on agenda items don't have to sit and wait through Public Questions and answers at the beginning (1 person).

- Of those that disagreed:
  - Reference to Public Question time historically being at the beginning of a Council meeting and comment that this is more appropriate (9 people).
  - Throughout the meeting (1 person).
  - After Urgent Business items (1 person).
  - Online to be more accessible to all (2 people).

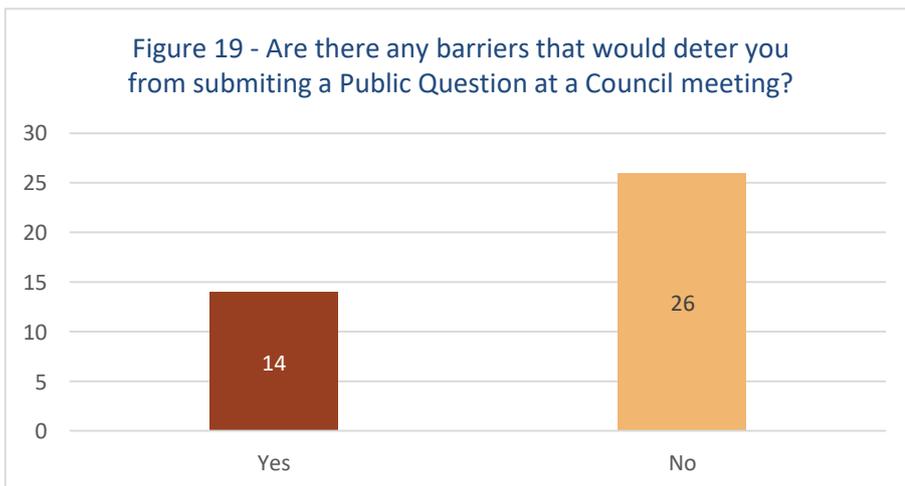
*(If the respondent answered disagree, they were then asked)*

**During a Council meeting, when do you think it is appropriate for Public Questions to be read out?**

Of those that disagreed and provided an additional comment to this question, key themes are noted below:

- The beginning of a meeting (11 people).
- Allow 20 minutes at the end of the meeting for general public questions (1 person).
- Throughout the meeting at intervals (2 people).
- Online and accessible to everyone (1 person).

**5.2.6 Are there any barriers that would deter you from submitting a Public Question at a Council meeting?**



*(If the respondent answered yes, they were then asked)*

**What are the barriers you are experiencing?**

Of those that answered 'yes' and provided additional comments, some key themes are noted below:

- I feel more likely to be heard if I was able to ask my questions earlier in the meeting (1 person).
- Discomfort around being in the presence of councillors (2 people).
- Needs to be an opportunity for a right of reply to answer councillor questions (1 person).
- (I) have to be present – mobility and other disability makes in-person attendance a barrier (1 person).
- The restricting criteria (4 people).

## 5.2.7 What can Council do to help you participate more easily?

**Table 2 - Themes and comments on how Council can support participation of members of the public during the Public Question process.**

<b>Barriers (themes)</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Inclusivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Accepting questions or statements via other mechanisms (phone, email, online, at both service centres).</li></ul>
Criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Remove some criteria.</li><li>• Allow public to speak on all matters relating to the community.</li><li>• Consider simplified language on some criteria.</li></ul>
Impartiality amongst Council group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure Council group and Chairperson are well versed in impartiality and meeting etiquette.</li></ul>
Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Move question and speaking time to beginning of meeting.</li></ul>

## 5.3 Petitions

The Petitions section of our community consultation reminded community members that petitions can be submitted to demonstrate a cohort of the communities' views on a matter, and that petitions can be presented directly to Council.

Survey participants were asked to state their level of agreement with a statement and were able to choose from either 'agree', 'disagree' or 'don't know/can't say' answers. Participants were also able to provide additional comments with free text answer boxes. A range of yes/no questions were also included throughout the survey, followed by more opportunity to provide comment with free text answer boxes. All questions from the Shaping Banyule online survey (Petition section) are outlined below, followed by what our community had to say.

