June 2026

Elsternwick Plaza Creative Lighting Installation

Engagement report



City of GLEN EIRA

GLEN EIRA CITY COUNCIL

BENTLEIGH, BENTLEIGH EAST, BRIGHTON EAST, CARNEGIE, CAULFIELD, ELSTERNWICK, GARDENVALE, GLEN HUNTLY, MCKINNON, MURRUMBEENA, ORMOND, ST KILDA EAST

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Executive summary

We're planning a creative lighting installation for Elsternwick Plaza to make the space more welcoming, vibrant and safe after dark. The project is partially funded by the Victorian Government's *Multicultural Business Precinct Revitalisation Program*.

Creative lighting can help transform public spaces at night, creating a welcoming atmosphere that encourages people to spend time and enjoy the area after dark. A more active and inviting plaza can support local businesses and contribute to a stronger sense of safety.

This project supports our *Council Plan 2025–2029* by helping create a welcoming, inclusive and vibrant public space that brings people together and strengthens Elsternwick as a local destination.

How we engaged

We gathered community feedback over a four-week period from 19 May to 16 June 2026.

Opportunities for community feedback included:

- an online survey on Council's Have Your Say website
- quick poll votes online and at pop-up events
- location suggestion shared online and at pop-up events
- submissions via email, phone or post

We asked for feedback to shape the lighting design principles and the preferred location for the installation. This will inform the design brief used in a public tender process, where a contractor will be selected to design and deliver the lighting installation.

Who we heard from

We received a total of **165 pieces of feedback**, including:

- 75 survey submissions
- 74 quick poll votes
- 14 location suggestions
- 2 email submissions

What we heard



Strong support for improving the plaza after dark

- 76% of quick poll respondents said a creative lighting installation would encourage them to spend more time in the Plaza after dark.



Safety and ease of movement were the highest priorities

- Creating a space that feels safe and is easy to move through was the highest-ranked design principle (weighted average 2.56 out of 3).
- This was followed by creating a flexible space for events and community activities, and celebrating Elsternwick's heritage (weighted averages 1.89 and 1.78 out of 3, respectively).



People want a welcoming and active public space

- Respondents frequently raised in comments their support for lighting that helps activate the plaza, supports events and encourages people to gather.



Preference for warm and distinctive lighting

- Respondents frequently raised in comments a preference for warm, non-harsh lighting that creates an inviting atmosphere while avoiding glare and impacts on wildlife.
- Many also supported creative and distinctive lighting features that give the plaza a recognisable and unique identity.



Central lawn area was the preferred location

- Most location suggestions (7 of 14) identified the central lawn area as the preferred location for the lighting installation.

Background

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This project supports our *Council Plan 2025–2029* by helping create a welcoming, inclusive and vibrant public space that brings people together and strengthens Elsternwick as a local destination.

We are at the beginning of this project. Community feedback will help inform the design brief used in a public tender process, where a contractor will be selected to design and deliver the lighting installation.

What was fixed

Some requirements are set by the grant funding and can't be changed. The lighting must:

- Reflect cultural diversity in a respectful and inclusive way, without focusing on any single culture.
- Support night-time activity and encourage people to spend time in the plaza after dark.
- Be durable, energy-efficient and easy to maintain, so it lasts for years to come.

Where the community could provide input

- The additional design principles, including what matters most if trade-offs are needed.
- The preferred location of the lighting installation within Elsternwick Plaza.

This report provides a detailed summary of the engagement activities undertaken and the feedback received from the community.

Communication activities

We ran a broad communication campaign to let people know about the engagement opportunity and invite them to take part. We used a mix of channels to reach key stakeholders and the wider community. The table below shows which channels we used and how many people each one reached.

Communication activities	Reach
Glen Eira News Article in the May 2026 edition	• Delivered to approx. 64,500 residences
Have Your Say engagement page Live from 19 May to 16 June 2026	• Views: 472 • Visits: 422 • Followers: 10
Social media: Facebook and Instagram Glen Eira City Council Facebook and Instagram accounts concluded the campaign with 6 posts, including main feeds and stories	• Views: 10,092 • Reach: 6,658 • Interactions: 67 • Link clicks: 36
Community engagement e-newsletter June edition	• Recipients: 4,440 • Opened: 2,195 • Link clicks: 144 • Clicks to engagement: 12
Targeted promotion Shared with internal teams including City Economy, Youth Services and Life Stages, Sustainability and Libraries and promoted to their network. Shared directly with local community groups and organisations. Presentation to Council's Diverse, Accessible and Welcoming Places Advisory Committee Advisory	• Emails: 13 • Presentation: 2

Communication activities	Reach
Committee and Elsternwick Mainstreet Committee.	
Poster Shared at Council facilities, including Glen Eira Town Hall and Glen Eira Libraries.	• Posters: 9
Postcard Distributed during pop-up events, drop-ins to businesses on Glen Huntly Road and shared at Council facilities, including Glen Eira Town Hall and Libraries.	• Postcards: 401
Service Centre screen On display during the engagement period.	

Engagement activities

Feedback on the project was gathered through online activities and pop-up events held in Elsternwick Plaza.

The primary engagement activity was an online survey through Council's Have Your Say platform. Hard copies of this survey were available upon request.

Community members could also share feedback directly to the Engagement Team by phone, email or post.

