

# Sex Work Decriminalisation Bill

## Community Awareness Campaign Survey Results

### Executive Summary

At the Scheduled Meeting of Council held on 22 November 2021, Council resolved to undertake a community awareness campaign to promote awareness of, and seek feedback on, the Victorian Government's proposed Sex Work Decriminalisation Bill 2021.

Council sought views on the proposed Bill via a community feedback survey between 29 November 2021 and 31 March 2022.

The *Sex Work Decriminalisation Bill 2021* was passed by the Victorian Parliament in February 2022.

This report provides an overview of the community awareness campaign and survey results in accordance with the Council resolution.

### Background

In 2021, the Victorian Government announced it was seeking to decriminalise sex work. At that point, in Victoria, sex work had been regulated under a legalised model, which meant sex work was only legal if it took place under certain conditions set out in the *Sex Work Act 1994*.

Melton City Council was invited by the Department of Justice and Community Safety to make a submission on the Victorian Government's discussion paper on this issue.

In its [submission](#), Council outlined its support for the positive aspects of the decriminalising of sex work as proposed however, raised concerns that some of the proposed changes could potentially compromise the community if the legislative framework was inadequate. Council noted that management of community dissatisfaction arising from matters such as compliance were proposed to be largely managed by Council.

Council held concerns that these laws will not achieve the worthy goal of increased safety for sex workers and that some of the proposed changes would compromise the community if the legislative framework was inadequate. In particular, Council was concerned that the proposed legislative changes:

- introduced new land uses which were likely to create conflict between the community and industry (namely street work, home based services and the removal of separation buffers)
- presented a significant shift in what was permitted in residential and commercial areas of the community
- would negatively impact commercial areas, particularly shopping centres which were typically frequented by families and children
- would negatively impact residential areas and that, were sex workers to operate from a dwelling, it would be difficult to control if minors or children were also on the

premises, and who would be responsible for monitoring this and taking appropriate compliance action.

Council was also concerned there that there was insufficient consultation undertaken by the Victorian Government regarding the legislative changes with key stakeholders, including local government authorities and the broader community. Given the scale of the proposed legislative changes, Council believed it was important that the local community had the opportunity to have their say.

## Community Awareness Campaign

Council sought views on the proposed Bill via a community feedback survey between 29 November 2021 and 31 March 2022.

The community awareness campaign focussed on ascertaining community views with regard to level of concern or support of the Bill and impacts around:

- The impact on child safety and welfare
- The impact on community and neighbourhood safety
- The impact on general neighbourhood atmosphere
- The impacts on retail and commercial precincts with regard to general amenity
- The impacts on retail and commercial precincts with regard to safety
- The impacts on retail and commercial precincts with regard to economic viability

The Community Awareness campaign and survey was promoted via a media release, on Council's website, via social media channels including City of Melton and Venture Melton eNews and advertising. Council also wrote to local State Members to advise of the campaign.

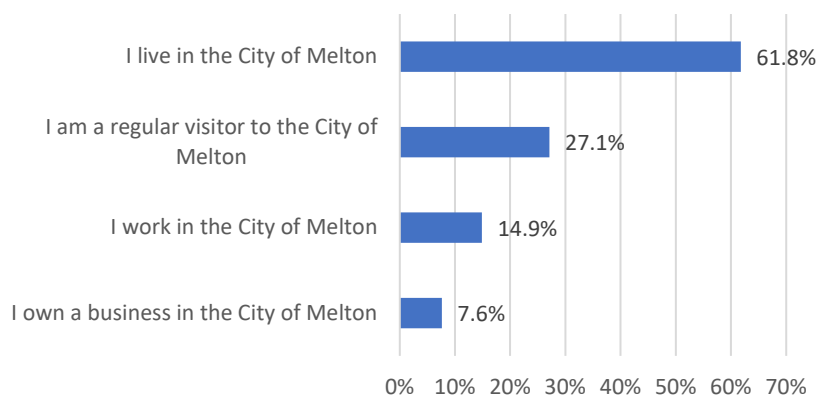
## Survey results

### Methodology:

The survey was hosted on Council's community consultation website. The survey opened on 29 November 2021 and closed on 31 March 2022. A total of 1595 respondents completed a survey.