### 5.3.1 Statement 13: Submitted petitions must have a minimum of 10 signatures to be accepted.

*Subtext under statement:* The requirement to have a minimum of 10 signatures has not changed.



This Rule gained a high level of support throughout the community engagement period.

#### Why did you choose that response?

Of those that provided additional comments to this rule, some key themes are noted below:

- Of those that agreed:
  - A sentiment that 10 signatures seems reasonable (10 people).
- Of those that disagreed:
  - Belief that there should be no limit to the number of signatures required or at least just one signature (2 people).

*(If the respondent answered 'disagree', they were then asked)*

#### What do you think is an appropriate minimum number of signatures for a petition to be accepted?

Of those that disagreed and provided an additional comment to this question, key themes are noted below:

- At least one signature (2 people).
- No limit to the number of signatures required (5 people).
- At least 5 signatures (1 person).

### 5.3.2. Statement 14: Additional signatures will not be accepted once a petition is submitted (new rule introduced).

*Subtext under statement:* The final number of signatures will be taken to be those signatures included on the date that the petition was first submitted. Any additional signatures will be referred to the relevant department after the matter is heard at Council.



A low level of support was received for this statement. Comments on this proposal highlight specific concerns for the community.

*(If the respondent answered 'disagree', they were then asked)*

#### Why did you choose that response?

Of those that provided additional comments to this rule, some key themes are noted below:

- Of those that agreed:
  - Signatures should only be from those within the Banyule municipality (1 person).
- Of those that disagreed:
  - Could be perceived to be restrictive/exclude people (8 people).
  - As word of the petition lodgement spreads/awareness of petition increases, more people may want to sign within the community (7 people).
  - Unsure of logic around this rule (2 people).
  - There could be issues with lodgement of petition (1 person).
  - Late signatures should be accepted and reference at the Council meeting (1 person).

*(If the respondent answered disagree, they were then asked)*

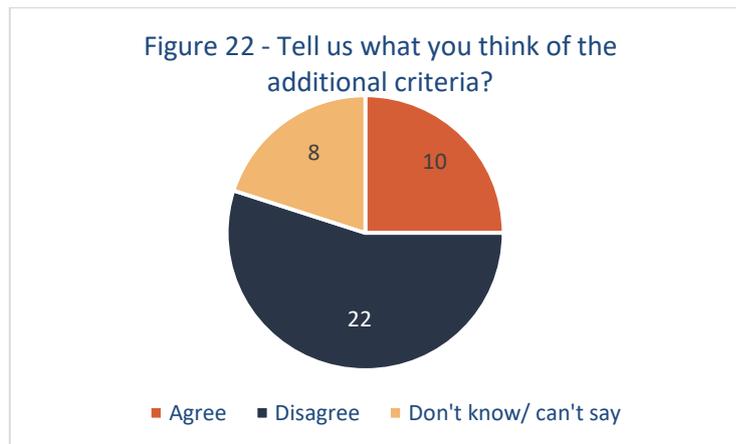
#### What do you think is an appropriate requirement for signatures to be accepted?

Of those that disagreed and provided an additional comment to this question, key themes are noted below:

- Up until the time (commencement) of the meeting, with additional signatures received after that included in the meeting minutes (3 people).
- Should be at the discretion of the head petitioner to accept (late signatures), not Council (2 people).
- 10 signatures minimum only (2 people).
- Residents of Banyule only (1 person).

### 5.3.3 Statement 15: Officers have introduced additional criteria for disallowing petitions, to make it easier for the community to understand petitions that may not be accepted.

*Subtext under statement:* Tell us what you think of the additional criteria.



There was a high level of disagreement for this statement amongst the community. Participants who provided comments on this statement were able to give insight into the specific concerns for disallowing petitions.

