

## Case Study: TOMORROW TOGETHER

*An engaged Launceston community. A bright future.*



## Highlights

In 2018 the City of Launceston, in partnership with Capire Consulting Group, redesigned its approach to community engagement. Through the redesign, Council built its internal engagement capacity and launched its largest engagement program ever, *Tomorrow Together*. *Tomorrow Together* brought together over 40 significant projects into one streamlined engagement campaign.

The campaign approach was designed to respond to common, but significant challenges experienced by many local governments across Australia. These challenges include:

- The community has greater expectations than ever on how and at what level they are engaged in local government decision making.
- A long list of projects needing community input and stretched resources to deliver engagement in a meaningful way.
- The need for a sustainable solution – there was no point in designing something great if it can never be repeated.

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Two streams of activity were designed to combat these challenges.

### 1. Building internal capacity and excitement

Council was committed to creating a compelling story and genuine authority to change the way it engages. When the program started, Council only had a small engagement team, but had an organisation that was passionate about community engagement. The solution became simple, let's get as many people as possible involved. Departments across Council were asked to nominate their community engagement champions who were then trained to support engagement activities across the program. Through the design and delivery of each engagement activity, more staff got involved to either bring their content knowledge or gain experience.

### 2. Designing a new approach to local government engagement

*Tomorrow Together* demonstrated a new way of engaging on complex and big-picture conversations through a community-centric process. Rather than asking for feedback on each of the 40 plus projects separately, the community were brought together to talk about the big issues and challenges that the community care about, all of which impact influence or drive the individual projects. Instead of just being asked for their feedback on, for example, a waste management strategy, they got to explore all the different elements that will help make Launceston a more resilient city.

Six themes were identified for the campaign, and each had a bespoke engagement approach that suited the target stakeholders, the content, and the engagement level for different projects. Each conversation provided Council with meaningful inputs for multiple projects.

Because the conversations were bigger and bolder the community needed to be provided opportunities to learn. Council went above and beyond to present information in fun and engaging ways. Methods ranged from Lego models, mascots, a rare opportunity to meet an endangered river creature, fun social media videos and panel discussions.

This engagement approach is one of the first of its kind in Australia. Council took a significant leap with a campaign approach to deliver more meaningful engagement. Over 3,500 people participated in the engagement. The approach was able to demonstrate great value and Council will be continuing the campaign with a second-round, incorporating all their new upcoming projects.

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## 1.0 Objectives

**The project had clear purpose:** Council made it clear as to why this engagement was different, what the community would expect to explore and the project they would be influencing under each theme.

**Cut the repetition:** Council reduced the engagement touch points and repetitive engagement through a bigger and deeper conversation with the community.

**Make it easy:** Council made engagement accessible, age and stage appropriate and provided flexibility for people to choose how they wanted to engage.

**Make it fun:** Council created engagement that was memorable, shareable, describable, post-able and readable.

**Make it valuable:** The people who are going to incorporate the engagement in their decision making were involved from the start in defining the scope and designing the activities.

## The challenge

Like most Australian Councils, the City of Launceston traditionally delivered community engagement on a project basis, led by project teams in isolation with their set engagement resources. Data was collected inconsistently, not centrally managed, and rarely shared. Council teams with similar project aspirations, outcomes or locations were at risk of delivering resource stretched and repeat programs. Consistent and informed decision making by Council and community participation opportunities were hampered by infrequent peaks and troughs of engagement activity.

In late 2018 Council was considering how it would deliver over 40 strategic engagement projects with a resourced-stretch engagement team.

## The solution

In partnership with Capire Consulting Group, Council explored internally the opportunity to do something differently and through a robust cross-organisation, co-design process, they developed *Tomorrow Together*.

*Tomorrow Together* pooled together the engagement resources and built internal capacity to deliver a campaign of engagement activities across two years. The campaign was designed to be an ongoing conversation providing regular opportunities for the community to engage in the big issues. It provided a single-entry point for the community to learn about the issues, provide further insights and feedback, and see how Council uses the engagement findings to develop plans and strategies, and make decisions.