More than three out of five respondents (61.8%) live within the City of Melton.

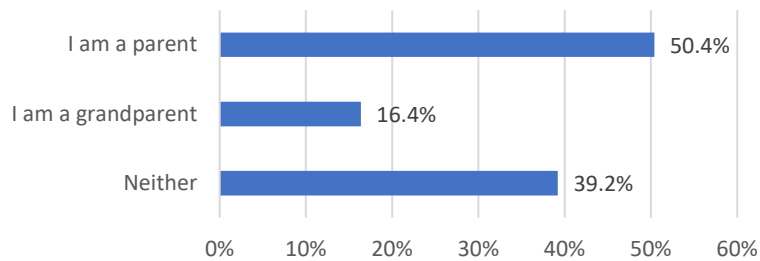
Figure 1: Connection to Melton LGA (n=1595)



NB: Respondents were asked to choose all connections to Melton LGA: therefore, results do not total 100%

Two-thirds of respondents were parents, grandparents or both 66.8%)

Figure 2: Parent/ Grandparent status LGA (n=1595)



NB: Respondents were asked to choose parent and/or grandparent status: therefore, results do not total 100%

## Results

Results across all aspects of the survey showed differing views across the community, with most respondents being either “very concerned” about the proposed changes, or “not at all concerned”. Significantly fewer held less emphatic sentiments.

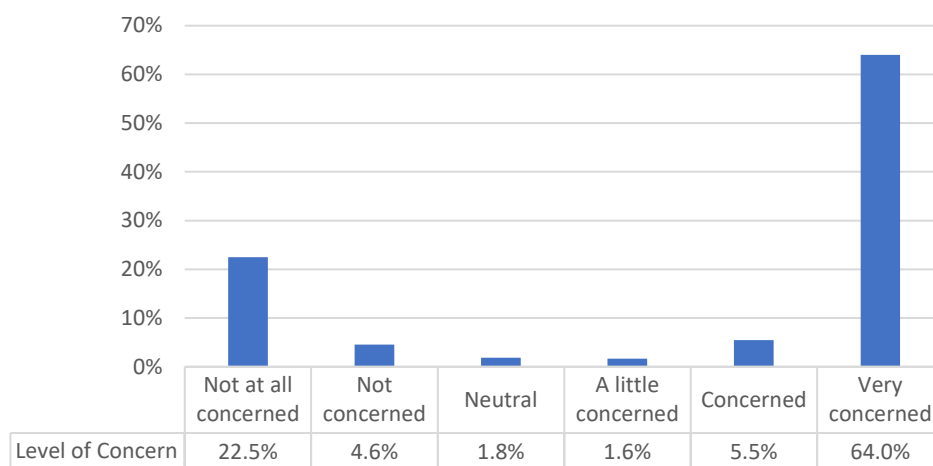
### Overall level of concern

Respondents were first asked to rate their level of concern regarding the proposed state government changes to where sex work can legally operate in Victoria.

More than two-thirds of respondents (71.1%) registered some level of concern regarding the proposal to expand where sex work can legally operate, with 64% stating they were “very concerned”.

In contrast, more than one quarter of respondents stated with they were not concerned about the changes, with 22.5% stating they were “not at all concerned”.

Figure 3: Level of concern (n=1577)



## Rating of impacts

Respondents were then asked to rate their level of concern regarding different impacts of the changes regarding sex work.