Engagement activities	Number who participated
Survey The community could complete the survey online at Have Your Say or request a hard copy survey.	• 75 survey submissions
Quick poll votes The community could vote in the 'quick poll' online at Have Your Say or vote in-person at pop-up events.	• 74 quick poll votes

Engagement activities	Number who participated
Location suggestions The community could suggest where in Elsternwick Plaza the creative lighting installation would work best in.	• 14 location suggestions
Email submissions	• 2 emails
Community pop-ups 2 pop-ups were held at Elsternwick Plaza during the engagement period.	• 2 pop-up events • 41 conversations • 151 postcards handed out





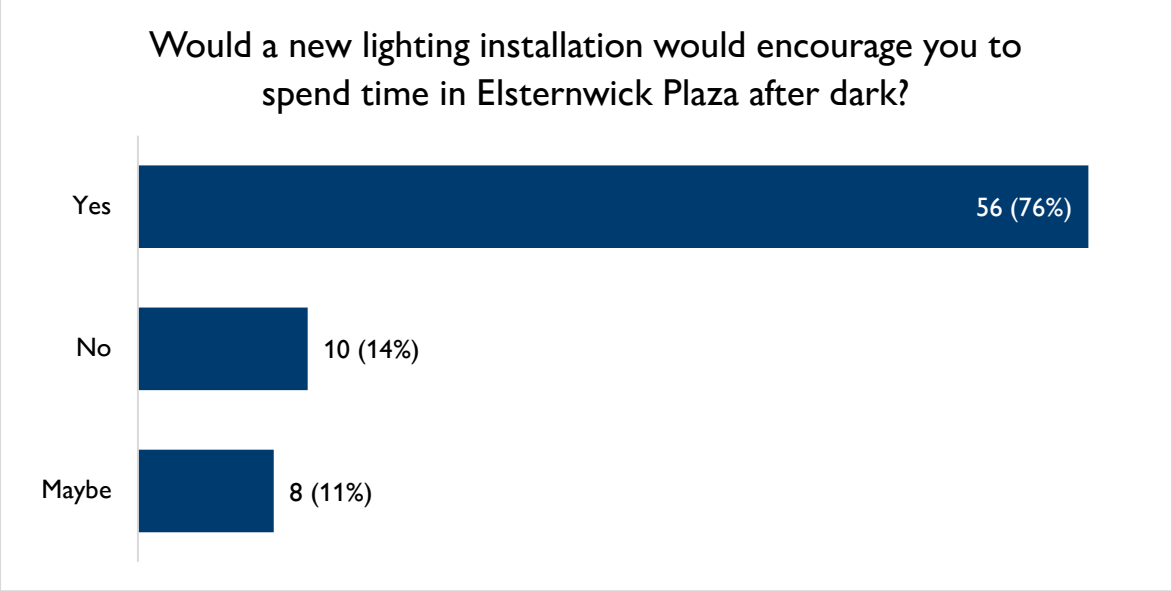
What we heard

Quick poll

The quick poll asked whether a new lighting installation would encourage them to spend time in Elsternwick Plaza after dark.

People could vote online at Have Your Say or in-person at pop-up events.

Of the 74 respondents, 76 per cent said it would encourage them to spend time after dark.



Email submissions

Two email submissions were received and are summarised below.

Submission 1:
Suggests a creative lighting installation featuring cascading "meteor shower" lights suspended in trees to create a visually striking display. Also proposes interactive projections inspired by immersive exhibitions, with changing cultural, Indigenous or community-themed imagery. Recommends combining both elements, with feature lighting at the Plaza entrance and interactive projections within the space.

Submission 2:
Supports a programmable and adaptable lighting installation that can be updated over time to reflect different cultures, festivals and seasons. Emphasises durability, energy efficiency and remote monitoring to support long-term maintenance. Recommends locating the

installation where it is highly visible from Glen Huntly Road and key pedestrian routes, while minimising impacts on nearby residents.

Location suggestions

People were invited to share ideas about where a creative lighting installation could be located in Elsternwick Plaza.

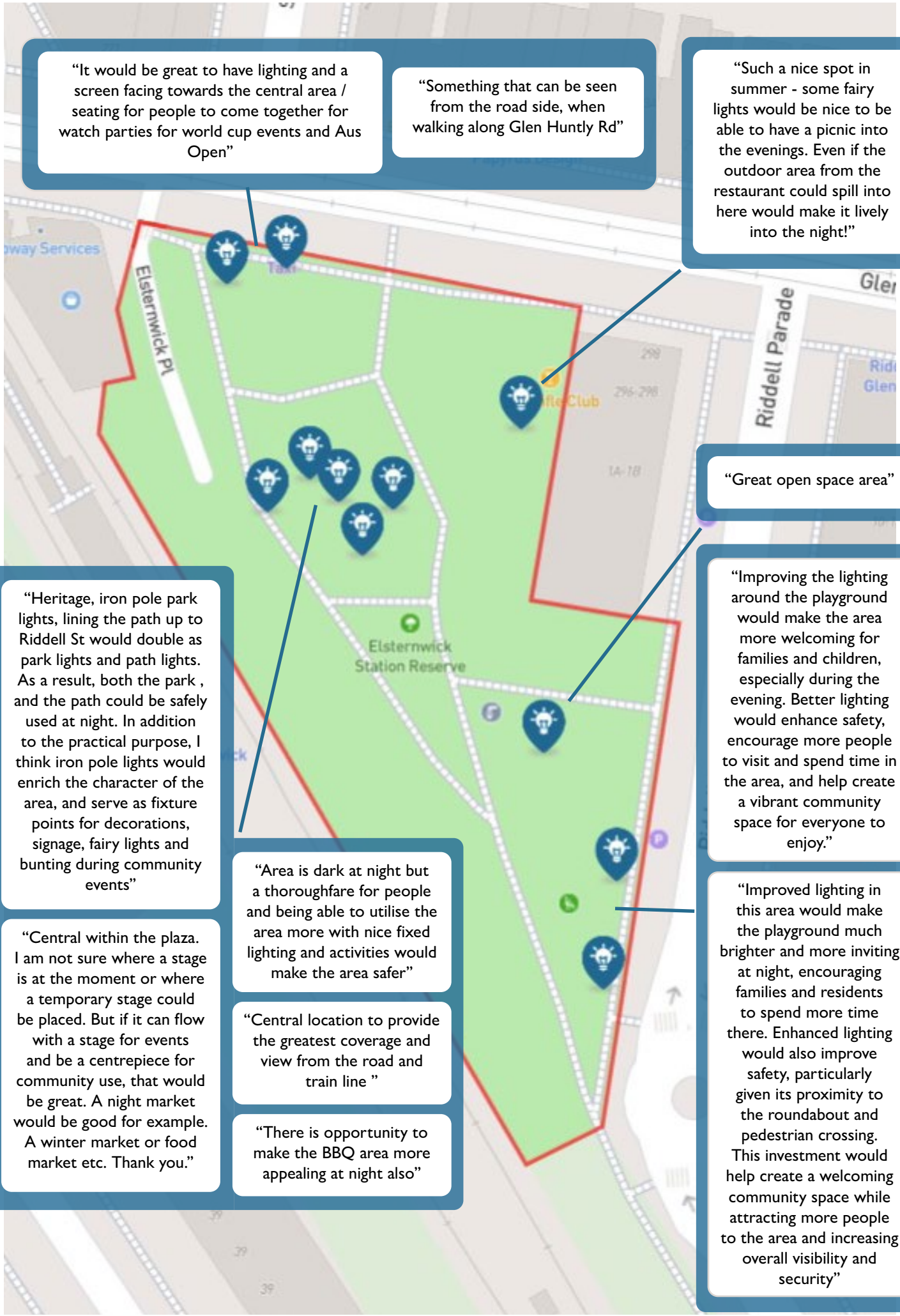
Respondents were asked to place a marker on the map and explain why they chose that location. They were encouraged to consider:

- where people already gather or move through
- places that feel unsafe or difficult to navigate after dark
- locations that could act as a focal point or gateway
- areas that could support events and activities

A total of 14 location suggestions were received, including 11 submitted online and three collected at pop-up events.

Many respondents suggested the installation should be located within the central lawn area (seven suggestions). Others suggested locations near Glen Huntly Road (four suggestions) or in the south-east corner of the Plaza, near Riddell Parade (three suggestions).

The image on the following page shows the location suggestions and comments submitted online. Of the three suggestions collected at pop-up events, one was located along Glen Huntly Road and two were within the central lawn area.



"It would be great to have lighting and a screen facing towards the central area / seating for people to come together for watch parties for world cup events and Aus Open"

"Something that can be seen from the road side, when walking along Glen Huntly Rd"

"Such a nice spot in summer - some fairy lights would be nice to be able to have a picnic into the evenings. Even if the outdoor area from the restaurant could spill into here would make it lively into the night!"

"Great open space area"

"Improving the lighting around the playground would make the area more welcoming for families and children, especially during the evening. Better lighting would enhance safety, encourage more people to visit and spend time in the area, and help create a vibrant community space for everyone to enjoy."

"Improved lighting in this area would make the playground much brighter and more inviting at night, encouraging families and residents to spend more time there. Enhanced lighting would also improve safety, particularly given its proximity to the roundabout and pedestrian crossing. This investment would help create a welcoming community space while attracting more people to the area and increasing overall visibility and security"

"Heritage, iron pole park lights, lining the path up to Riddell St would double as park lights and path lights. As a result, both the park , and the path could be safely used at night. In addition to the practical purpose, I think iron pole lights would enrich the character of the area, and serve as fixture points for decorations, signage, fairy lights and bunting during community events"

"Central within the plaza. I am not sure where a stage is at the moment or where a temporary stage could be placed. But if it can flow with a stage for events and be a centrepiece for community use, that would be great. A night market would be good for example. A winter market or food market etc. Thank you."

"Area is dark at night but a thoroughfare for people and being able to utilise the area more with nice fixed lighting and activities would make the area safer"

"Central location to provide the greatest coverage and view from the road and train line "

"There is opportunity to make the BBQ area more appealing at night also"

Survey

The survey asked eight questions and was structured into two sections:

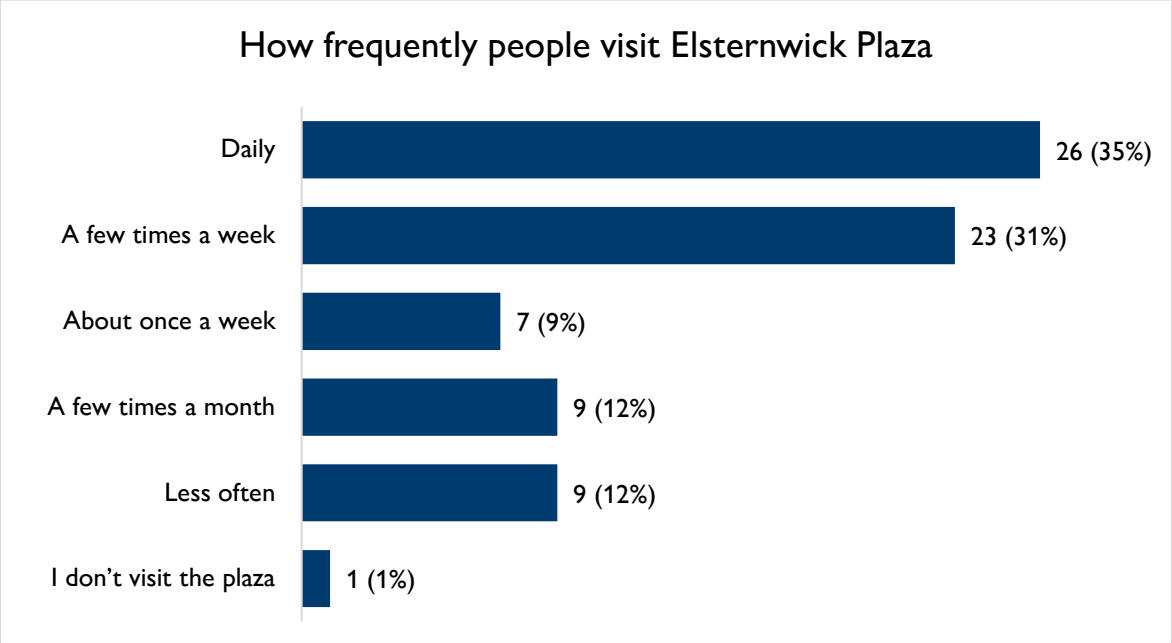
- visiting Elsternwick Plaza
- creative lighting principles

