

Integrated Community Engagement



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Artwork created by local artist Dean Wittmann-lamb. The artwork is a graphic illustration of the geography of the Shire aiming to capture the key people and places that create the identity of Nillumbik.

Acknowledgement of traditional owners

Nillumbik Shire Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people who are the Traditional Custodians of Land known today as Nillumbik. We pay respect to Elders both past and present and extend that respect to other Indigenous Australians.

Introduction

Nillumbik Shire Council developed the Our People, Our Place, Our Future engagement program to capture the views and priorities of the Nillumbik community to inform the development of key strategic planning documents in line with legislative and regulatory requirements.

During the first stage of the engagement program, which ran from 15 February to 28 March 2021, Council asked the community to identify what is important to them in relation to their wellbeing, neighbourhood and surrounds both now and into the future. Council also asked the community what areas Council should focus on in order to support the delivery of these priorities and aspirations.

In line with Nillumbik's Community Engagement Policy, and in an effort to reach as many people as possible, a range of promotional tools and information resources were provided to the community to encourage and support meaningful participation in the program. These included posters, postcards, video presentations, emails, social media posts, media releases, newsletters, and fact sheets.

Council provided a variety of options for people to participate in the engagement program. During the engagement period, Council engaged with over 2,000 voices through survey responses, community pop-ups, workshops, written submissions, online workshops, phone calls, visits to the Participate Nillumbik website, and emails.

This report presents a summary of the key findings from the first stage of the engagement program for the Our People Our Place Our Future initiative. The report provides high-level analysis of feedback received from the community during February and March 2021. The findings will be used to inform the development of the following documents:

- Asset Plan
- Community Vision
- Council Plan
- Financial Plan
- Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan
- Municipal Planning Strategy.

Subsequent engagement phases will be delivered over the coming months, in line with individual document requirements and the Our People, Our Place, Our Future engagement program.

Project background

The *Local Government Act 2020* requires councils to develop an integrated, longer-term approach to strategic planning organised around a long-term community vision.

Strategic planning is the process of defining an organisation's direction and priorities and then deciding how to allocate resources to pursue these. Much of the strategic planning for councils is to occur within the first year of a four-year Council term.

Nillumbik Shire Council's approach to strategic planning supports the efficient and effective delivery of strategic outcomes in line with Council resources and legislative and regulatory parameters. Central to this approach is the effective, deliberate, and thorough engagement with the community.

In recognition of legislative requirements under the *Local Government Act 2020*, and guided by Nillumbik Shire Council's Community Engagement Policy, Council has undertaken engagement with its community to develop the following strategic planning documents:

Table 1: Strategic planning documents

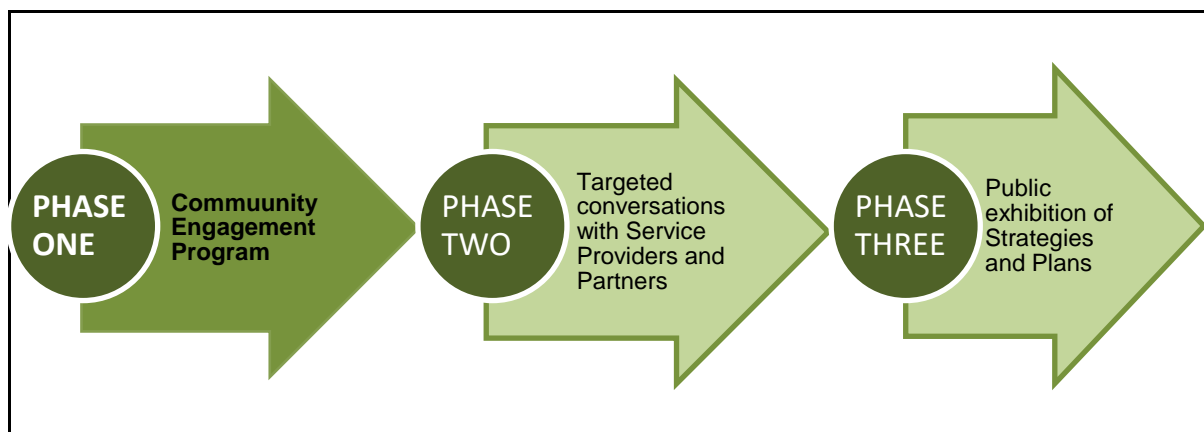
Strategic Planning Document	Adoption Required	Relevant Act
Municipal Planning Strategy (Planning Scheme) The Municipal Planning Strategy will strengthen Nillumbik's Planning Policy and as well as better integrating State Planning Policy. The new Municipal Planning Strategy will ensure consistency, effectiveness and efficiency in relation to planning activities and initiatives.	June 2021	Victorian Planning Provisions and the <i>Planning and Environment Act 1987</i>
Community Vision A community vision must have an outlook of at least ten years and should describe the municipal community's aspirations for the municipality.	October 2021	<i>Local Government Act 2020</i>
Council Plan A Council Plan contains Council's key strategic directions, informed by the Community Vision and other strategic commitments to deliver services and infrastructure. The Council Plan is the key planning document of a newly elected council.	October 2021	<i>Local Government Act 2020</i>

Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan A Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan supports Council's obligation to protect, improve and promote health and wellbeing in the Nillumbik community. The Plan will include an examination of health data for Nillumbik and will identify strategies for creating a community in which people can achieve maximum health and wellbeing.	October 2021	<i>Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008</i>
Financial Plan A Financial Plan provides a long-term view of the resources that are expected to be available to Council and the proposed use of those resources. The Financial Plan illustrates how the viability and sustainability of Council will be achieved over a ten-year period.	October 2021	<i>Local Government Act 2020</i>
Asset Plan An Asset Plan provides a long-term view of how Council intends to manage its portfolio of assets. The Plan will define Council's strategic asset management priorities and is required to address all aspects of asset management including maintenance, renewal, acquisition, expansion, and disposal or decommissioning of all classes of community assets.	October 2022	<i>Local Government Act 2020</i>

While each document has its own unique requirements, strong strategic links were identified between each that will direct and influence initiatives, activities, and projects undertaken by Council. The identification of these links provided an opportunity for Council to engage the community in an integrated and efficient manner, avoiding duplication and mitigating the risk of engagement fatigue. As such, Council created the Our People, Our Place, Our Future engagement program as a way to encourage enhanced community engagement outcomes through a targeted and streamlined approach of engagement.

The program encompasses three distinct phases of community engagement that run from mid-February 2021 through to the adoption by Council of each of the documents outlined above.

Figure 1: Our People, Our Place, Our Future engagement program



The first phase of engagement ran from 15 February to 28 March 2021. This phase represented broad-level engagement with the community through a range of engagement activities supported by a community survey. Council asked the community to identify what was important to them in relation to their wellbeing, neighbourhood and surrounds both now and into the future. In line with Nillumbik's Community Engagement Policy, and in an effort to reach as many people as possible, a range of promotional tools and information resources were provided to the community to encourage and support meaningful participation in the program.

The second phase of engagement takes place from April 2021. This phase involves targeted conversations with service providers and partners to identify operational responses to key priority areas. Further, consultation with Council officers will bring together a range of expertise to inform the development and implementation of strategy deliverables.

The third and final stage of the engagement program involves the public exhibition of the strategy and plans developed as part of the Our People, Our Place, Our Future initiative. Legislative requirements will determine the adoption date for each of these documents.

Engagement approach

Community members, local residents, businesses, service providers, workers and visitors were asked to share their thoughts on the Our People Our Place Our Future engagement from 15 February to 28 March 2021. In the planning of this initiative, Council aimed to engage 1,000 voices throughout the engagement period.

Promotional activities and tools


Throughout the engagement period, Council worked to engage the community and encourage participation in the initiative through a variety of ways. All communication materials informed the community about the intent of the program, promoted engagement opportunities and encouraged people to visit the Our People, Our Place, Our Future Participate Nillumbik website for more information about the project. Officer details and phone/text numbers were also provided, acknowledging that not all participants have access to online services or may feel more comfortable contributing information over the phone.








Over 3,400 people engaged with the project information and resources provided on the Participate Nillumbik website. The following promotional activities were used to inform the community about the project and promote their participation in the engagement approach.

Figure 2. The Our People, Our Place, Our Future posters and post cards, complete with QR codes to provide access to the online survey.