## Engagement objectives

Internally, Council was committed to creating a compelling story and genuine authority to change the way it engages through:

- Implementing, supporting, and nurturing an engagement awareness for all Council staff.
- Delivering appropriate systems, tools, information, and data to underpin a deeper understanding of Community needs and views.
- Establishing, embedding, and executing a sustainable and high performing approach to engagement.

Externally, Council wanted to bring together community, business, and industry to work together to tackle the big challenges facing Launceston. Council wanted to coordinate its efforts to create a consistent entry point for the community to join the conversation and make sure the conversation was continuous.

Council designed the engagement to:

- Provide space for the community to tell Council what is important.
- Educate the community about the challenges facing Council, the municipality, and the region.
- Generate cross-cutting community insights to inform a range of projects across Council (moving away from the single project engagement activities).
- Continually report back to the community on how their inputs are influencing day to day decisions and projects being delivered by Council.
- Hear from a broad range of community and stakeholder groups.
- Build the communities capacity and confidence to engage with Council.

## Stakeholders

The engagement was designed to be broad-reaching, far beyond the usual suspects. But the stakeholders were also unique for each theme. For each theme, a targeted stakeholder analysis was undertaken to determine those both likely to be interested in the theme and those who may be influenced by specific projects being explored. The sentiment and interest levels varied greatly across themes. For example, in '*A Resilient City*,' there were high levels of interest in sediment raking and in '*A Well Designed City*' high levels of interest in heritage protection. The design of the activities allowed people to focus on the sub-themes they were most interested in.

## Conversation scope

The initial design of the engagement strategy explored the engagement needs of over 40 city-shaping and significant projects. The first step was to group the projects into logical themes that would be meaningful to the community, these were:

- A Resilient City
- A Well-Designed City
- A Unique And Prosperous City
- A Mobile And Accessible City
- A Social, Inclusive And Fair City
- A Focused And Sustainable Council

The community were given the opportunity through the project launch to identify the themes that they want to be kept up-to-date on. Participants also provided feedback after each theme to help refine the remaining themes.

The engagement activities across the themes broadly sat on the 'involve' level of the spectrum. The conversations held within each theme consistently gathered aspirations, values, and ideas. Appropriate project-specific feedback was also gathered. Through Council's report, they shared draft strategies and plans (where relevant) that were developed using the engagement outcomes which the community could provide further feedback on.

## 2.0 Methodology

### Project governance model and engagement program development

*Tomorrow Together* was designed through an iterative co-design process. The first stage involved workshops with Councillors, Executives, senior management, and Officers to inform the design of the overarching campaign approach. In the lead up to each theme, targeted workshops were delivered to design specific theme approaches projects and identify stakeholders.

Highlights of the project governance model included:

- Community engagement champions recruited from different departments undertook community engagement training and delivered engagement activities.
- Project teams led the design and delivery of specific-engagement activities through the support and mentoring of the Engagement Lead and Capire.

Some of the themes provided partnership opportunities with stakeholders such as other responsible authorities, community organisations and the University of Tasmania.

While there was an overarching engagement strategy, each theme also had a strategy that identified:

- Theme-specific stakeholders.
- The projects that will draw on the engagement findings.
- The negotiables and non-negotiables of projects.
- What information needed to be shared with the community to build informed participation.
- The right engagement and communication tools and techniques.

## Engagement methods and data collection

Overall, Council engaged with 3,453 community members and stakeholders - above and beyond what was anticipated. Ages ranged from 12 to over 85. There was a great distribution of participants across key population areas. Tools were designed to meet each theme while surveys and pop-ups were common across all themes. Some of the bespoke activities developed for specific themes included:

- *Tomorrow Together* launch: a business breakfast with University of Tasmania speakers, Vice Chancellor, Councillors, Launceston Chamber of Commerce, CityProm, representatives from surrounding councils and media.
- SpeakOut and Symposium: attracting over 600 participants with activities for all ages. Participants were able to explore flood models, meet a rare freshwater crayfish, test their knowledge around waste and share ideas for a more resilient Launceston. Alongside SpeakOut was a symposium with presentations and panel discussions on topics such as waste management and flooding. [Watch the vox pop video from the day.](#)
- Open Streets Event in the CBD: three CBD streets were closed, and residents were invited to bring scooters, roller-blades, and skateboards, or simply ride their bikes and enjoy the 'Open Streets'. The day provided the opportunity for the public to have their say on important transport topics through fun and interactive activities including a scooter race. The event also featured representatives from Council's City Development team and the city's bus network operator MetroTas. [Watch the highlights video.](#)
- *Tomorrow Together* Talks – Evening Series: participants heard from expert speakers on the economic challenges facing the Launceston. Topics included: 'What does a University City look like?', 'Shopping in the CBD', 'Population growth', 'Place DNA, What makes Launceston Launceston?', and 'kanamaluka/Tamar'.
- Balancing Act: an interactive budget setting tool. By choosing to allocate funds in a certain way, participants could express their priorities and preferences - but the tool also required them to balance spending and revenue. Participants could navigate a budget and submit it with a surplus, but not a deficit. Without being able to over-spend, they were forced to make trade-offs between what they would fund more, or less. The online nature meant residents could participate at any time and from anywhere.

All engagement activities collected data in a consistent manner. Data was collated for each theme into one data set that could be shared and used to inform multiple projects. Data was also used to prepare engagement summary reports for each theme that highlighted how the data was being used.

## Supporting communications materials and approaches

Communication and education material was central to building informed participation and reach a broad audience, including people who had not previously engaged with Council.

- '*Your Voice Your Launceston*' online engagement platform: designed around the six themes. This allowed visitors to learn about all the topics in relation to a specific theme.
- Foundation document: a journey planner for the engagement. It provided an overall narrative of the engagement program and each of the six overarching themes.
- Pavement decals and banners: all through the CBD, highlighting activities, promoting events, surveys and stimulating participation.
- Pop Ups: informal "drop-in" events at public spaces. Community members were invited to attend and hear about the projects affecting their neighbourhood and meet council team members.
- Postcards: colour postcards with thought provoking statements/questions and information on how to join the conversation.
- Social media posts: Council utilised its successful social media platforms to share engaging videos on content, engagement opportunities and outcomes. [Watch an example of an informative video exploring the myths of the kanamaluka/Tamar Estuary.](#)
- Community radio: advertisements on engagement events and interviews on specific topics.
- Fact Sheets: key interest Fact Sheets on each theme.

## Enabling factors that supported inclusive engagement

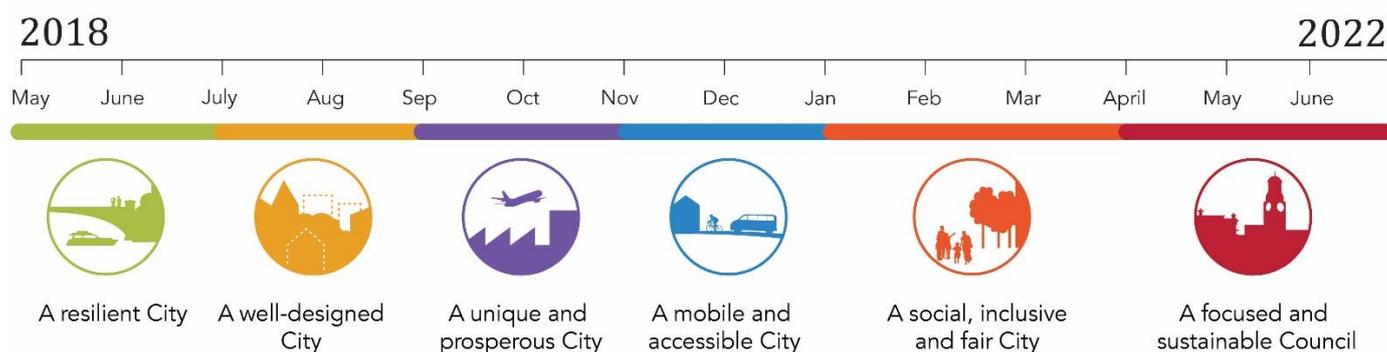
Creating engagement activities that were inclusive for all was a critical success factor. Key design elements that supported inclusive engagement included:

- Education methods were diverse to support different learning styles, including videos, written materials, expert presentations, and conversations with council officers.
- Multiple ways to provide input including online, written, video and through discussions with team members.
- For people who were unable to attend events, videos of presentations and slides were shared online.
- Specific activities were designed for gathering feedback from young people including graffiti walls, drawings and a video where young people explored what resilience meant to them. This was shared at the symposium and online.
- Events for small children such as face painting and silent discos to support parents to contribute to the discussion.
- Accessible venues for events.

## Project resources

By pooling project and department resources Council was able to design and deliver more interesting, inclusive, and meaningful engagement opportunities. The project had a budget of \$290,000 which included training community champions and contracted consultants. Capire Consulting Group was engaged by Council to increase their internal capacity to deliver the program.

## Timeline



| IAP2 CORE VALUES  | EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS WAS CONSIDERED IN THE DESIGN OF YOUR PROJECT METHODOLOGY   |
|---|--|
| <p>1. Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process</p>            | <p>At the heart of <i>Tomorrow Together</i> was the desire to bring the community together to explore the issues facing Launceston. With a community-centric approach, Council took a step back to think about what they can learn from community, rather than presenting pre-conceived solutions that they were seeking feedback on. Engagement activities were fun and interactive and were able to attract large numbers of participants who had previously had little interactions with Council.</p>                                     |
| <p>2. Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision</p>  | <p>Participants were informed about the different Council projects that would be drawing from the engagement within each theme. Where relevant, participants were asked to focus in on specific projects. For example, participants were informed of the project intent and their chance to influence the council's 2022-2023 budget through the Balancing Act engagement. Council reported back regularly on what they heard from the community on a theme-by-theme basis and specifics on how it is helping Council to make decisions.</p> |
| <p>3. Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognising and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers</p> | <p>Taking a community-centric approach to the engagement allowed for both a broader and deeper conversation than what is traditionally on offer. When engaging on specific projects the scope can be limiting, however by opening the conversation to be themed based, it allowed people to share what is most important to them. All data was captured and treated equally to serve as a robust set of engagement data that can inform current projects and future decisions.</p>   |
| <p>4. Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision</p>                                 | <p>In the case of <i>Tomorrow Together</i>, the call-to-action was to everyone that makes up the Launceston community. Through creative promotion, education and engagement methods, the project was able to attract people from all ages and geographies that make up the Launceston community.</p>   |
| <p>5. Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate</p>  | <p>During the launch of the project, participants were invited to share which themes they would like to be kept informed about. At the completion of each theme participants were asked to share their feedback to help improve the opportunities that were provided in the subsequent themes.</p>   |
| <p>6. Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way</p>  | <p>This was a particularly significant strength of <i>Tomorrow Together</i>. Participants across City of Launceston were given many opportunities to learn about the complex challenges facing the city through evening talks, symposiums, pop-up events, videos, and fact sheets.</p>   |
| <p>7. Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision</p>   | <p>For each theme a report was prepared that summarises the engagement findings. Each report includes highlights of how the data is informing current and future decisions. This information is shared in pop-out boxes throughout the reporting.</p>  |

"We've seen reduced fatigue, deeper engagement, and hugely increased participation rates. Embedding this theme-based practice into the way we engage with our community makes sense." Michael Stretton, CEO - City of Launceston

"I was blown away with the enthusiasm and creative thought that officers brought to the design of their engagements. Particularly those who had previously had very little to do with engagement." - Mollie Rashleigh, Capire Consulting Group



