

City of Palmerston Car Parking Strategy

Consultation Report

Prepared by True North Strategic Communication
April 2019

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Consultation statement

True North Strategic Communication is guided by the principles of good community engagement, based on people's level of interest and concern as outlined by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2).

Our role is to provide stakeholders and the general public with objective information so they can provide informed feedback on consultation projects. We give people the opportunity to provide input that is balanced and reflective of the range of community views to independently provide the best possible guidance to decision makers.

Our practice reflects professional standards and ethical standards for human research including anonymity, confidentiality, record storage and keeping people informed.

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Executive summary

City of Palmerston commissioned a study of Council operated and maintained car parks in Palmerston's central business district to determine occupancy rates of metered and unmetered car parks. Council engaged True North Strategic Communication (True North) to consult with the community and stakeholders and seek feedback on Council's draft City Centre Parking Study and the recommendations arising from it, including **changes to the cost of parking and parking time limits**.

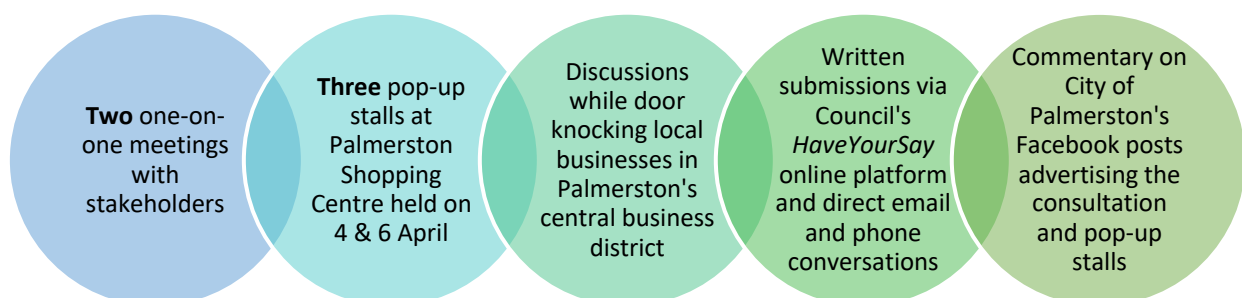
This report outlines the consultation process and the feedback received during the consultation and provides some analysis and recommendations based on the feedback received.

The consultation ran for three weeks, from **27 March to 17 April 2019** and was targeted to stakeholders identified as being interested or affected by the changes to car parking in the central business district, including the general public, retail and service based businesses located in the central business district, government offices and services located in the central business district and industry groups.

The consultation involved several communication tools and techniques including:

- media release and event
- City of Palmerston *HaveYourSay* online platform
- Facebook promotion
- pop-up stalls at the Palmerston Shopping Centre
- stickers on parking metres in the central business district
- door knocking businesses
- emails and meeting offer to stakeholders
- meeting with stakeholders.

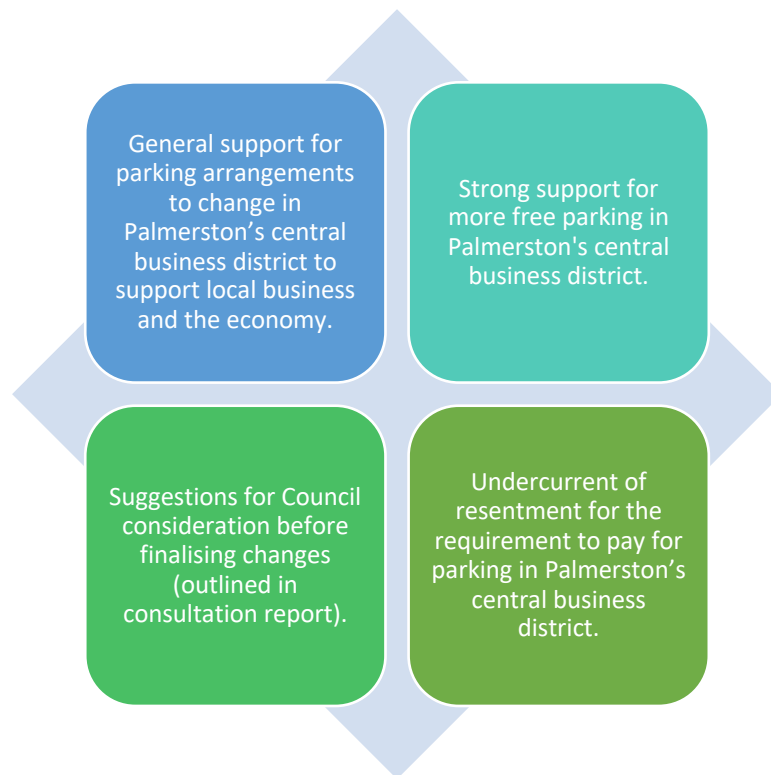
Feedback was received in the following ways:



The feedback received indicated general support for changes to be made to the parking arrangements in Palmerston's central business district with many people referencing the tough circumstances that businesses are experiencing at present. Many felt that paid parking did not help local business or residents in an already challenging period. The introduction of free parking is generally welcomed as a result with a number of stakeholders believing the changes will positively impact local businesses.

