GEELONG CITY MARKET

QUARTER 4
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY REPORT

August - October 2026



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

The City of Greater Geelong undertook community engagement for the Geelong City Market between 20 August and 14 September 2026 to support Quarter 4 reporting. Building on community engagement from Quarters 1 and 2, this engagement explored visitor experiences at the market and suggested priorities for the market's future. Additional feedback on market experience was also captured from stallholders.

A total of 101 people responded to the community engagement for Quarter 4, 71 online and 30 in person. Feedback was strongly positive about the market's contribution to Central Geelong's vibrancy, support for local businesses and opportunities for community connection.

Five key themes emerged from the community engagement:

- Stall variety and curation
- Market size and spatial layout
- Seating and amenities
- Parking and accessibility
- Location and environment

The market's atmosphere and sense of community were identified as its key strengths. Opportunities for improvement include diversifying stallholders, enhancing pedestrian flow, increasing seating, adding waste facilities, and providing clearer parking and access information. The City has addressed community feedback throughout the year and will continue to enhance the user experience

INTRODUCTION

Launched in October 2025 with Barwon Events, the Geelong City Market advances the City's goals to activate Central Geelong, support local businesses and foster community connection. It is now a key element in the City's efforts to revitalise central Geelong and encourage community engagement. The City conducted three community engagement periods to assess the market's performance and identify improvements: Quarter 1 in January 2026, Quarter 2 in May 2026 and Quarter 4 in August to September 2026. No engagement was captured in Quarter 3, due to staff resourcing constraints.

Feedback from the engagements noted the market's positive atmosphere, quality stalls and role in increasing visitation and community connection, while also identifying opportunities to enhance stallholder diversity, seating, infrastructure, accessibility and amenity. Quarter 4 engagements validated themes from earlier consultations and provided the community another opportunity to influence the market's future. Feedback was also collected from both general and community stallholders. This report outlines the feedback, key findings and priorities for the future planning of the Geelong City Market.

HOW WE ENGAGED

WHAT DID WE DO?

Community Feedback

Quarter 4 engagement invited the community to share market experiences and suggest improvements through both online and in-person channels.

An online survey was available throughout the engagement period, collecting quantitative and qualitative feedback on satisfaction, visitation patterns, market experience, and opportunities for improvement. Demographic data collection was limited to respondent postcodes; broader demographic indicators were not captured this quarter.

City officers spoke with visitors at the market on 12 September 2026 and assisted with on-site survey completion. This approach engaged regular visitors, first-time attendees, and those who may not have participated online. The 101 responses were analysed to identify common themes and priorities.



26 DAYS

of engagement (Quarter 4)



101

Survey responses received



1

Face-to-face engagement event



14

People following the project

Source: City of Greater Geelong, Geelong City Market Have Your Say Community Survey

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK - ENGAGEMENT TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

HOW WE ENGAGED	
Have Your Say Online Survey	An online survey was available between 20 August and 14 September 2026. Community members were invited to provide feedback on their experiences of the market, satisfaction levels, visitation patterns and opportunities for improvement.
Face-to-Face Engagement	City officers conducted in-person engagement at the Geelong City Market on 12 September 2026, providing visitors with an opportunity to discuss the market and complete the survey while attending the event.

Engagement Method and Limitations

Participation in the engagements was open and voluntary. As respondents were self-selected rather than randomly sampled, the results represent their views and are not statistically representative of the broader community. The survey combined quantitative measures, such as satisfaction ratings and visitation patterns, with qualitative comments that provided context for the results.

Communications

The City promoted Quarter 4 engagement through its social media and the City communication channels, the Geelong City Market operator network and relevant stakeholder networks. Two corflute signs were displayed during market hours over two weekends to raise awareness and encourage visitors to complete the survey online.

WHO WE ENGAGED WITH

PARTICIPATION

The 101 respondents included regular visitors, first-time attendees, and residents from Greater Geelong and surrounding regions. They provided feedback on their experiences, highlighted the market's strengths, and suggested areas for improvement. Most respondents lived in Greater Geelong, with some visitors from outside the region. A separate stallholder survey was conducted through the City Have Your Say platform, receiving 13 responses in October 2026. For Quarter 4, demographic data collection was limited to postcodes, and broader demographic indicators were not captured. Collecting more detailed demographic data in future quarters will help the City better understand and support the diverse needs of the community.

WHAT WE HEARD

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Feedback was generally positive, particularly about the market's atmosphere, vibrancy and community feel. Respondents valued its contribution to local businesses, community connection and activity in Central Geelong.

The main opportunities were to diversify stallholder offerings, increase and improve circulation around stallholder sites, provide more seating and waste facilities, address parking and accessibility barriers, and review the market set-up. The consistency of these themes with Quarters 1 and 2 indicates clear and sustained community priorities.

KEY THEMES

Quarter 4 identified five themes

- Stallholder variety and curation
- Market size and spatial layout
- Seating and amenities
- Parking and accessibility
- Location and environment

Stallholder variety and curation

Respondents wanted a broader mix of vendors. Although food stalls were well regarded, many called for more local craftspeople, artists, makers, fresh produce suppliers and speciality traders. Rotating vendors and themed markets were supported and suggested would encourage further repeat visits.

COMMUNITY COMMENTS	
"More variety. It's the same stalls each week and are mostly food. I can only eat so much! If you want it to be a mainly food themed market maybe some fresh food. Otherwise, crafters would be good to see"	"More local craftsmen stalls. For example, someone who makes wood products, silver smith, wool spinner, potters and felt maker."
"More variety of local producers - doesn't have a local cheese maker (meredith goats cheese would be great)."	"Bigger and more variety -arts and crafts"
"More variety of stalls"	

Market size and spatial layout

Respondents indicated that crowding during busy periods can create bottlenecks in circulation and make the site difficult to navigate. Respondents suggested a larger footprint, wider spacing between stalls or a larger location to support growth and improve accessibility.

COMMUNITY COMMENTS	
"Move to the waterfront or allow people and stalls more space to spread out. It gets quite crowded and cramped which makes it difficult to navigate, especially when there's queues for some stalls"	"The night market was great but incredibly bottle necked and busy, it was really hard to see how this made it inaccessible for some. Could the road potentially be closed and we use the other further side of the footpath to open the market wider? The extra space would make a world of difference!"
"Make it bigger! South Melbourne or Queen Vic market style! Bring in fresher everything, make it a one stop shop for local produce and wares"	"It would be nice if it were bigger with more stalls"
"Bigger"	

Seating and amenities

Respondents requested more seating, tables and dedicated dining areas to improve comfort and encourage longer visits. They also called for additional rubbish and recycling bins across the site.

COMMUNITY COMMENTS	
"More bins are needed as only at ends of the market and difficult when balancing cups and containers from food. Please add more bins for waste and recycling"	"Places to sit and eat rather than being a line of stalls to walk through"
"Seating to sit and eat, the seating was low and not good for older members of the community"	"More bins"
"We feel it needs a lot more seating when eating!"	

Parking and accessibility

The cost and availability of parking were frequently cited as barriers to attendance. Respondents also noted difficulties for visitors with a disability, people carrying purchases and those using larger vehicles. Suggested improvements included clearer wayfinding and parking information, together with stronger accessibility measures.

COMMUNITY COMMENTS	
"Free parking and better access. I know a lot of people who won't attend due to the parking issues in town. Responsiveness to emails. Sent an enquiry a few weeks ago and still haven't heard back."	"It can be difficult to find a nearby park when the market is busy. Having convenient parking reasonably close to the market makes a difference, particularly when you are carrying products or multiple purchases back to the car."
"As a resident of the neighbour in golden plains shire and former Geelong resident going to the market would be something I would really enjoy. However, living in the country and having livestock means i also have a larger vehicle because it's necessary to tow. There is nowhere in central	"This survey doesn't take into account people who have not been to the market. I have not been to the market because there is very little parking. The access accessibility issues to driving around and parking in Geelong and the expensive parking mate going to the market

COMMUNITY COMMENTS	
Geelong that i can comfortably and safely park if i can even find a park at all."	completely invalid. Any activities in central Geelong have become outside the possibilities for most people due to the lack of and cost of parking."
"Free parking and maps recommending where to park"	

Location and environment

Views on the location were mixed. Many valued the activity the market brings to Central Geelong, while others felt the surrounding environment reduced its appeal. Suggestions included utilising the waterfront Steampacket site and improving the appearance, safety and amenity of neighbouring sites.

