

# Case Study

## City of Monash



CITY OF  
MONASH

capire

*Giving every person a voice.*

PROJECT NAME

# Imagine Monash Deliberative Engagement

Client Monash City Council  
Time frame 5 weeks

Process Deliberative Engagement  
Audience City of Monash residents

PROJECT OUTLINE

Across May and June 2021, Capire partnered with Monash City Council to deliver a deliberative engagement process. Taking part during the pandemic, Capire leveraged the online environment to amplify voices from the community and facilitate community aspirations.

Informing the Council’s Community Vision, the deliberative engagement process also informed its Council, Financial and Asset Plans. In five weeks, the community curated draft visions. Capire made this possible by leveraging the Imagine Monash Community Panel’s strong community ties.

Capire then turned the ‘engaged’ into the ‘engager’ by spurring the panel to collect stories from every corner of the community. The engagement process allowed participants to be the experts in creating the key messages that reflected the community’s priorities.

PROJECT TEAM



**Ross Goeman**  
Manager  
of Corporate  
Performance



**Denise Francisco**  
Project Manager  
& Lead Facilitator



**Eliza Knox**  
Project Support



**Diana Bell**  
Consultation  
& Research  
Coordinator



**Matthew Gordon**  
Project Director  
& Lead Facilitator



USING THE ENGAGER’S PERSPECTIVE TO OVERCOME PROJECT CHALLENGES

There were two challenges associated with this project. A short five-week time frame was allocated for the project. At the same time, this project was being executed during the COVID-19 pandemic. This meant that any deliberative engagement programme had to be safe for everyone and time efficient.

Capire started by building on what was already available – Monash City Council had an online community panel and advisory committees that already provide feedback to Council. Capire also had extensive experience in delivering safe engagement programmes throughout the pandemic.

KEY STEPS TO A SUCCESSFUL ENGAGEMENT

The deliberative engagement programme consisted of three phases, designed to maximise the value of engagement.



**Learning and listening**  
This phase supported panel members in understanding the scope, purpose, role and process of the panel.



**Building the collective narrative**  
This phase encouraged the panel to think collectively about ‘representative needs’ within the City of Monash.



**Deliberating over community priority areas**  
This phase focused on gaining collective agreement about what is important to the community over the next 10 years.



ACTIONS TO FOSTER ENGAGEMENT

➤ **Creating a ‘community within a community’.**  
Capire recruited an Imagine Monash community panel from the existing online community panel membership. The goal was to create a ‘community within a community’ which exemplified Monash’s diversity.

➤ **Turning the engaged into the engager.**  
Capire gave community panel members training to collect narratives and stories from their communities. The team encouraged the panel to draw commonalities within these stories. This fed into a sharing session between the council and panel. It also spurred constructive discussion on what the key messages to the council should be.

➤ **Ensuring open communications with everyone involved.**  
Capire committed Monash City Council to listen and discuss its challenges, possibilities, and opportunities for the city to its residents. By utilising the expertise of council staff, residents and council were able to consider different aspirations for the community and understand the trade-offs of each aspiration.

Based on these three phases and key actions, Capire delivered four online engagement sessions with the community panel.

## FACILITATING THE COMMUNITY VISION

# *“Monash is a city that gives more than it takes.”*

As a result of the lessons learnt, Capire and the City of Monash were able to identify a community vision and six key themes. The vision encapsulates the community spirit that was present throughout the engagement process.