Some people expressed frustration at the introduction of parking metres in the past with many appearing unlikely to move from this position.

Notwithstanding that general frustration exists for many on having to pay for parking in Palmerston's central business district, there was support for the proposed changes on the grounds that the changes will benefit local business. The key themes from the consultation are below:



Some suggestions from stakeholders included:

- parking in the central business district should be free (no all-day parking charge)
- local business owners should have free all-day parking
- 12-month parking permits should remain available in addition to the new 3-month parking permit
- more 15 minute and 30 minute parking bays close to the post office
- changes to time limits in some areas in the central business district.

It is recommended that:

- Council consider the feedback received from stakeholders, businesses and residents when finalising the proposed changes including the detailed suggestions outlined in this report.
- Council note the following key points from the consultation:
 - There is general support for parking arrangements to change in Palmerston's central business district to support local business and the economy.
 - The strongest support is for the introduction of free parking in Palmerston's central business district.
 - Despite the support expressed for changes and the introduction of more free parking, there is an undercurrent of resentment for the existing requirement to pay for parking in Palmerston's central business district.

- Council release the consultation report to the public on City of Palmerston’s website, and authorise True North to provide a copy to those who made a submission or requested to be kept informed.

Background

Context

Currently, City of Palmerston offer various timed parking options in the Palmerston central business district. These vary from 15 minutes to all-day parking. City of Palmerston commissioned a study of Council operated and maintained car parks in Palmerston's central business district to determine occupancy rates of metered and unmetered car parks. This included parking surveys, review of the current policy framework, and best practice parking principles based on the Australian Standards.

The investigation found:

- Parking behaviour is not measurably altered by pricing changes across the central business district. It appears to be linked to end destination and the convenience.
- The greatest demand is generally in locations where all-day parking is available.
- There is an opportunity to consolidate and amend parking zones to improve utilisation and better meet actual, observed demand.

Recommendations from the investigation have been made to better align some of the car parks to Australian Standards. The findings have informed the development of the Palmerston City Centre Parking Study: Background Report, Parking Strategy and Implementation Plan.

The Implementation Plan recommends two objectives be implemented immediately. These are to:

- Develop a hierarchy for off street and on street parking areas.
- Adopt appropriate pricing for off street and on street parking.

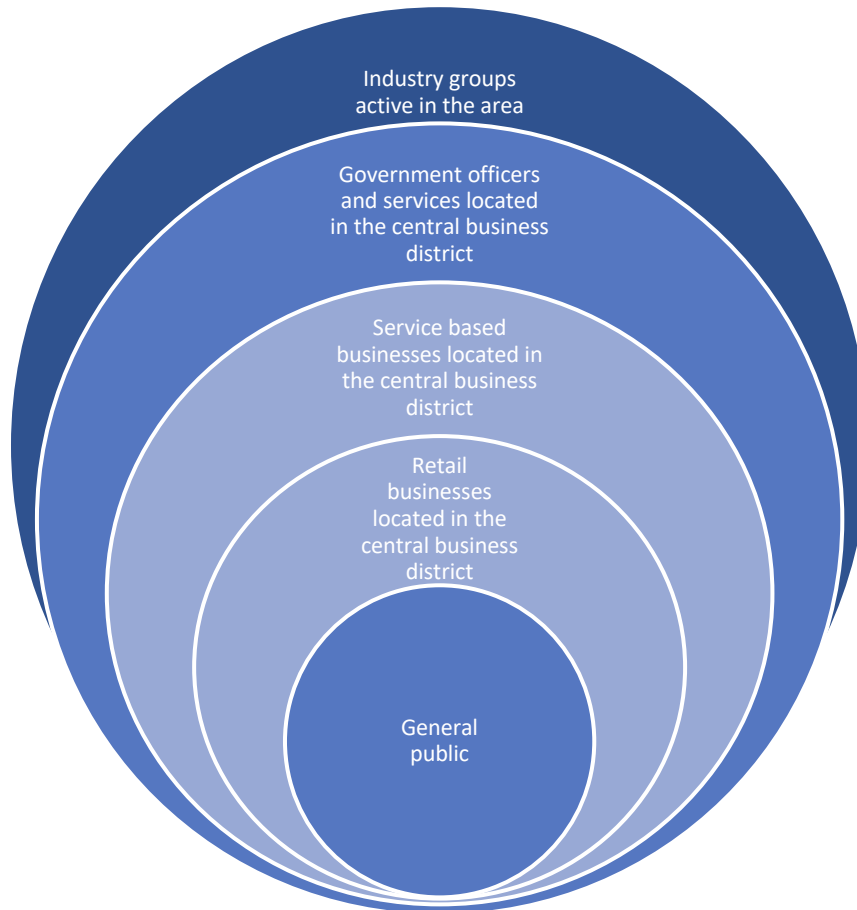
It has been recommended that pricing be changed to provide free timed parking and paid all-day parking spaces, and the timing allocated to particular parking spaces in the city centre be changed.