Table 2. Engagement tools

	<p>Website</p> <p>The initiative was hosted on Council’s Our People, Our Place, Our Future Participate Nillumbik webpage. The page contained information about the program including resource materials, promoted engagement activities, copies of the surveys, registration opportunities and contact information.</p> <p>During the engagement period, a total of 4,612 visits were recorded the Our People, Our Place, Our Future Participate Nillumbik website. The project was also promoted on Council’s webpage and linked to the Our People, Our Place, Our Future Participate Nillumbik website.</p>
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	<p>Posters</p> <p>Posters containing the program’s iconic artwork were displayed across the Shire in both council and non-council locations (Figure 2). The posters included a QR code that linked to the project website.</p>
	<p>Postcards</p> <p>Postcards were available and distributed at a variety of locations across the Shire including Council buildings, businesses, and rural post offices (Figure 2). Postcards were also distributed at community events. The postcards included a QR code that linked to the project webpage.</p>
	<p>Social media</p> <p>Social media posts (Facebook and Instagram) were used to promote and encourage participation in the engagement program reaching over 13,500 individuals.</p>
	<p>Newsletters</p> <p>A Nillumbik News article promoting the project was included in the Summer Edition of Nillumbik News and distributed to over 23,000 households and businesses in the Shire.</p> <p>The project was also promoted through a range of Council and non-Council newsletters that included school groups, kindergartens and playgroups as well as community and sporting groups.</p>
	<p>Fact Sheets</p> <p>A series of seven fact sheets were developed to support deliberative engagement with the initiative (Figure 3). The fact sheets were available on the project website. Fact sheets were also offered to participants at community pop-ups and community workshops and were also emailed to participants of the online sessions.</p>
	<p>Frequently Asked Questions</p> <p>A set of Frequently Asked Questions were developed to explain the intent and scope of the program, opportunities to participate, where to find more information, and how to contact Council.</p>
	<p>Drop boxes</p> <p>Survey drop boxes and hard copies of the survey were left at 15 key community locations including libraries, community centres, rural post offices, and other Council buildings.</p>



	Word of mouth Councillors, Council Officers and Community Groups were encouraged to promote the program through their networks. Project information and resources were provided to support this promotion.
	Advertisements An advertisement for the project was shown at Diamond Creek Movie Night.

Figure 3. An example of one of the seven fact sheets developed to support deliberative community engagement – the community health and wellbeing factsheet, complete with QR to provide access to the online survey.








Engagement opportunities

Council developed a range of resources to promote the program and to encourage meaningful engagement, providing a variety of options for people to participate in the program.

During the engagement period, Council engaged with over 2,000 voices through survey responses, community pop-ups, workshops, written submissions, online workshops, phone calls, visits to the website, and emails.

Throughout the engagement period, Council monitored and adapted promotional materials and engagement activities to ensure that these were accessible and responsive to the needs and wants of the community.

Table 3. Engagement activities

	A total of 2,019 voices were captured during the engagement period.
	<p>Community Survey</p> <p>Community surveys were central to this program, with Council promoting them as the main form engagement. The surveys were designed to elicit a variety of views relating to the project deliverables. With participation and accessibility in mind, three variations of surveys were developed. During the engagement period a total of 1,111 surveys were completed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General survey – 728 surveys completed • Easy read survey – 9 surveys completed • Children’s survey – 374 surveys completed. <p>Access to translating and interpreting services was also made available to participants. Nillumbik’s Chinese and Arabic communities accessed these services (two from the Arabic-speaking community and three from the Mandarin-speaking community).</p> <p>Following the survey deadline, an additional six surveys were received. While not captured in this report, the responses have been recorded and the data made available to the individual project teams.</p>
	<p>Pop-ups</p> <p>Council hosted a total of 11 community pop-ups (public consultation events) throughout Nillumbik (Figure 4). A range of engagement activities were provided at the pop-up events including interactive idea boards, children’s activities, hard-copy surveys and opportunities to discuss issues with Council officers.</p> <p>A total of 604 people were recorded as pop-up participants during the engagement period.</p>
	<p>Workshops</p> <p>A total of 283 people participated in 12 community workshop events during the engagement period.</p>
	<p>Virtual sessions</p> <p>Council developed and promoted four virtual workshop sessions. The sessions were spread over weekdays and weekends and scheduled for morning, afternoon and evenings. A total of four people registered to attend a virtual session, with two people attending.</p>






