

Asset Plan Focus Group Engagement Summary

20 May – 4 June 2024



Introduction

The Asset Plan 2025-35 is a community facing document that will outline how the City of Whittlesea will plan, build, manage and maintain our assets over the next 10 years to ensure that they meet the needs of our growing community now and into the future. The plan will cover all Council physical assets including roads, footpaths, playgrounds, storm water, open spaces and buildings. It will outline how Council will prioritise, deliver and manage our infrastructure and assets.

To involve the community in shaping the Asset Plan focus groups were established to provide opportunity for valuable insights to be shared that will help identify, assess, and prioritise community interests. This approach will enable us to achieve balanced outcomes that are informed by the community's perspectives.

How we engaged you

Council held three community focus groups as well as an internal focus group. The three community focus groups were held in different locations across the municipality reducing travel for participants and enabling a place-based lens to the feedback captured.

Recruitment for the focus groups took place via an Expression of Interest (EOI) over a six-week period, 15 March – 28 April 2024. The opportunity was promoted via various channels including Councils social media channels (LinkedIn and Facebook), electronic direct mail to registered CALD, senior and sports clubs and in newsletters distributed by local area networks and the Hume Whittlesea local learning and employment network. A separate flyer was developed for each focus group and were displayed in Council facilities across the municipality including community centres, libraries and the Whittlesea Service Hub.

To submit an expression of interest, interested community members could complete the digital form available through the Engage Whittlesea platform or complete a hard copy form and submit it in

person at either Civic Centre or Whittlesea Service Hub or via email to the engagement team. Community could also contact the project team via phone to further discuss the opportunity.

The Engage Whittlesea project page featured general information about the focus groups including the purpose of the consultation as well as a project timeline. Focus Group Terms of Reference (Appendix 1) were prepared and housed on the project Engage page along with the digital EOI form.



Above: Flyers used to promote the three focus groups and displayed in Council facilities.

Confirming successful candidates and pre reading for the Asset Plan Focus Groups

Successful candidates that met and agreed with the terms of reference were advised via email that their application had been successful and were asked to confirm which of the three workshops they wanted to attend. The details of the three community focus groups and internal focus group are as below:

- Civic Centre Fountain View Room, South Morang, Monday 20 May, 7pm – 9pm
- Galada Community Centre, Epping, Wednesday 22 May, 7pm – 9pm
- Whittlesea Community Activity Centre, Tuesday 28 May, 7pm – 9pm
- Internal focus group – Lakeview Room at PRACC, Tuesday 4 June, 9.30am - 11am

Once a participant confirmed which focus group, they were attending they were sent, a pre reading information pack and pre-session survey that they were required to complete and return via email or bring along with them to the focus group. The pre-work was anticipated to take between 30-60 minutes to complete.

Format of the focus groups

Each focus group ran for two hours and included an ice-breaker activity, two small group activities, completion of an individual survey and a post evaluation survey. The agenda of the focus group is as below:

Time	Agenda Item
7.00pm	Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country (10 min)
7.10pm	Who are we, getting to know each other and a little bit about this workshop (20 min)
7.30pm	Activity 1: Group activity – Community levels of service - summary and group recommendation (30 minutes)
8.00pm	Session Break (10 minutes)
8.10pm	Activity 2: Group activity- Asset Management Principles -summary and group recommendation (30 minutes)
8.40pm	Recap recommendations (10 minutes)
8.50pm	Session reflections and wrap up (10 minutes)
9.00pm	Session Close

Activity 1 focused on the levels of servicing assets, with the activity broken into two parts. Table groups were presented with various coloured balls (pink, blue, green and yellow) labelled with 16 asset categories and were asked to place them in one of three tubs labelled 'increase level of service', 'keep the level the same' and 'decrease level of service'. Table facilitators assisted by introducing each asset group and assisting with facilitating table deliberations if needed. A staff member at each table acted as a scribe and captured participant comments and discussions as the activities were undertaken.

The second part of the activity saw the facilitator introduce the reason for the different coloured balls and outline that each colour represented the provided estimated annual costs of managing the asset category labelled on it. Participants were asked again to place each of the balls into one of the three tubs as they had before, but this time they needed to ensure that the budget balanced. To do this they needed to trade off the level of service on some of the asset categories. For instance, if the group wanted to increase the level of service of one of the pink balls, say open spaces they needed to trade off by decreasing the level of service equal to the value of that ball. The pink balls had the highest value and were equal to four green balls which meant as an example that the group needed to decrease the level of service of four asset categories (green balls) to increase the service level of open spaces (pink ball).

It was expected that many balls would be placed in the 'increase level of service' tub in the first activity, however groups were expected to move many balls out of this tub as part of the trade-off activity in an effort to balance the budget. The outcome of this first activity following deliberation and trade off was a clear indication of which asset groups if any that the community wanted the level of service increased on and which assets, they were comfortable lowering the level of service on.



Above: Council staff facilitating activity 1 at the focus group

Activity 2 saw participants presented with 12 asset management principles and asked individually to identify their level of agreement to each, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree (five possible options). Participants were also offered the opportunity to propose a new asset management principle.

Coming together the table groups were then asked to deliberate and rank the principles from high to low priority. Each tables ranking was shared with the wider group with the facilitator noting the top four principles of each group.

To conclude the session the facilitator summarised the table findings and encouraged participants to complete the post evaluation survey to capture feedback on their experience at the focus group.

See appendix 4 to view the workshop activity worksheets.



Above: focus group participants engaged in activity 2

Participation

A total of 49 community members were successful in their EOIs and offered the opportunity to participate in one of three focus groups. The final participant number across the three sessions was 34. The session with the highest number of participants was in Whittlesea with 16 participants, followed by Civic Centre with 12 community members and lastly Galada with six participants attending.



18% living with
or caring for a
person with a
disability



56% Female,
44% Male



32% aged 36 - 45
42% aged 55+



53% CALD
community members



56% of participants
described their household
structure as a couple with
children, 23% as married/
De facto with no children
and 9 % single.



LGBTQIA+
community: 6%
identified as members
of the LGBTQIA+
community and 9%
preferred not to say.



Participants
represented a total of
11 suburbs within the
municipality

Thirty-five Council staff registered to be a part of the internal focus group, with 25 attending on the day. Internal participants represented ten departments with many living within the municipality. The table below shows the different departments represented and the number of staff from those departments that participated in the focus group.



What we heard

Prior to the focus group session, majority of participants were satisfied with the current level of service of key assets, however many identified local assets they feel are under serviced. These assets included parks, gardens, nature strips and landscaping, roads and shared user paths, public bins and toilets, sporting/ leisure facilities and grounds, playgrounds, general contractor performance, car parks and lighting.

Once participants attended the workshops and deliberated with other community members and project staff, they gained a better understanding of the service level expectations and challenges faced. Participants told us, in small groups, that Aquatic Centres (swimming pools and splash parks), Lighting, Sports Pavilions and Public Toilets needed to have their service levels increased, whilst Shelter, Park Furniture, Kerbs and Community Buildings could have their levels of service decreased.