#### Why did you choose that response?

Of those that provided additional comments to this rule, some key themes are noted below:

- Of those that agreed:
  - Seems fair and/or reasonable (2 people).
- Of those that disagreed:
  - Can be perceived as being restrictive (4 people).
  - Criteria is complex/too many obstacles (2 people).
  - Potential for overuse of discretion by officers or council (1 person).
  - Overall disagreement with section 14 (section d, e, f, g, h) (1 person), and section 15 and 16 (1 person):
    - (d) – It is aimed at embarrassing a Councillor or a member of Council staff, or relates to the personal views or actions of an individual Councillor or Member of Council Staff.
    - (e) – It relates to the conduct or performance of a Councillor or Member of Council Staff.
    - (f) – It relates to personnel matters, personal hardship of any resident, ratepayer, industrial matters, contractual matters, proposed developments, legal advice, matters affecting security of Council or Council property, or any other matter which Council considers would prejudice Council, or any person or would require on the advice of the Chief Executive Officer or is determined to be an unreasonable diversion of Council resources to prepare a response for public question time.
    - (g) – It relates to a Councillor Conduct Matter that is currently under investigation internally within Council, or that has yet to be determined by an Internal Arbitration Process, Councillor Conduct Panel, or a complaint resolution body.
    - (h) – It relates to legal privilege information or a matter that relates to law enforcement activity that is currently under investigation.

- (15) – Where a petition is submitted, and the subject is of the same nature of a matter considered by Council in the last six months, and Council has not yet resolved on how to action that petition, or the officer under delegation has not undertaken a way forward, the petition will be dealt with in conjunction with the original petition that was tabled at a Council meeting and will not be considered as a new petition.
  
- (16) – Where a petition is submitted that is lobbying Council for the direct opposite outcome of a petition that has previously been tabled at Council in the previous six months, and Council have resolved on a way forward on that matter, the opposing petition will be provided to the relevant department and the relevant department will liaise directly with the lead petitioner. Electronic or online petitions must contain the name and email address of each petitioner or signatory, which details will, for the purposes of this Rule, qualify as the signature of such petitioner or signatory.

*(If the respondent answered 'disagree', they were then asked)*

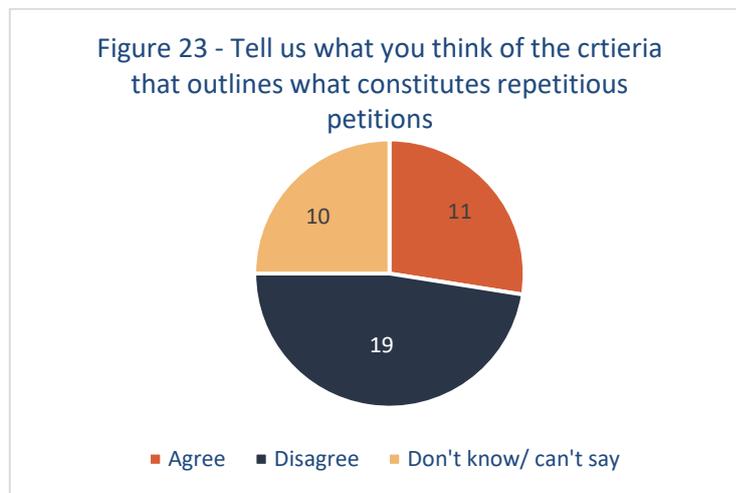
### **What do you consider to be appropriate criteria for disallowing petitions?**

Of those that disagreed and provided an additional comment to this question, key themes are noted below:

- Petitions that include a name and address within Banyule only, email addresses can be 'pretend/fake' (1 person).
- Minimal criteria for disallowing (should mostly allow all) (3 people).
- Remove criteria (14) (d) - It is aimed at embarrassing a Councillor or a member of Council staff, or relates to the personal views or actions of an individual Councillor or Member of Council Staff (1 person).
- Most criteria in section 14 acceptable, must be 10 genuine signatures not from the same address/house (1 person).
- All petitions should be allowed as long as not defamatory, offensive, or relating to a legal dispute (1 person).
- Remove criteria (14) (d) - It is aimed at embarrassing a Councillor or a member of Council staff, or relates to the personal views or actions of an individual Councillor or Member of Council Staff, (e) - It relates to the conduct or performance of a Councillor or Member of Council Staff, and (15) - Where a petition is submitted, and the subject is of the same nature of a matter considered by Council in the last six months, and Council has not yet resolved on how to action that petition, or the officer under delegation has not undertaken a way forward, the petition will be dealt with in conjunction with the original petition that was tabled at a Council meeting and will not be considered as a new petition (1 person)/

#### 5.4.4 Statement 16: Officers have introduced examples of what constitutes repetitious petitions to provide greater clarity on petitions that may not be accepted (new rule introduced).

*Subtext under statement:* Tell us what you think of the additional criteria.



Of those that expressed their level of agreement with this proposed new Rule, the community appear to be divided. Comments received highlight some particular thoughts from the community.

#### Why did you choose that response?

Of those that provided additional comments to this rule, some key themes are noted below:

- Of those that agreed:
  - Seems reasonable/fair criteria (1 person).
  - Appreciation for 'combining petitions of the same matter' (1 person).
- Of those that disagreed:
  - Potential for criteria on repeat petitions to appear restrictive or biased (6 people).
  - Unaware of previous issues of repeat petitions/unclear understanding for need of this criteria (4 people).
  - Residents that are invested should have an opportunity to lodge a petition regardless (1 person).

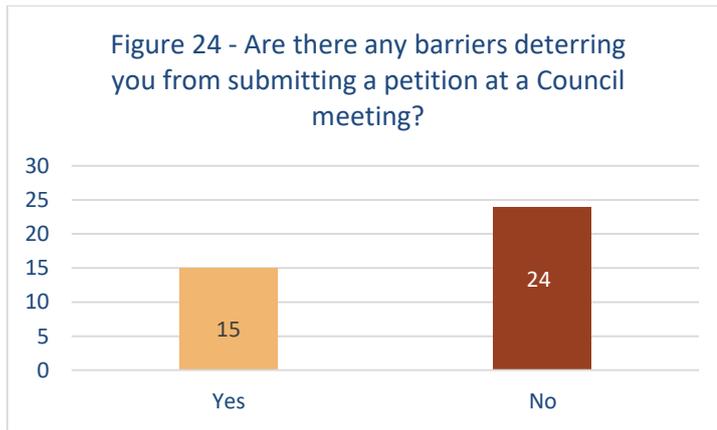
*(If the respondent answered disagree, they were then asked)*

#### What do you consider to be appropriate criteria for not accepting repetitious petitions?

Of those that disagreed and provided an additional comment to this question, key themes are noted below:

- Can Council check names and signatures of similar petitions to rule out 'repeat petitions' (2 people).
- All petitions should be accepted (4 people).

### 5.4.5 Are there any barriers that would deter you from submitting a Petition at a Council meeting?



*(If the respondent answered yes, they were then asked)*

#### What are the barriers you are experiencing?

Of those that answered 'yes' and provided additional comments, some key themes are noted below:

- Feeling of the criteria being 'restrictive', technical or 'too complex' to understand (6 people).
- New criteria around disallowing petitions (3 people).
- Attending a meeting (1 person).

### 5.4.6 What can Council do to help you participate more easily?

**Table 3 - Themes and comments from the community on how Council can support participation of members of the public during the Petition process.**

Barriers (themes)	Comments
Criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simplify some of the new criteria/wording.</li> <li>• More guidance information on website, a register of petitions?</li> <li>• Easier process to be provided.</li> </ul>