The eight impacts surveyed were as follows:

- The impact on community and neighbourhood safety
- The impact on general neighbourhood atmosphere
- The impacts on retail and commercial precincts with regard to general amenity
- The impacts on retail and commercial precincts with regard to safety
- The impacts on retail and commercial precincts with regard to economic viability
- Sex work will be allowed to operate in homes
- Sex work will be allowed to operate on public streets
- Sex work will be allowed to operate in retail and commercial areas

More than two-thirds of respondents recorded concern (a little concerned/concerned/very concerned) regarding all eight impacts.

Figure 4: Impacts of sex work changes (n-1585)

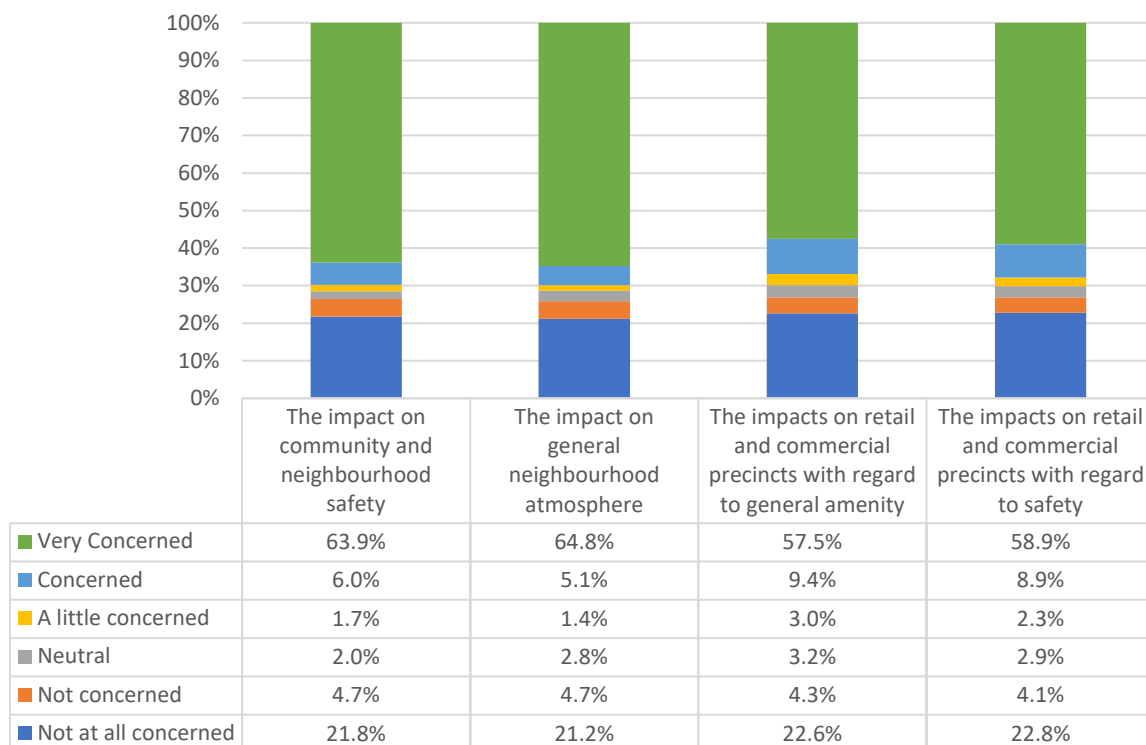
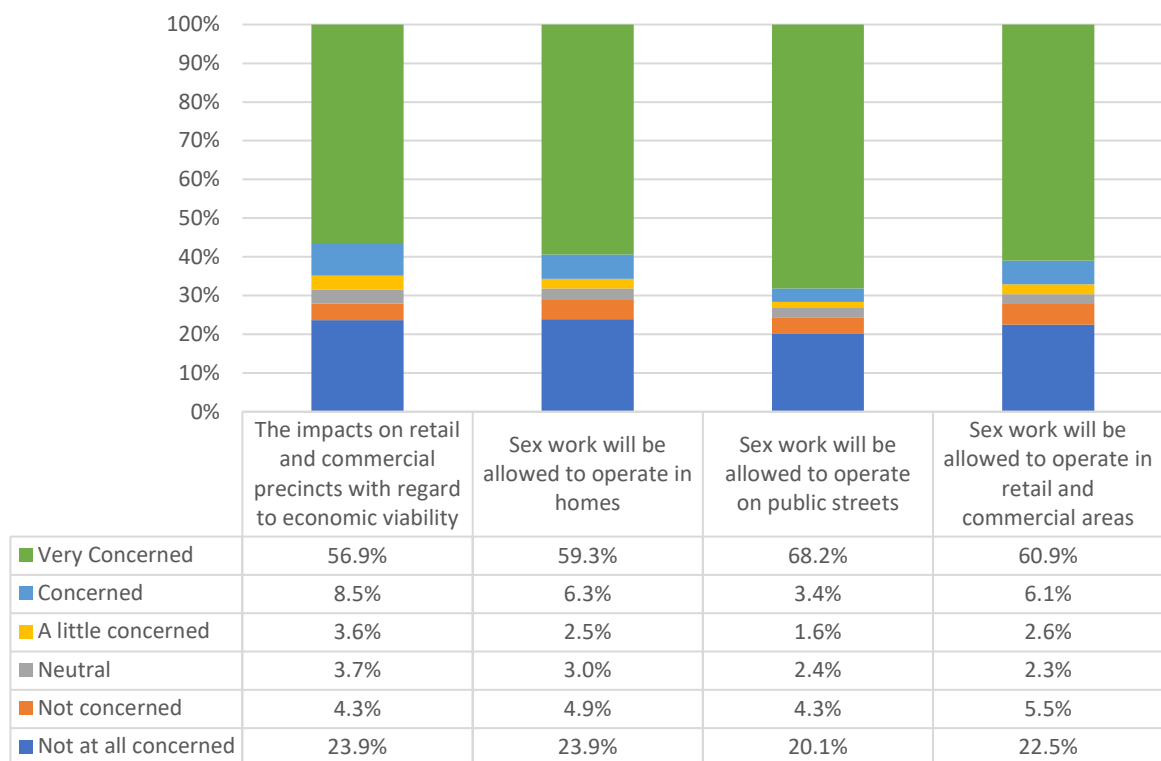