Participants, working in small groups, also told us that 75% agreed their top four asset management principles were “Assets promote an active and healthy community”, “Asset risks are minimised to keep the community safe”, “Assets are equitable & accessible to the whole community” and “Assets promote community connectivity”

At the completion of the focus groups:

- 97% of those attended felt that the purpose of the focus group was clear/ very clear.
- 93% felt very comfortable/ comfortable with the flow and structure of the focus group
- 94% felt very comfortable/ comfortable contributing
- 93% gained much more/ little more understanding of the challenges faced when asset planning
- 97% felt much more/ little more informed about asset planning
- 96% rated the facilitator engaging/ very engaging.

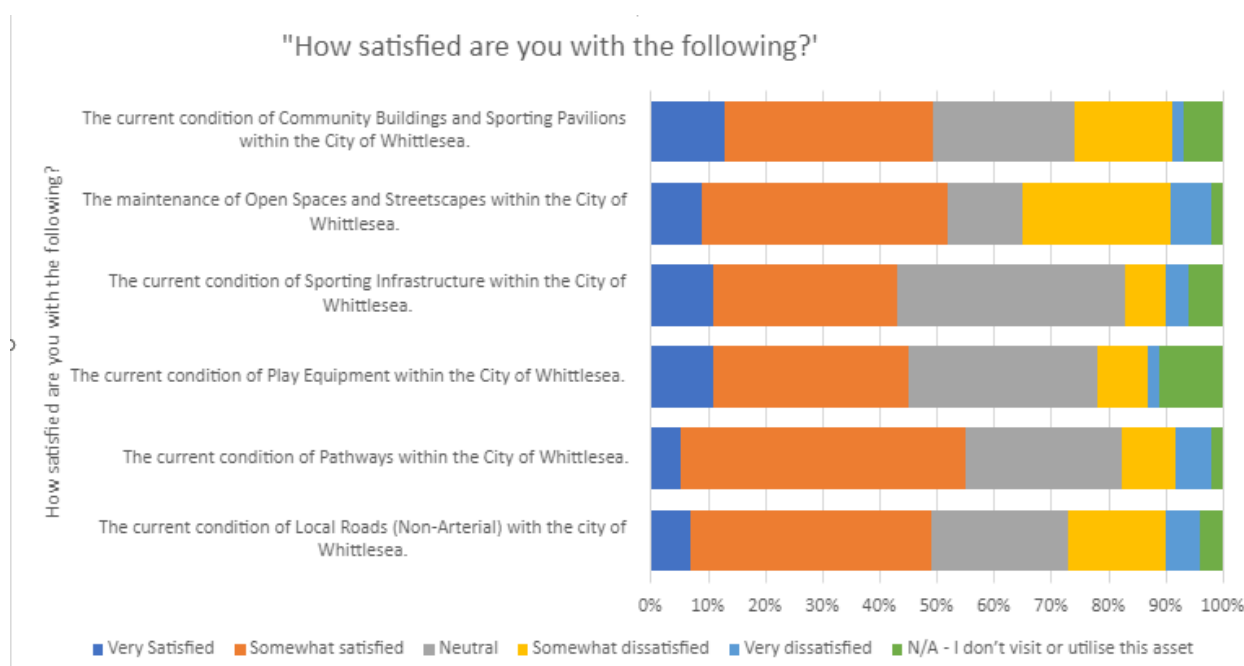


Above: Council staff and participants deliberating during activity 2 at the focus group

Pre-survey

The pre-survey was designed to capture participants satisfaction level with certain assets, and was completed by 53 of the 59 participants (32 community members and 21 Council staff).

The survey consisted of six questions that required participants to identify their level of satisfaction from a possible six options. The table below outlines the percentage of responses for each option based on the data received from all participants combined (internal and external). Overall, majority of participants were satisfied (selecting neutral, somewhat satisfied or very satisfied) with the current condition of key Council assets.



The survey then posed the question "are there any assets within the City of Whittlesea you think are over serviced and or under serviced?". Comments shared through this question and have been separated into over or under serviced and themed as below (all themed responses can be viewed in Appendix 2)

Over serviced assets (28 comments in total):

- Not sure, need more information or no (12 comments)
"As only moved into the area 12 months ago, not sure of this one"
- Sporting facilities (5 comments)
"I think sports fields are potentially overserviced"
- Happy with the state of assets (4 comments)
"In general, the CoW takes good care of its assets."
- Established areas vs new areas (3 comment)
"I feel the older areas of CoW get good services, but Donnybrook can be forgotten sometimes as it is very isolated"
- Playgrounds and streetscapes (2 comment)

"The streetscape infrastructure on High Street, Thomastown and the Lalor Shopping Centre is really high quality but is often completely overgrown with weeds and litter is left to accumulate for weeks on end."

- Cost of operations and purchasing of assets (2 comments)
"The \$400,000 budget for a bicycle storage facility in Whittlesea township is crazy"

Under serviced assets (58 comments in total):

- Roads and shared user paths (16 comments)
"Yan Yean Rd, Donnybrook Rd and Epping Rd"
- Parks, gardens, nature strips and landscaping (12 comments)
"Thyme Park needs some lighting since its one of the most used parks around the area. In winter it's hard to use the park for a walk by seniors or by kids to play due to lack of lighting"
- Sporting/ leisure facilities and grounds (7 comments)
"Sporting infrastructure and pavilions; community houses; gym that is safe for woman"
- Community facilities (7 comments)
"Spring Street Community Hall - Outdated and requires a revamp"
- Public bins and toilets (5 comments)
"Need more bins along walkways"
- Playgrounds (4 comments)
"Hinkler Drive playground is very old and full of rust"
- Car parks and lighting (4 comments)
"The parking area opposite the library beside the tennis courts on Laurel St Whittlesea. The parking areas around the AF Walker Reserve on Laurel St and Forest St. Parking outside Whittlesea Secondary College on Laurel St."
- Waterways (2 comments)
"Cleaning of waterways/lakes and some public areas"
- Contractor performance (1 comment)
"In general, I experience under serviced streetscapes/ parks during wet spring or summer periods where the grass is not maintained regularly."

