

Report to the Future Melbourne Committee**Agenda item 6.7****Power Melbourne – Findings from community consultation****6 December 2022****Presenter:** Evan Counsel, General Manager Strategy, Planning and Climate Change**Purpose and background**

1. The purpose of this report is to present the findings from phase 1 of community consultation on the Power Melbourne project relating to Council Plan Major Initiative 34 (Attachment 2 of the report from management), and seek Future Melbourne Committee's endorsement to progress development of neighbourhood batteries at five Council-owned sites.
2. Power Melbourne is a flagship initiative to establish a network of neighbourhood batteries across the city linked to a retail electricity product for the community with the aim of assisting renters, people living in apartments, and those running small businesses to access more affordable renewable electricity.
3. Phase 1 of community consultation was undertaken via an online survey on the engagement portal Participate Melbourne from 26 September to 4 November 2022. This consultation sought to understand community perspectives and preferences on neighbourhood batteries and obtain feedback on proposed battery locations.
4. A list of host sites have been identified and assessed as part of a techno-economic feasibility study and network analysis undertaken in partnership with RMIT University, University of Melbourne, and network operator, Citipower, which was funded by the Victorian Government. Battery host sites include iconic Council-owned buildings: Library at the Dock, Boyd Community Hub, Council House 2, Queen Victoria Market, and Kensington Recreation Centre.

Key issues

5. A total of 311 responses were received in response to the Power Melbourne survey. The survey was promoted through multiple channels: CoM library newsletters, Neighbourhood Partners, the business concierge service, and social media. Responses were received from all city neighbourhoods and a broad range of demographic groups.
 - 5.1. Survey results show that 77 per cent of respondents are supportive of a neighbourhood battery in their area, and 67 per cent are strongly supportive. A further 16 percent were unsupportive, and 7 percent reported a desire for more information.
 - 5.2. Issues reported as significant to supportive respondents include climate action and leadership, improved access to renewable energy, and reduced energy costs for vulnerable residents.
 - 5.3. Concerns raised by unsupportive respondents include efficacy, aesthetics, and long-term value to ratepayers. Council can address many of these concerns through further engagement, public education, and careful implementation in consultation with community stakeholders.
 - 5.4. The survey sought opinions on the five proposed Council-owned battery host sites and invited suggestions for new locations. Most responses indicated an appetite for batteries to be scaled in the community at libraries, apartment buildings, sports facilities, universities, and cultural landmarks. Less than one per cent of respondents raised direct concerns about the proposed battery locations.
 - 5.5. A significant proportion of respondents (33 per cent) reported this survey as the first time they had participated in a Council consultation process.
6. The second community consultation phase will take place in early 2023 with a series of deeper engagements. The purpose will be to address community concerns raised through phase 1, identify future battery host sites with high level of community interest and support, foster community participation and activate community champions.

7. Council has been awarded a \$750,000 grant through the Victorian Government's *Neighbourhood Battery Initiative* to support delivery of a battery at Library at the Dock.
8. The next steps to deliver Power Melbourne include to release a tender to identify a commercial partner to build and operate the battery network and provide electricity retail services to the community.

Recommendation from management

9. That the Future Melbourne Committee:
 - 9.1. Notes the high level of community support for neighbourhood batteries expressed by respondents to the Power Melbourne survey (Attachment 2 of the report from management).
 - 9.2. Endorses management to progress development of the Power Melbourne battery network at Library at the Dock, Boyd Community Hub, Council House 2, Queen Victoria Market, and Kensington Recreation Centre.
 - 9.3. Notes that Phase 2 community consultation on Power Melbourne will commence in early 2023 to identify future battery host sites in consultation with the community.