Visiting Elsternwick Plaza

Questions 1. How often do you visit, pass through or pass by Elsternwick Plaza?

This was a required question. It received 75 responses (100 per cent). Respondents could selct one option.

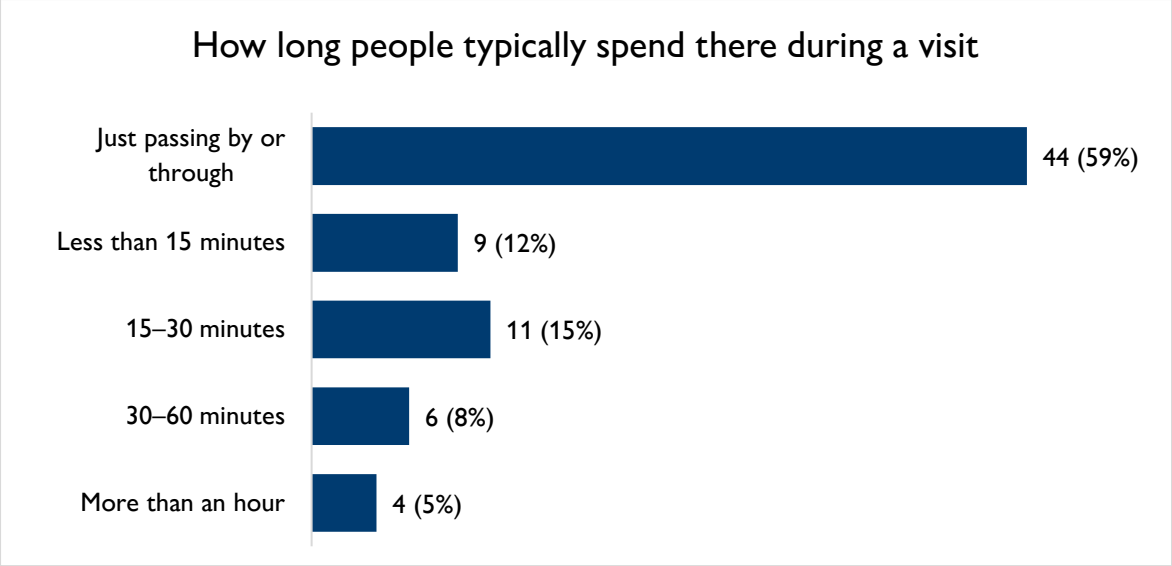
Most respondents vist Elsternwick Plaza frequently, with 35 per cent visiting daily and 31 per cent visit a few times a week.



Question 2. How long do you typically spend there during a visit?

This was a required question for those who said they visit Elsternwick Plaza (74 respondents, 99 per cent). Respondents could select multiple options.

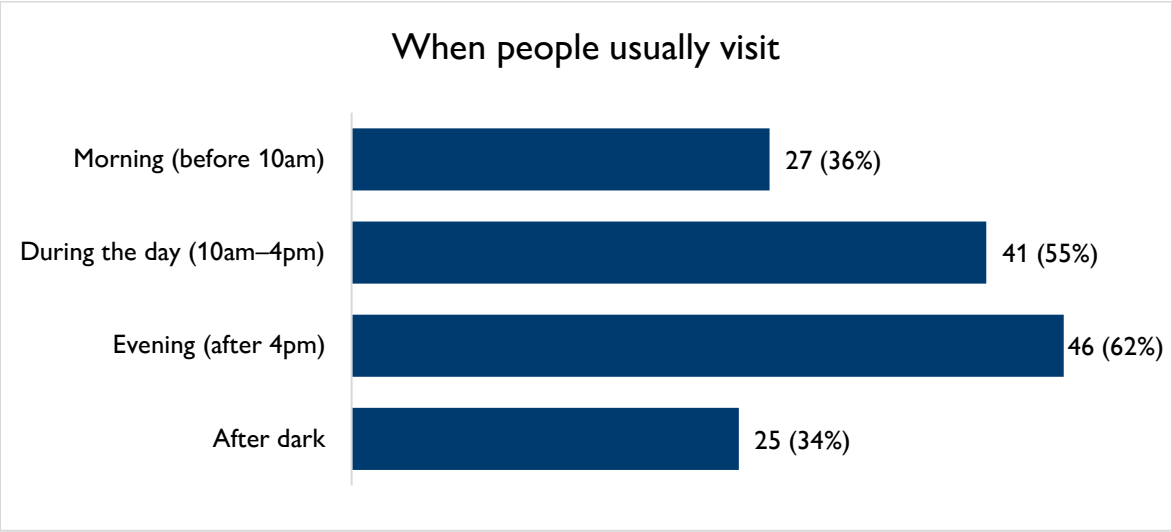
The majority of respondents typically passed through or by Elsternwick Plaza (59 per cent), rather than spending time there during a visit.



Question 3. When do you usually visit?

This was a required question for those who said they visit Elsternwick Plaza (74 respondents, 99 per cent). Respondents could select multiple options.