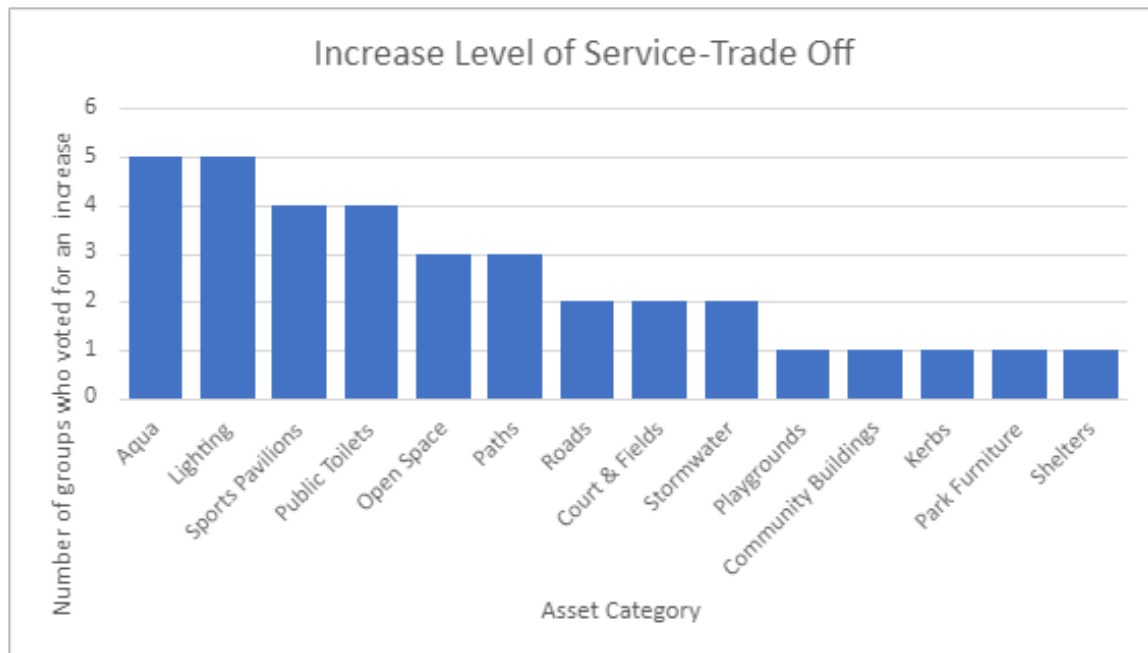
At the workshop

At each focus group participants worked in small table groups with a total of 12 groups participating. Three groups participated at Civic Centre, two at Galada three at Whittlesea and four at the internal session.

Activity 1 – Levels of service

Not surprisingly the first part of this activity that required groups to indicate their preferred level of service saw many of the coloured balls in the increase level tub. All 12 groups came in over budget when the value of each ball was revealed. Groups then traded-off the level of service in an effort to balance the budget, revealing the asset categories they saw as highest priority and/or requiring a higher level of service as well as those they were willing to reduce the level of service on.

After deliberation all 12 groups managed to balance the budget after trade-off, with two groups coming in under budget. The chart below highlights the findings of the desired increased levels of service of the asset category after the trade-off. These are the categories most important to the participants collectively.



Above: Council staff facilitating during activity 1 at the focus group

What participants were saying at the tables during Activity 1

Participants questioned project staff about the asset categories to better understand what the category comprised of to help the group make a collective informed decision. Participants shared their learned and living experiences, local to them, with one another to assist them to trade off and agree on a compromised outcome. Some examples of conversation themes scribed by the project staff include:

- The condition of assets in their local areas:
“Older venues such as Mill Park Aquatic centre are ill equipped in changing rooms, as families grow older some children are too big to be taken into change rooms with parents, need a medium sized space, much like an accessible toilet space, that can accommodate families with multiple children that need to change, shower and go to the toilet in the once area”
- Public toilets
“Are an area that is lacking – needed for people with small children, seniors and those with medical issues. There should be accessible public toilets in all council parks”
- Tree maintenance
“I am attaching photos of 4 large gum trees outside my house. They are possibly 10 or less years old! Also, photos of how its possibly leading to cracks on the road. Road cracks have been repaired at least 3 times, since I arrived at the property in last 2 years. So, the trees are expected to be high and will cost council large sums of money to remove them in future. “
- Road barriers
“Let's focus more on the road potholes”
- Mowing
“Make it a high priority as not safe especially around road traffic islands”
- Lighting
“Safety for women at night around facilities and shared user paths”
- Park furniture
“Park furniture more cleaning and more required

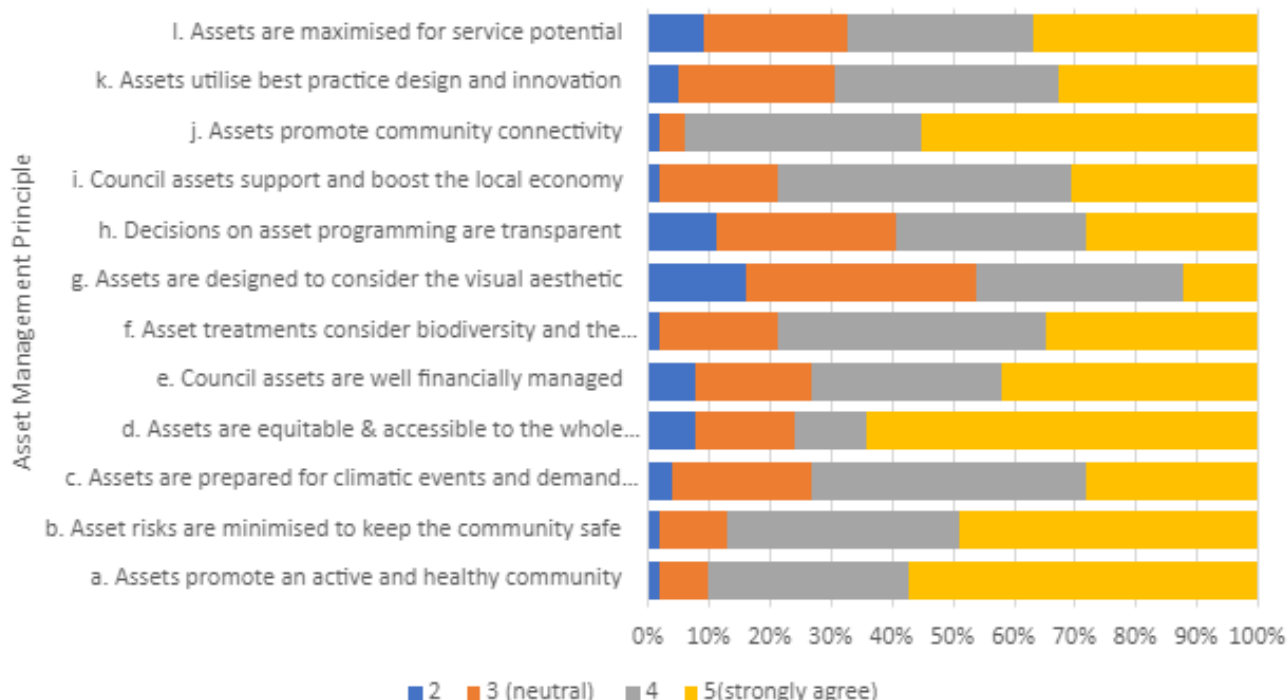
The collected scribed comments will be shared with other departments within council and referenced for any upcoming asset management plans. This will assist prioritising future works across the municipality.

Activity 2 – Asset management principles

Individual survey

When asked their level of agreement to the asset management principles, majority of participants agreed with them (selecting neutral, agree or strongly agree). The table below shows the percentage of responses received for each principle.