Figure 5: Impacts of sex work changes (n-1585)



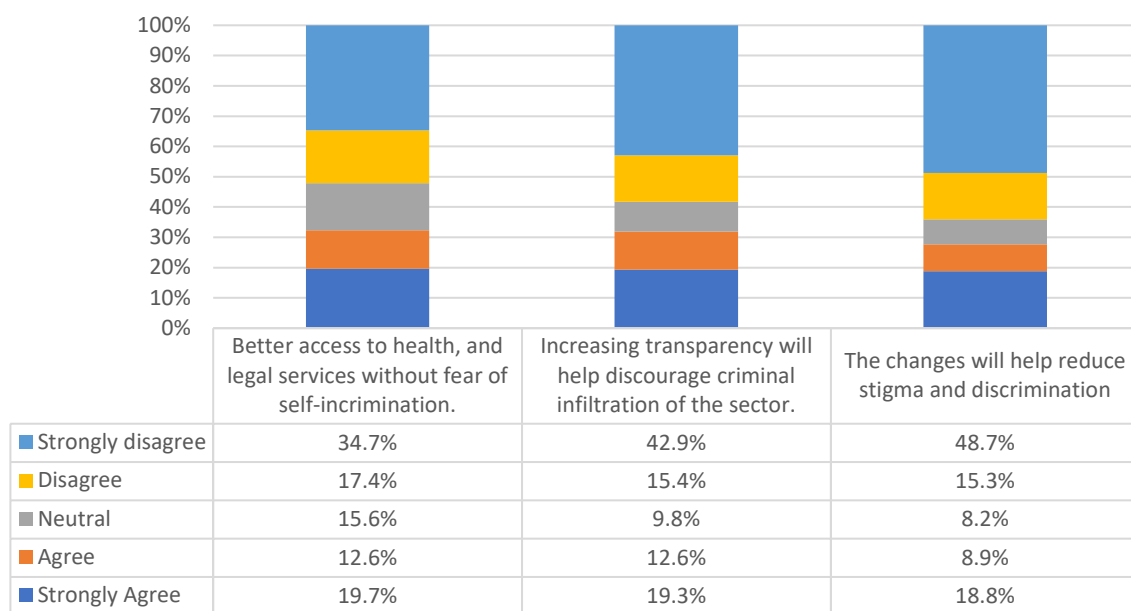
### Agreement with proposed benefits of the changes to sex work in Victoria

