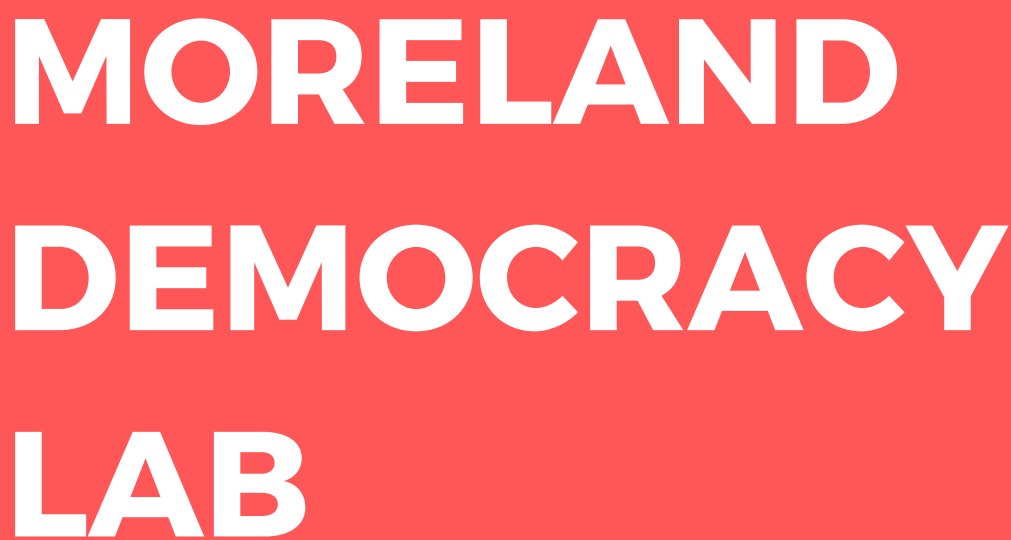


# HIGHLIGHTS REPORT 2019



REPORT PREPARED BY  
EMANUELA SAVINI  
THE PUBLIC VALUE STUDIO



**MORELAND  
DEMOCRACY  
LAB**



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Moreland Democracy Lab was created to enhance civic participation. It consisted of a series of workshops that developed community engagement skills and built a network of people with a common interest in community generated projects and change.

Aligned to Moreland's Social Cohesion Plan, the Lab focused on participants from Moreland's north and priority groups from its Human Rights Policy. The program was developed in consultation with a Community Reference Group of community leaders that was established specifically for the Lab.

Between September and November 2019, this diverse and impressive group of community members met eight times covering a range of topics including the principles of community-led practice, collaboration and partnerships, maintaining group dynamics over long periods of time and understanding Council decision making processes. The program culminated in a Building Alliances event where participants met Council staff and people from relevant community organisations to discuss their project ideas or areas of interest.

***"My passion for being active in my community has been ignited and confirmed! I can't wait to get out and about, thinking of ways to bring my neighbours together"***

**2019 Lab Participant**

Evaluation for the 2019 Moreland Democracy Lab demonstrates that the program was successful in engaging with priority groups, particularly from Moreland's north, building skills in civic participation and developing participants' networks. Participants welcomed the opportunity to engage more closely with Council and learnings from the Lab can be used to inform future community engagement initiatives.

A key outcome was also the strong connections participants made as a collective, demonstrated through their enthusiasm for supporting each other's initiatives as well as desire for maintaining contact through an ongoing Community of Practice.

# PROGRAM SESSIONS



The Moreland Democracy Lab ran from 24 September to 26 November 2019.

1

## Welcome

Deputy Mayor, Cr Mark Reily and Community Development Director, Arden Joseph welcomed participants. Jason Mifsud (Indigenous leader) talked about the First Peoples Assembly, his experiences around advocacy and the importance of self-determination for First Nations communities. Participants learnt more about each other through a Head, Heart and Hand activity.

2

## Understanding the 'why'

Kimba Thompson (Blak Dot Gallery) talked about working in ways that are led and informed by community. This was followed by discussion and workshop around better understanding how to identify what a community values in order to mobilise community-led action.

3

## Collaboration is key

Muhammad Murtaza (Fawkner Community House) and Sally Beatie (Fawkner Food Bowls) talked about their experiences and learnings around building networks and partnerships. This was followed by the first stage of a collaborative mapping exercise where the Lab participants' ideas and areas of interest were explored..

4

## It took 10 years - why?

Gabrielle Castree (Merlynston Progress Hall) talked about the advocacy campaign for the refurbishment of Merlynston Progress Hall and how the group was able to sustain momentum and engagement over the 10-year period. This was followed by the second stage of the collaborative mapping exercise.

5

## Understanding the system

Nalika Peiris (Moreland City Council) talked about Council's strategic planning processes and gave examples of how community initiatives have been supported through Council. This was followed by a project planning workshop around strategic planning and Impact/Effort assessment for initiatives.

6

## Project planning for public value

Emanuela Savini (The Public Value Studio) gave a presentation around how to align what the community values with the strategic interests and operational capacity of Council. Followed by a workshop on framing projects in a way that responds to these three aspects (Value to community, strategic alignment with Council and operational capacity).

7

## Building alliances

Networking evening where participants met council staff and people from relevant local community organisations to discuss their project ideas, obtain feedback and suggestions on potential opportunities for those project ideas.

8

## Community of practice

Discussion regarding program learnings, co-design of future iterations of the Lab and the development of a Community of Practice group

# PROGRAM OUTCOMES:

## Objective 1 - Increased knowledge and skills in how to influence policy including increased understanding of Council processes

*"The program was very informative, it provided good ways and tools to learn about community practices. I am very satisfied with the final outcomes, excellent initiative."*

Participants identified having developed skills in:

- Connecting with others that are involved in social work, community and political work to exchange ideas
- Building a network that will support participants to effectively lead or engage in community focused projects
- Building skills in community leadership in a way that acknowledges different lived experiences and is community-led
- Strategies for activating and mobilising community
- Information about Council processes and how to effectively engage with Council

# 80%

of Lab participants expressed they developed skills in civic participation

## Objective 2 - Participation of priority groups from Moreland's Social Cohesion Plan and Human Rights Policy



Participants in the 2019 Moreland Democracy Lab:

- 77% live north of Bell Street including Glenroy, Fawkner, Merlynston or North Coburg
- 46% were people who had recently migrated to Australia
- 70% were from CALD communities
- one person identified as a young person
- one identified as from the LGBTQI community and
- one identified as having lived experience of mental illness.



# PROGRAM OUTCOMES:

## Objective 3 - Increased professional network for participants

**90%**

of participants identified networking or connecting with others as the most valuable part of the program

Throughout the program, Lab participants were supported in building connections in relation to their areas of interest. This culminated in a networking event held on 19 November 2019 at Oxygen Youth Centre, North Coburg. Participants also made strong connections with each other. They were enthusiastic about supporting their peers with project ideas, offered to assist with each other's projects, facilitated introductions with their own networks and provided genuine interest and encouragement to each other.

*"I feel the respect of my peers at the Democracy Lab, the genuine interest to learn together and the desire to collaborate. That's inspiring!"*

## Objective 4 - Inform Council understanding of practice that builds civic participation

The Moreland Democracy Lab was developed in partnership with a number of Council staff, namely from the Community Development and Social Policy Unit. Anecdotally, the Lab provided useful understandings of how Council can better support community-led initiatives and expand civic participation in Moreland. In future iterations, Lab participants could be knowledgeable and effective champions for Council's engagement activities and the program could support professional development aimed at building community engagement skills.