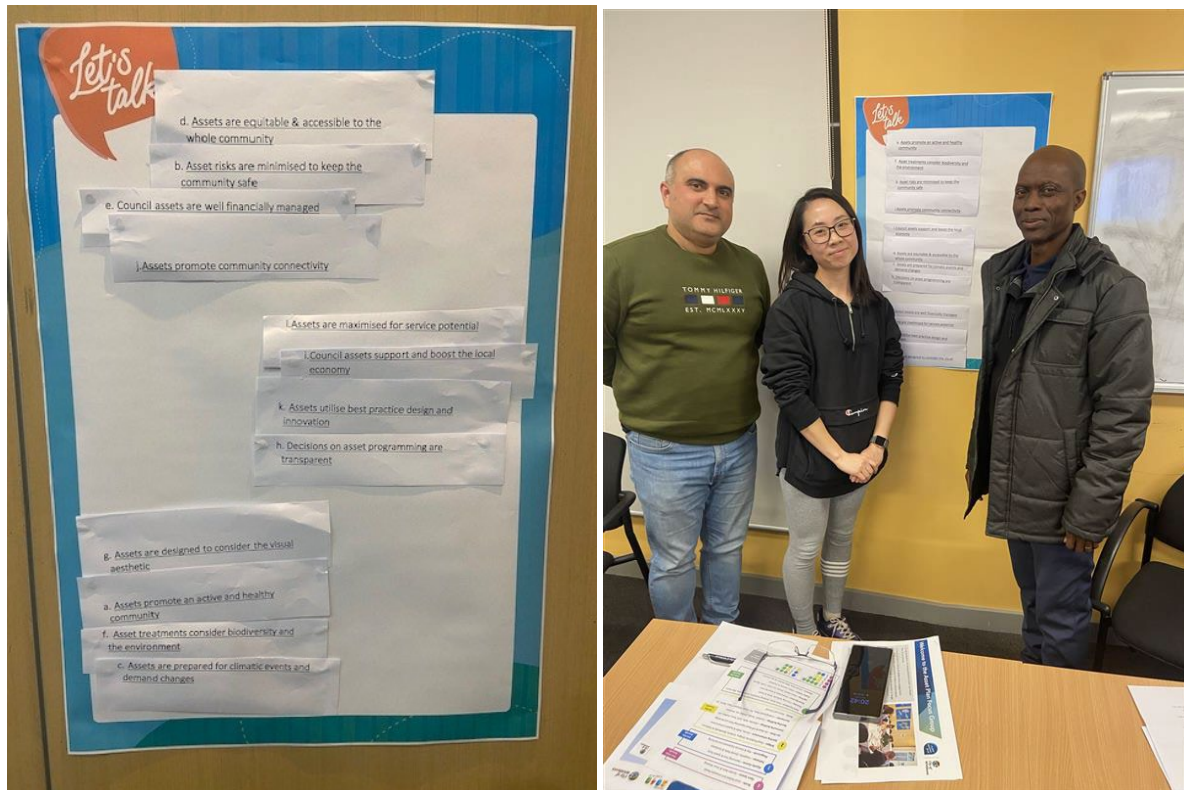
'Asset Management Principle'



Participants were also offered the opportunity to suggest their own principle with 17 new principles and or statements developed by participants as follows:

- Assets are sustainably designed with low maintenance
- Gifted assets are being designed/constructed by the highest of standards
- Grouping of assets should be reconsidered
- Overall street aesthetics- including more art and design across the streetscape
- Assets create a safe and vibrant city
- Have assets that are low maintenance
- Plant trees with low maintenance in long term
- Consult more with committees with new assets
- Consider splitting objective "f" into two separate objectives and eliminate 'e'
- Assets are valuable trees that have environmental attributes and contribute to reducing climate change impacts
- Plant a tree instead of a shelter
- Use community effort for asset management initiatives to optimise costs and increase connection
- Accessible for diverse and seniors
- The trees are counted as valuable to maintain assets to reduce heat island effect.
- Assets are designed for maximised service potential
- Community priorities identified
- Propose and approve the open space assets for new developments.

Activity 2B – Asset management principles priority ranking as a group



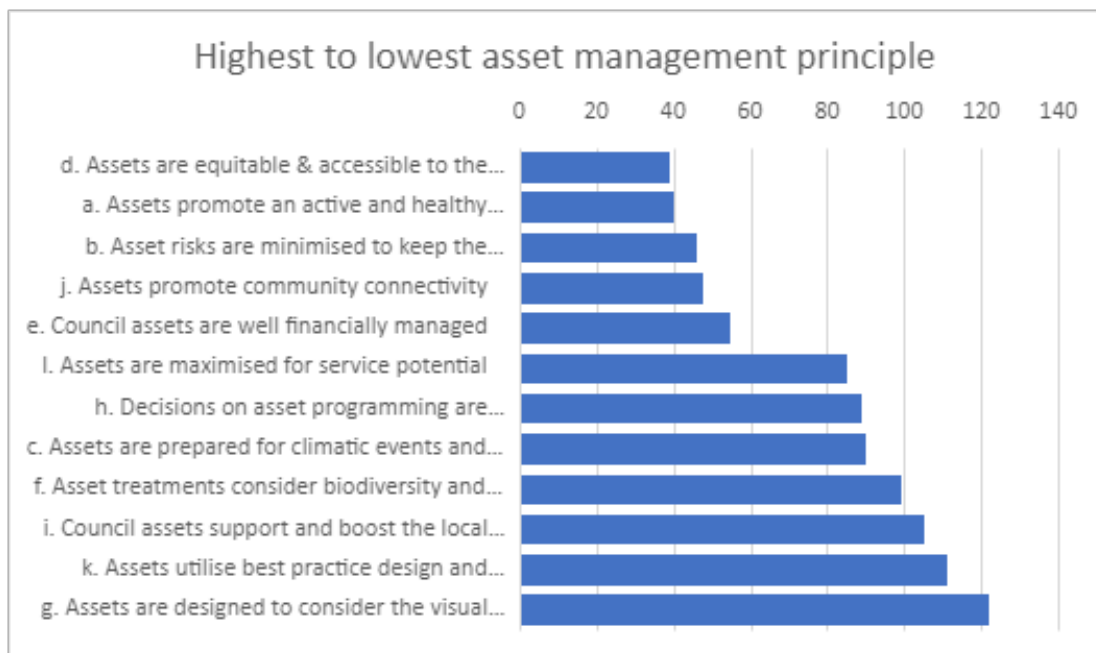
Above: Activity 2 results board (left) and group presenting results (right)

Working in table groups, participants ranked the 12 principles in order of highest to lowest priority. Following deliberation, the highest ranked principles were:

- (d) Assets are equitable & accessible to the whole community
- (a) Assets promote an active and healthy community
- (b) Asset risks are minimised to keep the community safe
- (j) Assets promote community connectivity

It is worth noting that a few groups suggested that transparency and assets being well financially managed should be a given and not included as a principle.

Twelve tables ranked the principles from one to 12 with one being highest priority to 12 being the lowest priority. The rankings were then totalled with the lowest score being the highest ranking and so forth. The graph below presents the highest to lowest priorities of the given principles.



Post evaluation survey

At the conclusion of the workshop, participants were invited to complete a post evaluation survey to measure the effectiveness of the focus group workshops, share feedback in relation to the facilitation and provided an opportunity to make any further comments. A total of 56 participants completed the survey Below is a snapshot of what we heard.