The State Government outlined several benefits it believed would occur as a result of the changes to sex work in Victoria. The survey asked respondents whether they agreed with these statements. This question recorded greater variability in responses.

Respondents had the highest level of agreement with the statement that “Sex workers currently working in the unlicensed sector will have better access to health, and legal services without fear of self-incrimination”, 32.3% stating they “strongly agree” or “agree” with this statement. However, 52.1% of respondents either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement and an additional 15.6% recorded a neutral sentiment.

In contrast, the statement recording the lowest level of agreement was “The changes will help reduce stigma and discrimination”, with 27.8% agreeing with this statement.

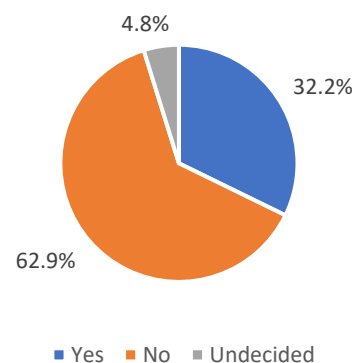
Figure 6: Agreement with proposed benefits of sex work changes (n=1585)



### Support for the Bill

Respondents were then asked whether they supported the Bill to decriminalise sex work in Victoria. Three out of five respondents (62.9%) did not support the Bill, while nearly one-third (32.2%) did support it. An additional 4.8% were undecided.

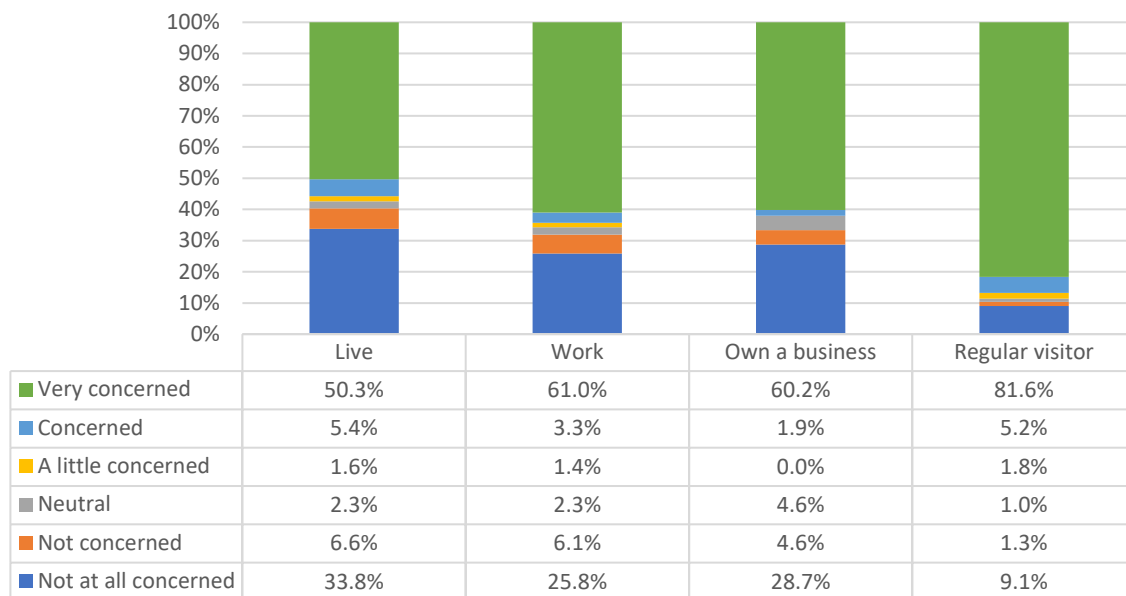
Figure 7: Support for sex work Bill (n=1580)



### Concern regarding the Bill by connection to the City of Melton:

While most respondents expressed concern regardless of their connection to the City of Melton, the highest level of concern came from those who were regular visitors to the City of Melton (88.6%). This compares with significantly lower concern from those who reside in Melton (57.3%).

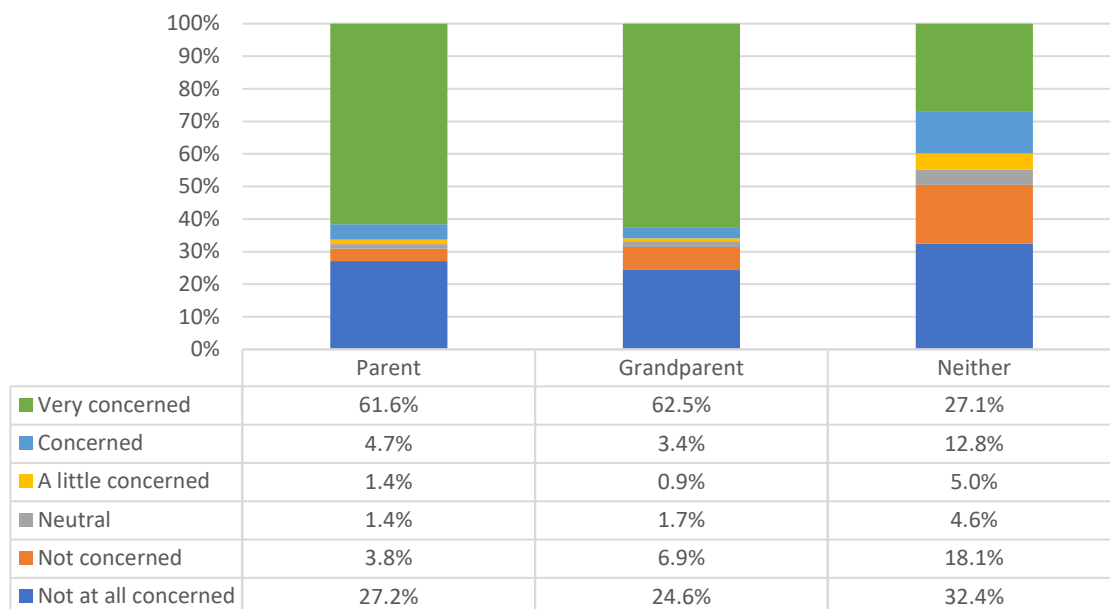
Figure 8: Concern about sex work Bill by connection to Melton (n=1580)



#### Concern regarding the Bill by parent/grandparent status:

Parents and grandparents recorded higher levels of concern than those who were not parents.

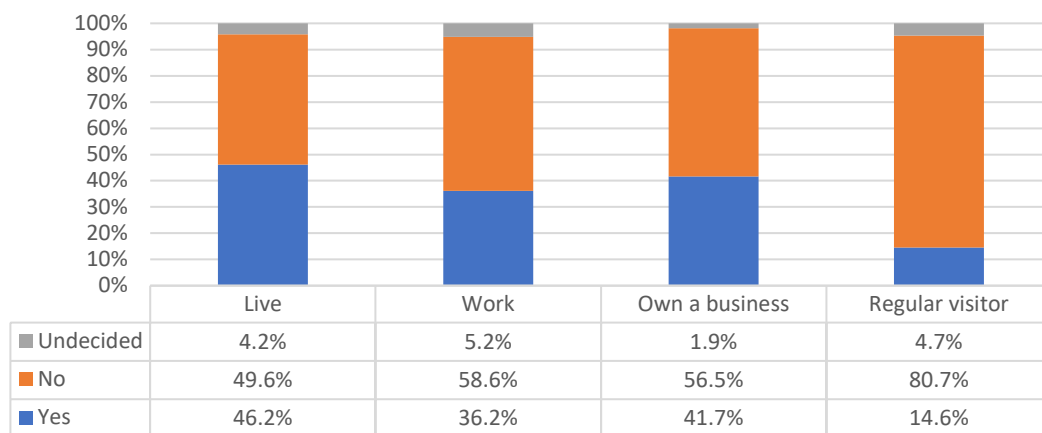
Figure 9: Concern about sex work Bill by parent/ grandparent status (n=1580)



#### Support for the Bill by connection to the City of Melton:

The highest level of support for the Bill came from those who reside in the City of Melton (46.2%), while the lowest support came from those who are regular visitors to the City of Melton (14.6%).

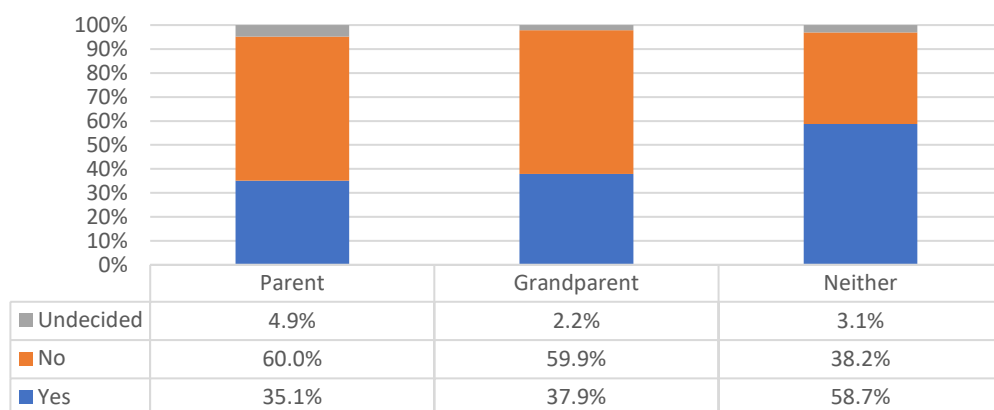
Figure 10: Support for the sex work Bill by connection to Melton (n=1580)



#### Support for the Bill by parent/grandparent status:

The highest level of support for the Bill came from respondents who were neither parents nor grandparents (58.7%), while the lowest level of support came from those who were parents (35.1%).

Figure 11: Support for the sex work Bill by parent/ grandparent status (n=1580)



These survey results will be sent to every Local State Member of Parliament and the responsible Minister and Shadow Minister for information so that the community's views on this issue can be considered as part of any potential future amendments.



## Appendix 1: Council correspondence on Community Awareness Campaign

Our Ref: P Hobbs/ph/NoM786

ECM: 7947590

3<sup>RD</sup> December 2021

Mr Joshua Bull MP  
Member for Sunbury  
[josh.bull@parliament.vic.gov.au](mailto:josh.bull@parliament.vic.gov.au)

Dear Josh,

### Re: Sex Work Decriminalisation Bill 2021

I write to inform you of Council's plans to seek community feedback on the Victorian Government's proposed Sex Work Decriminalisation Bill 2021.

Council has previously made a submission on the proposed Bill which is available on Council's website: [Council's submission on decriminalising sex work in Victoria \(melton.vic.gov.au\)](https://www.melton.vic.gov.au/councils-submission-on-decriminalising-sex-work-in-victoria)

Council holds concerns that these laws will not achieve the worthy goal of increased safety for sex workers and that some of the proposed changes will compromise the community if the legislative framework is inadequate. In particular, Council is concerned that the proposed legislative changes:

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Council is also concerned there was insufficient consultation with local government authorities and the broader community, undertaken by the Victorian Government regarding these draft legislation changes. Given the scale of these proposed legislative changes, Council believes it is important that our community has the right to have their say and at our November Council Meeting resolved to seek community feedback on this important issue.

We will be seeking the views of residents and businesses on the proposed Bill via a community feedback survey which will go live on Council's website on Monday 29 November and will remain open until 31 March 2022.

We fully appreciate that the *Sex Work Decriminalisation Bill 2021* is currently before the Victorian Parliament and that it is likely the Bill will be passed during the consultation period.



Cr Goran Kesic

Mayor

Cambridge Ward Councillor

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However given the significant impact these changes will have on our community and that our community was not provided with sufficient opportunity to have a say, the results of our community survey will form the basis of a report to be published on our website, and sent to all local State Members and the responsible Minister so that our community's views on this issue are heard and considered as part of any potential future amendments.

I look forward to sharing our community's views with you.

Yours sincerely,

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Cr Goran Kesic  
**MAYOR**

Our Ref: P Hobbs/ph/NoM786

ECM: 7947590

3<sup>RD</sup> December 2021

The Hon Natalie Hutchins MP  
Member for Sydenham  
[natalie.hutchins@parliament.vic.gov.au](mailto:natalie.hutchins@parliament.vic.gov.au)

Dear Natalie,

**Re: Sex Work Decriminalisation Bill 2021**

Thank you again for your time last Friday.

As discussed, I write to inform you of Council's plans to seek community feedback on the Victorian Government's proposed Sex Work Decriminalisation Bill 2021.

Council has previously made a submission on the proposed Bill which is available on Council's website: [Council's submission on decriminalising sex work in Victoria \(melton.vic.gov.au\)](https://www.melton.vic.gov.au/council/submissions/councils-submission-on-decriminalising-sex-work-in-victoria)

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Cr Goran Kesic  
**MAYOR**

Our Ref: P Hobbs/ph/NoM786

ECM: 7947590

3<sup>RD</sup> December 2021

The Hon Marlene Kairouz MP  
Member for Kororoit  
[marlene.kairouz@parliament.vic.gov.au](mailto:marlene.kairouz@parliament.vic.gov.au)

Dear Marlene,

**Re: Sex Work Decriminalisation Bill 2021**

I write to inform you of Council's plans to seek community feedback on the Victorian Government's proposed Sex Work Decriminalisation Bill 2021.

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Cr Goran Kesic  
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ECM: 7947590

3<sup>RD</sup> December 2021

Mr Stephen McGhie MP  
Member for Melton  
[Stephen.McGhie@parliament.vic.gov.au](mailto:Stephen.McGhie@parliament.vic.gov.au)

Dear Steve,

**Re: Sex Work Decriminalisation Bill 2021**

I write to inform you of Council's plans to seek community feedback on the Victorian Government's proposed Sex Work Decriminalisation Bill 2021.

Council has previously made a submission on the proposed Bill which is available on Council's website: [Council's submission on decriminalising sex work in Victoria \(melton.vic.gov.au\)](https://www.melton.vic.gov.au/council/submissions/councils-submission-on-decriminalising-sex-work-in-victoria)

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ECM: 7947590

3<sup>RD</sup> December 2021

The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP  
Member for Macedon  
[mary-anne.thomas@parliament.vic.gov.au](mailto:mary-anne.thomas@parliament.vic.gov.au)

Dear Mary-Anne,

**Re: Sex Work Decriminalisation Bill 2021**

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