

CONSULTATION REPORT

Aha! Consulting

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PROJECT | Strategic Community Plan

CLIENT | Shire of Serpentine

DATE | September 2023

VERSION | V1

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Located approximately 45 kilometres from the Perth CBD, the Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale is home to more than 37,000 people and is one of the fastest growing communities in Australia. The Shire has diverse communities, including rural settings such as Serpentine and Jarrahdale, the rapidly growing suburb of Byford, agri-businesses as well as a significant equine industry and community.

This report reviews the second stage of engagement in the Shire's Strategic Community Plan (SCP) Major Review. The Shire engaged the community on the draft Community Plan that was developed and underpinned by extensive community engagement earlier in 2023.

'Shape our Future – SJ 2033' was a community engagement campaign conducted from 1 March to the 7 April 2023. Residents, ratepayers, businesses, community and sporting groups and other stakeholders were invited to participate in a variety of engagement activities.

This second stage of engagement reviewing the draft Community Plan was open for two months from the 1st of July and closed on the 31st August. The project was advertised widely throughout the community, and those who took part in stage one were also invited to participate.

The engagement gathered input from 160 individuals who completed an online survey and 32 people who participated in the pop-ups. The sample captured the opinions from a wide range of demographics that reflect the profile of the community.

The key themes from the survey are reported below.

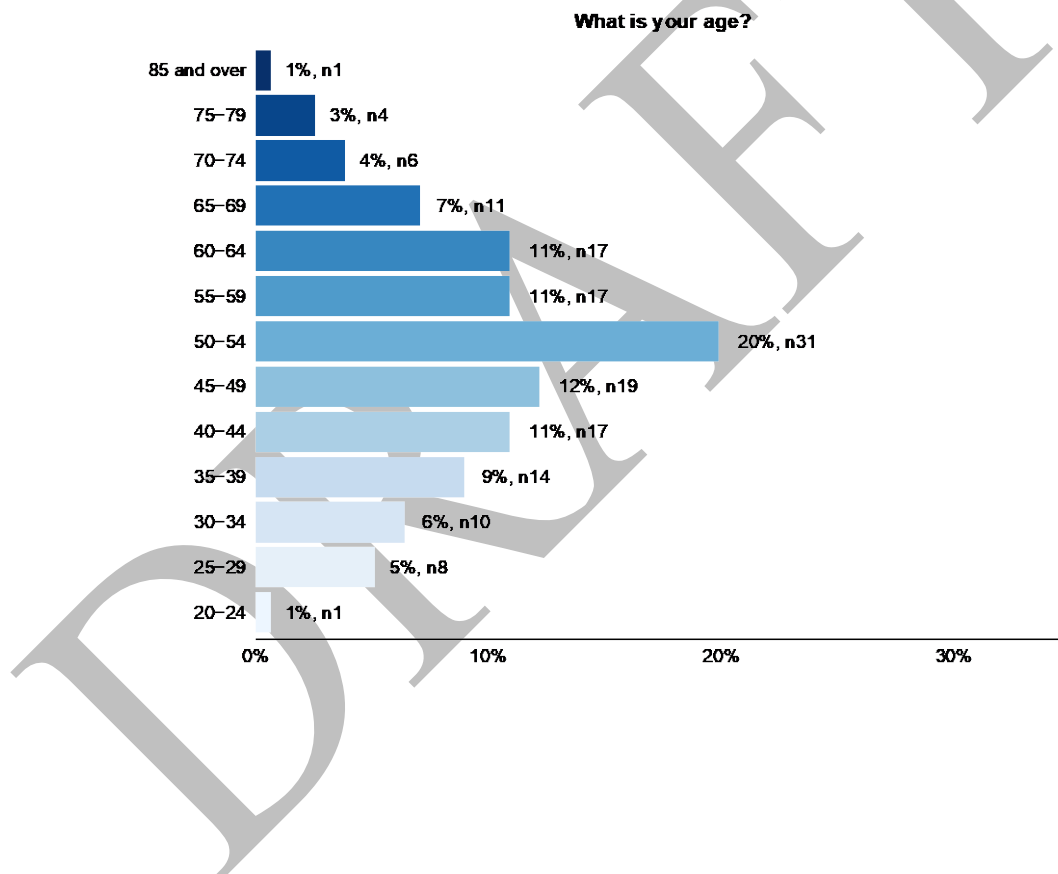
- The new vision and mission reflect what was heard in earlier engagement and reflected the future the community wants for the next 10 years, but was only somewhat supported
- The three pillars – Liveable, Thriving and Connected accurately reflect the future that the community wants for the Shire in the next 10 years.
- The open-ended feedback was consistent with the key themes gathered in the initial stage of engagement. The community took the opportunity to re-emphasise several points during this second stage:
 - o The community wants to maintain the current Shire identity that focuses on a being a rural lifestyle in a safe community.
 - o The community places a high value on environmental and recreational services.
 - o The community desires increased/improvement of facilities and infrastructure.
 - o The community wishes for greater governance and leadership underpinned by communication, transparency, accountability, and prioritising the wishes of the community.

2 ONLINE SURVEY

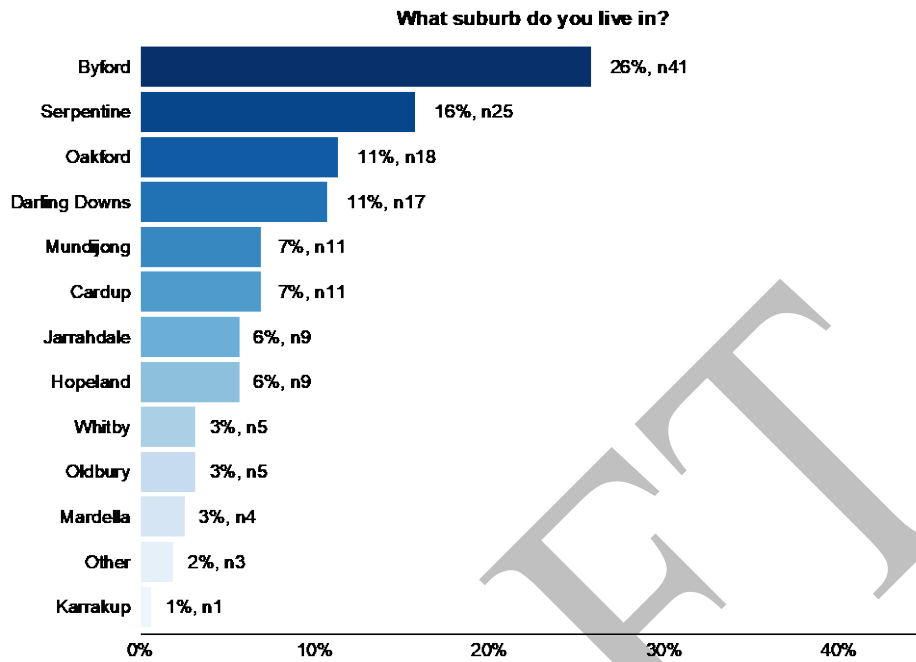
2.1 Demographics

A total of n160 people completed the survey. The group included n87 female, n55 male, n10 who preferred not to say, and n6 who responded female and male.