- 97% of those attended felt that the purpose of the focus group was clear/ very clear
- 93% felt very comfortable/ comfortable with the flow and structure of the focus group
- 94% felt very comfortable/ comfortable contributing
- 93% gained much more/ little more understanding of the challenges faced when asset planning
- 97% felt much more/ little more informed about asset planning
- 96% rated the facilitator engaging/ very engaging.

Participants felt the workshop was well structured with clear directions and appreciated the opportunity for discussion. Council staff were seen as friendly and welcoming with majority of participants feeling included and displaying respectful behaviour. The facilitator and project staff were clear and concise with directions, they were helpful and understanding when assisting and participants felt valued and listened to.

Next steps

Feedback captured through the focus groups is being collated and will be presented through a community pulse check activity on our Engage Whittlesea project page <https://engage.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/assetplan25> in late July. The pulse check will allow participants to see what we heard and confirm it aligns to their views. There will also be the opportunity to provide further feedback before we develop the draft Asset Plan 2025-2035 sometime in early 2025. The draft Asset Plan 2025-35, once endorsed by Council for community consultation will then be shared for community feedback before being presented for final endorsement by Council in mid-2025.

Appendix 1 – Focus Group Terms of Reference

City of Whittlesea Asset Plan 2025- 35 Focus Group - Terms of Reference

1. Purpose

The purpose of the Focus Group is to provide valuable insights to assist Council to shape the Asset Plan 2025- 35 that will outline how the City of Whittlesea will plan, build, manage and maintain our assets over the next 10 years to ensure they meet our growing community's needs now and into the future. The plan will cover all of Council's assets, which includes roads, footpaths, playgrounds, sporting grounds, stormwater, open spaces and buildings. The Focus Group is not a decision-making body of Council.

2. Participation

Participation in the Asset Plan Focus Group will be capped at 25 people per session, with a maximum of three sessions across the municipality. Participants will be chosen to reflect the diversity of the City of Whittlesea community. This diversity will include ages, genders, abilities, cultural backgrounds, suburbs and household structures.

To be eligible to be a participant of the Asset Plan 2025-35 Focus Group you will need to:

- Be a resident of the City of Whittlesea
- Be willing and able to attend all three focus group sessions
- Be willing and able to complete any pre-session reading, assistance can be organised for those requiring it
- Declare membership of any special interest group, community groups, networks such as sporting clubs, craft and hobby groups, seniors' groups, schools etc
- Not be a current staff member or contractor of Whittlesea Council.

If a participant believes that they may have a financial interest in any of the projects discussed during the focus groups, they must discuss that interest with the facilitator. Should the facilitator decide that the financial interest gives rise to a conflict, the participant will not be permitted to contribute to discussions regarding that project.

3. Role of the Asset Plan Focus Group

The Asset Plan Focus Group will help inform the development of the draft Asset Plan 2025- 35. We will capture valuable insights from our Focus Group participants to help us identify, assess, and prioritise community interests. This approach will enable us to achieve balanced outcomes that are informed by the community's perspectives.

Focus Group participants will be provided with a copy of the draft plan following Council endorsement and encouraged to provide feedback through the Engage Whittlesea platform.

4. Code of Conduct

All participants are expected to abide by the City of Whittlesea [Code of Conduct](#) and:

- Operate with integrity, objectivity, accountability, honesty and openness

- Participate and provide feedback that is in the best interest of the City of Whittlesea as a whole
- Declare any potential conflict of interest (including financial) to the facilitator if it arises during the focus group sessions
- Dedicate appropriate time and effort to the focus groups – approximately 3 hours in total over the project period
- Prepare for focus groups by completing pre-reading and actively participate in all three focus group sessions
- Maintain effective and respectful relationships with other participants and facilitators.

5. Focus group sessions

Focus Group participants will be required to attend one of three two-hour sessions held across the municipality and will receive a participatory gift voucher for their time. The sessions are:

- To be scheduled based on availability of successful applicants between 20 and 30 May 2024.

Agenda and session pre-reading

The agenda and any pre-reading will be provided to Focus Group members one week in advance of each session. A summary of what we heard through all separate sessions will be provided to participants following the focus group sessions.

Participatory Gift

Focus Group participants will be required to complete the required pre-reading and attend one two-hour session and will receive a participatory gift voucher for their time.

6. Requirements of participants

Confidentiality

Focus Group participants are expected to maintain confidentiality and refrain from publicly sharing any information related to the focus group materials.

Public Statements

Focus Group participants are not authorised to issue public statements on behalf of Council.

Rescinding members

The City of Whittlesea retains the right to revoke the inclusion in the focus group of any individual who violates the Terms of Reference or Code of Conduct.

Appendix 2 – Pre survey question – “Are there any assets within the City of Whittlesea you think are over serviced?”

Of the 53 participants who completed the survey, 28 comments were shared and have been themed as per the table below.

Theme	Comment
Not sure, need more information or no (12 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No specific experience with over serviced assets. • As only moved into the area 12 months ago, not sure of this one • Not sure (3) • No (6) • Unknown what are the actual assets
Sporting facilities (5 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sporting facilities everything else (2) • I think sports fields are potentially overserviced. I don't necessarily have a problem with that, but I think the surrounding parklands and open spaces need to be maintained at a similar level. It feels incongruous to me to have a beautifully maintained football or soccer field when the carpark is full of illegally dumped rubbish and the surrounding parkland is left unmowed. Another example of this is the Thomastown Aquatic Centre which is a fantastic facility. But the garden beds in front are full of weeds and litter. • Leisure centres • sporting grounds- give active user groups and clubs constant attention in one of these areas- squeaky wheel etc likely at the expense of other passive areas
Happy with the state of assets (4 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CoW is taking care of their assets specially leisure centre and library - used to go to Mill Park library it is very good clean and organised • In general, the CoW takes good care of its assets. I don't feel over serviced is a bad thing e.g. Mill Park library is amazing, hope all other assets are the same • no - I think most assets meet community expectations and are serviceable. Most assets are managed for function and service. The number of assets managed and additional from handovers from developers means budgets do not stretch to overservicing • Whittlesea is absolutely stunning. Continue to overservice the main areas (town Centre) and other inviting areas for the community and others
Playgrounds and streetscapes (2 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playgrounds • Likewise, the streetscape infrastructure on High Street, Thomastown and the Lalor Shopping Centre is really high quality but is often completely overgrown with weeds and litter is left to accumulate for weeks on end.

<p>New areas vs established areas (3 comments)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A lot of new amenities are being built to newer non-established suburbs such as Wollert & Mernda. There needs to be a greater balance of increasing amenities to established areas such as Thomastown, Lalor & Older parts of Epping with gentrification occurring to these areas, i.e younger families moving in. There aren't many shops in Thomastown and certain parts of Lalor, and Epping Plaza is not within a reasonable walking distance. Planning to have Epping Plaza as a central point of shopping / community is over serviced. There requires further consideration of incentives for further commercial shops towards Thomastown and parts of Lalor. This may possibly involve rezoning industrial estates or planning 2-3 storey apartments with shops below. It is portrayed there isn't much emphasis on Thomastown or Lalor when it comes to planning. An example is, as you get off the Edgars Rd Exit on M80 signage displayed says you're getting off at Epping left turn and Reservoir Right turn. It should indeed say you're getting off at Thomastown and Epping is in the left direction and Reservoir is in the right direction. • A majority of facilities sports ovals, pavilions kindergartens (in new community centres) are very well serviced in comparison to some of the older assets across council • I feel the older areas of CoW get good services, but Donnybrook can be forgotten sometimes as it is very isolated
<p>Cost of operations and purchasing of assets (2 comments)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CEO salary • The \$400000 budget for a bicycle storage facility in Whittlesea township is crazy. The cost of upgrading the swimming pool in Whittlesea Township was well over the top.

