


# Case study: Melbourne People's Panel

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 [mosaiclab.com.au/news-all-posts/2016/8/2/peoples-panel](https://mosaiclab.com.au/news-all-posts/2016/8/2/peoples-panel)

*VIDEO: See how the City of Melbourne engaged with the community to inform its budget and spending priorities.*

## THE PROJECT

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Between July and December 2014, the City of Melbourne undertook a community engagement process to inform the development of its first ever 10-Year Financial Plan.

Citizens were engaged in two different ways - through broader community engagement and through the Council's first ever 'People's Panel'.

MosaicLab was engaged to facilitate the People's Panel (a citizen's jury) which would deliberate and make recommendations to the Council as to how to direct \$5 billion over the next ten years.

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## BROADER ENGAGEMENT

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6500 people were invited to participate in this project, with more than 600 people actively contributing by submitting an online budget or attending workshops, discussion groups and pop-up events.

Information gathered during the broader community engagement was presented to the People's Panel to inform their recommendations.

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“That a group of 43 randomly selected Melburnians meeting over six weekends developed sound policy that is now being implemented is a profound result for anyone despairing at the state of our democracy.

— Nicholas Reece, *The Age*, June 29 2015



*IMAGE: Members of Melbourne's People's Panel Outside City Hall. Photo: [City of Melbourne](#) via ABC Radio National ([source](#)).*

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## THE PEOPLE'S PANEL

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A 43 member People's Panel of everyday Melbournians (comprised of residents, business owners and students) was selected using random stratified sample process to reflect the city's demographics. The selection process was overseen by the the New Democracy Foundation.

The Panel met over five and a half days and was facilitated by MosaicLab founders Nicole Hunter, Kimbra White and Keith Greaves.

Th panel was asked to answer the question: *'How can we remain one of the most liveable cities in the world while addressing our future financial challenges?'* and make recommendations to Council on its spending and revenue strategy over the next decade.

The panel was a full scale, fully informed, deliberative process. The panel met for six half days and participants were able to request information from the Council and trusted external experts. The Council opened their books and panel members were provided access to comprehensive information on financials, municipal demographics, plans, strategies and challenges.

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“Many recommendations were the result of robust debate and a democratic vote, deciding what we would include in our report. I thoroughly enjoyed the process, believed it resulted in good recommendations and hope that this process is adopted by other organisations.

— Panel Member



*IMAGE: The People's Panel presented its recommendations to Council at a special Future Melbourne Committee on Monday 17 November 2014. Photo: [City of Melbourne](#).*

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## TOOLS FOR SUCCESS

A number of key principles were followed to ensure that this process was successful. These included that:

- there was clarity about the decision to be made;
- appropriate choices were made regarding the role of the public; and
- the core values were expressed throughout the process.

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## THE OUTCOME

The panel came up with 11 recommendations that were directly presented to the Future Melbourne Committee of Council including the Lord Mayor. Ten of the Panel's 11 recommendations are being implemented by the Council.

“Participants presenting their recommendations directly to the decision-makers is important as it creates an added level of significance and influence to the end result.”

— Kimbra White, Facilitator

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## REFLECTIONS & KEY LEARNINGS

**From the facilitator - MosaicLab co-founder Kimbra White:**

As part of all deliberative democracy processes, MosaicLab is keen for the community to present the final report to the decision makers. The report could be presented by several representatives, one nominated member, or the group as a whole. This small yet critical

step makes a big difference to how the process is perceived and the impact that participants feel they have had, increasing the belief that their report will be taken seriously and that their recommendations will be implemented.

It is also important to note that the in-depth, deliberative engagement process undertaken by the City of Melbourne had a positive impact on the the organisation's relationships and reputation.



## MORE INFORMATION

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For more information on the City of Melbourne's People's Panel for the creation of a 10 Year Financial Plan head to [participate.melbourne.vic.gov.au](https://participate.melbourne.vic.gov.au)

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