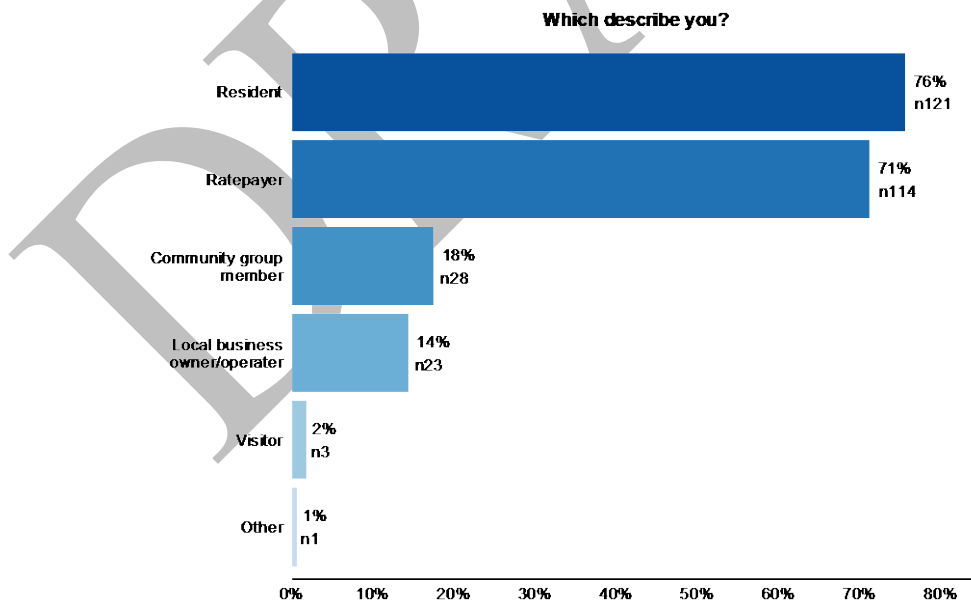
The sample included people aged between from 20 to 85+ years of age. The sample included a high representation of people from 40 to 64 years of age, with the largest group being aged 50 to 54. There was lesser representation of people aged below 35 and 70+ years.



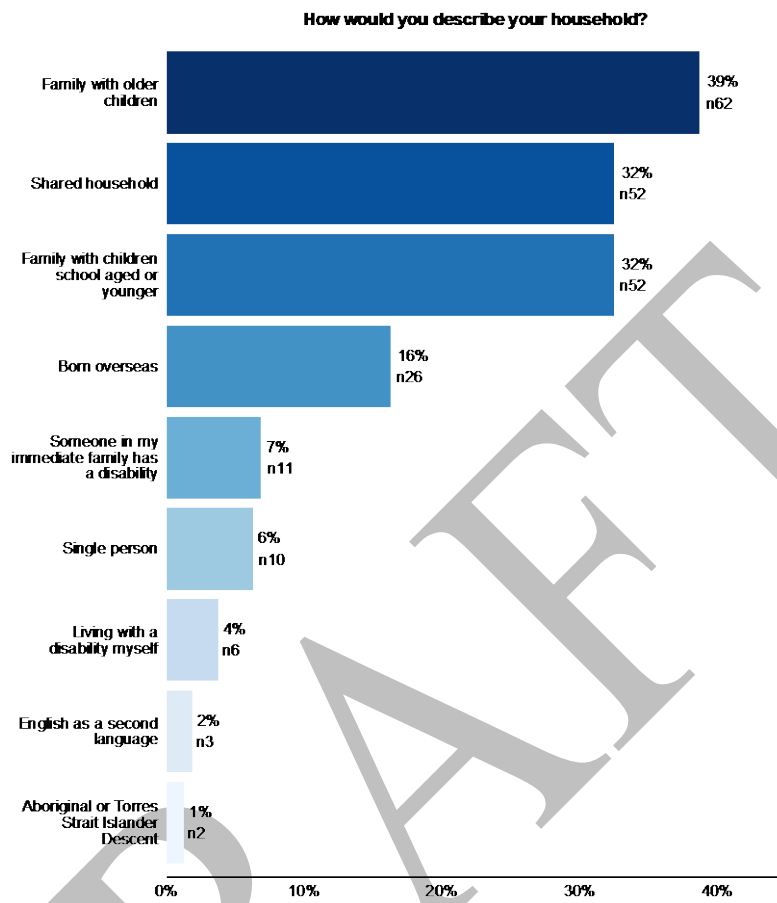
The sample largely included residents of Byford (n41, 26%), followed by Serpentine (n25, 16%), Oakford (n18, 11%), and Darling Downs (n17, 11%).



Most people were residents of the Shire (n121, 76%) and ratepayers (n114, 71%). Lesser people said that they were a community group member (n28, 18%) and a local business owner/operator (n23, 14%).



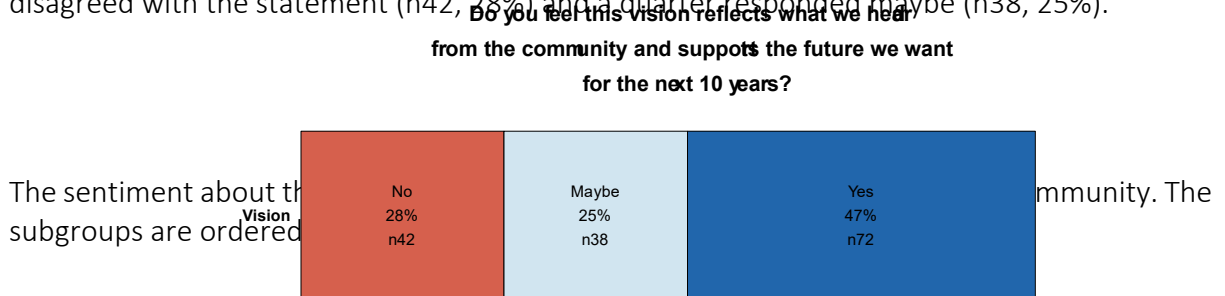
The most common household groups included family with older children (n120, 21%), followed by family with school aged or younger children (n52, 32%) and a shared household (n52, 32%).