Appendix 2 Pre survey question – “Are there any assets within the City of Whittlesea you think are under serviced?”

Of the 53 participants who completed the survey, 58 comments were shared and have been themed as per the table below.

Theme	Comment
Community facilities (7 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mill Park Leisure Centre (privately run, not enough disability parking, insufficient management of inappropriate behaviour/harassment), • The community centre in Findon Rd Epping- bathrooms need renewal- mainly disabled ones, The secondary college at Findon Rd needs renovation. The park next to Howard St Epping needs more kids play spaces and the ones existing needs some renovation • Epping Community Activity Centre • Spring Street Community Hall - Outdated and requires a revamp., Edgar’s creek trail, requires more attention. • Whittlesea courthouse • kindergartens- reflection on maintenance requests currently received • community facilities
Parks, gardens, nature strips and landscaping (12 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local market, parks and gardens, landscaping, skate park, libraries, dog parks, • Parks • Rubbish left on the nature strips - 2 weeks response, rate payers depended upon to report (need council to be proactive), repeat offenders, dangerous front fences(leaning) parking - breaches of by laws. • maintenance of trees particularly over signage, median strips need cutting more often • more nature strip trees, • In general, I experience under serviced streetscapes/ parks during wet spring or summer periods where the grass is not maintained regularly. • More vegetation and bins required. Ziebell’s Farmhouse and Lutheran Church Land. Requires better maintenance to its appearance and can be better utilized within the community. • Parks are not mowed regularly enough- Weeds are not managed adequately in many councils’ garden beds (recreation facilities, shopping precincts, roundabouts etc)- Illegal dumping and general litter is a major problem in all parks, playgrounds and shopping precincts throughout Thomastown and Lalor • The nature strip tress has noticed that some of the older trees are dropping branches during/ after storms. My tree, not even in the

	<p>ground 6 months, they have removed the stakes and the tree is leaning 45 degrees now. No wonder the trees can't grow straight. Playgrounds, like Centenary Park, need to be upgraded. Playgrounds need to have shade cloths a=for safe play during the warmer months. C.P. the concrete way above ground level in part and cracked. have reported this, nothing to date.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am not sure if nature strip trees are considered to be an asset of the council. If it is, please stop planting them as they are growing high and council is unable to maintain them. This is evident in Eucalyptus Estate in Wollert. Roots damage properties and over the years, it will be very costly to remove them. I understand, trees are fire prone due to flammable nature of eucalyptus oil! • Yes. -Donnybrook Road lacks connected footpaths between Peppercorn Estate and Donnybrook Train Station placing pedestrian at significant risk of being hit by a car or truck. Pedestrian are forced to walk along uneven gravel roadside. -The lack of community centres and neighbourhood houses in the new estates along Donnybrook Road (within the City of Whittlesea) negate Council's Connected Community and Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategies forming part of the Integrated Planning Framework • streetscapes- including street trees using my street as an example, missing street trees, trees in poor health and not a consistent character - missed opportunity
<p>Roads and shared user paths (16 comments)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Macarthur Road unsafe, • Continued safe cycling pathway • The road edges are full of weeds between the gutters and bitumen. Including some eucalypt saplings growing. The new Mernda shopping centre car park is full of train commuters, particularly along the side where the medical centres are. Footpaths are often crumbling and uneven, I'm continually reporting on snap send solve • Shared user paths - vegetation overgrown, crack. movement due to soil movement and or tree roots, proactive condition assessments need to be completed more frequently • Edgars Rd between Deveny Road and Cooper St. There is no footpath and rubbish gets dumped. Vic Track rail land along High St Thomastown to Lalor requires better consultation as to how land is used. There is gravel dumped and it is a poor look to area and encourages rubbish dumping. Edgars Rd bridge over M80 is very unsafe for pedestrians. The pathway over it all the way down to Mahoney Rd requires further attention i.e better vegetation and maintenance. Road safety at Dalton Rd, Thomastown Intersection towards Settlement Road. General road bike lanes and paths around Whittlesea Council area is very unsafe. Safety along Ring Rd Bike Path i.e., better surveillance, lighting, eliminating blind spots around bends for cyclists. Improved roundabout Vegetation/Flora Public transport is greatly under serviced between the Inner North, Darebin area towards the Whittlesea Area of Thomastown and Lalor. There requires to be

	<p>better connectivity from Gilbert Road, Preston West & Reservoir all the way to Thomastown West. I believe there is also potential to have the SMART BUS 902 travel from the newly built Keon Park Station all the way down to Thomastown station, head towards Edgars Rd and Back to Mahoneys. The 902 bus isn't easily accessible by Thomastown and Lalor residents however with a minor tweak to the route it could become a major transport asset to the community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sitting wooden benches along the pathways are not maintained. If it continues to be not maintained, it will rot and will cost council more money to replace/ repair it. There has to be a solution to rubbish along the public pathways and open spaces. After the grass cutting along the Findon creek in Wollert and other areas, there is more rubbish as the grass cutter shreds all plastic materials into small pieces and scatters it. I think the area needs to be clear of rubbish before grass is cut. Plastic rubbish is harmful to local and protected habitants/fauna along the creek • New roads are hard to build and find space for. • bike path specially on Road in rural roads • bike paths, • Yan Yean Rd, Donnybrook Rd and Epping Rd • Transport and parking to use transport. I would be great to capture journeys to see where people are travelling from / to. I would only use a train to the city and only 50% of the time. Busses (infrequent) and trains (parking and car safety) prevent me from utilising these services more. • roads and pathways (2) • Roads. Some roads I travel on frequently are still gravel. They are graded 3-4 times a year but can be dangerous. I wonder what the annual budget is to maintain them versus the cost to pave them- • as a resident I am perplexed as to why roads can be closed, and I'm not informed not know where to subscribe for closures. Some are local roads; some are Vic Roads. But I need to read a blinking sign for dates rather than read online about (extended) closures (like when Donnybrook & Beveridge Rds are closed simultaneously). - • Structure of roads in residential areas, the amount of dumping is becoming a bigger problem, the high school disrepair, more education capability in the areas for trades. • Our roads are lacking maintenance in that potholes take a long time to get repaired then done quickly and substandard. The shoulders of our roads are substandard and not maintained or repaired. There are bitumen edges that are up to about 15 cm deep and dangerous. There are blackberries growing onto the shoulders. -The council staff that clear rubbish, remove graffiti, repair signs etc are doing the best they can. The contractors doing the mowing are doing their best which is inadequate, but we are getting what we pay for. RSL members in their 70's and 80's have been maintaining the sites around the two memorials in Whittlesea township with limited council support. We were told
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	the site at the Soldiers Memorial was not the contractors responsibility as it is a nature strip not owned by the council.
Lighting and car parks (4 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spring St Hall - Better lighting is required at its crossings i.e., Main St & Spring St Thomastown. • Thyme Park needs some lighting since its one of the most used parks around the area. In winter it's hard to use the park for a walk by seniors or by kids to play due to lack of lighting. A small cricket pitch is preferred due to the composition of the community around this area. Currently basketball area is a cricket area! We want a connected community in a lovely neighbourhood. It being a sense of belonging to the place. Bendt Rd, Wollert has been closed but it is accumulating lots of rubbish. It looks ugly and spoils the surrounds. Not sure why it was closed as it was an important route in case of a fire in the area. It needed lighting and a proper tarmac road • The parking area opposite the library beside the tennis courts on Laurel St Whittlesea. The parking areas around the AF Walker Reserve on Laurel St and Forest St. Parking outside Whittlesea Secondary College on Laurel St. • public car parks
Public bins and toilets (5 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public bins, public dog poo bag dispensers, revegetation work of native plants in parks, libraries as public transport hubs/make them more accessible via PT, more accessible tourist/local information/information centre. • Need more bins along walkways, need more public toilets, more benches in parks, wooden ones with tables, community pool and covered sports complex in Mernda • public toilets (2) • Sycamore Reserve soccer ground and Thomas St – pavilion not open- no toilet • Sometimes rubbish from the bins or when bins are emptied, it flies on to the creek area and stays there forever. Maybe some rubbish bins along the pathway exits might help
Sporting/ leisure facilities and grounds (7 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sporting infrastructure and pavilions; community houses; gym that is safe for woman • The Mill Park leisure centre, particularly the pool area, quite often has an area closed/ not working properly. Particularly the warm water pool and sauna. • yes, there is no aquatic centre in Donnybrook • The new Olivine Rec Reserve sporting pavilion is taking a long time to get up and running with CoW services e.g. - outside public toilets, keys for sporting club roller doors and entry, Cyad Ave Park needs attention - huge potholes in ground is very dangerous • aquatic and leisure centres (2) • passive areas around sporting grounds, granitic sand areas, older pavilions • sports lighting