Proposed changes

The following changes to parking are proposed:

- Roylat Street, Maluka Drive and Wilson Street: change from 2 hour to 4 hour parking.
- South-west end of Palmerston Shopping Centre: change from 2 hour to all-day, 1 hour, and 2 hour parking.
- Frances Drive and Hillson Street: change from 2 hour to 1 hour parking.
- Northwest of Palmerston Recreation Centre: change from 1 hour to 2 hour parking.
- Hillson Street car park: retain as all-day parking but introduce \$4.00 all-day charge.
- The regulated hours for all-day parking be changed from 9am to 5pm to 8am to 4pm.
- Parking on weekends and public holidays will remain free and no time limits enforced. Tickets are not required on weekends or public holidays.

From **27 March to 17 April 2019**, True North consulted with the community on behalf of the City of Palmerston on the proposed changes. Local businesses in the central business district, the general public who visit the central business district, staff from Highway House, Goyder Building and Palmerston Police Station were identified as being the most affected by the changes.



^ Stakeholders

Methodology

Consultation goal

The goal of this community engagement was to seek feedback on City of Palmerston’s draft City Centre Parking Study with a focus on the immediate changes proposed for the central business district.

The objectives of the consultation were to:

- Give stakeholders the opportunity to have their say on the draft City Centre Parking Study
- Seek additional information on the current parking behavior of stakeholders in the area
- Promote the proposed changes to parking.

Level of engagement

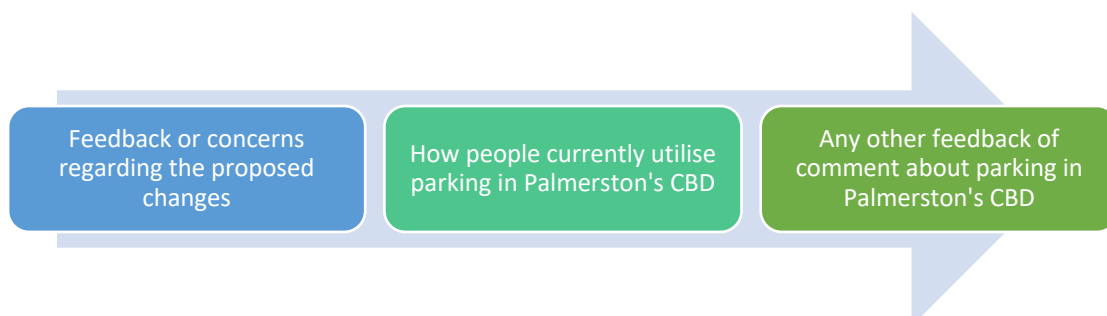
Using the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) principles that guide good community engagement, this consultation was conducted at the **inform** and **consult** level of engagement.

Level of engagement	Promise to the public
Inform	We will keep you informed
Consult	We will keep you informed, listen to your concerns and provide feedback on how the public’s input influenced the decision
Involve	We will work with you to ensure your concerns are reflected in the alternatives developed, and provide feedback on how the public’s input influenced the decision
Collaborate	We will look to you for advice, ideas and solutions and incorporate those into the decisions as much as possible
Empower	We will implement what you decide