ONLINE  
**1615**  
engagements



EVENTS  
**879**  
attendees



MAPPING TOOL  
**308**  
users



BUDGET TOOL  
**483**  
submissions



POP UPS  
**50**  
attendees



SYMPOSIUMS  
**125**  
attendees



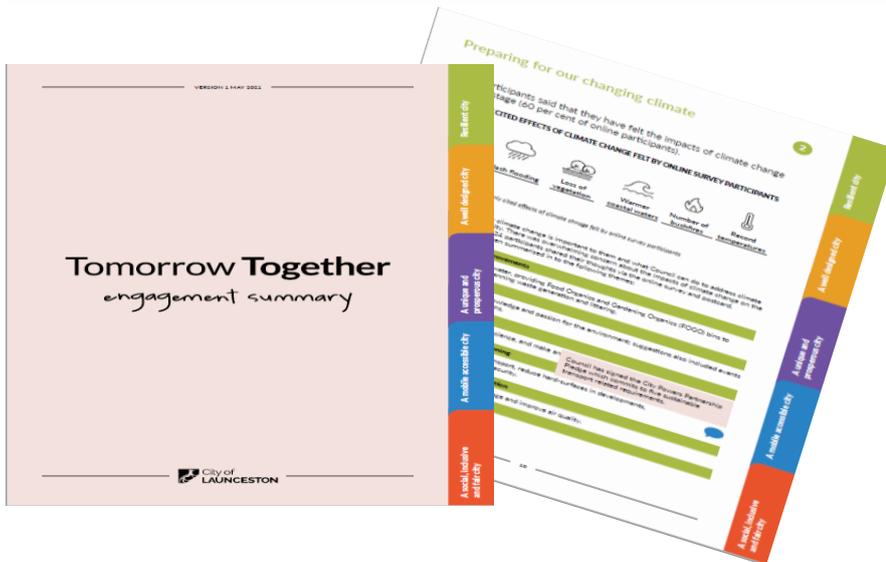
Launceston Talks, Place DNA Presentation 1



Major Event Open Streets Day - scooter race winners



Resilient City Speak Out - CoL Team Leader Water Kathryn Pugh with Lobby the freshwater crayfish



Engagement Report and example contents with pop-out box reporting on how engagement findings are informing decisions.

## 3.0 Manage Engagement

The extent of the engagement created a series of operations, policy, resourcing, and reputational issues for Council that presented a series of design and delivery challenges. These challenges and the way Council responded to them, are described below.

Most engagement activities were planned, led, and delivered individually by each division within Council. Naturally, this meant differences in the design, development, and execution of multiple engagement activities. To deal with this, there were elements of each theme's engagement approach that were consistent and others where a customizable model was essential across the themes. For example, all themes had an online space as part of Council's engagement platform and all had a digital tool, a way for people to contribute online. There were also set questions that were consistent across all surveys such as demographics.

Council tends to hear from the same people in their engagements. Having the objective from the outset drove creative thinking in the strategy development to reach beyond the 'usual suspects'. Council developed its most creative engagement activities and in doing so attracted its largest number of participants. The first major event was the Resilient City Speak Out, an approach Council had never used before, and it attracted over 600 people. They event had something for everyone from meeting a crayfish, expert talks, and exploring a Lego stormwater model.

Ensuring that the engagement activities were fun but still gathering valuable data. One of the challenges with designing fun and interactive engagement activities is that the data capture can become a challenge. For each theme, a clear set of engagement questions were developed. These questions were used to guide the development of tools. In some instances, they formed the online survey and in other instances such as the Speak Outs different stations focused on different questions where they could get a little creative but still capture the same data. Data was then all collated into one database.

Reducing skepticism towards Council. Community members are often skeptical about whether their feedback is used. It was important to change people's perception about engagement with Council. Actions that were taken to foster meaningful engagement included:

- Council was ready for increased community expectations on how and what level they are engaged in local government decision making. This was supported by often having the decision makers in the room.
- We avoided the risk of over consultation, engagement fatigue and muddying the message by creating a single-entry point for engagement.
- We recognised engagement is not a one-way transaction. We looked at ways to make it meaningful for everyone through identifying themes that would be important to the community and having open and honest conversations about the tough decisions both within and out of Council's control.
- We made engagement sustainable and changed methods as we learned to make it better for future themes and beyond.