Playgrounds (4 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Big playgrounds, mountain bike tracks, areas to use remote control cars utilising STEM skills learned in schools, walking tracks that aren't connected and end, enclosed indoor pools in the northern end, more enclosed play spaces to keep children safe • Playgrounds and or equipment maintenance (4) • Playgrounds-Keeping the grass down and roundabouts maintained so you can see oncoming traffic • Hinkler Drive playground is very old and full of rust
Contractor performance (1 comment)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I understand that some solar powered systems are not maintained well
Waterways (2 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waterways (2) • cleaning of waterways/lakes and some public areas,

Appendix 3 – Post Evaluation Survey comments

Can you tell us why you felt that way about the structure and flow of session?

A total of 49 comments were received and have been themed in the table below.

Themed response	Comments
Opportunity for discussion (15 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was well structured with the opportunity for questions and discussion- facilitation was good. • The discussion was passionate and objective • Initial bonding exercise was possible not required, due to 2-hour time limit • you felt heard • good discussion and understanding across the table of multiple areas of operations within council • Good structure and very good discussion by all • Some participants hijacked the discussion to talk about very specific issues that was only relevant to them • session was very informative, lots of discussion about role and regulation • everyone was able to have their say- it demonstrated many people don't understand assets • Arrived late so playing catch up for the discussion, however the session progressed well. • It was good, my personality struggles with strong personalities and opinions but it was done well • clear engaging, everyone had a voice • it was informative, however some team representatives had very hard perspectives and would not deviate from their perspective - excluding others • great structure for discussion • variety of attributes and well prompted discussion
Project staff assisting helped with understanding (9 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The team was very nice and help with understanding everything • the table facilitator helped with the control and flow • The session was organised, all the team were helpful, I wouldn't have understood any terms or activity, they helped us and clarify everything. • Well introduced, assisted by team members • The whole team was very courteous, clear on objectives and helpful throughout • Dedicated officers with specific roles for each table. The pre reading material was very clear and covered basic info, which provided more time during the focus group to give input. • it was a great team effort that worked out well

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • having a scribe and team member on the table allowed session to flow • informative and inclusive
Well-structured with clear directions (21 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity always important Met (Tick)- and structure - strong with some wriggle room • The group ice breaker allowed us to be comfortable and readily speak our thoughts • It was organised well • power point was clear and having print out meant we knew what was happening • It was engaging, questions were answered clearly, and the session was designed to be light with activities and connecting participants • structure was outlined at the beginning and followed. Introduction of everyone present helped people feel comfortable and more willing or able to contribute • clear direction on what was required so we could jump into the tasks • It helped reflect what was more important and lead to further reprioritising the commitment to maintenance and community assets • everything was explained clearly, the flow was good between activities and staff were friendly and made us feel comfortable • The presentation of the activities and the host George brought clarity and correctness to the process • Well presented, each activity flowed to the next • Clear agenda, group discussion, staff guidance and help, safe and respectful space. • well explained and good pace - great job • small group and well structured • you've done it before - well-structured and logical flow • The ice breaker was an excellent team building exercise that helped us build connection with our table. The activities were well explained, engaging and meaningful. • how it was explained in which it really needs to be explained • the sequence of delivery and project objectives was great timing • well structures and facilitated- kept to the time and not run out and complete all tasks • generally went well and flowed well, a couple of people kept going on about the same thing • was run really good • well organised and was enjoyable • introduction was clear
Fun and interactive (2 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • open and interactive • it was fun and engaging
Rushed – more time would have been welcomed (2 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Started late. staff helping sometimes pushed outcomes. Everyone was nice and respectful. Only limited angles of discussion were

	<p>offered- categories/groupings predetermined, was strongly defined on council's terms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> felt a bit rushed and much time spent discussing the exceptions. Assets is such a broad term
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Would you like to tell us more about how comfortable and welcome you felt in the session?

A total of 34 comments were received and have been themed in the table below.

Themed response	Comments
Staff were friendly and welcoming (8 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Everyone was friendly and understanding All the team were kind, welcomed and helpful, they respect all our background and ages and listened carefully very welcome, great host and friendly team members All staff made the environment and structure of the focus group less concerning. The ground rules set for group work were present in a polite and open manner open and friendly meet and greet All council members were very approachable and have an excellent knowledge of the assets very comfortable made me feel our contributions were valuable and encouraged to give our opinions Council member were delightful and very welcoming, residents were the same, everyone was made to feel welcome
Everyone got to share their thoughts (3 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The facilitators explained very well activities, and everyone shared their thoughts Very welcomed because it was a small group and facilitators did a great job of asking for each person's input. Especially the quiet contributors. we were given plenty of opportunity to speak up, listened to and heard
Felt very comfortable, inclusive and respectful behaviour (20 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> always uncomfortable - was fine very comfortable- friendly staff - diverse attendees- respectful and informed The constant reminder about being respectful and how everyone's experiences and perspectives were valid set an inclusive tone. I felt very comfortable, and everyone was kind and welcomed (7) good manners and respect all round I received positive feedback on my discussion group Very comfortable, great (3) I was so comfortable and valuable while discussing and putting my verified information

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think I've already indicated how comfortable the focus group made us feel • very welcome, questions were welcome, and all voices encouraged • very comfortable and felt welcomed and my views were valued and appreciated • felt very welcome, inclusive environment, very comfortable and supported
Access to information from project team (1 comment)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was quite revealing what sort of considerations goes into asset management decisions
Clarity of tasks and purpose (4 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • very well explained (2) • very clear direction and very helpful and informative council staff • ball game was very insightful about balance of investment

Would you like to tell us more about how engaging the facilitator was?