2.2 The Vision

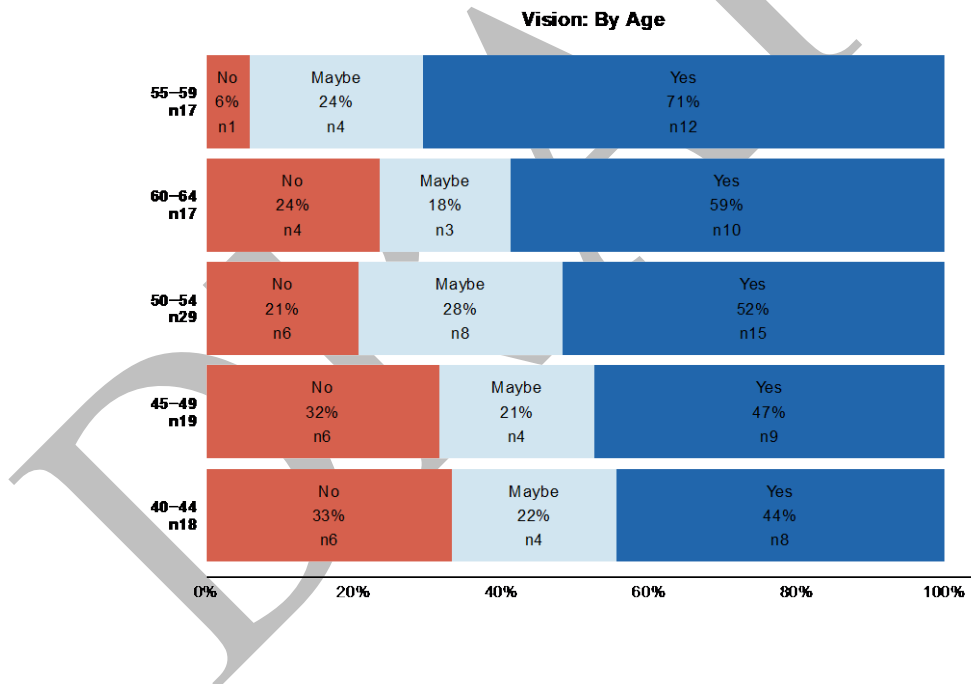
‘A welcoming community where everyone feels at home’

Half of the community (n72, 47%) agreed that the vision reflects what was heard from the community and the future the community wants for the next 10 years. A quarter of the group disagreed with the statement (n42, 28%) and a quarter responded maybe (n38, 25%).

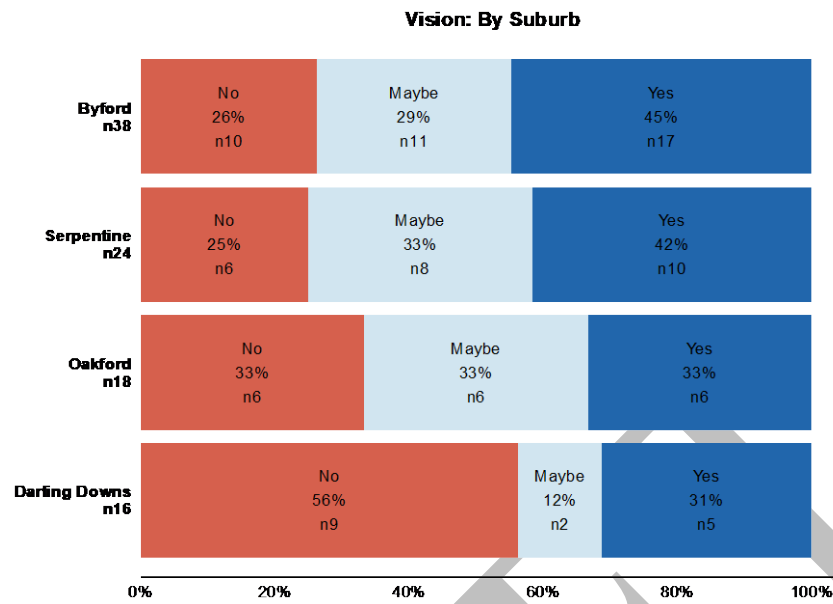


Note. To allow for valid inferences, only subgroups with n15 or more responses were calculated, and so some subgroups are not presented.

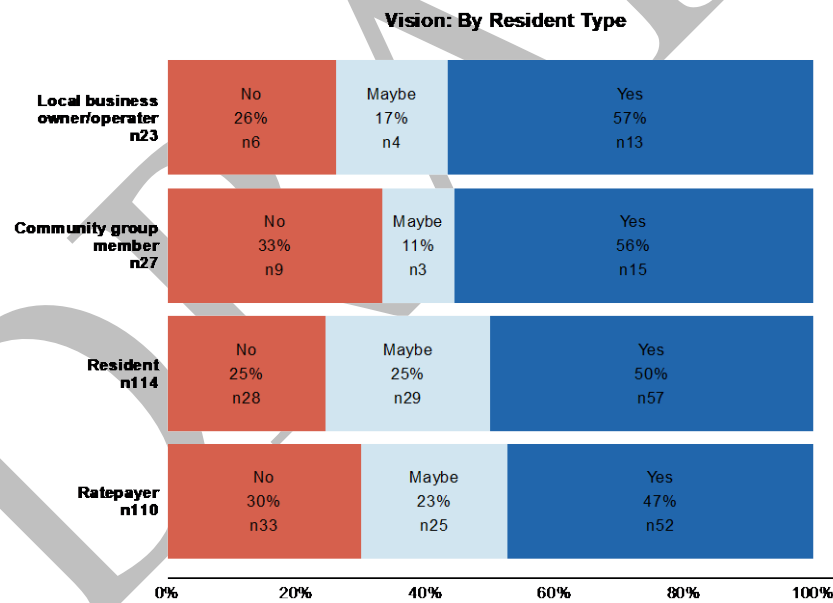
There was a more positive sentiment from people aged 55 to 64, and a lower sentiment from people in their 40s.