COMMUNITY COMMENTS	
"More diversity of products and stall holders. Also, the location is really ugly and depressing."	"Put it back on the Geelong waterfront."
"Transforming the dilapidated area on both sides of the street, mainly market square (I'm aware the council is pushing the owner of market square to develop it, but this is really run down eye sore. The proposed multi-use development with public space in the block would be amazing)"	"The location. As a previous stallholder, the bump in and out is difficult. Most outdoor markets you can have your car behind your stall. Safety is also a concern. I have not attended any other market that has to have police patrolling because it is a known area for drug addicts to hang out. It does not feel like a safe place to gather. And the undesirables are there every week."
"Better location, i.e. Waterfront or other side of Little Malop Street"	

STALLHOLDER FEEDBACK

This engagement stage also sought direct feedback from commercial businesses partnering with Barwon Events as stallholders. The Geelong City Market Stallholders Survey was conducted via the City of Greater Geelong's Have Your Say platform, receiving 13 responses in October 2026 of an approximate 80 - 100 stallholder pool. The survey focused on stallholders' experiences, the market's impact on their businesses, opportunities to enhance participation and attract a wider range of visitors. While the 13 responses offer useful insights, they should be considered indicative of participating respondents rather than representative of all stallholders.

Stallholder input is valuable because traders directly experience the market's operations and commercial outcomes, including participation costs, site allocation, customer engagement, and trading conditions. Their feedback offers practical insights that may not be evident from visitor numbers or general community feedback. It also helps identify differences among stallholders, understand barriers to participation, and inform evidence-based decisions about the market's future operations, investment, and place-making.

85%	**92%**	**85%**	**100%**	**92%**
11 respondents rated support from	12 respondents rated pre-market	11 respondents rated site setup	13 respondents rated cleanliness	12 respondents rated access to

85%	92%	85%	100%	92%
organisers as good or excellent	communication positively	and pack-down positively	as good or excellent	amenities positively

Benefits and Challenges

Many stallholders said they value the current market setup and its business benefits. They appreciated the regular weekly trading. The survey shows the market has a positive effect on local business, community ties, and central Geelong. Stallholders reported steady weekly sales, more exposure, and chances to reach new customers, including loyal Geelong shoppers who do not go to Melbourne markets. They also bought from each other, shared feedback, talked about local sourcing, and helped a local egg producer connect with a restaurant wholesaler. Examples of local sourcing included eggs from another stall and Victorian-grown fruit and vegetables used in drinks. 92% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the market supports local businesses, 92% said it helps central Geelong, and 85% felt it benefits the Geelong community overall. 69% strongly agreed that the market builds community connection, while 8% disagreed and 23% were neutral.

The responses show there are ways to get more stallholders involved, but also some challenges. Stallholders mentioned that market fees, commitments to other markets, and other business duties can be barriers. One person said that fees and bad weather can make costs too high compared to sales on slow days. Opinions on safety were mixed: 77% rated it good or excellent, 15% said average, and 8% said poor. Issues like affordability, weather risks, site allocation, and safety still need attention. One stallholder was concerned about being placed next to similar businesses, highlighting how important stall placement and a good mix of traders are for business success.

Respondents described the market as a place for socialising, family outings, local produce, and real connections between stallholders and customers. To attract more visitors, they suggested better marketing and signs at Geelong railway station, tourism bus visits, more fresh produce and farmers, affordable food, family-friendly activities, night markets, a mix of cultural music, and more work with local artists and schools. Ideas included rotating weekly school-band performances with schools from Werribee, Geelong, and the Surf Coast. They also suggested better cool storage and easier access to help with local sourcing. Overall, these findings show the market can help business growth, support local producers, build community, and boost central Geelong. The feedback also points to practical ways to make the market more accessible and appealing. Keeping in touch with stallholders will help the City check these findings, learn about different business needs, and focus on improvements that balance business success with community and place-making goals.



Source: City of Greater Geelong, Geelong City Market Have Your Say Stallholder Survey.

COMMUNITY STALL FEEDBACK

The City provides one 3x3m stall at the Market each week, free of charge and on a rotating basis, for not-for-profit or community organisations such as neighbourhood houses, support groups, and sporting clubs. This initiative aims to connect community organisations with the public, promote their services,

and support fundraising or engagement activities. Over the year, community stallholders have represented a range of groups, including theatre groups, RSL clubs, language societies, animal welfare groups, sporting clubs, toy libraries, and dance clubs.