Attachments:

1. Supporting Attachment (Page 3 of 12)
2. Analysis of Phase 1 Community Engagement Results (Page 4 of 12)

Supporting Attachment

Legal

1. Legal advice will be provided as required in respect to all aspects of the Power Melbourne project.

Finance

2. Implementation of neighbourhood battery projects at the proposed sites will require future identification and allocation of Capital Works budget. Final cost to Council would be determined through a competitive tender process. The outcome of the tender process and associated recommendations would be the subject of a further report to Council.
3. Council has been awarded a \$750,000 grant from the Victorian Government to support delivery of a battery at Library at the Dock. Management will pursue funding opportunities through federal government programs to further reduce Council's investment.

Conflict of interest

4. No member of Council staff, or other person engaged under a contract, involved in advising on or preparing this report has declared a material or general conflict of interest in relation to the matter of the report.

Health and Safety

5. Installation of neighbourhood batteries will require careful consideration of safety issues, including technology selection, siting, control systems and operation and maintenance procedures. These health and safety considerations will be addressed through design and construction specifications and contracts during tender stage. Future community engagement will seek further insights on any safety concerns and ensure they are addressed.

Stakeholder consultation

6. Phase 1 consultation on Power Melbourne was undertaken via the Participate Melbourne online engagement portal. A total of 311 responses were received.
7. Phase 2 community consultation will take place in early 2023, with a series of deeper engagements including place-based community conversations, and consultation with Traditional Owners. Engagement will target community members, including apartment residents, renters, students, and small businesses, seeking to address community concerns, identify potential future battery host sites where there is high level of community interest and support, activate community participation and foster community champions.

Relation to Council policy

8. The report is consistent with and supports delivery of the Climate Change Mitigation Strategy 2018, the Climate and Biodiversity Emergency Response 2020, and Council Plan 2021-25 (Climate and Biodiversity Emergency and Power Melbourne Major Initiative).

Environmental sustainability

9. The purpose of the Power Melbourne initiative is to innovate and scale new models for neighbourhood-scale battery storage, accelerate the transition to a zero-emissions city powered by 100 per cent renewable energy, and extend the benefits of renewable energy to residents and small businesses in the community.

Power Melbourne

Analysis of Phase 1 Community Engagement Results

December 2022

Project background

Council has set an ambitious goal to be a city powered by 100 per cent renewable energy by 2030 and achieve net zero emissions for the entire municipality by 2040. Achieving this goal requires the rapid transformation of the electricity grid to support high levels of renewable energy, all-electric buildings, and electric vehicles; plus a significant uptake in renewable energy purchased by residents and businesses.

Power Melbourne is a flagship project to establish a network of neighbourhood batteries across the city linked to retail electricity products for the community; to assist renters, people living in apartments, and those running small businesses to access more affordable renewable electricity.

Power Melbourne is a Major Initiative in Council Plan 2021-2025 and forms part of Council's Climate and Biodiversity Emergency response.

To ensure the success of neighbourhood battery projects, it is imperative they are delivered in collaboration with local communities; and for batteries to be sited in areas where there are high levels of community support. As such, consultation and engagement with community is a core focus in the development and delivery of Power Melbourne.

Through innovation and demonstration, and empowering communities, Power Melbourne will accelerate the delivery of neighbourhood batteries, and provide pathways for communities to access the benefits of renewable energy.

Community engagement Phase 1

The purpose of Phase 1 community engagement on Power Melbourne was to raise general awareness about the project, to better understand community interests and concerns about neighbourhood batteries at a neighbourhood level and obtain feedback from community on where they would like batteries located and how they would like to be involved in the project.

A deeper program of engagement is planned for Phase 2 commencing in early 2023, which will include place-based community conversations in neighbourhood forums. The objective of Phase 2 will be to further identify battery host sites in consultation with community, build community support, activate community participation, and foster community champions.