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Approach

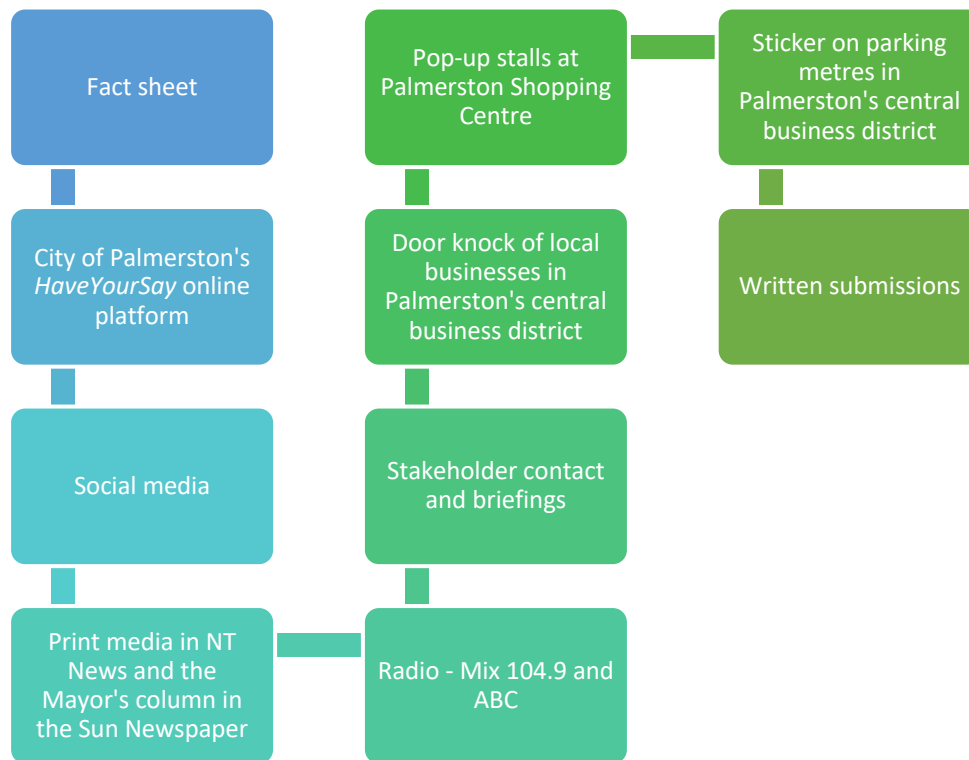
The **information sought** during the consultation included the following:



Tools and tactics

The consultation incorporated several tools and tactics to maximise engagement with stakeholders and the community.

The tools and tactics included:



^ Tools and tactics

Fact sheet

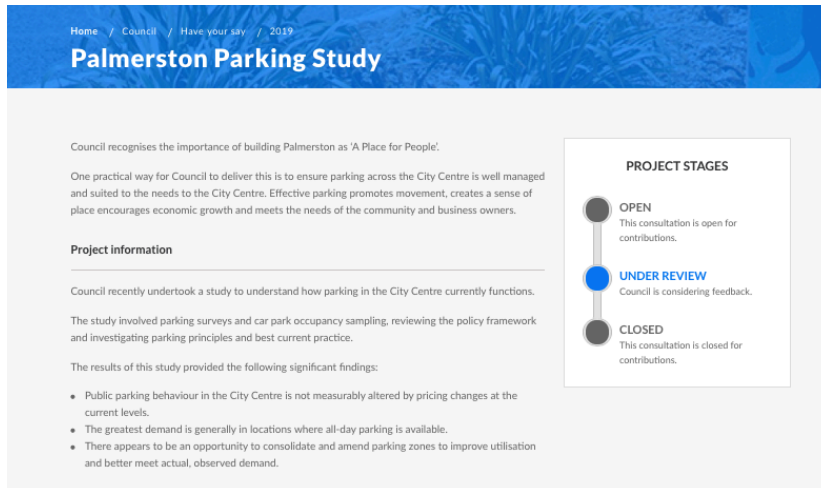
A **fact sheet** was prepared by Council and dropped at local businesses, placed on the City of Palmerston webpage and available at the pop-up stalls.



< Fact sheet

HaveYourSay online platform

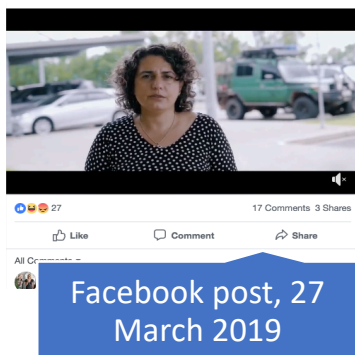
The project was included on City of Palmerston’s *HaveYourSay* online platform and included project information, information on the proposed changes, the ways to provide feedback and next steps.



< Consultation web page

Social media

There were three social media posts regarding the consultation on Council’s Facebook page during the consultation period. The first was on 27 March 2019 **announcing the start of the consultation** and was in the form of a Mayor’s Talk. As at the 11 April, this post attracted 27 comments and 3 shares. The second social media post was on 3 April and provided **information on the two pop-up stalls** that were held. As at the 11 April this post attracted 16 comments and 17 shares. The third social media post was on 17 April and reminded people to have their say before the consultation closed. As at 18 April this post attracted no comments and 6 shares.