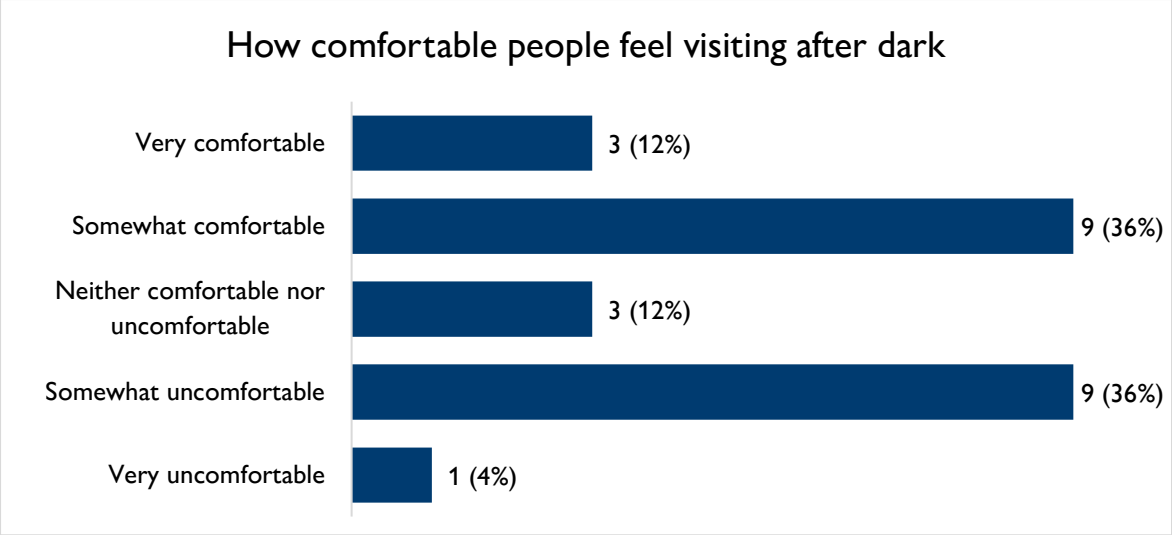
Respondents visited Elsternwick Plaza at all times of day. Most visited in the evening (after 4pm) (62 per cent) and during the day (10am–4pm) (55 per cent). Similar proportions visited in the morning (before 10am) (36 per cent) and after dark (34 per cent).



Question 4. How comfortable do you feel spending time in the plaza after dark?

This was a required question for those who said they visit Elsternwick Plaza after dark (25 respondents, 33 per cent).

Views were mixed. Nearly half of respondents (48 per cent) said they felt very or somewhat comfortable spending time in the plaza after dark, while 40 per cent felt very or somewhat uncomfortable. A further 12 per cent felt neither comfortable nor uncomfortable.

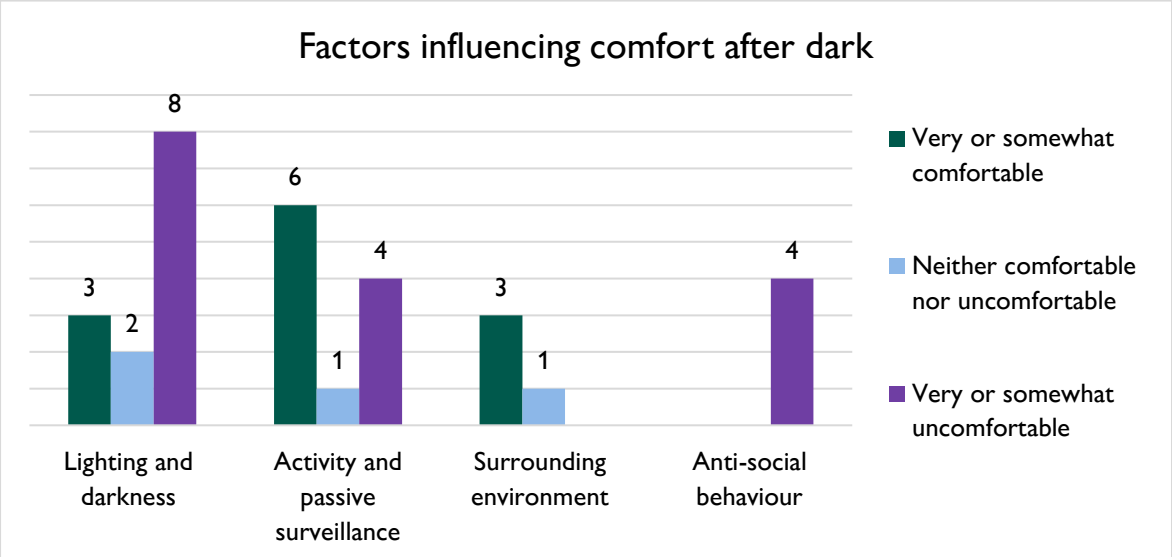


Question 5. What are the main factors influencing your level of comfort?

This was an optional question for those who said they visit Elsternwick Plaza after dark. It received 23 responses (31 per cent).

The most common themes from the comments are summarised in the chart below and table on the following page. A comment could reference more than one theme.

Lighting and darkness were the most common factors influencing comfort after dark. Comments also highlighted the importance of activity and passive surveillance, while respondents who felt less comfortable were more likely to mention anti-social behaviour and darker areas of the plaza.



Theme	Description	# of mentions
Lighting and darkness	• Comments referred to darkness, poor lighting and limited visibility.	• Very or somewhat comfortable: 3

	• Respondents across all comfort levels said darker areas reduced comfort, particularly near the playground and BBQ area.	• Neither comfortable nor uncomfortable: 2 • Very or somewhat uncomfortable: 8
Activity and passive surveillance	• Comments referred to the presence or absence of people in the space, including nearby restaurants and general activity. • Respondents who felt more comfortable often linked comfort to having people around and passive surveillance, while those who felt less comfortable referred to quiet or low activity areas.	• Very or somewhat comfortable: 6 • Neither comfortable nor uncomfortable: 1 • Very or somewhat uncomfortable: 4
Surrounding environment	• Comments referred to the surrounding context of the plaza, including nearby businesses, hospitality venues, the station and adjacent paths. • For some respondents, these surrounding uses made the area feel more active, while for others they reduced comfort.	• Very or somewhat comfortable: 3 • Neither comfortable nor uncomfortable: 1
Anti-social behaviour	• These comments referred to behaviour or activity that respondents perceived as unsafe, including drug-affected behaviour and other concerning activity in and around the plaza.	• Very or somewhat uncomfortable: 4

Representative quotes:

- "Lots of people/activity around in the restaurants but walking through the actual plaza up the path and past the playground (both sides of it) after dark is uncomfortable" — Woman, 25–34, Elsternwick
- "More people around = more comfort. Less blind spots = more comfort" — Man, 55–64, Bentleigh
- "It is dark and no one hangouts there so it doesn't look safe to hangout in the area at night" — Woman, 35–44, Elsternwick
- My comfort is dependent on the crowd in the dark spots if there is overflow from the Goat — Man, 55–64, Elsternwick

Creative lighting principles

The project is in the early design stage. As part of the grant funding, the lighting design must respond to the following principles:

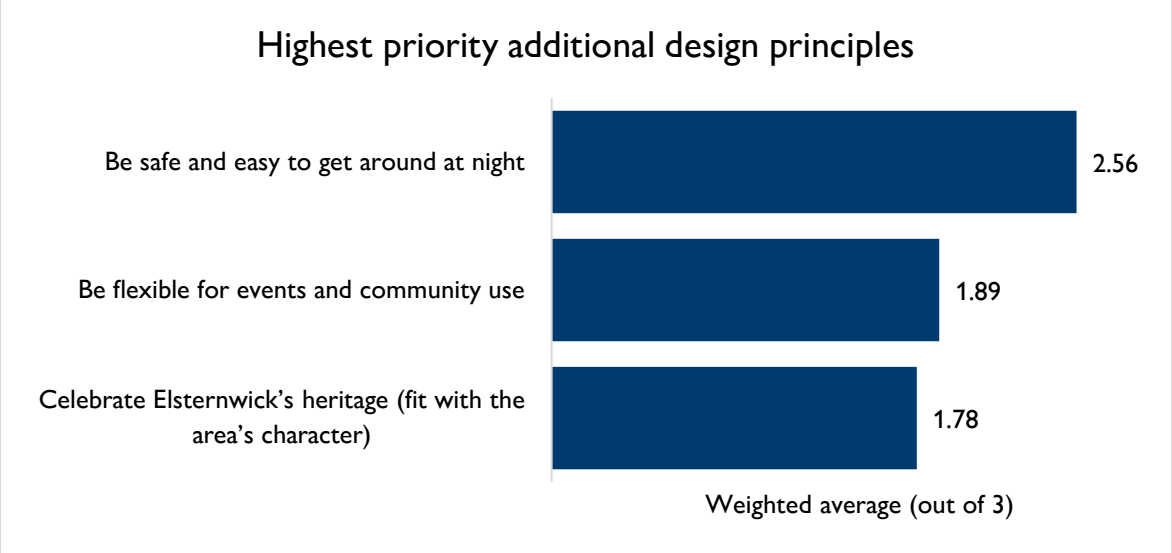
- reflect Elsternwick's cultural diversity
- support night-time activity
- be sustainable and long-lasting

These design principles are fixed. The survey asked people to provide input on other draft design priorities.

Question 6. Which of the following additional principles should be the highest priorities for the lighting design?

This was an optional question. It received 73 responses (97 per cent).

Being safe and easy to get around at night was the highest-ranked design principle.



Question 7. What are the main reasons for your ranking?

This was an optional question. It received 54 responses (73 per cent).

Safety and accessibility were the most dominant considerations (57 per cent), followed by community activation through events and gatherings (31 per cent).

Theme	Description	# of mentions
Safety and accessibility	• Many described the plaza as feeling unsafe after dark and highlighted that better lighting could improve accessibility, comfort	31 (57%)

	and confidence when moving through the space.	
Events, community use and activation	• Many saw lighting as an opportunity to support community events and social gatherings. Comments reflected a desire for a more welcoming community space to bring people together.	17 (31%)
Heritage and local character	• Some wanted the lighting to reflect Elsternwick's heritage and established character. Common suggestions included drawing on local history, built landmarks and traditional design elements. • A few said heritage was a lower priority, noting they were unsure how it should be reflected or were more concerned with practical function.	14 (26%)
Lighting style	• Comments highlighted the importance of lighting that creates an attractive and welcoming atmosphere, while avoiding lighting that felt overly bright or harsh.	12 (22%)
Out-of-scope	• A small number expressed opposition to the project or raised matters outside the scope of the lighting design.	4 (7%)

Representative quotes:

- "What matters most to me is safety and comfort. As someone who feels somewhat uncomfortable in the plaza after dark due to limited lighting, I believe improved lighting would make the area feel more secure and accessible for everyone" — 18–24, Woman, Gardenvale
- "If you are spending money on lighting having flexibility would enable a variety of after-dark events throughout the plaza, as opposed to a fixed position" — 55–64, Woman, Elsternwick
- "Apartments are getting smaller and gathering in social spaces to be part and create community is the best use of these spaces I think. Bringing people together is important" — 35–44, Man, Elsternwick
- "Elsternwick seems to be losing its heritage too quickly these days so if we can have more of it celebrated even lighting design that would be a win!" — 45–54, Woman, Elsternwick

- "Function first for safety but it would be great if it looks like a interesting feature as well to liven up the area" — 45–54, Woman, Elsternwick
- "My main consideration is having a good design, nothing too modern or boring" — 25–34, Man, Elsternwick

Question 8. Do you have any feedback on these additional principles, or suggestions that could help guide the lighting design?

This was an optional question. It received 41 responses (54 per cent).

Comments most commonly focused on improving safety and movement after dark (32 per cent) and using warm, non-harsh lighting (29 per cent).

Theme	Description	# of mentions
Safety and movement after dark	• Respondents emphasised the importance of clear sightlines and well-lit pathways and gathering areas to support safe movement and use of the plaza after dark.	13 (32%)
Warm non-harsh lighting	• Respondents preferred warm, inviting lighting rather than bright or harsh illumination. Suggestions included softer lighting tones, fairy lights and human-scaled lighting that creates a welcoming atmosphere while minimising glare.	12 (29%)
Creative and distinctive or features	• Respondents supported lighting that adds interest and creates a unique identity for the plaza, encourages visitation and enhance the character of the space.	9 (22%)
Events and flexible community use	• Comments highlighted the role lighting could play in supporting community activities, events and informal gathering. • Respondents wanted the space to remain flexible and capable of accommodating a range of uses throughout the year.	8 (20%)
Environmental sensitivity	• Some respondents emphasised the need to minimise light spill and impacts on wildlife.	5 (12%)

Heritage, local identity and character	• Several respondents wanted the lighting design to reflect Elsternwick's local character and heritage. • Suggestions included traditional-style lighting and design elements that complement the existing character of the area.	4 (10%)
Anti-social behaviour	• A small number of respondents expressed concerns about lighting encouraging late-night gathering, noise or anti-social behaviour.	2 (5%)

A small number of comments expressed opposition to the project (2 comments) or were unrealted to the scope of the question (1 comment).

Representative quotes

- I think a good mix of safety lighting along the paths and then cool installations in the more common areas/parts that aren't used in the dark would be good. It's such a great spot already especially when you're at the Goat or Bang Bang at night with the current lights in the trees. Great little hive of activity" — 25–34, Man, Elsternwick
- "Warmer colored lighting preferred, lights can be bright and accessible without being pure white" — 25–34, Man, Elsternwick
- "The lighting should face down to prevent light pollution and the exit of fauna from any trees that are lit up" — 75–84, Woman, Caulfield South
- "If possible, to do what we can do avoid light pollution aim for softer lighting, like yellow lights instead of white" — 18–24, Woman, Elsternwick
- "I would love to see something colourful that sparks joy, not just way finding. Something That has an interactive element" — 35–44, Woman, Elsternwick
- "Think outside the square rather than just classic old fairy lights let's actually make this something different perhaps using different colours structures" — 25–34, Man, Cheltenham

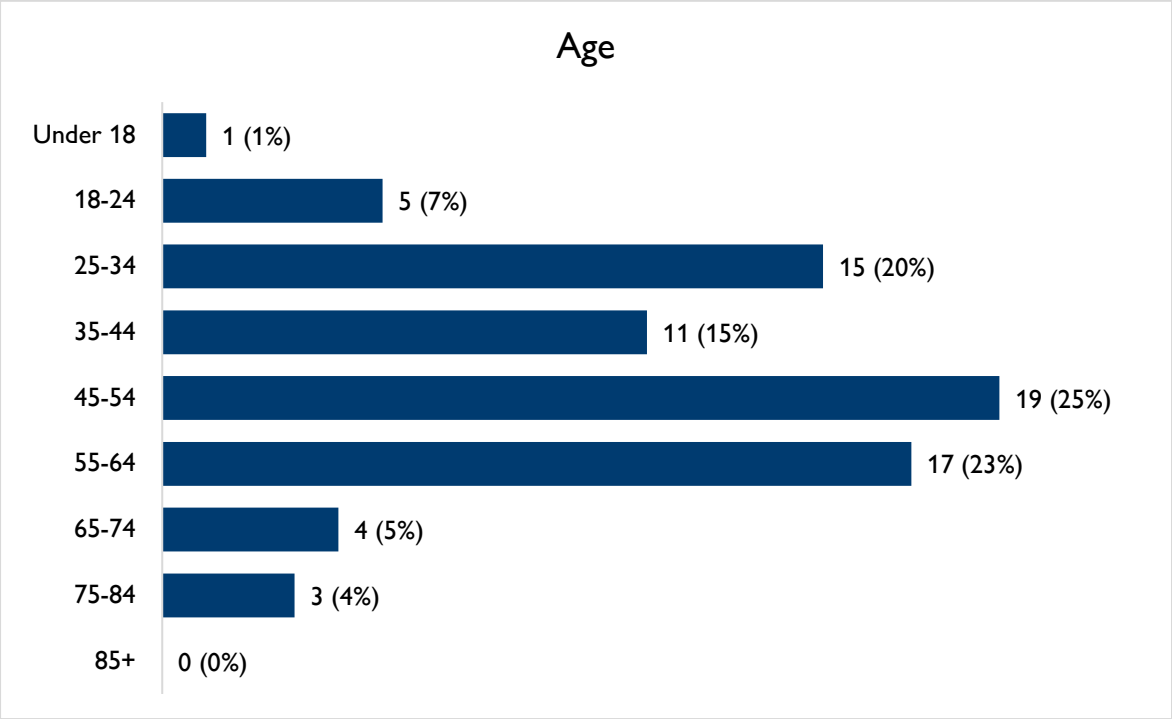
About you (demographics)

The following demographic questions were asked to help understand who we're hearing from and whether it is representative of our broad and diverse community.

These were required questions and received 75 responses (100 per cent).

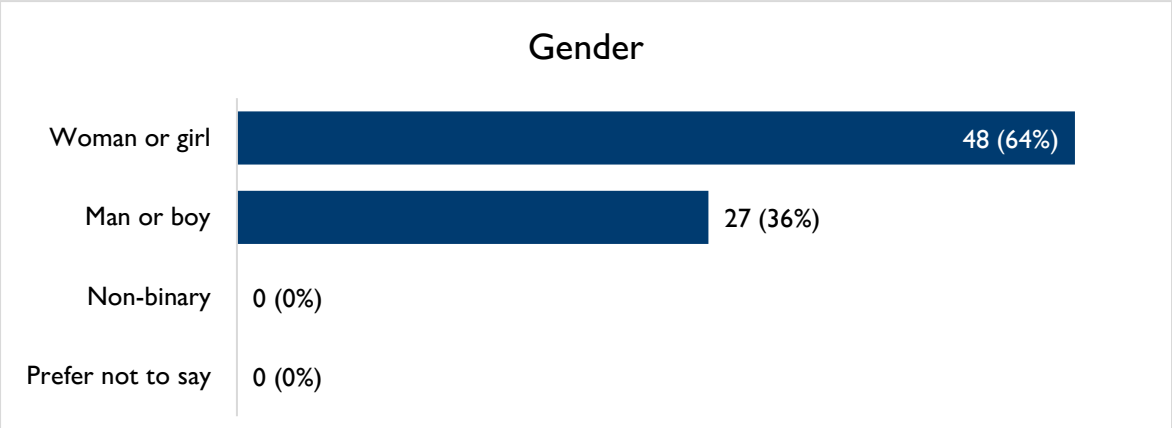
What is your age?

We mostly heard from respondents aged 45–54 (19 respondents, 25 per cent) followed by 55–64 (17 respondents, 23 per cent), followed by 25–34 (15 respondents, 20 per cent). No responses were received from people aged over 85.



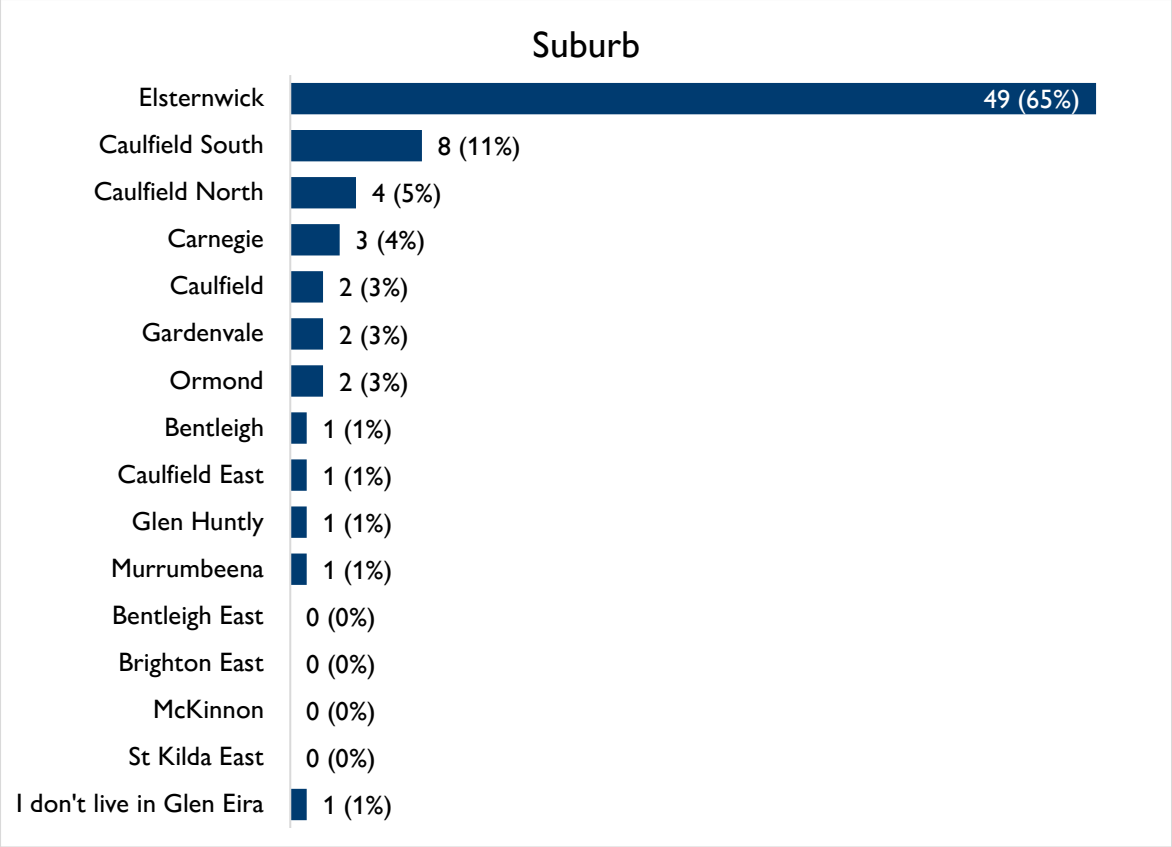
What is your gender?

Responses were higher among women (48 respondents, 64 per cent) compared to men (27 respondents, 36 per cent).



What suburb do you live in?

The majority of responses were among those from Elsternwick (49 respondents, 65 percent), followed by Caulfield South (8 respondents, 11 per cent).



Do you identify as any of the following?

The majority of respondents did not identify with any of the listed groups (35 respondents, 50 percent). Among those who did identify, the most common responses were those from a multicultural background (16 respondents, 23 per cent) and those born overseas (10 respondents, 14 per cent).