## SIX KEY THEMES



A sustainable future



A strong sense of community



An engaged community



A green and leafy city



Easy to get around



Services in my neighbourhood

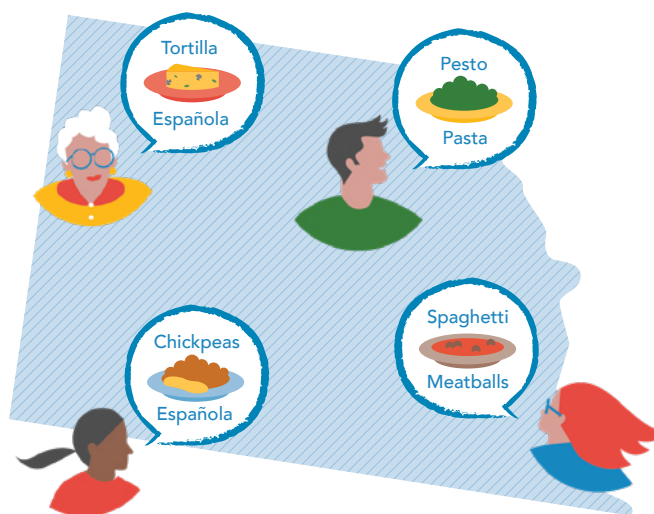
Throughout the process, the discussion between participants was authentic and empathetic.

The diversity of the Panel reflected a good representation of the Monash community, with almost half the group speaking at least one of seven different languages at home. Two thirds of the group were women and one third were men. The panel ranged in age from 16 years to late 70s, with half the group aged under 50 years, including three members in their teens and 20s.

Expert knowledge provided during the engagement offered the basis for panel members to have heartfelt and informed conversations.

Many community members rethought their decisions and opinions throughout the journey based on the knowledge they accumulated.

A sign of Capire's resounding success in creating a 'community within a community', participants also spoke of their desire to meet one another in person following the end of COVID-19 lockdowns.



## PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

***“Making a positive contribution to making Monash a world-class place to live.”***

***“Being able to contribute and learn from the diverse opinions and experiences of the panel and council staff.”***

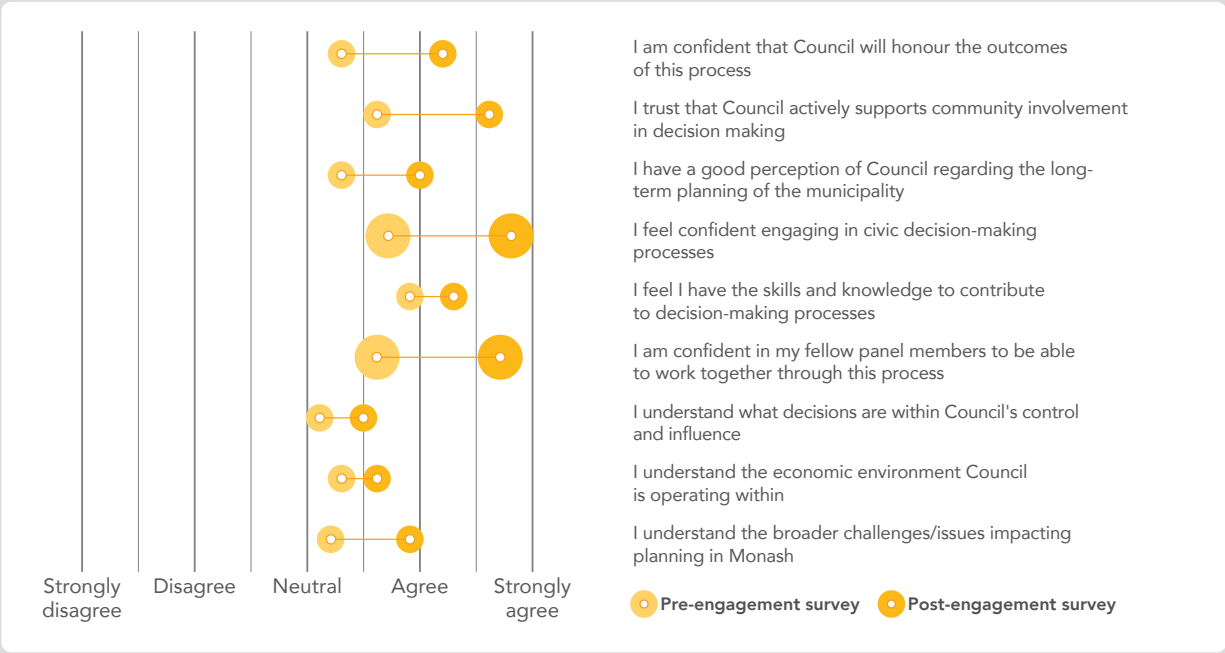
***“In the last session my group liked many of my contributions and wanted me to present our values.”***

ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES

Positive feedback was given by participants in an end-of-engagement survey. All responses to the community engagement initiatives increased following the engagement compared with the survey taken beforehand. Shared sentiment among the participants’ spoke of Monash City Council’s

openness throughout the process, especially around the challenges and opportunities facing the city. The feedback also described the community engagement process as iterative, responsive to people’s needs, and accessible.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SURVEY RESULTS



MAKING A MEANINGFUL IMPACT

This community engagement exercise became an educational experience for Monash City Council. Decision makers and councillors have built trust in deliberative engagement through the project team’s ongoing engagement with them. Council staff appreciated the community-centric language of the consultation. They also saw that the Community Panel worked well to address a broad range of complex community challenges and issues. The richness of the data collected was sought specifically to inform several Council strategies, the Council Plan, Financial Plan and Asset Plan. This shows Council’s transparency to its community members beyond the community engagement process.

## KEY LESSONS

# Strategies for engaging with diverse communities

## 1 Creating a 'community within a community'

### HOW WE DID IT

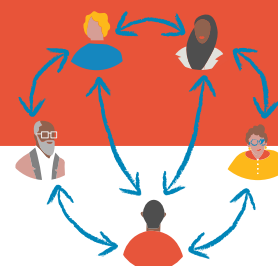
Capire leveraged the existing Monash online community panel to identify participants from a diversity of backgrounds. This culminated in the formation of the Imagine Monash Community Panel.

### WHY WE DID IT

Leveraging the existing online panel membership allowed the Capire team to create a diverse panel that reflects the community's demographics. This could be done efficiently as a new panel did not have to be created from scratch.

### OUR IMPACT

Despite the COVID-19 lockdowns, the Community Panel members were a strong representative mix of the Monash community.



## 2 Turning the 'engaged' into the 'engager'

### HOW WE DID IT

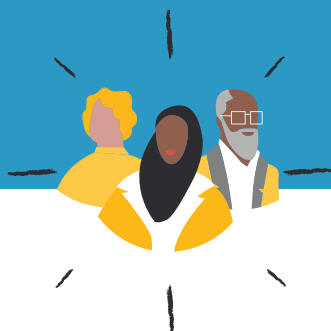
Capire provided training to the Community Panel, to collect narratives and stories from the broader Monash community.

### WHY WE DID IT

Embedding the participant into the community engagement process broadened Capire's reach into the Monash community in the short time that was available for the project.

### OUR IMPACT

The stories that participants shared were authentic, creating an atmosphere of empathy throughout the community engagement process. The 'richness' of these stories contributed to creative visions, key messages and goals in the Community Vision.



### 3 Ensuring open communications with everyone involved

#### HOW WE DID IT

Through experienced facilitators and online platforms, Capire facilitated the sharing of the narratives throughout the community engagement process.

Capire helped the Community Panel draw commonalities between common themes and also helped to translate them into key messages, goals, and visions.

Online platforms were used to keep the discussions going in the Community Panel.

An online portal was also developed to distribute information and collateral to participants and ask questions in between sessions.

#### WHY WE DID IT

Expert facilitation allowed community panelists and council staff to present their concerns and aspirations. It also encouraged discussions around the trade-offs of specific ideas raised.

The use of online platforms provided accessible ways for the Community Panel members to contribute to conversations.

This was possible even during COVID-19 lockdowns.

#### OUR IMPACT

Participants were surprised at how open council staff were to their suggestions. Council staff valued the ability to share their challenges and opportunities for the area. They also found the genuine narratives that have arisen throughout the process enlightening – Council plans to use the 'rich' narratives gained for projects beyond the Community Vision, such as their Council Plan, Financial Plan and Asset Plan.



Ready to engage, learn and connect?

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