^ Facebook promotion

Print media

A full page advertisement was taken out in the NT News on 3 April 2019 to promote the consultation.



< NT News full page advertisement

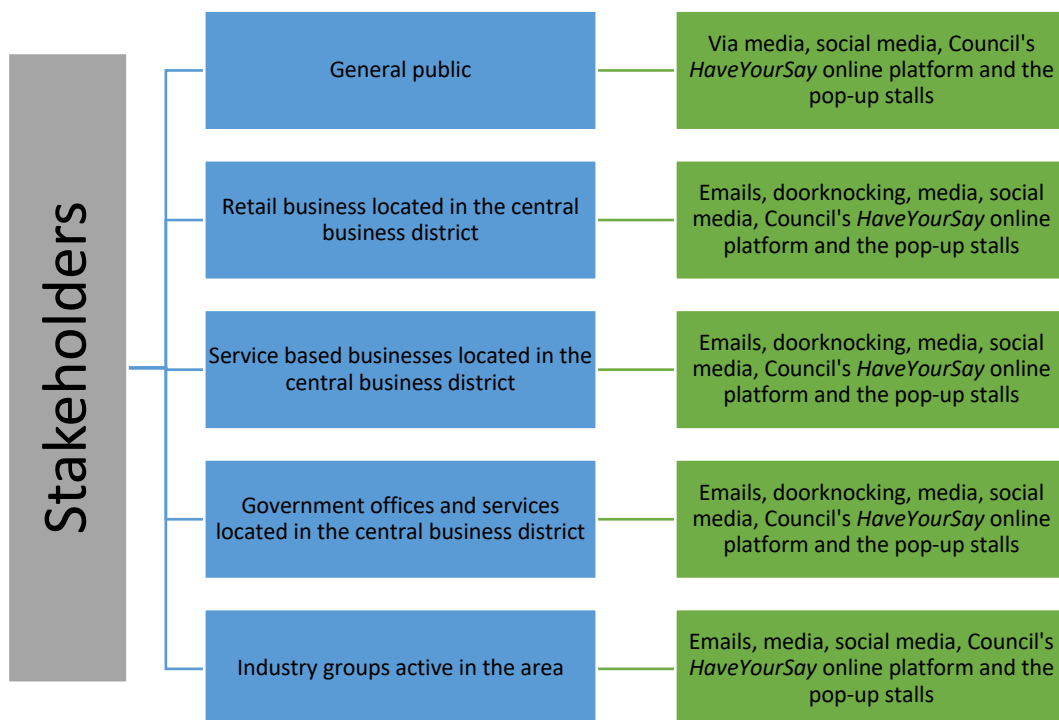
Radio

The consultation was promoted by the Mayor during regular radio spots, including:

- 105.7 ABC Radio - ABC news hour
- 104.9 Mix FM – 360 with Katie Woolf
- 105.7 ABC Radio – ABC Drive

Stakeholders and briefings

The stakeholders targeted in the consultation and how they were targeted is as follows:



An email with information on the proposed changes and the consultation was sent to stakeholders during the consultation. An email was sent to the following organisations and their staff:

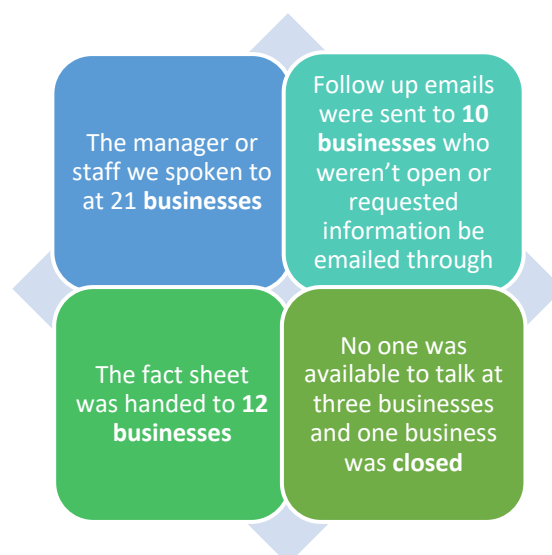
- Department of Corporate Information Services
- Department of Education
- Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics
- Territory Families
- Community Corrections (via Department of the Attorney General)
- Department of Local Government, Housing and Community Services
- Industry organisations such as Hospitality NT, Palmerston Regional Business Association and Palmerston and Rural Markets Association
- CBD businesses.

Due to the amount of information being consulted on and existing sensitivity surrounding car parking in Palmerston, meetings were offered and available to all stakeholders. Two stakeholders took up the meeting offer during the consultation. The key points of the discussion are included below with further information provided in Appendix A.