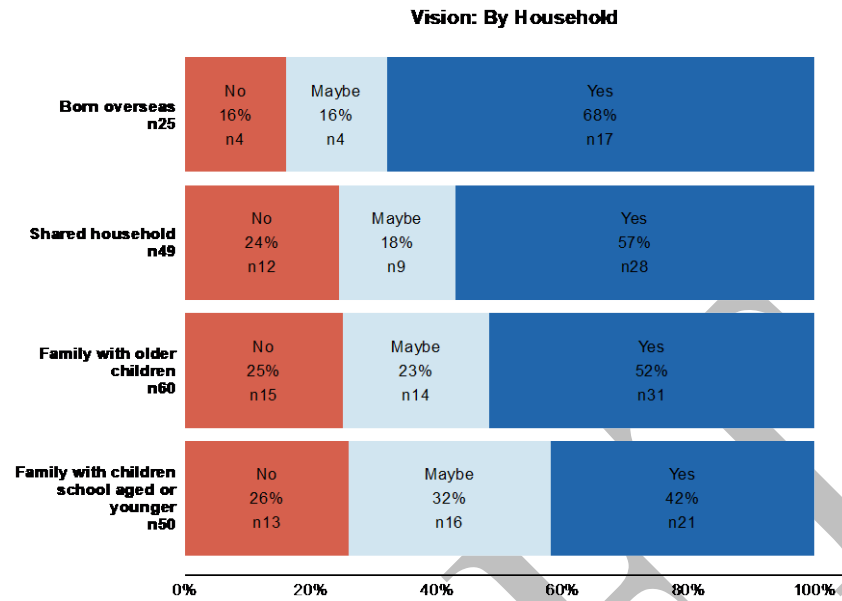
There was a lower sentiment from people residing in Oakford and Darling Downs.



There was slightly more positive sentiment from local businesses and community members compared to those that only identified as ratepayers and residents.



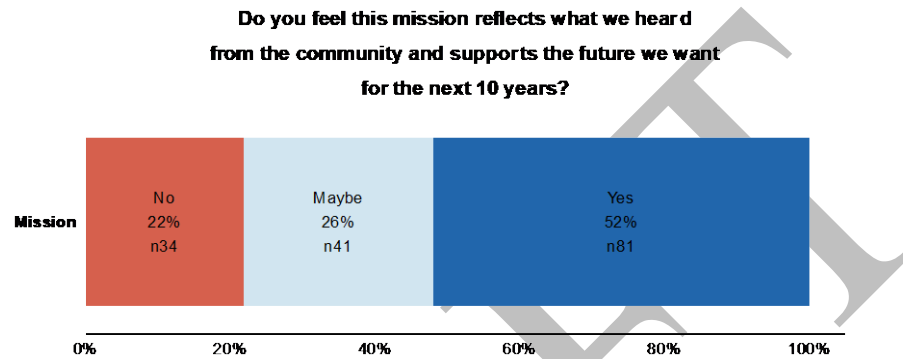
There was a noticeably more positive sentiment from people born overseas, and a lower sentiment from families with school aged children or younger.



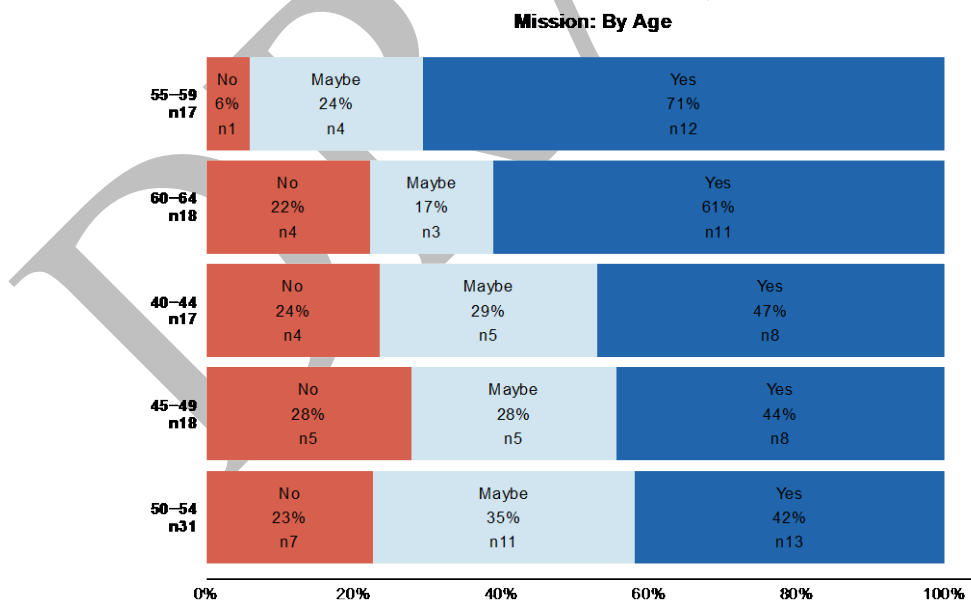
2.3 The Mission

‘A local government that strives for transparency and clear communication with our community, providing excellence in our stewardship in delivering on community priorities.’

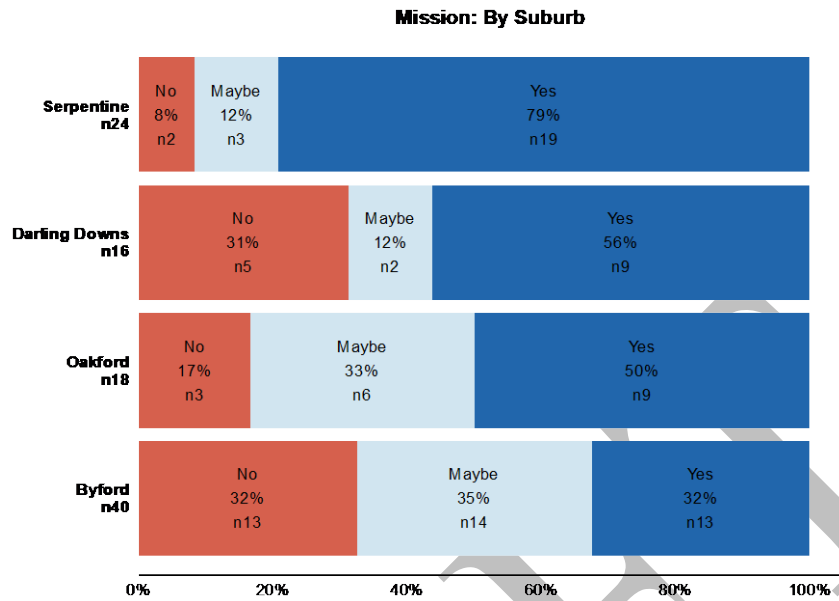
Consistent with views about the vision, half of the community (n81, 52%) agreed that the mission reflects what was heard from the community and the future the community wants for the next 10 years. A quarter of the group responded maybe (n38, 25%), and 20% (n41) of the group disagreed with the statement.



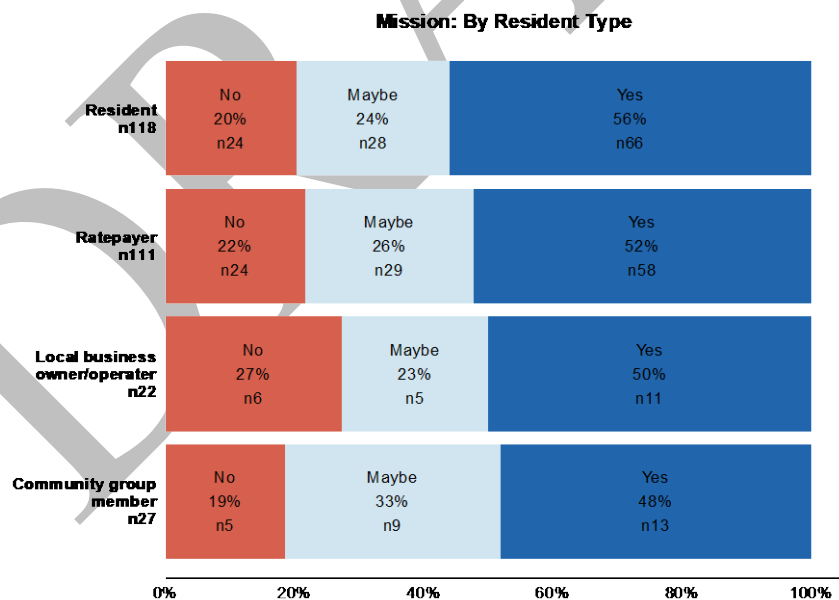
There was a wide range of sentiment across age groups. Like the Vision, people aged 55-59 had a very positive sentiment, while again there was much lower sentiment from those aged between 40 to 54.



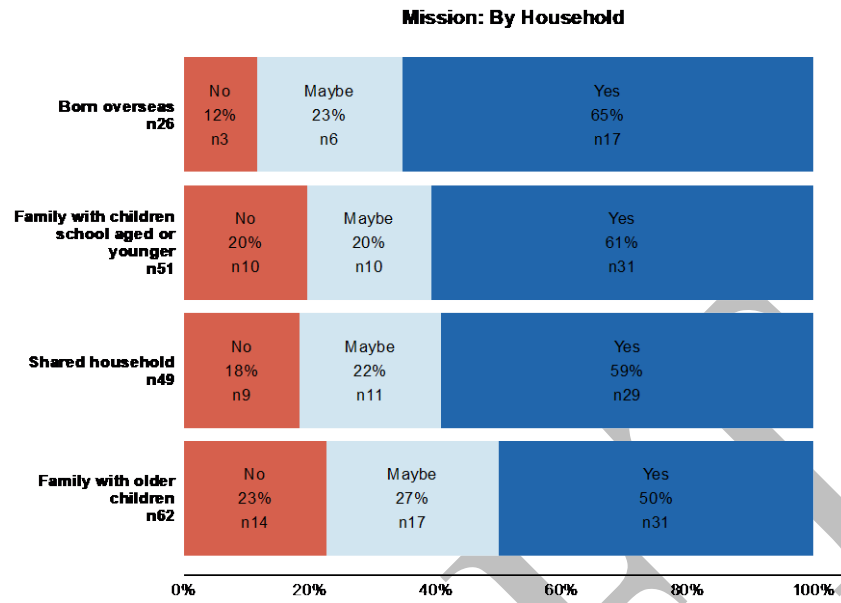
There was very positive sentiment from those living in Serpentine, and comparably lower sentiment from those living in Byford.



There was comparable sentiment across residential subgroups, with a range of 48-56% in subgroup's positive sentiment.



There was again greater positive sentiment from people born overseas, and a lower sentiment from families with older children.

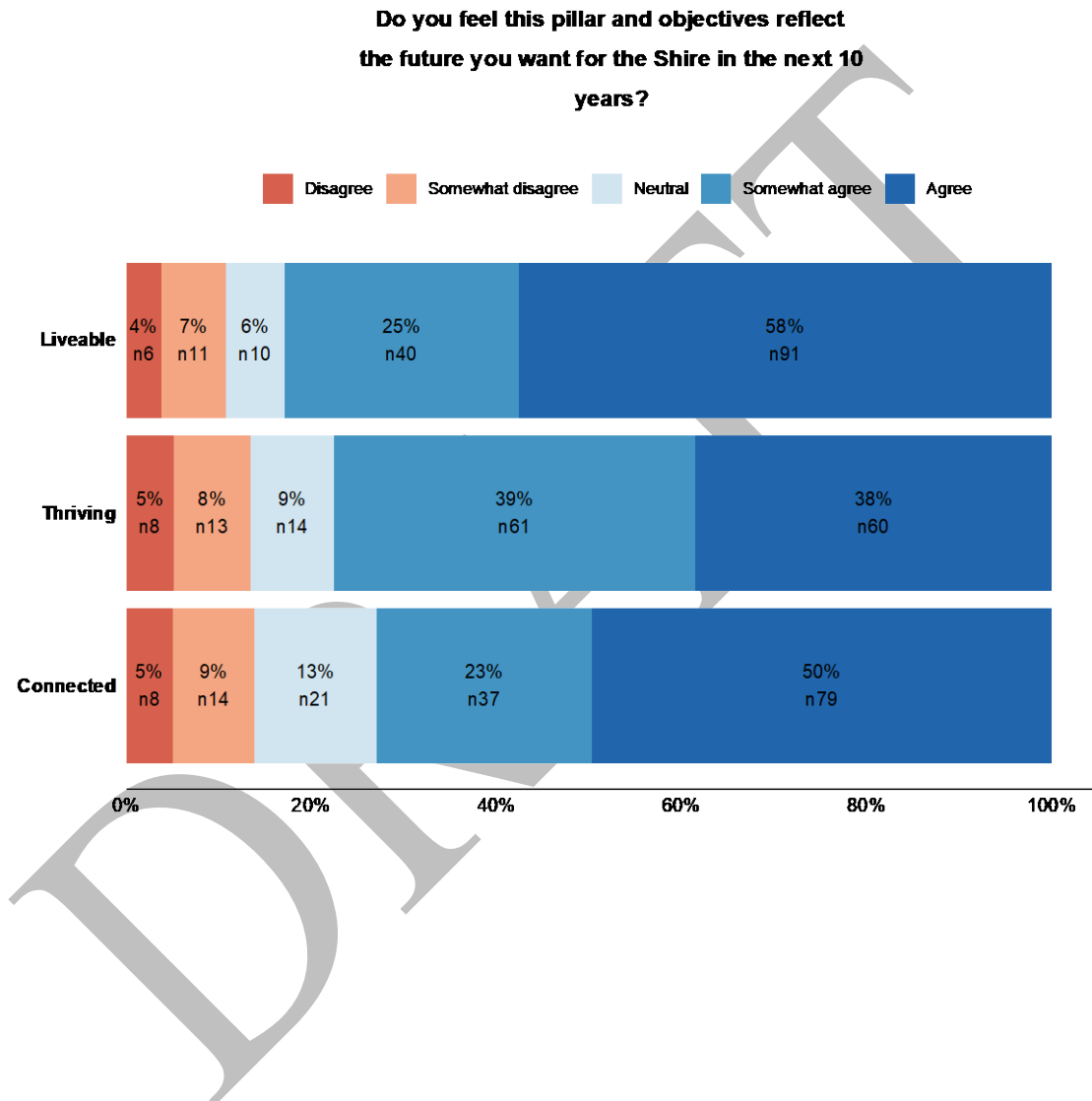


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2.4 The Pillars

The community was asked whether the objectives of each pillar reflect the future they want for the Shire in the next 10 years. The 5-point scale ranged from agree to disagree.

The 'Liveable' pillar had the highest level of agreement, with 83% of the community agreeing to some extent, followed by the 'Thriving' pillar at 77%. The 'Connected' pillar had the lowest level of agreement at 73%, and this was due to having a higher level of neutral responses.

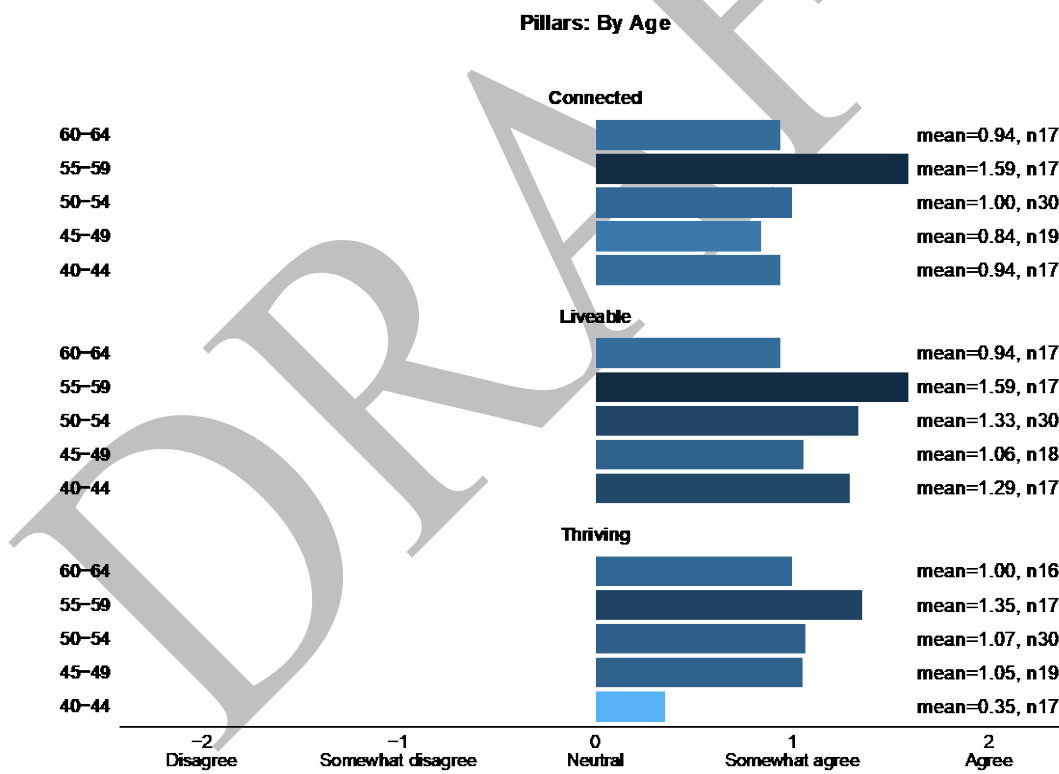


The sentiment about the three pillars was also compared across subgroups in the community. To assist with the interpretation of the results, the scores were converted to numeric values to calculate average scores for each subgroup.

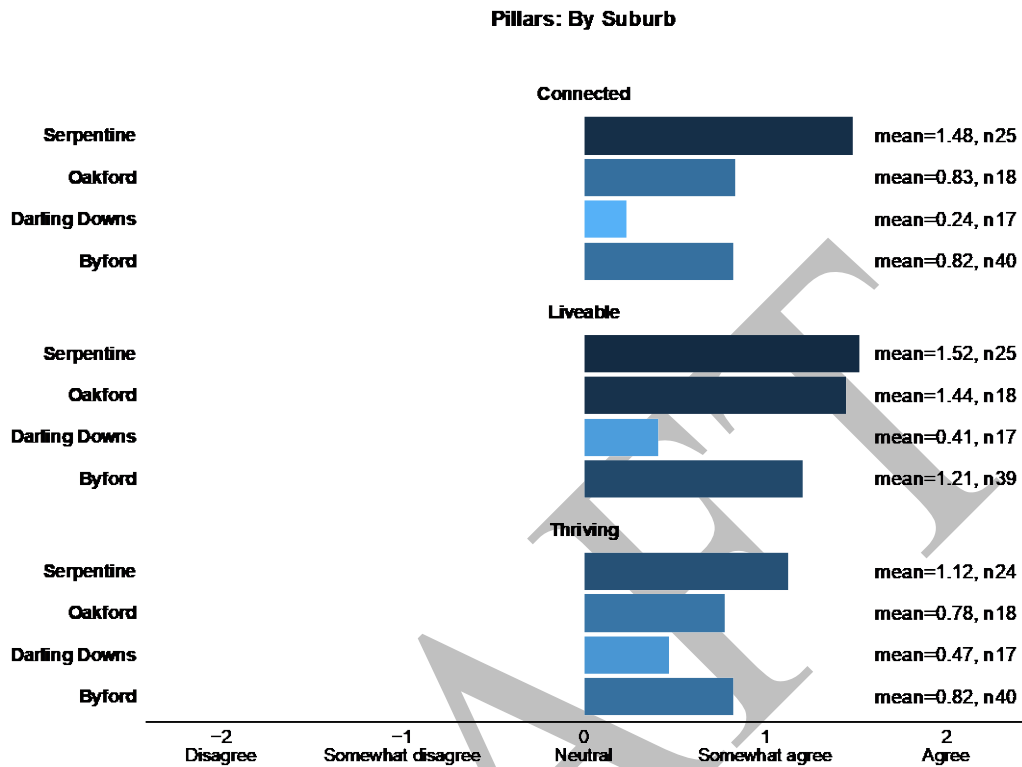
Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree
-2	-1	0	+1	+2

Note. To allow for valid inferences, only subgroups with n15 or more responses were calculated, and so some subgroups are not presented.