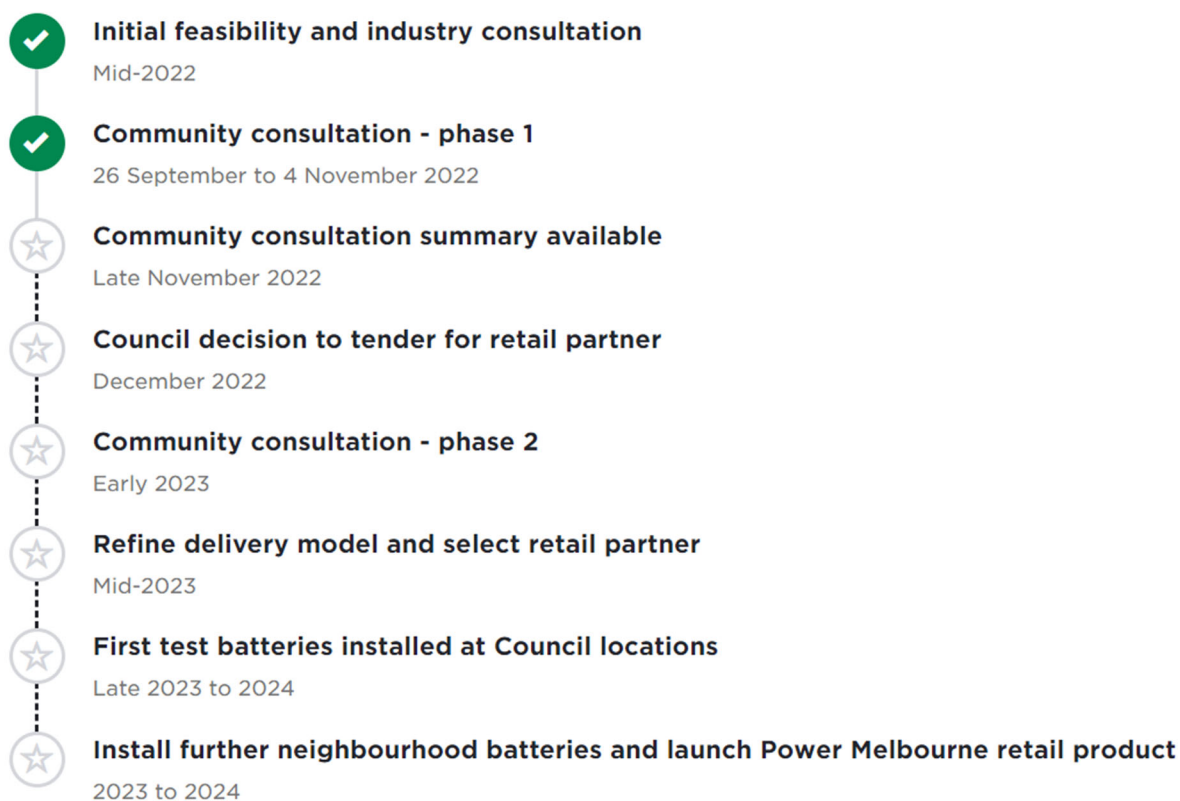
Phase 1, included a project overview on City of Melbourne's (CoM) online engagement portal Participate Melbourne, including information about neighbourhood batteries, proposed Council-managed locations for an initial demonstration network of batteries, and the proposed retail product.

Between 26 September and 4 November 2022, the community were asked to review the background information provided on the site and provide feedback via an online survey.

During the Phase 1 engagement period, 311 survey responses were received. The survey was promoted through multiple channels, including CoM library newsletters, Neighbourhood Partners, business concierge service, and social media. The responses indicate a diverse representation of the CoM community in terms of neighbourhood, gender, cultural background and age.

Although the online survey is now closed, Participate Melbourne retains the ability for submissions to be made on neighbourhood batteries.

Engagement Timeline



Survey responses

The following section provides raw data of results received from respondents from the Participate Melbourne online survey.

Q1. Please indicate your level of agreement with following statements:

	Do not agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree	Unsure / Require more info
Urgent action is needed on climate change	16	14	13	263	3
It is important to move away from fossil fuels and transition to renewable energy	12	15	17	260	3
Neighbourhood batteries are an important part of the solution to transitioning to more renewable energy	15	13	52	197	31
I would like to be able to access more affordable renewable energy	7	18	14	268	2

Q2. What is your current understanding of neighbourhood batteries?

66	96	103	33	11
Zero – I'd never heard of them before today	Minimal	Medium	Knowledgeable	Expert – I've studied or worked on this topic

Q3. The first Power Melbourne batteries are proposed to be installed at council-owned buildings including:

- Queen Victoria Market
- Southbank Library
- Library at The Dock
- Kensington Recreation Centre
- Council House 2

What is your opinion of these proposed locations?

A representative summary of responses to this open text question is presented below:

Respondents overwhelmingly supported the locations with specific references to libraries, Kensington Recreation Centre and Queen Victoria Market. Less than one per cent of responses were unsupportive of any or all locations proposed.

Q4. What other locations in City of Melbourne should be considered for neighbourhood batteries? List as many locations as you like, and tell us why.

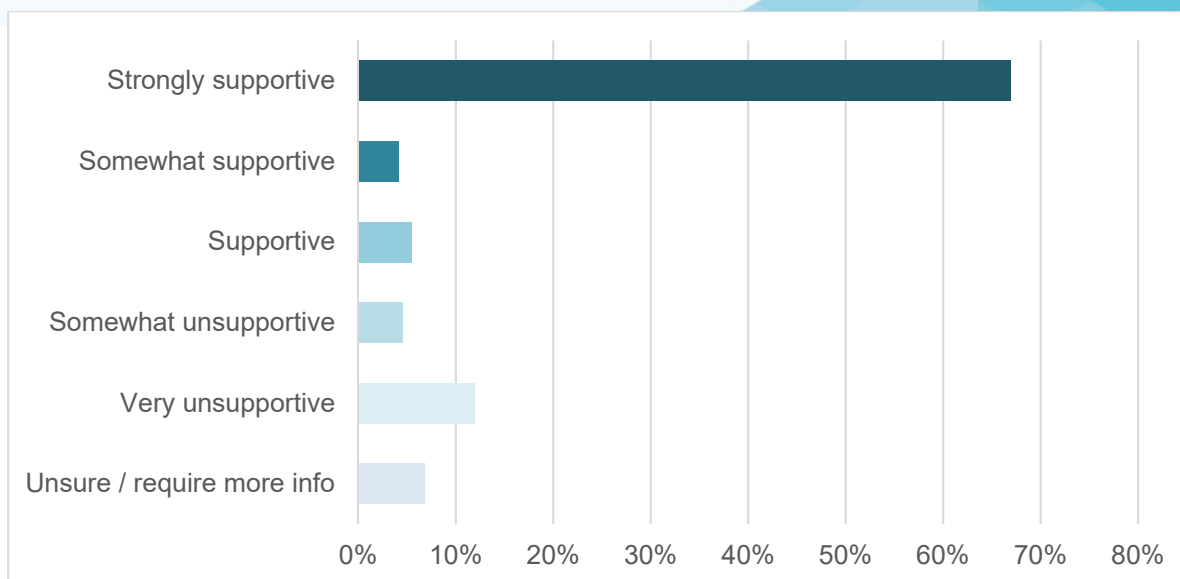
A representative summary of responses to this open text question is presented below:

Respondents expressed support for public buildings and spaces across the municipality including:

- libraries
- community hubs
- hospitals
- universities
- sports facilities
- shopping centres
- train stations
- flyovers and traffic islands
- iconic cultural landmarks

Q5. How supportive would you be of a neighbourhood battery in your area?

37	14	17	13	207	21
Very unsupportive	Somewhat unsupportive	Supportive	Somewhat supportive	Strongly supportive	Unsure / Require more info



Q6. For the previous question, tell us why you chose this level of support for a local neighbourhood battery.