	<p>Website</p> <p>During the engagement period a total of 4,612 visits were recorded on the Our People, Our Place, Our Future website. The website also recorded 10 interactions whereby community members posted comments and suggestions to support the development of key council documents.</p>
	<p>Phone</p> <p>Council received less than 10 phone enquires relating the program. Council did not receive a request to complete a survey or provide a submission over the phone.</p>
	<p>Text</p> <p>Council provided the opportunity to community members to engage with the project via text messaging as a means to enquire about information relating to the program or to submit a survey response. At the conclusion of the engagement period no text message interactions were recorded.</p>
	<p>Social media</p> <p>Council created posts for both Facebook and Instagram which reached 13,500 individuals.</p>
	<p>Written submissions</p> <p>Throughout the engagement period Council received seven written submissions from community groups and members.</p>

Figure 4. 11 pop-ups with a range of engagement activities were hosted throughout Nillumbik during the consultation period.

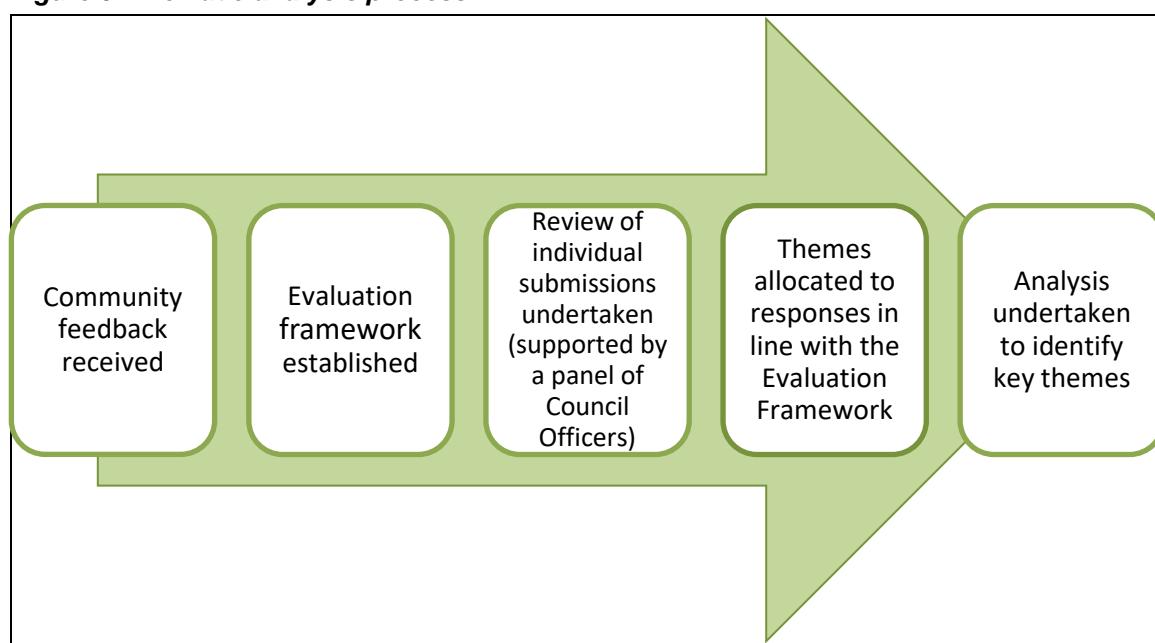


Evaluation of engagement results

Participants provided their feedback in a variety of ways including surveys, idea boards, participating in workshops, through conversations with Council officers, and for a large number of our youngest participants through illustrations.

Regardless of the form, all feedback was recorded, collated and analysed in order to identify key themes. The procedure for reviewing the content of all the submissions is shown below:

Figure 5. Thematic analysis process



A suite of key themes were informed by the ‘social determinants of health’ and ‘domains of liveability’ as a basis. Many of these themes are referenced throughout this report, however a full list (including references) is provided in the Appendix of this report.