A total of 49 comments were received and have been themed in the table below.

Themed response	Comment
Friendly and helpful (8 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informative, easy going, helpful and polite • Very much engaging • He was friendly, inclusive, energetic and genuine • George and the team did well • friendly and informative • excellent • great pace and engagement, friendly welcoming and competent from all facilitators • Kirsten and Michael very engaging, informative and fun
Open dialogue (8 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • facilitator spoke openly about what their roles were for the evening and showed us how they were working together. Their open dialogue made me feel part of their job tonight. • very stimulating discussions • engaged in the conversation and let everyone speak their opinions respectfully. stayed on time and wrapped up the session well. • friendly, approachable, kept to time, felt well supported for open discussions • open • they felt like they wanted us to contribute • I felt engaged with how the policy will be captured through everyone's feedback • open and constructive/ informative
Felt comfortable and welcome (6 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amazing - Ice breaker was a great way to start • excellent made us feel comfortable and welcome, not too serious easy going

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was George, what else would it be (5 from 5) Humour, but firm enough to keep us on track, explained everything really well • All the council staff were great. George makes you feel so at ease and relaxed • very comfortable and great sense of humour • engaging good
Clear and concise (9 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very nice, they clarified well all the activities and help achieve best understanding • the facilitator provided background context of the challenges when it comes to asset management • Good communication skills • all were informed and documented • George was very dedicated and explained this very well • contributed and lead the discussion well • excellent communicator • clear to understand, everyone was on the same page, the group worked as a team, credit to them • ran smoothly - good time keeping
Felt listened to and valued (2 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very welcoming and engaging - council staff listened deeply to the feedback that was given • inclusive, good humour and active listener
Less slides (1 comment)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bit much reading from slides, nice and friendly

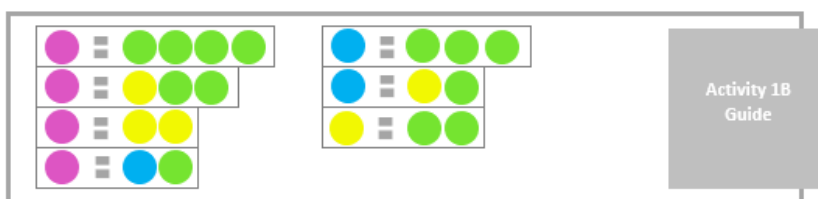
Would you like to share or add any other comments about the Focus Group sessions and or activities?

A total of 31 comments were received and have been themed in the table below.

Themed responses	Comments
Grateful for the opportunity (7 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • thank you for creating this focus group to give the community the opportunity to contribute real life examples and opinions of what matters to us. I'm looking forward to future focus groups. Thank you to tonight's officers that worked after hours. • I think its progressive and important that council care enough about the needs and wants of the community to invite us to take part in a session like this. • This is a very good session, great cohort and hope to have contributed to the betterment of my city • I appreciate the opportunity to give my opinion • privileged to be able to contribute • well done and thanks, there should be more of this

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the wonderful place we live
Keen in to stay in touch with progress (3 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would be great to be kept informed of how the project progresses • keen to stay involved • good work, looking forward to discussing further
Quality of focus group (8 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging • very well structured and organised, enjoyed the activities • it was really well planned, I enjoyed it - thanks • well set up - good facilitation at table and scribe support - well organised • All participants were engaged and genuinely interested in the questions • very well prepared • enjoyable and lots of different people • difficult position to be positive when most people have their own agendas, usually negative
Feedback on activities and content provided (6 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • priority of asset management may be different councils' areas. It could be worthwhile discussing priorities of assets management in different council areas. • first activity would have been more efficient if cost/colour was ignored- it just confused the issue - balancing budget should start from all balls in status quo rather than working from step 1 - would have been good to have more examples of asset categories for reference • would have been good to be given more of an overview of council's assets and current challenges and trends to inform discussion • Would be great to get more people involved in learning the struggles council has balancing all the 'balls'. • facilitators shouldn't have been arguing for things, ie financial and transparency - should listen to us - felt like we were wrong • pipeline in asset decision making - that is going to be the bigger challenge
Good session, informative and a chance to connect (5 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • it was a very good initiative to arrange such a wonderful session • A good night • very informative and also it was great to connect with other residents and council staff who were very lovely • great session • great table (2)
Specific to personal interests (2 comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would like for Aquatic Centre (Donnybrook) • I would like to know how the assets are being handover to the council. Are there any policies of the requirement from the developers or council accepts the assets(whatever) handed over from the developers?

Appendix 4 – Workshop worksheets



Above: Asset category colour chart for activity 1 at the focus group

ASSET MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES (ACTIVITY 2)

In order to determine what the community (your) aspirations are, Council would like to create a number of strategic objectives to aid how we prioritise asset management projects/tasks.

Please rate each of these proposed strategic objectives below.

Assets promote an active and healthy community

“ 1 “ 2 “ 3 “ 4 “ 5

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

a. Asset risks are minimised to keep the community safe

“ 1 “ 2 “ 3 “ 4 “ 5

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

b. Assets are prepared for climatic events and demand changes

“ 1 “ 2 “ 3 “ 4 “ 5

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

c. Assets are equitable & accessible to the whole community

“ 1 “ 2 “ 3 “ 4 “ 5

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

d. Council assets are well financially managed

“ 1 “ 2 “ 3 “ 4 “ 5

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

e. Asset treatments consider biodiversity and the environment

“ 1 “ 2 “ 3 “ 4 “ 5

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

f. Assets are designed to consider the visual aesthetic

“ 1 “ 2 “ 3 “ 4 “ 5

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

g. Decisions on asset programming are transparent

“ 1 “ 2 “ 3 “ 4 “ 5

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

h. Council assets support and boost the local economy

“ 1 “ 2 “ 3 “ 4 “ 5

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

i. Assets promote community connectivity

“ 1 “ 2 “ 3 “ 4 “ 5

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

j. Assets utilise best practice design and innovation

“ 1 “ 2 “ 3 “ 4 “ 5

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

k. Assets are maximised for service potential

“ 1 “ 2 “ 3 “ 4 “ 5

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

Your suggested objective

“ 1 “ 2 “ 3 “ 4 “ 5

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

Your suggested objective

“ 1 “ 2 “ 3 “ 4 “ 5

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

Your suggested objective

“ 1 “ 2 “ 3 “ 4 “ 5

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree