GLEN EIRA CITY COUNCIL

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Rooming House Policy

Engagement summary report

JULY 2024

BENTLEIGH

BENTLEIGH EAST

BRIGHTON EAST

CARNEGIE

CAULFIELD

ELSTERNWICK

GARDENVALE

GLEN HUNTLY

MCKINNON

MURRUMBEENA

ORMOND

ST KILDA EAST

Executive summary

Rooming houses play an important role in offering accommodation for low income and disadvantaged members of our community. Council has a role in registering rooming houses and regulating them to ensure they meet minimum standards under state laws.

Council's *Rooming House Strategy 2019* (the *Strategy*) and Rooming House Working Group responded to community concerns about rooming houses, addressing complaints about noise, amenity, and anti-social behaviour.

The proposed *Rooming House Policy* (the *Policy*) aims to embed the positive changes created by the *Strategy*. The *Policy* aims to guide Council's approach to managing rooming houses, with a focus on educating rooming house operators to improve standards and protect the health of our community.

How we engaged

Community engagement on the proposed *Policy* covered a four-week period from 17 June to 15 July 2024. The engagement sought community feedback about the proposed *Policy* and their experiences with rooming houses in Glen Eira.

Opportunities for formal community feedback included:

- a Have Your Say Glen Eira web page, including an online submission form
- mailed submissions
- emails sent to Council.

We promoted the engagement through a range of channels, including social media, letters to rooming houses, emails and calls to rooming house operators and stakeholders, a news item on Council's website, and Council advisory groups.

Who we heard from

In total, we received **34 submissions** through the Have Your Say platform, emails and letters. There were **27 online surveys** completed through Have Your Say which provide quantitative and qualitative data for the community's feedback. We received written feedback in **six emails**. **One mailed survey** was received and added to the Have Your Say data.

Three respondents currently live, or might live in a rooming house.

Three respondents are registered rooming house operators.

Six respondents are key stakeholders.

What we heard

The feedback about the proposed *Policy* is broadly supportive, with some respondents providing suggestions for expansions or changes to the *Policy*. Responses include support for the need for the *Policy*, concerns around safety and local impacts of rooming houses, and suggestions for more detail in the *Policy* about how Council manages rooming houses.

The quantitative feedback provided through the Have Your Say survey shows:



61 per cent of respondents support the *Policy*



21 per cent of respondents said "Maybe" to supporting the *Policy*



18 per cent do not support the *Policy*

Feedback that supports the *Policy* (**61 per cent**) includes themes of:

- Support for the need for a *Rooming House Policy*.
- Importance of rooming house residents' wellbeing and support.
- Preference to expand the *Policy*.
- Concerns about the impact of rooming houses on the neighbourhood.

Feedback that indicated "Maybe" to supporting the *Policy* (**21 per cent**) includes themes of:

- Preference to expand the *Policy*.
- The importance of external authorities.
- Concerns about the impact of rooming houses on the neighbourhood.
- Concerns about unregistered rooming houses.

Feedback that does not support the *Policy* (**18 per cent**) includes themes of:

- Preference to not have rooming houses in Glen Eira.
- Concerns about the impact of rooming houses on the neighbourhood.
- Preference to expand the *Policy*.
- The importance of community amenity and safety.

Engagement report

Background

Council has proposed a *Rooming House Policy* to guide our approach to managing rooming houses in Glen Eira. This follows the *Rooming House Strategy 2019* which was created to address community concerns about rooming houses in Glen Eira.

Rooming houses

A rooming house is a building where one or more rooms are available for rent, and at least four people live. They're different from share houses because they're run by a rooming house operator and there are usually individual agreements with each resident.

Rooming houses offer accommodation for low income and disadvantaged members of our community, particularly those who can't access, afford, or sustain a tenancy in the private rental market.

There are currently 39 registered rooming houses in Glen Eira with approximately 400 residents.

Rooming House Strategy 2019

The need for the *Rooming House Strategy 2019* came from a steady increase in the number of rooming houses in Glen Eira and concerns raised by the community. At the time, there were 52 rooming houses registered with Council, accommodating approximately 500 vulnerable residents. The *Strategy*:

- outlined the complexity of rooming house issues
- set an action plan to improve Council's response to the issues
- set an advocacy approach to improve minimum standards
- helped coordinate regulatory agencies.

Since the *Strategy*'s actions were completed, there has been a significant reduction in reported complaints from our community about noise, amenity impacts and anti-social behaviour. These improvements could be credited to Council's Rooming House Working Group, which was formed alongside regulatory agencies and health services.

Rooming House Policy

The draft *Policy* aims to embed the positive changes created by the *Strategy*. It focuses on educating rooming house operators to improve the standards of rooming houses and protecting the health of our community. It includes Council's risk management approach, which targets rooming houses that pose greater risks to public health.

Relevant legislation

Council must adhere to relevant state legislation. Council's role in monitoring and regulating rooming houses is set out in the:

- *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*
- *Residential Tenancies Act 1997*
- *Rooming House Operators Act 2016.*

Community engagement

Council's *Community Engagement Policy* requires community engagement at a 'Consult' level for the proposed *Policy*.

Engaging the community

Council sought to engage with our community about the *Policy*. We developed a broad communication and community engagement program to seek community feedback about the proposed *Policy* over a four-week period from **17 June to 15 July 2024**.

The engagement program included:

- a Have Your Say Glen Eira webpage at: www.haveyoursaygleneira.com.au/rooming-house
- a community survey accessible on the Have Your Say webpage asking people for their feedback
- FAQs and information about the *Policy*
- information across Council's communications channels.

The survey consisted of six questions about the subject matter and six questions for demographics and contact details.

The subject matter questions asked respondents to indicate whether they support the *Policy*, and to explain their reasons why or why not and provide further feedback. It also asked respondents how they relate to the *Policy* and how they would rate their experience with rooming houses in Glen Eira.

The detailed responses to this engagement are outlined in the community survey responses section of this report.

Communication activities

A broad communication campaign using various channels was used to raise awareness and engage rooming house operators, residents, and the broader community. Supporting the engagement program was a broad communication approach. The table below outlines the communication activities undertaken during the campaign.

Communication activities	Reach
Have Your Say survey page Background information and community survey. Survey opened on 17 June and closed on 15 July 2024.	Page views: 446
Social media Glen Eira City Council posts on Facebook and Instagram.	Impressions: 9,280 Reach: 10,050 Engagements: 44 Link clicks: 59

Council website News item on Council's website announcing the engagement, published 25 June.	Page views: 22 Link clicks: 21
Glen Eira News One article in the July edition of Glen Eira News.	Distributed to approximately 64,500 residences
Posters Promotional posters were displayed at Town Hall and Council Libraries.	Posters: 5
Community engagement newsletter June newsletter.	Reach: 4,456 Opens: 2,516 Clicks: 45 direct to HYS page
Rooming house operators The operators of all 39 rooming houses were emailed on 18 June and 10 July. The operators were called on 12 July.	Emails: 66 Calls: 30
Community and stakeholder groups • Consumer Affairs Victoria • Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal • Victoria Police • Registered Accommodation Association of Victoria • Launch Housing • Peninsula Community Legal Centre • Housing for the Aged Action Group • Council to Homeless Persons • Tenants Victoria • Community Information & Support Victoria • GECAN Glen Eira Climate Emergency Action Network • Department of Families, Fairness and Housing	Emails: 12
Rooming House Working Group Meetings on 20 February and 18 June included discussion of the Policy and consultation process with the following key stakeholders: • Victoria Police • Department of Families, Fairness and Housing • Peninsula Community Legal Centre • Consumer Affairs Victoria	Meetings: 2 Stakeholders: 4

Letterbox drop An information pack was hand delivered on 19 June to each of the 39 rooming houses. The information packs each included: • eight hard copy surveys • eight pre-paid return envelopes • a draft *Policy* • a consultation poster.	Information packs: 39 Hard copy surveys: 312
Town Hall Service Centre TV screen	Displayed during the survey period.
Radio Mentioned on Golden Days Radio 95.7FM on 6 July.	Mentions: 1

Engagement activities	Number who participated
Have Your Say community survey	28
Emails to Council	6

Insights and analysis

Opportunities for formal feedback included an online survey at www.haveyoursaygleneira.com.au/rooming-house, email to Council, and submission via post.

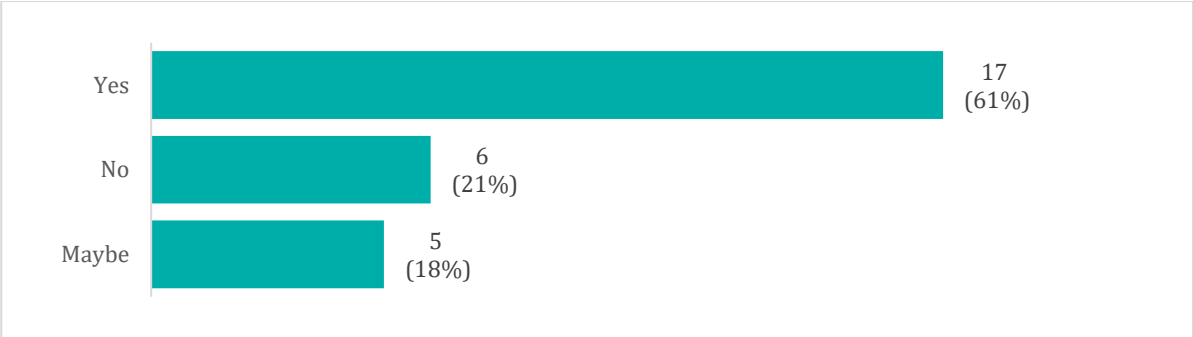
A total of **34** submissions were received. **27** responses were received through the online survey and **six** email submissions were received by Council. **One** hard copy survey was received via post and then added into the online Have Your Say survey.

The submissions received included commentary feedback from respondents, totaling around **2,600 words**. This feedback has been provided in full to Councillors and the project team.

Community survey responses

Q.1 Having read the draft Rooming House Policy, do you support it? *Required. Single choice.*
28 responses.

61 per cent of respondents chose *Yes* to support the policy, and **21 per cent** of respondents chose *No* they do not support the proposal. **18 per cent** chose *Maybe*.



Q.2 Please tell us why: *Optional. Free text.*
23 responses.

Example responses from respondents who chose "Yes" in Q.1:
having worked as a health outreach professional in the area i have visited rooming houses where the residents have been concerned about their living situation and need support to have their concerns addressed for fear of eviction.
It appears to cover all of the necessary points to support those people living in rooming houses and protect them

It is necessary for rooming house operators to ensure the place is kept in a safe and hygienic condition for the people living there

Example responses from respondents who chose "No" in Q.1:

Glen eira is an unsuitable area for such houses
There is real risk that these rooming houses may encourage unlawful behavour, specifically is romms are utilised by the socially / financially or mentally disadvantaged. No near schools, housing zones or Public Transport hubs
I don't want them here. I guess a lot of people feel that way.

Example responses from respondents who chose "Maybe" in Q.1:

The focus of Council's involvement would appear to be on the basis of public health only. Yet issues will also arise regarding the impacts of rooming houses on noise, amenity and anti-social behaviour.
Council should not be the only stakeholder to not renew rooming house registration. It should be determined by an appeals board or possibly vcat.
The policy does not cover strategies for managing those properties that have not declared themselves as Rooming Houses nor sought registration in the first place.

Q.3 Do you have any further feedback? Is there anything you would change or add to the Policy? *Optional. Free text.*

20 responses.

Example responses from respondents who chose "Yes" in Q.1:

Safe, secure and comfortable housing is a basic human right for all. As a community we need to ensure all members have access
I haven't lived in a rooming house but I have lived at a youth foyer operated by Launch Housing. Though these services try their best, it is a very alienating and isolating experience and can often further contribute to someone's mental ill health or poor coping mechanisms if there aren't protections offereed
I would like to see it help address the need for people in rooming houses to have access to safety and security. The rooming house management should be supported to understand how to refer to support and community health services and participate in solving ways to ensure these services feel safe attending these proprties the people living in rooming houses need to be able to access community support if they need. They should be suported to help tenants access housing support services for government housing applications There should be a complaints or concerns process for tennants to report if they need assistance with their landlords treatment

Example responses from respondents who chose "No" in Q.1:

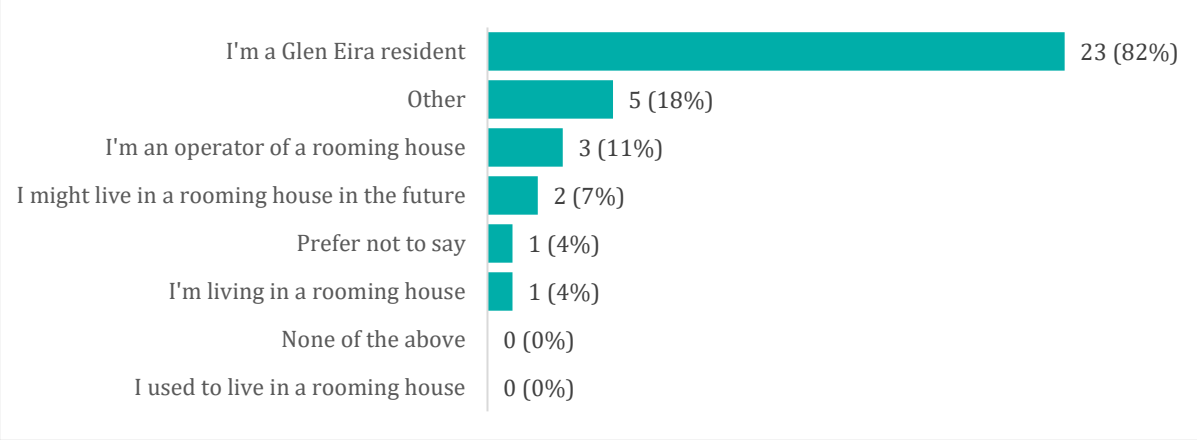
We have had a few before in the area. It just brings crime and all kind of characters into the area - and then they bring their tribe to the area. There are a lot of families and elderly people here. Many residents are already targeted here due to politics. Thanks but no thanks. Please not here
There are too many schools in GE the area is unsuitable. Is there a limit to the number of such houses? The draft was empty of much info. How is the community health protected? There was nothing in the draft relating to that. Why?
I do feel that the council needs to take action to help remove the homeless from the streets, but this may not be the answer, there would need to be more supervision, compliance and law and order control. There are areas of Glen Eira already turning towards undesirable areas with homeless, mentally ill and undesirable people.

Example responses from respondents who chose "Maybe" in Q.1:

Vcat should be consulted by council in order to close a rooming house. "Public health" is a broad brush objection to not renew a rooming house licence. As we all know, rooming house legislation is complex and councils can interpret breaches differently to each other. Eg recent Frankston council doing an audit on rooming house window locks.
I think the proposed policy is comprehensive and fir for purpose, but my understanding is that Rooming Houses can only be regulated , if they have been registered in the first place. There are many unregistered rooming houses operating in Melbourne. It may be prudent to have a process for managing the unregistered ones by first considering them as unlawful in addition to having a policy for managing those that are registered?
As well as public health I would add noise, amenity and anti-social behaviour.

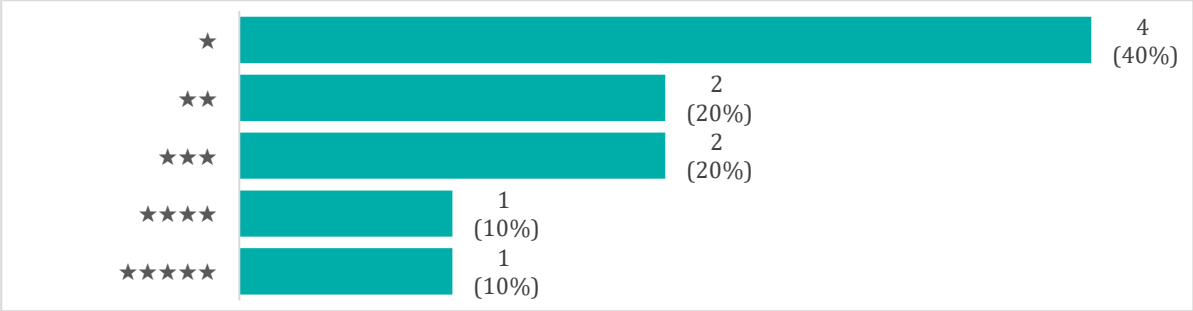
Q.4 How do you relate to the Policy? *Required. Multiple choices allowed.*
28 responses.

The most common way people relate to the *Policy* is as *Glen Eira residents*, which was selected by 23 respondents (**82 per cent**). The next most commonly selected options were *other* (**18 per cent**) and *operator of a rooming house* (**11 per cent**).



Q.5 If you have any experience with rooming houses in Glen Eira, how would you rate your experience? *Optional. Star rating out of five.*
10 responses.

The most common rating was *one star*; which was selected by 4 respondents (**40 per cent**). The next most common ratings were *two stars* (**20 per cent**) and *three stars* (**20 per cent**). The average rating was **2.3 stars** out of five.



Q.6 Please explain the reason for your rating. *Optional. Free text.*
12 responses.

Seven respondents provided feedback to explain the reason for their rating. Five respondents provided feedback without having answered Q.5.

Example responses from respondents who chose *one star* in Q.5:

Often there are people living there who cause trouble, are using substances and who have committed assaults against other residents. Women often feel unsafe.
not in Glen Eira however are aware of other rooming houses that attract unstable and criminal activity. Not what I want for our suburb

Example responses from respondents who chose *two stars* in Q.5:

I have never met or been able to communicate with a rooming house operator i visited rooming houses both registered and unregistered where the residents reported having had their rent increased without notice, then having eviction noticies posted up, and then the electricity was switched off. some places arranged for residents to do work for reduced rent then this was never honoured. SOme places where destroyed and burnt down shortly after eviction notices sent to tenants tenants where at times fearful of landlords
the service is not the Best. Landlord is good But can be treatin Underwell by her.

Example responses from respondents who chose *three stars* in Q.5:

N/A

Example response from a respondent who chose *four stars* in Q.5:

Things have significantly improved in Glen Eira rooming houses and police are being called less often to these locations

Example response from a respondent who chose *five stars* in Q.5:

They provide accommodation options to people of all backgrounds and the rooming houses themselves have a vested interest to be of good standards for the community, council & neighbours.

Example responses from respondents who did not answer Q.5:

Varies dependant upon proprietor

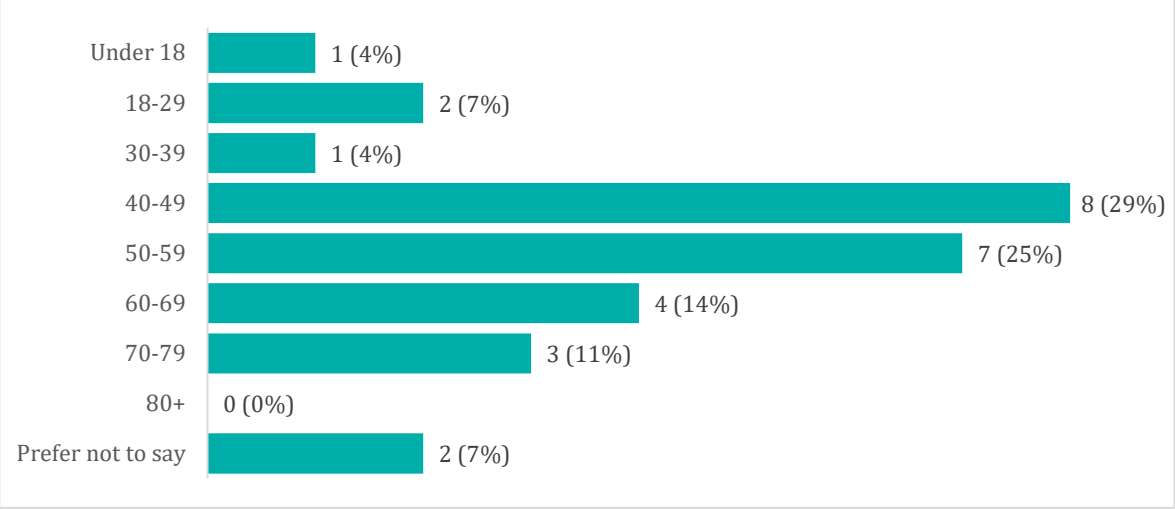
It brings crime to the area. I have been yelled at by residents. They bring noise and their crime. If not them, their guests.

Given that 48 out of the total 49 rooming houses are for profit, I think regulation and monitoring is good thing to protect the residents of the home and also the general community.

Q.7 Email. *Optional. Free-text question.*
15 responses. *CONFIDENTIAL.*

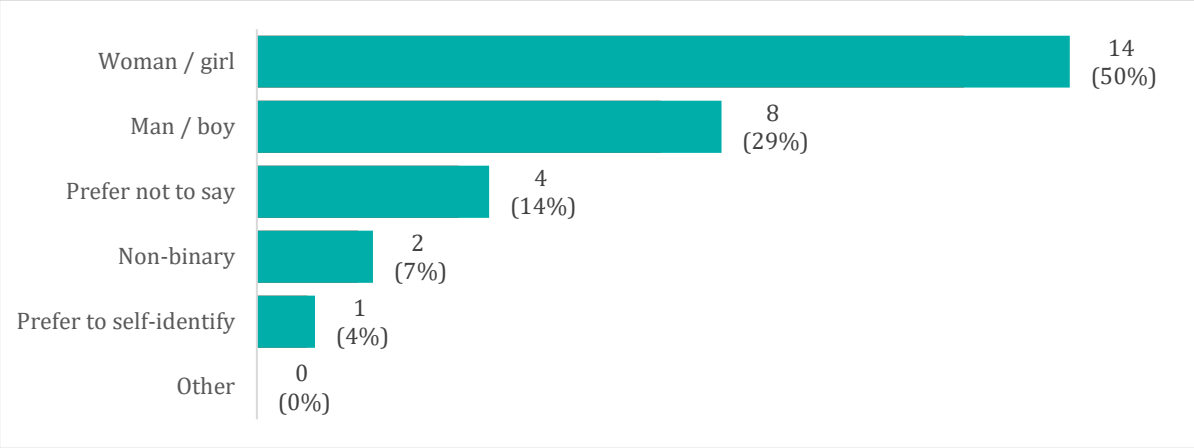
Q.8 Your age group. *Optional. Single choice.*
28 responses.

The *40–49* age group is most highly represented with 8 responses (**29 per cent**). Age groups *50–59* (**25 per cent**) and *60–69* (**14 per cent**) were the next most represented. No individuals in the age group of *Over 80* provided a response.



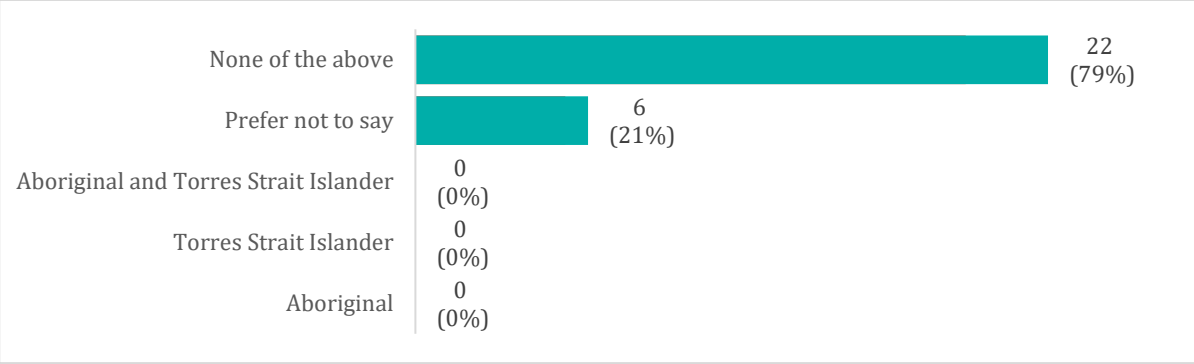
Q.9 What is your gender? *Required. Single choice.*
28 responses.

The most highly represented gender group is *Woman/girl* with 14 responses (**50 per cent**). *Man/boy* received 8 responses (**29 per cent**).



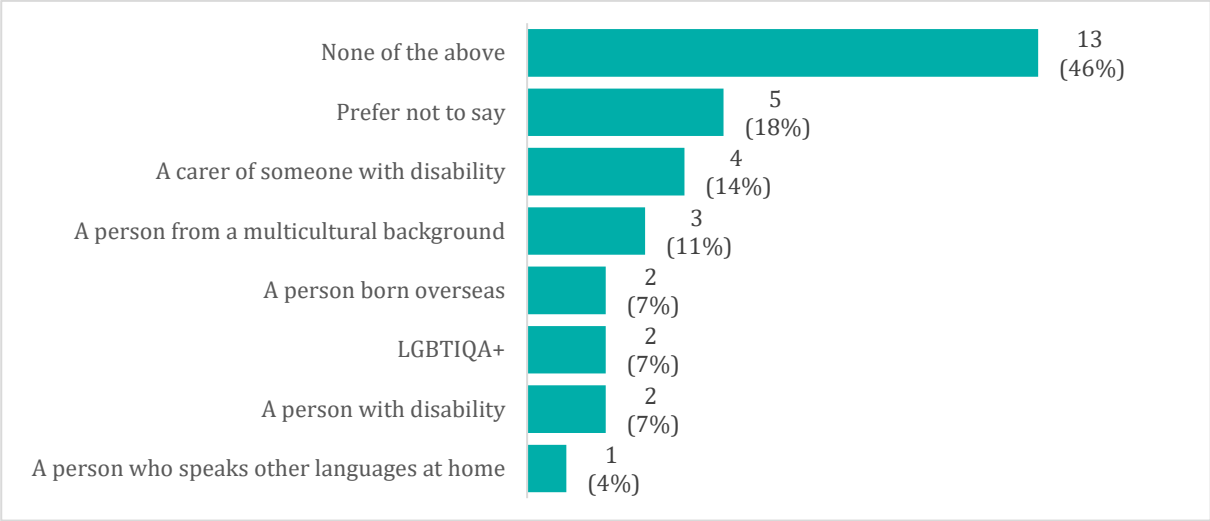
Q.10 Do you identify as: *Required. Single choice.*
28 responses.

The majority of respondents (**79 per cent**) indicated that they are not Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. The remaining respondents (**21 per cent**) indicated that they would prefer not to say.



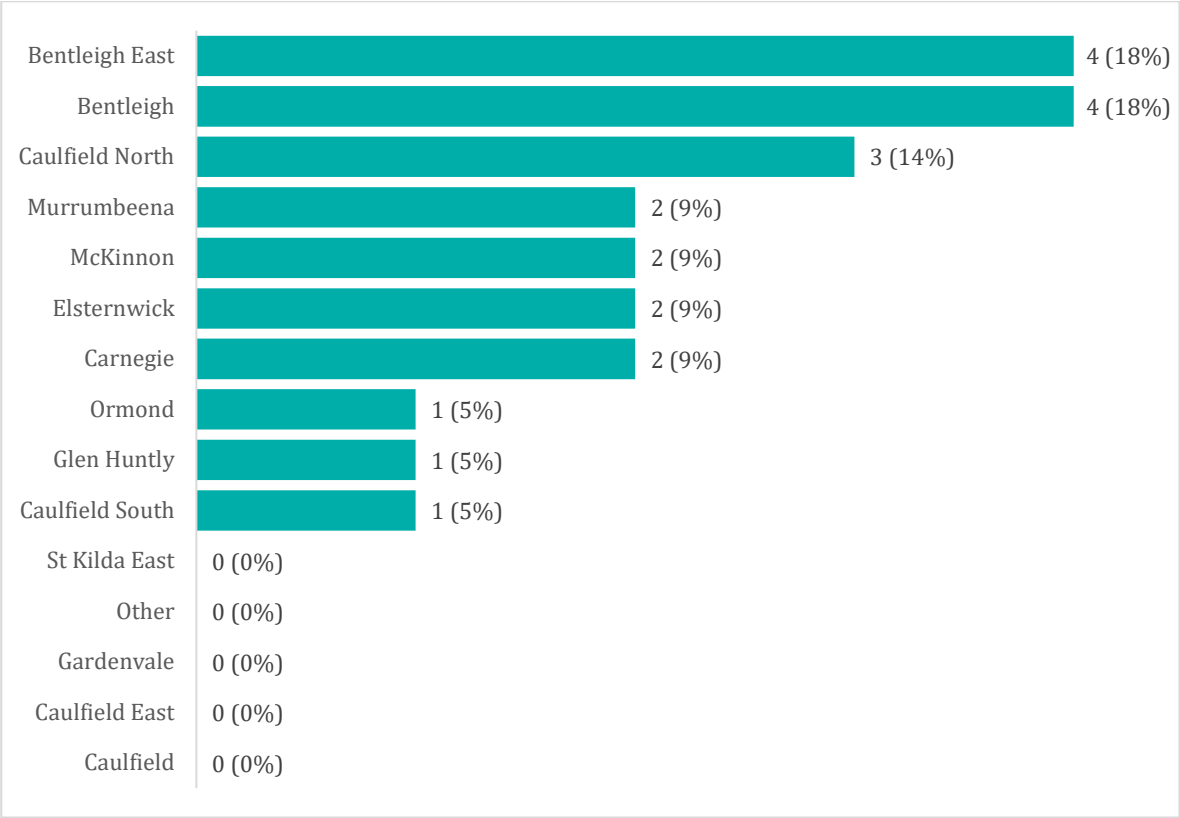
Q.11 Do you identify as: *Required. Single choice.*
28 responses.

Responses show four people who are *carers of someone with a disability* (**14 per cent**), and three people from a *multicultural background* (**11 per cent**). All other cohorts received at least one response.



Q.12 Suburb of residence. *Optional. Single choice.*
22 responses.

The most common suburbs of residence are Bentleigh East and Bentleigh, with 4 responses (**18 per cent**) each. The next most common suburb is Caulfield North with 3 responses (**14 per cent**).

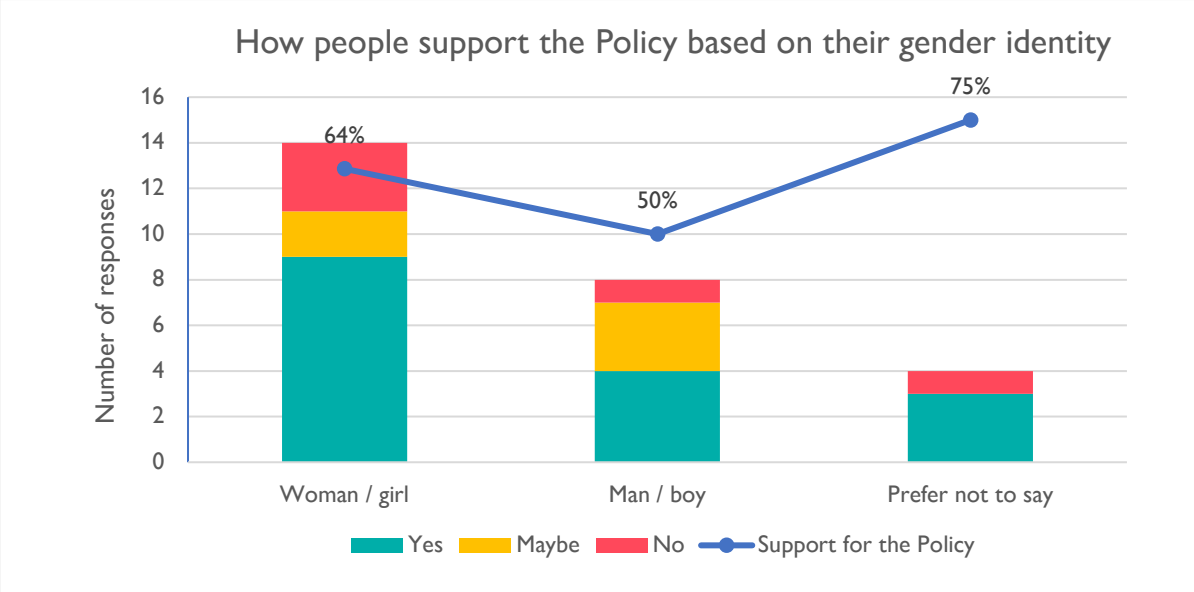


Survey data analysis

We undertook further analysis to demonstrate trends across the various data subsets. The analysis below compares respondents' support for the *Policy* according to their gender grouping. No other data subsets were analysed due to the limited number of submissions in the data set.

Support for the Policy compared to gender grouping

The survey results show that support for the *Policy* is relatively higher from respondents who identify as a *woman/girl* (**64 per cent**). This result is marginally higher than the 61 percent overall support for the *Policy.* The *man/boy* grouping has mixed support for the *Policy* (**50 per cent**). Respondents who *prefer not to say* have higher than average support for the Policy (**75 per cent**).



Note: The gender identity of non-binary has been excluded from this subset analysis for privacy due to low response rates.

Email submissions

The engagement@gleneira.vic.gov.au inbox is a formal channel for engagement and promoted through the Have Your Say website. Emails received to other Council email accounts, including officers and Councillors, are forwarded to the engagement inbox to capture feedback. **6** emails (**1,150 words**) were received about the *Policy.* All email submissions have been provided to Councillors and the project team.

Free-text feedback analysis

The free-text feedback from both the Have Your Say survey and emails (combined total approximately **2,600 words**) has been deidentified and provided to Council. The free-text feedback has been themed below, and sorted by the percentage of responses that mention each theme.

Of the total 34 submissions, **31 submissions** provided free-text feedback through the Have Your Say survey or email.

The most common themes in the free-text feedback were:

- Preference to expand the Policy (**39 per cent**)
- General support for the Policy (**35 per cent**)
- The importance of rooming house residents' wellbeing and support (**23 per cent**)
- Concerns about the impact of rooming houses on the neighbourhood (**19 per cent**)
- Preference to not have rooming houses in Glen Eira (**16 per cent**)
- The importance of community amenity and safety (**10 per cent**)

All themes for the free-text feedback

Theme	Theme count	Percentage out of the 31 free text responses
Preference to expand the Policy	12	39%
Support for the Rooming House Policy	11	35%
Importance of rooming house residents' wellbeing and support	7	23%
Concerns about the impact of rooming houses on the neighbourhood	6	19%
Preference to not have rooming houses in Glen Eira	5	16%
The importance of community amenity and safety	3	10%
Importance of external authorities	2	6%
The Policy is not clear in its goals	2	6%
The need to support operators	1	3%
Importance of supporting vulnerable communities	1	3%
Concerns about unregistered rooming houses	1	3%

Themes for the free-text feedback grouped by support for the Policy

Theme	**Theme count** from respondents who **support** the Policy	**Theme count** from respondents who **do not support** the Policy	**Theme count** from respondents who **may support** the Policy	**Theme count** from respondents who provided submission via **email**
Preference to expand the Policy	3	2	3	4
Support for the Rooming House Policy	7	0	0	4
Importance of rooming house residents' wellbeing and support	7	0	0	0
Concerns about the impact of rooming houses on the neighbourhood	2	3	1	0
Preference to not have rooming houses in Glen Eira	1	4	0	0
The importance of community amenity and safety	1	2	0	0
Importance of external authorities	0	0	1	1
The Policy is not clear in its goals	0	1	0	1
The need to support operators	1	0	0	0
Importance of supporting vulnerable communities	1	0	0	0
Concerns about unregistered rooming houses	0	0	1	0