## 4.0 Outcomes, Impact & Insights

### Reflection and evaluation of engagement

City of Launceston recognised that engagement is part of everyone's role in Local Government, not an add on; it is core to working in any community. Rather than centralising engagement to one team, Council has worked to provide training and learning opportunities across the organisation.

From an organisation perspective, Council has been able to demonstrate that this approach is sustainable through the value it brings to the community, resourcing, and decision-making.

For the community this approach provides:

- Opportunities to learn something new and have access to information about the issues Council is working on, and how their voice is helping Council respond to these issues.
- A clear roadmap for engagement allowing theme sufficient lead times and choice around which topics and projects they want to engage on.
- Multiple ways to engage that are different and fun rather than transactional.
- Transparency on how their input is influencing decisions.
- Multiple opportunities to connect with Council and build their trust and confidence.

From a resourcing perspective it is about sharing the load and fostering a culture that is excited and has the skills to deliver meaningful community engagement.

For decision makers the data gathered has informed a significant number of projects, far more than Council would have been able to engage on if it had engaged project-by-project. Engagement reports (theme by theme) were provided to councillors and made public. PowerPoint presentations on the outcomes was also presented to councillors.

Council now has a robust source of data to use when making decisions and will be able to build of this data in the following phases of the program. In the past any community engagement results tended to be in silos within departments. The beauty of the theme based engagement is that it reduces this happening.

Some examples of how the data has been used to-date include:

- The City of Launceston Sustainability Strategy commenced implementation in 2020. The action plan was developed to strive towards achieving 100% neutrality of carbon emissions by 2025.
- All the feedback that has been shared in relation to public transport has been shared with State Growth and Metro Tasmania.
- Through the development of the Integrated Transport Strategy Council is looking at how a reduction of one-way streets could provide a more accessible city alongside lower vehicle speeds.

## Evaluation methodology

The following evaluation tools were used through the delivery of the program.

- Internal baseline survey: explored culture, systems, and capacity in relation to community engagement.
- Internal evaluation survey after each theme: included questions of the baseline survey to track change over time as well as their evaluation of the engagement associated with each theme.
- Participant evaluation survey: this was available at in person events which asked people to provide feedback on the engagement.
- A standard set of civic participation questions asked across all theme surveys: questions included whether participants feel part of the Launceston community, whether they feel empowered to have their say about what matters to them most and how easy they can access information about Launceston. By asking these questions each time, Council was able to develop time-series data to track how their engagement efforts impact these important indicators.

## Examples of participant feedback

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <i>"This was the best engagement event the Council has ever had."</i>   | <i>"We will be back to one of these events. It was a great day and the grandchildren enjoyed it."</i>                              | <i>"Thanks – very informative and a forward thinking event. Let's do this again!"</i> |
| <i>"To share concerns and to be heard by lovely, down to earth, interested people was delightful and very informative. This transparent approach is a great step in building connection with the people of Launceston."</i> | <i>"This was an excellent opportunity for the public to engage with and understand council projects and departmental focuses."</i> |   |

## Innovation and Uniqueness

Launceston was facing many of the typical challenges every Local Government is faced with, such as:

- The community now has greater expectations on how and at what level they are engaged in decision making.
- A long list of projects needing community input and stretched resources to deliver engagement in a meaningful way.
- The need for a sustainable solution – there was no point in designing something great if it can never be repeated.

Launceston tackled these challenges through creative thinking and getting the whole-organisation involved.

This engagement approach is one of the first of its kind in Australia. Council took a significant leap with a campaign approach to deliver more meaningful engagement. Council is now making informed decisions based directly on community feedback. Community can see the value in getting involved for both the enjoyment of participation and to see how their feedback is being used.

### Acknowledgements and to find out more

We would like to thank City of Launceston for agreeing to share this case study and insights to advance engagement practice. This case study was authored/co-authored by Capire and City of Launceston. At the time of publishing, Capire was employed by City of Launceston in the position of consultant. Capire has experience and expertise in the community engagement sector.

**For more information about this project visit:** visit: [yourvoiceyourlaunceston.com.au](http://yourvoiceyourlaunceston.com.au)

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