Organisation	Date	Key points
CBD business, general manager	2 April 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the proposed changes. • Does not affect the business.
CBD business, business owner and general manager	3 April 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In general support for the introduction of free car parking for the first 2 hours. • Some concerns and suggestions outlined in written submission dated 17 April 2019, see below for further detail.

Door knocking of local businesses

Door knocking of local businesses took place on 28 March and 10 April 2019 to promote the proposed changes to parking and the consultation process. Of the 57 businesses located in the central business district (not including government offices or services). There were approximately 27 properties door knocked and in summary:



Pop-up stalls

Pop-up stalls at Palmerston Shopping Centre provided people with the opportunity to learn more and provide feedback about the draft car park strategy and the proposed changes. Materials used at the displays included the fact sheet, maps showing the current car parking arrangements and the proposed changes and copies of the Draft Background Report, Draft City Centre Parking Strategy and Draft Implementation Plan.

Three pop-up stalls were held over two days as follows:

- Thursday 4 April from 12pm to 2pm and 4pm to 6pm
- Saturday 6 April from 12pm to 2pm.

On 4 April, 24 people attended the two pop-up stalls and on 6 April, 25 people attended the one pop-up stall. There was varying levels of interest about the proposed changes. Most people approached the stand to ask what it was about or they provided feedback on a non-related Council issue. Some examples of other matters raised included waste management, bus services and lawn maintenance.

However once learning about the proposed changes to parking in Palmerston's CBD, the majority of people who attended the pop-up stalls supported the proposed changes.

Appendix B includes the notes taken from the pop-up stalls which provides further information on the issues raised and comments received.

Stickers on parking meters in Palmerston's central business district

Stickers were placed on parking meters in Palmerston's central business district to further promote the consultation to people already parking in the area and provide details on where people can have their say.



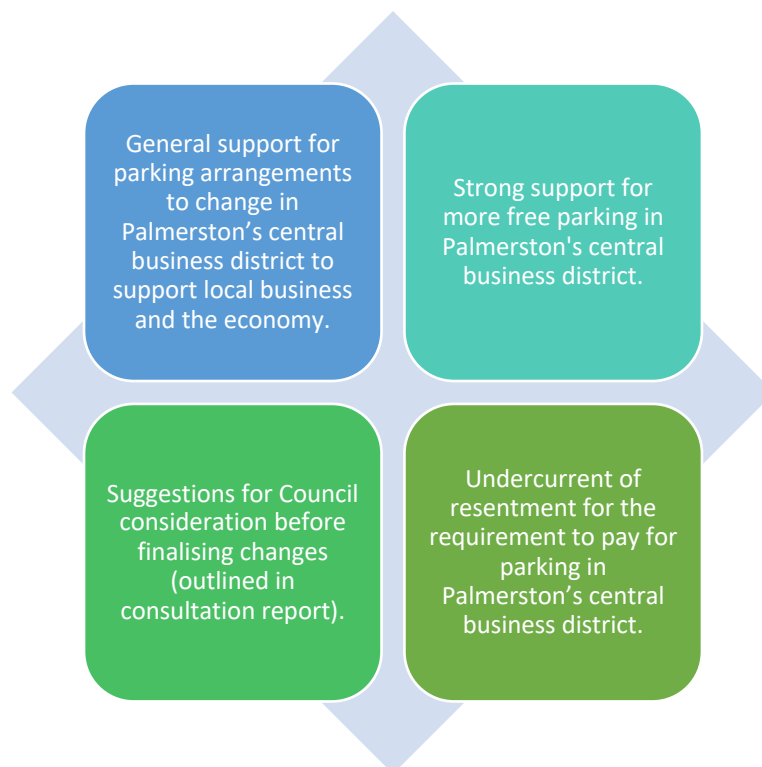
Written submissions

Stakeholders and the general public were invited to provide feedback either via Council's *HaveYourSay* online platform or email. There were 16 written submissions received.

Feedback and analysis

Feedback was captured through a number of means. The overall feedback received indicated support for changes to be made to the parking arrangements in Palmerston's central business district with many people feeling that paid parking did not help local business or residents during an already challenging period. The introduction of free parking is welcomed as a result.