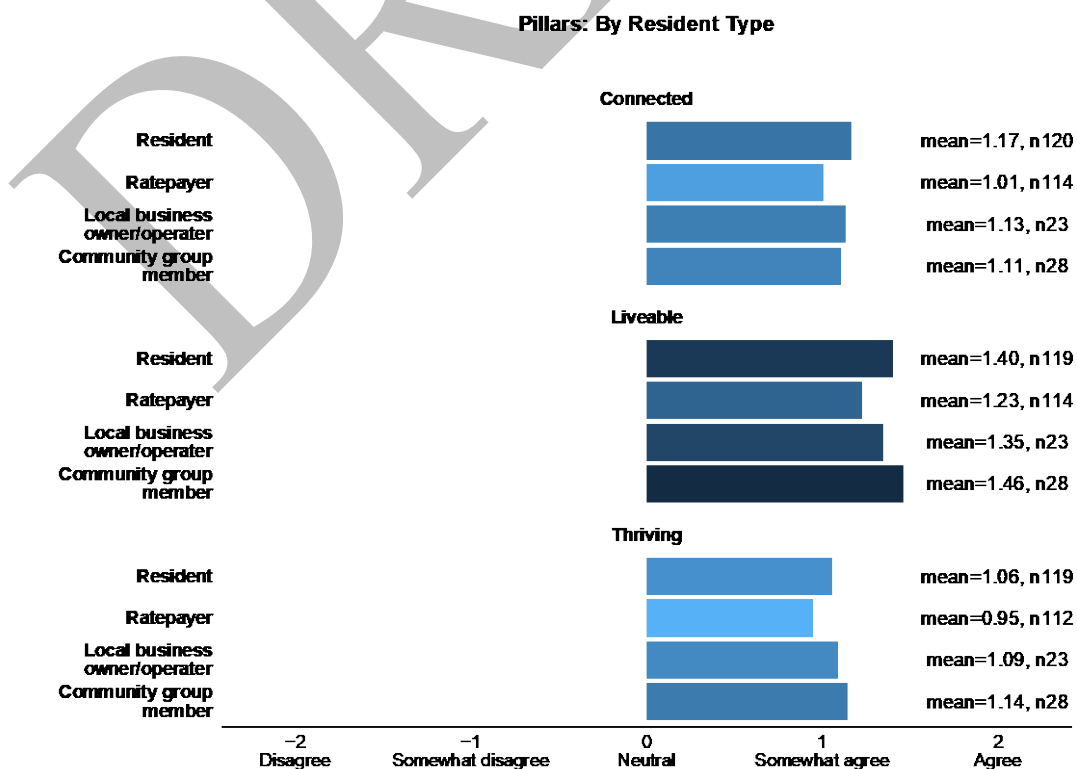
The sentiment was consistent across age groups, however, those aged between 55-59 had relatively higher levels of agreement compared to other age groups. Those aged 40-44 had a more neutral view about the thriving pillar.



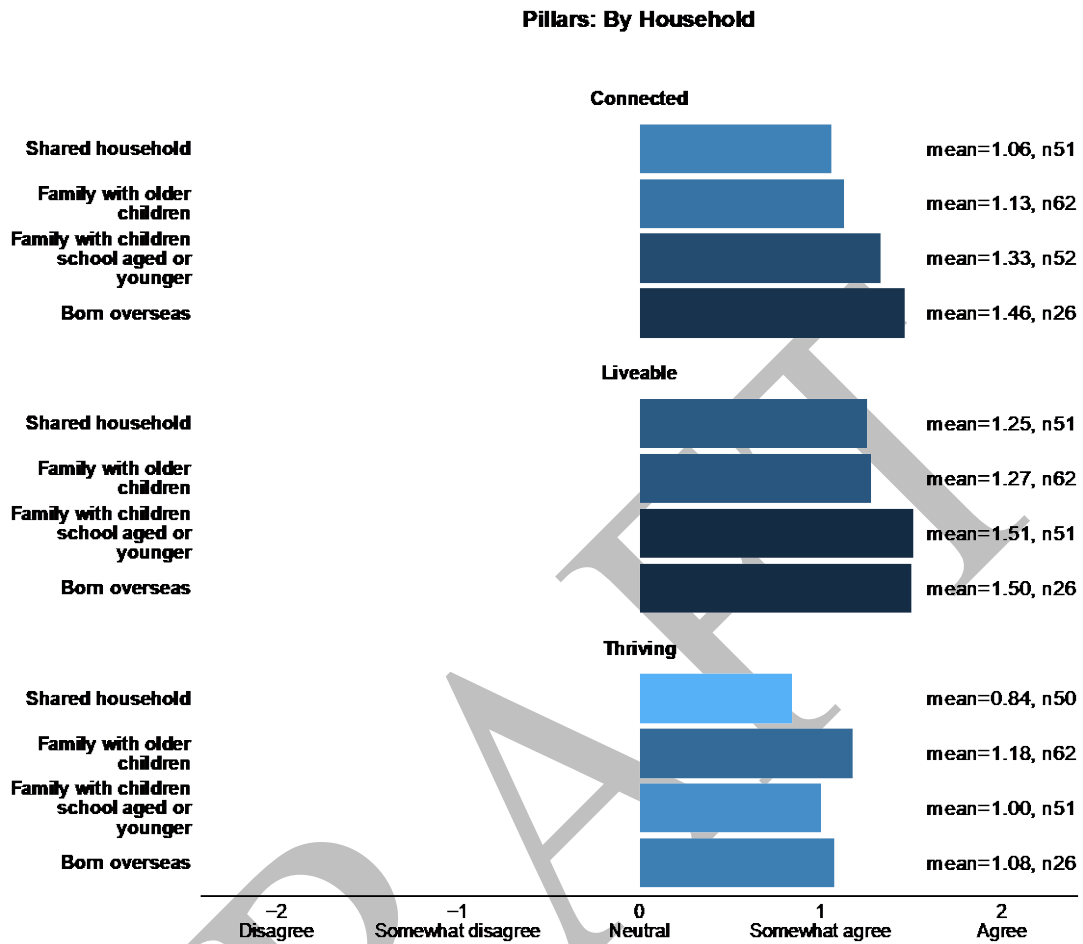
People who live in Serpentine had a more positive sentiment compared to other groups, particularly for the connected and liveable pillars. People who live in Darling Downs had a lower sentiment across the three pillars compared to the other suburbs.