A representative summary of responses to this open text question is presented below:

Supporters care about:

- Taking visible, rapid climate action
- Scaling up faster
- Embedded networks
- Reducing cost of living for low income residents
- Sharing generated locally solar

Sceptics are concerned about:

- Uninterrupted reliable supply of green power
- Rapid transition away from fossil fuels
- The necessity of Council investing in renewables
- Long term value for money

Undecided need info about:

- Safety
- Noise
- Appearance
- Whole of life environmental impact
- Technical viability of sites

“I think it’s good for people in the city that can’t install panels on their roof or a battery in the garage to be able to take action as a community”

“Is it reliable affordable and available and really necessary”

“I am supportive in principle but need much more information”

Q7. Power Melbourne also proposes to offer a retail product which would give anyone in the City of Melbourne access to a renewable energy plan linked to neighbourhood batteries.

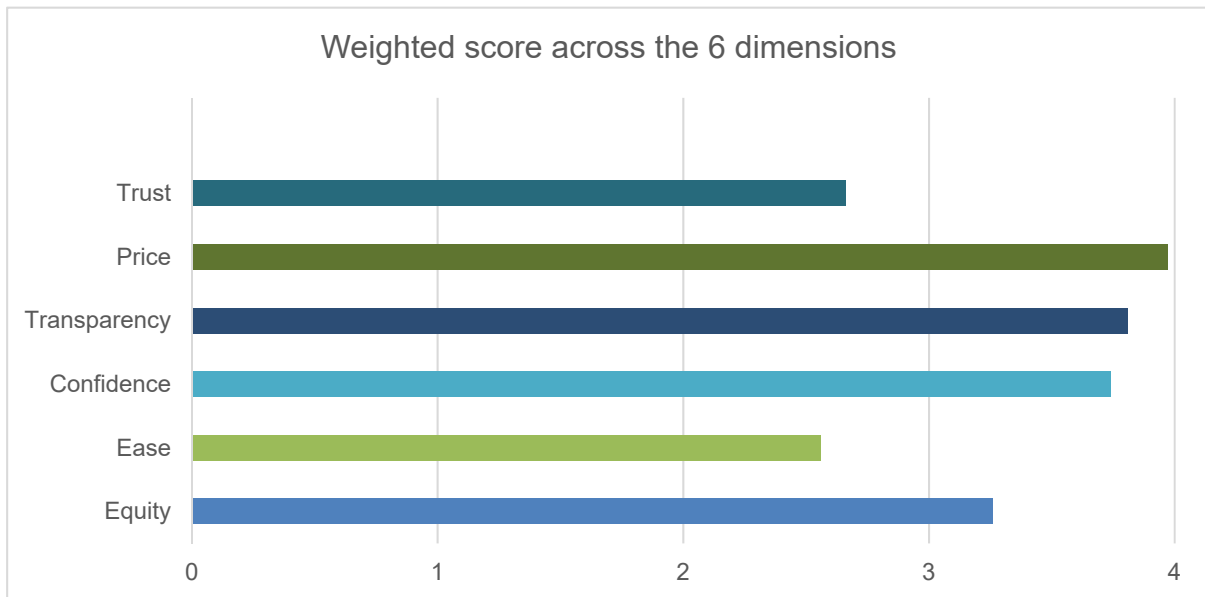
Do you currently purchase GreenPower or carbon neutral electricity?

137	102	69
Yes	No	Unsure

Q8. What would matter most to you when considering switching your electricity provider to a renewable energy plan linked to neighbourhood batteries?

- Trust: In Council, and in Council’s chosen retail energy partner
- Price: At least as cheap or cheaper compared to other green plans
- Transparency: Guaranteed 100% renewable energy

- Confidence: Reliable, stable renewable power for my home or business
- Ease: Simple to switch, great customer service
- Equity: It allows everyone to access renewable energy whether or not they have rooftop solar



Q9. Are you responding today as an individual or on behalf of an organisation or business?

289	19
Individual	Organisation or business

Q10. Do you have any questions or comments about Power Melbourne or neighbourhood batteries? These will inform our next stage of consultation.

A representative summary of responses to this open text question is presented below:

Respondents took the opportunity to reiterate support, questions or concerns including:

- Offers to advocate in community and engage in local conversations about specific sites
- Offers to host a battery in own building
- Questions about lifecycle environmental impact of battery components.

Q11. Would you or your organisation like to be involved in more consultation about Power Melbourne in future?

211	92
Yes	No

Q12. What type of activity would you be interested in?

83	104	157	90	164	0
Attend workshop in person	Attend workshop online	Provide online feedback	Attend pop-up kiosk at	Receive email updates	Other

			potential host site		
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Q12. Apart from being consulted on locations and electricity plans, are there other ways you would like to be involved in a neighbourhood battery project?

A representative summary of responses to this open text question is presented below:

Respondents offered support and engagement with the project including:

- becoming a host site
- supplying batteries
- collaborating to deliver pilot in a CALD neighbourhood
- creating teaching resources
- incorporate in a thesis
- study opportunities for engineering students
- investing
- engaging with creatives and artists
- asking for a job.

Demographic questions

Q1. What motivated you to participate in this consultation today?

12	84	174	138	26
I was passing by/approached by City of Melbourne	The project directly impacts me	I think it's important to have your say and contribute to the future of the city	I received a letter/email from City of Melbourne	I saw the project on social media
16	36	3	0	
I saw the project on media (TV, radio, newspaper etc.)	Word of mouth	Prefer not to say	Other (please specify)	

Q2. Which of the following best describes your connection to this City of Melbourne project?

219	46	10	8	5	2	14
I am a resident	I am a worker	I own a business	I am a student	I am a visitor	Prefer not to say	Other (please specify)

Q3. Based on your connection to this project, where do you live/work/own a business/study/visit?

35	40	24	24	37	37	39
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Carlton (3053)	CBD (3000)	Docklands (3008)	East Melbourne (3002)	Kensington (3031)	North Melbourne (3051)	Parkville (3052)
21	10	17	1	3	23	
Southbank (3006)	South Yarra (3141)	West Melbourne (3003)	Fisherman's Bend	Prefer not to answer	Other/outside the City of Melbourne	

Q4. Do you identify with any of the following?

4	1	25	13	42	42
Aboriginal	Torres Strait Islander	Person with a disability	Carer	LGBTIQ+	Speak a language other than English at home
91	4	9	142		
Born overseas	International student	Prefer not to say	None of these		

Q5. Have you participated in a consultation with City of Melbourne before?

101	132	40	29	4
No, this is my first City of Melbourne consultation	Yes, I have participated in a City of Melbourne consultation once or twice before today	Yes, and I participate in City of Melbourne regularly	Not sure	Prefer not to say

Q6. How do you describe your gender?

150	132	6	13	0
Female	Male	Non-binary/gender diverse	Prefer not to say	I use a different term (please specify)

Q7. What is your age?

0	0	12	18	33	37	39	28
Under 15 years	15-19 years	20-24 years	25-29 years	30-34 years	35-39 year	40-44 years	45-49 years
29	22	28	24	7	11	13	
50-54 years	55-59 years	60-64 years	65-69 years	70-74 years	75+ years	Prefer not to say	

How feedback will be used

The Participate Melbourne website notified readers that participation in this consultation will influence three key factors:

- Battery locations – Your feedback will help City of Melbourne understand priority locations for neighbourhood batteries.
- Retail product – Your feedback will inform our partnership with an energy provider, and the type of renewable energy plans which are offered.
- Project communications – Your feedback will help us understand your attitudes towards neighbourhood batteries, and ensure we communicate clearly and effectively with our community.