Some people expressed frustration at the introduction of parking metres in the past with many appearing unlikely to move from this position. Appendix A provides further information and detail. The key points from the consultation are as follows:



Feedback relating to the proposed changes

Parking zones/time allocations/charges

- *Please consider the local businesses that suffer from paid parking, if you want local Palmerston Businesses to thrive get rid of the paid parking!!!*
- *Disagree that charging should be introduced to the all-day car park located on Hillson street... reduction in the regulated hours for all-day parking would be handy for those quickly dropping into the shops for groceries after work/picking up children from school.*
- *The parking for free outside the library is great. It is a shame you reduced the number of spaces in order to widen the pavement as now there are never any free spaces and I feel it is harder to park so I don't bother going so much and never think to go into the City centre... I also think the free parking proposals are a great idea.*
- *We need more 15 min parking for mail pick-ups.*

- *There should be more short term bays (30 min) close to the Post office pickup. There is a high churn rate during the day.*
- *I would urge the council to consider the problem in terms practical resolution of all day parking needs by means of allocation and zoning and abandon paid parking for the benefit of local business and convenience of the public.*

Parking permits

- *Please keep the option for all day parkers to buy a 12-month pass so that we can take advantage of the same discounts we currently have.*
- *I really like the idea of the proposed 3 month parking permits, as I'm a field worker and only would require it in the wet season. My concerns are I'm aware of people holding 12 month permits that have not been able to get a near by park due to car parks being full, and have had to park elsewhere. Perhaps there should be reserved car parks for people that have pre-paid permits for 3-months or more.*
- *The change to 3-month permits is great, hoping that a yearly option will still be available.*

Parking app

- *PayStay should be introduced in Palmerston car parks.*
- *The main parking I use is all day parking \$4.00 a day, the introduction of a car parking app is an excellent idea. The one used by Darwin City Council, Pay Stay, works effectively if you are still researching this.*

Paid parking

- *I am opposed to all paid parking it is literally driving my customers away potential customers have contacted me several times annoyed by having to find a free park for a 5 minute visit to my shop the free parking is constantly taken up by the government vehicles. Not good for business here.*
- *Please consider the local businesses that suffer from paid parking, if you want local Palmerston Businesses to thrive get rid of the paid parking!!!*
- *I urge Council to subsidise parking. Carparking was a major issue at the last Council election however the meters remain and parking continues to be charged, as a ratepayer I do not feel I have been listened to regarding carparking.*
- *The cost of parking is a huge part of some peoples weekly income so thank you for reviewing this and supporting the people of Palmerston.*

Parking meters

- *The paid meters are a joke! They are ugly, take up space and just a nuisance for Palmerston people.*

Feedback on parking in the Palmerston central business district

Disabled and motorcycle parking

- *Highway House has considerable staffing numbers of which there are 4-5 staff with disabled passes. Disabled people need to be able to park within close proximity to the buildings they are working in and able to park for full 8-9 hrs not have to move after 4 hrs.*
- *A motorcycle can't reliably display a ticket to park in a paid area as the ticket can either blow away, get stolen or wet from the rain as they are not enclosed like a car cabin. I understand that there are some free areas for motorcycles but the signage is a bit unclear in regards to needing a ticket and time limits so I'm hesitant to park in those. Due to motorcycle not being*

able to use paid areas, I would suggest all motorcycle parking to be free with an unlimited duration, as Darwin city and other larger cities.

Current behaviour

- *I live in Palmy, but only ever go in to Palmerston and Oasis shopping centres occasionally as can get everything else from Gateway and Woolies Bakewell. I never go to the other shops e.g. along the Boulevard (only found out the name of it looking at this parking map).*

Other

- *More parking for when the markets are on would be good.*
- *There is no suitable option for another mode of public transport available at this stage and this needs to be honestly recognised.*
- *I also feel the need to add that there is no draw card to the City Centre for anyone who does not work there, the shopping centre is run down and security substandard, the grassed areas encourage people to lay around, argue and yell abuse to those just walking by minding their own business, the water tower area is a haven for antisocial behaviour and congregation.*
- *I would also like to congratulate the council on providing December as free parking in the all-day parking bays. I do not have a yearly pass as my work is across the NT but I certainly appreciated this gesture.*

Other feedback (received via door knock, pop-up stalls)

Notwithstanding that general frustration exists for many on having to currently pay for parking in Palmerston's central business district, there was general support for the proposed changes, with some notable **viewpoints in support** as follows:

- A local medical centre supports the change from 2 to 4 hours on Royalt Street as their patients sometimes have to wait a few hours after procedures before they can drive.
- A local veterinary clinic supports the change, noting that when paid on-street parking was introduced previously, people were parking in their free customer parking spaces.
- A shop supports the changes, also citing that when paid on-street parking was introduced, people were parking in their free customer parking spaces. Also, free on-street parking will encourage more visits to the shop. A comment was made that their business has suffered because of paid parking.
- A local worker supported the changes and hopes free on-street parking will encourage more people to pop into stores and shop.
- The president of a local industry association thought the changes 'looked good'.
- Palmerston Police Station said they are unlikely to be affected by changes given that they have annual parking permits.
- The majority of people who attended the pop-up stalls were in support of the proposed changes, although some expressed frustrations at other non-related Council matters.
- There was some support for introducing the PayStay app.