Community stallholders were invited to share their insights, with five groups responding to the survey. All five stalls achieved their intended outcomes and indicated they would return. Collectively, stallholders reported 214 conversations, averaging 43 per week, with individual interactions ranging from 15 to 60. Interactive, informational, and performance-led stalls saw particularly strong engagement. One respondent noted that fundraising was less suited to this market audience. Operational support from the City and Barwon Events was identified as a major strength, particularly staff warmth, marquee setup, and communication.

Quarter 4 was the first time community stallholder were surveyed. While direct verbal feedback was collected throughout the year, the survey was introduced to capture experiences consistently and inform future engagement. With five respondents, these results establish an initial baseline. Future surveys will help track changes over time. The responses confirm strong satisfaction with operational support and the opportunity to connect with the community. Issues with booked equipment have been addressed through a streamlined protocol to improve the application process for community groups.

QUOTES FROM COMMUNITY STALLHOLDERS

"The warmth, kindness and generosity of the activation team was overwhelming,"

"Some community members came down to the market just to speak to us about the Strategy."

"We connected with some amazing families in the area, many of whom had been searching for social support, we were able to share information about our programs and some have already since engaged with us".

"We would definitely, host another community market. Our dancers received a lot of positive feedback from the crowd and we felt the crowd enjoyed our dance display. This made us feel like we had contributed to a great community market experience."

"We would like to thank the Geelong City Market team for the opportunity to participate. We thoroughly enjoyed the experience and are very keen to return."

"We were so appreciative that our tent had been set up for us. It was ideal to have our tent near the stage where we were performing so we could direct interested families to us."

"Our participation in the Geelong City Market was a valuable opportunity to connect with the wider community and promote the German Karneval Society, German culture, and our youth dance group, Die junge Garde. Throughout the day, we welcomed many visitors to our stall, including people who were learning about our organisation for the first time, as well as those with German heritage who were excited to see German culture represented at the market."



5

Community stall surveys received



88 DAYS

of open engagement



214

Conversations

Source: City of Greater Geelong, Geelong City Market Have Your Say Community Stall Survey.

RESPONSE TO FEEDBACK

The City has considered feedback from community members and stallholders, working with market operator to implement several improvements. To address requests for greater variety and a stronger local focus, the City has encouraged the market operator to broaden the stallholder mix and actively seek local businesses and producers. This ongoing initiative aims to attract new and local traders. Pedestrian flow has improved through revised stallholder layouts. Seating has been enhanced with bar-style stools and a more flexible arrangement, though the need for additional accessible seating remains an opportunity for future improvement. Safety remains a key focus. In response to concerns raised during engagement, the City and market operator have maintained ongoing dialogue with traders, community members, and Victoria Police. Actions include increasing both passive and active police presence, promoting incident reporting processes, and considering broader initiatives to improve perceptions of safety and comfort within the precinct.

When concerns extend beyond the market's direct scope, the City explores longer-term solutions. For example, concerns about second-hand smoke in and around the market have prompted consideration of requirements for establishing an enforceable smoke-free public space under local laws. Community members are also encouraged to report concerns through the City's existing channels for assessment by the appropriate service area. Community feedback continues to play an important role in shaping the ongoing evolution of the Geelong City Market and enhancing the experience for visitors, traders, and surrounding businesses.

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

Quarter 4 engagement confirms that the Geelong City Market is a valued part of Central Geelong, supporting vibrancy, economic activity and community connection. Across all three engagements, the community consistently identified opportunities to improve the market’s accessibility, amenity and visitor experience. The engagements across the year provide a strong evidence base for operational improvements and future decisions about the market.

The findings will inform consideration of:

- Increasing stallholder diversity, particularly local producers, makers and craft-based businesses.
- Exploring opportunities to expand the market footprint and improve pedestrian circulation.
- Improving seating, dining areas and waste management facilities.
- Continuing to consider accessibility and parking challenges experienced by visitors.
- Investigating opportunities to enhance the market environment and overall visitor experience.

Moving forward, the City will work with market operators Barwon Events and other stakeholders to assess these priorities and identify practical improvements that support the market’s long-term sustainability, appeal and contribution to Central Geelong.