

# COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS – CARLTON AND PARKVILLE SUMMARY

**When: Wednesday 12 September 2018, 6pm to 7.30pm**

**Venue: Kathleen Syme Library and Community Centre**

The City of Melbourne recently held a ‘Community Conversations’ session, chaired by the Lord Mayor, with community members in Carlton and Parkville. The purpose of the session was to provide an opportunity for the Lord Mayor and Councillors to meet directly with the community in a small group setting, to hear what people think and feel about their neighbourhood, and to have a meaningful discussion on key themes and challenges in different parts of the city. The Carlton and Parkville ‘Community Conversation’ was the third in a trial of this new community engagement initiative.

## **Who took part?**

City of Melbourne representatives included: Lord Mayor Sally Capp; Councillor Jackie Watts; Lindy Tan, Liaison Officer, Lord Mayor’s Office; Eamonn Fennessy, Manager Placemaking and Engagement; and Sam Cremean, Community Engagement Partner (scribe).

People from across Carlton and Parkville were invited to express an interest in being part of the session. Of those who nominated, 25 community members were selected by Council officers representing a cross section of residents, workers and business interests.

## **What was discussed**

The Lord Mayor facilitated a conversation with community members and posed a series of questions, including:

- What do you love about Carlton and Parkville?
- What are the emerging issues and opportunities in Carlton and Parkville?
- What can the City of Melbourne do better?

These questions prompted a rich conversation on many different topics. Community members spoke with great passion about what they loved about Carlton and Parkville including but not limited to:

- the diversity within the community;
- the parks and community facilities such as Kathleen Syme Library;
- the unique heritage character of Carlton;
- proximity to amenities and services; and
- a sense of community amongst residents and local businesses.

Community members identified a number of emerging issues. These included the need to balance development while retaining the heritage character of the area and to protect much valued places such as the Carlton Gardens, Royal Park and the Queen Victoria Market from future infrastructure development and the impact of events. The Lord Mayor noted that this requires a careful balance, ensuring that character and amenity are maintained while we plan for a growing population. The opportunity to help balance this increase in density lies in growth areas of the city such as Arden Macaulay and Fisherman’s Bend. There was also a desire from the group to better understand the University of Melbourne’s development plans through improved consultation processes.

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There was discussion on governance and the role of the City of Melbourne in advocating and partnering with other levels of government and stakeholders such as the University of Melbourne to represent the interests of the local community. Some participants asserted that voting equity should be investigated to ensure that the interests of residents are prioritised over that of the business sector. Cr Watts encouraged the participants to contact their local member. The Lord Mayor and Councillor Watts have brought this issue up with the State Minister for Local Government, Marlene Kairouz, and will continue advocating for change.

There was robust discussion around the need to address barriers to long term employment for international students and disadvantaged members of the community. Representatives from African community groups at the conversation commended the City of Melbourne for the support provided through the African-Australian Partnerships Project however, suggested there is still work to be done in addressing cultural barriers to the unemployment cycle. Ideas from the group to address these issues included African role model programs, community networking events and internships with local businesses. It was understood by the group that to achieve this, City of Melbourne would largely have an advocacy role with other levels of government. Some participants offered to help through their own organisations.

International student representatives also articulated concerns that support and programs such as the International Students Welcome have generally declined in recent years, while student numbers are growing. There was the suggestion that perceptions of safety have declined and therefore students are spending less time in the campus areas at night time. One student suggested that a forum should be held on issues facing international students. It was also discussed that attracting and retaining international talent is key in establishing Melbourne as a knowledge city.

One participant raised concerns that the Parkville Gardens (former Commonwealth Games Village site) is undergoing further high rise development, however, lacks community facilities. The important role that community facilities like Kathleen Syme Library and Community Centre play in nurturing a sense of community was widely discussed as well as Carlton Neighbourhood Learning Centre's need for an upgraded space and improved location.

Another participant suggested shade sails in Nature Play at Royal Park however City of Melbourne is committed to providing natural shade as often as possible. This is particularly important in Royal Park given its natural landscape character. There was also a request to improve street numbers, parking and bike racks on Lygon, Drummond and Queensberry Streets. City of Melbourne is currently working with local businesses to determine designs for potential wayfinding and streetscape improvements.

The session finished with a summary by the Lord Mayor and Councillor Watts where they thanked the group for participating, acknowledging their contributions to the discussion. The Lord Mayor affirmed the Councillors' commitment to be more involved at a local level and be seen within our community. The Lord Mayor also said she will endeavor to facilitate the local community voice in planning decisions, supported by Council officers.

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## What next?

- The City of Melbourne will investigate the establishment of an international student's forum event.
- The City of Melbourne will continue to support Harmony Day and other events that promote cultural diversity in the area.
- The City of Melbourne will continue to support the African-Australian Partnerships Project and investigate further potential programs with African community organisations. The Lord Mayor plans to convene a meeting with key members of the African community from various areas of the municipality to further understand their needs.
- The City of Melbourne will continue to engage with the community on the future use and development of Royal Park and provide advocacy to the State Government.
- The City of Melbourne will continue to collaborate with the University of Melbourne and the Carlton Local Agencies Network (CLAN) to improve community engagement processes. The Lord Mayor will meet with the new Vice Chancellor of Melbourne University, Professor Duncan Maskell, to voice the community's concerns and need for early and tangible engagement.
- The City of Melbourne will continue to work with the Parkville Gardens Residents Association and development sector to understand emerging community needs for the area.
- The City of Melbourne will continue to support Neighbourhood Houses in the municipality including Carlton Neighbourhood Learning Centre.