Summary

- Some people want to see the 12-month parking permit remain in place.
- One person suggested there be some reserved bays for people who have permits for 3-months or more.

- A local worker commented that people should not have to pay for parking in Palmerston at all. However, it was noted that the proposed changes will hopefully encourage more people to come into the central business district and shop.
- A local business supports the changes except for the 30 minute parking outside of their business. Treatments at this business are from 45 minutes to 1 hour, therefore 1 to 2 hour parking would be more appropriate and consistent with the other timed parking on the Boulevard. One person commented that they no longer go into the Palmerston CBD to get their hair done or have a facial as they do not want to be fined and the proposed changes mean the time allocation will be less.
- There was some concern about the introduction of an all-day charge at Hilson Street as the car park is further away from shops and is not maintained to the same standard as the Fiveish Lane car park. One person queried who owns the land and whether Council could charge for parking.
- There were suggestions that there be more 30 and 15 minute bays close to the post office pick up area.
- One person suggested that business owners should have to pay for all-day parking given the pressure they are currently under.
- Council should consider free parking outside the library and more parking for the markets.
- More consideration should be given to disabled parking, with the proposed changes not considering 8 hour disabled parking.
- In a detailed submission by a local business owner, some suggestions were provided on the water tower car park and the move to change it from a 2 hour paid car park to a combination of 1 hour, 2 hour and all-day parking:
 - Any car park area near retail and services should not be assigned as all-day parking. This would be a waste of car parks as they would not be turned over frequently enough to be used by customers who wish to access the retail and services.
 - The car parking study found there was low usage of some of the areas of the water tower car park and that having all-day parking might be a good solution for these car parks. However, the local business owner suggests that the reason for the low usage is that this area has been designated as a paid car park area and no one will use this when they can park in Palmerston Shopping Centre's car park which is free.
 - All-day parking in the city centre should be in car parks which are secondary locations so as to allow the car parks in prime areas to have continuous turnover of their spaces. If the goal is for commercial activity to be reactivated in the town centre Council need's to make it easier for users to access car parks close to the services they want to use.
 - The recommendation of one and two hour free car parking may lead to confusion and it would be far easier for customers to use and understand the regulations if time limits were all uniform. It would also be far easier for Council to manage this area if all the car parks had uniform time limits.
 - There should not be an increase in the numbers of all-day parking until we have seen what the impact of free car parking has on the use of this area.

Some **broader commentary** on parking in Palmerston's CBD was as follows:

- Abandon paid parking for the benefit of local business and convenience of the public.
- The cost of parking is a huge part of some people's weekly income.
- Congratulations to the Council for providing December as free parking in the all-day parking bays.

The social media posts on 27 March and 11 April 2019 confirm the broader sentiment and commentary on parking in Palmerston’s CBD. The first post on 27 March announcing the start of the consultation was in the form of a Mayor’s Talk segment. The general consensus on these posts was one of frustration with the paid parking in Palmerston’s CBD with some notable comments as follows:

- *Remove the parking metres*
- *I don’t shop anywhere I have to pay for parking, You should have listened to people before. You put all the parking stations in and businesses lost customers. Things are hard enough up here without parking fines*
- *Should be paying for parking in Palmerston full stop*
- *B!!DY good idea, about time*

The second social media post on 3 April provided information on the three pop-up stalls that were held. Again, the general consensus on this post was one of frustration with paid parking in Palmerston’s CBD with some notable comments as follows:

- *When are you going to place a parking meter in front of council car parks. Everyone pays or no one*
- *Get rid of them*
- *I refuse to shop there since the meters were installed, small businesses must be hurting big time*

Recommendations

It is recommended that the next steps are:

- Council consider the feedback received from stakeholders, businesses and residents when finalising the proposed changes including the detailed suggestions outlined in this report.
- Council note the following key points from the consultation:
 - There is general support for parking arrangements to change in Palmerston’s central business district to support local business and the economy.
 - The strongest support is for the introduction of free parking in Palmerston’s central business district.
 - Despite the support expressed for changes and the introduction of more free parking, there is an undercurrent of resentment for the existing requirement to pay for parking in Palmerston’s central business district.
- Council release the consultation report to the public on City of Palmerston’s website, and authorise True North to provide a copy to those who made a submission or requested to be kept informed.

Appendices

Appendix A – Engagement summary

Appendix B – Pop-up stall summaries