Residents shared a general positive sentiment about the three pillars, with a more positive outlook on the liveable pillar.



Households shared a general positive sentiment about the three pillars, with people born overseas having a generally more positive sentiment.



2.5 Other Feedback

The community was also asked to provide other comments that they would like to share about the draft Council Plan. Overall, n94 people took the opportunity to provide a comment.

The keywords and themes from each response were extracted and are represented in the word cloud below. The frequency of words are reflected by the size of the text. There were seven key themes from the responses, and example responses are provided for each theme.



Infrastructure and Development (n29): Comments related to the need for better infrastructure and services. For example, the need for improved roads, drainage, equestrian facilities, public services, and shops.

We still want to be provided with facilities and amenities to make our shire a great place to live.

Roads are a complete mess, services are minimal for the rates provided.

Community Engagement and Committed Action (n19): Comments about the effectiveness of community engagement, including the importance of listening to the community's needs, and committing to delivering the community's desired outcomes.

I am not sure why you ask for our feedback, because when we give it to you, you ignore it.

'Please actually do what you are committing to rather than using flowery language and no action.'

Rural Lifestyle vs. Urbanisation (n19): Comments discussing the tension between maintaining a rural lifestyle and embracing urbanisation to become a modern city. Most of the comments supported the rural lifestyle.

- N15 comments advocated for maintaining a rural lifestyle
- N3 comments advocated for urbanisation

80% seemingly want Rural lifestyle, I want to see more urbanisation we can have both, urbanisation will bring in businesses, public transport, more schooling opportunities.

Love the rural aspects but need to keep in mind property values. Whitby needs more development.

Accountability and Trust in Council (n11): Comments expressing concerns about the transparency and trustworthiness of the council, including the transparency behind agenda and the need for accountability.

'Can't trust anything the council says as councillors have [their] own agenda.'

'Not convincing enough that council will actually listen to residents needs and not that of investors.'

Environmental Concerns (n11): Comments emphasising the importance of preserving the natural and rural environment, as well as keeping greenery presentable.

'Advocate to protect our remaining forests.'

'A big focus needs to be on maintaining the natural and rural environment.'

Economic and Financial Considerations (n7): Comments discussing financial aspects, including the use of resources and finances, rates, the economic impact of various initiatives, and ensuring that council rates go directly towards the community's interest.

'How is the Shire ensuring optimal use of resources and finances. An enormous amount of money has been wasted in previous years and nothing delivered.'

'Reduce rates by cutting back on the nice to haves, council staff numbers, expenditure on everything apart from the basics, rubbish, roads and parks.'

Community Safety and Crime (n5): Comments addressing issues related to community safety, including targeting illegal activities such as dirt biking, drug houses, and speeding.

'Need to include a plan for the safety of the community to be able to live and thrive here.'

'There needs to be a focus on actively reducing crime and anti-social behaviour by youth.'

Feedback was also collected from n32 people who participated in a pop-survey located at the markets. The desired improvements to the community are the following:

- Improved parks and facilities for children and families – N8
- Maintaining the greenery and keeping a rural feeling – N6
- Improved roads and parking availability – N5
- Reducing litter and increasing garbage collection frequency – N3
- Greater support for agricultural businesses – N3
- More aged care facilities – N1

Other comments expressed the approval and questions about the plan and complimented the work of the Shire.

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3 CONCLUSION

The survey data suggests that the draft plan is supported by the community.

The survey data suggests that there is strong support for the pillars presented in the draft Community Plan and moderate support for the plan's vision and mission. The open-ended feedback did not provide any comments or suggestions indicating what could be changed.

The open-ended feedback was consistent with the key themes gathered in the initial stage of engagement, and community likely used this survey as an additional opportunity to highlight their importance.

Developing the draft, the Shire focused on the themes that emerged from community engagement:

- The community wants to maintain the Shire identity
- The community places a high value on environmental and recreational services
- The community desires increased/improvement of facilities and infrastructure

This second stage of engagement on the draft Council Plan reported the same key themes, along with a spread of demographic data that was somewhat representative of the community profile. There was low participation rate from younger people in their 20's representing only 6% of the feedback.

Half of the community felt that the 'Vision' and 'Mission' reflected the initial feedback provided by the community and supports the community's desired future of Serpentine.

Those that disagreed with the vision and mission were explored further, and there wasn't a clear pattern in the themes of the comments made by these people.

- N4 mentioned the need for more infrastructure and development (e.g., roads, shopping malls, playgrounds)
- N3 mentioned the lack of community engagement and committed action from the council
- N2 mentioned preserving the rural lifestyle and environment
- N3 mentioned the lack of trust with the council
- N2 mentioned the effect use of rates

There was a higher percentage of support for the three pillars – Liveable, Thriving and Connected – and this indicates that they reflect the future that the community wants.

In considering the priorities for the future and development of the new Council Plan, the engagement data suggests that the Shire keeps the new draft plan. It meets the key themes emerging from engagement data:

- The new vision does represent the community future desires. Although 28% disagreed with the vision, there were no comments to offer suggestions or an explanation to indicate changes the Shire could make.

- The mission details governance and leadership being an underpinning value across all themes of the new Council Plan and represents community views. Although 22% disagreed with the mission, but again there were no comments to offer suggestions or an explanation to indicate changes.
- The three new themes/pillars are representative of the community and the aspirations/objectives reflect the community desires.
- Engagement data needs to be fed down to the next level of planning for the Corporate Business Plan. The community has been very specific and detailed in their feedback to the Shire, and some underlying comments suggest that the Shire doesn't do anything with the suggestions. The granular data collected could be used and actioned in the future.
- The community needs ongoing close the loop information as there is a strong feeling that the Shire asks and does not action. Improving the transparency and reputation are important to the community. As projects arise in the community and are completed, continual feedback could start to rewrite the narrative for the Shire.

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– END –

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