Limitations and considerations

The Project Team acknowledges that there were some limitations and considerations of the engagement process. These included:

- Given that the program allowed multiple opportunities for engagement, it is possible that a participant’s views may have been captured more than once.
- Survey questions were not mandatory, therefore some questions received more responses than others. This includes the collection of demographic information. Council received feedback relating to the functionality and length of the online survey. Of those participants that contacted Council, officers provided support to assist them in completing the survey over the phone or by providing a hard-copy version. It is possible that these issues impacted on the number of surveys being submitted online and Council may have lost respondents as a result.

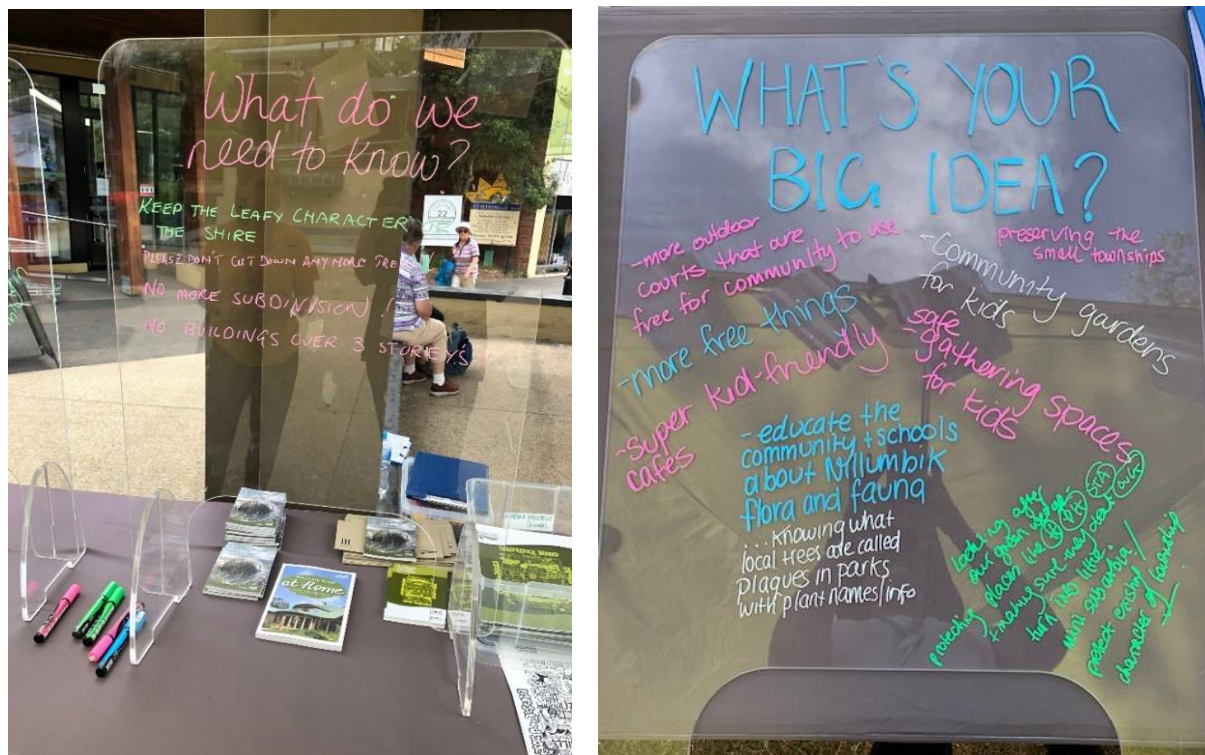
- While there were significant benefits in developing an integrated survey that would provide information to inform a range of strategic planning documents, the volume of the information collected was considerable. Council favoured 'free text' options to promote unrestricted responses from community. This greatly increased the complexity of evaluation and analytical processes.
- Scheduling of the engagement program was organised around legislative timeframes as set out in the *Local Government Act 2020* and the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*. Council allocated as much time to engagement as the legislative timeframes would allow.

Key findings

During the engagement period a total of 2,019 voices provided their feedback to the initiative through a range of activities. The following findings represents the data collected through these activities. Given the diversity of engagement activities, it was not always possible to present the key findings as a total proportion of participants. Where commonalities existed in the collection of data, this analysis was combined. In cases where this was not possible, the data was analysed separately.

Direct quotes from participants have been included into this report to illustrate sentiment to what was broadly heard and received by this community engagement.

Figure 6. Idea boards were provided at certain engagements events as a means for community members to provide feedback.



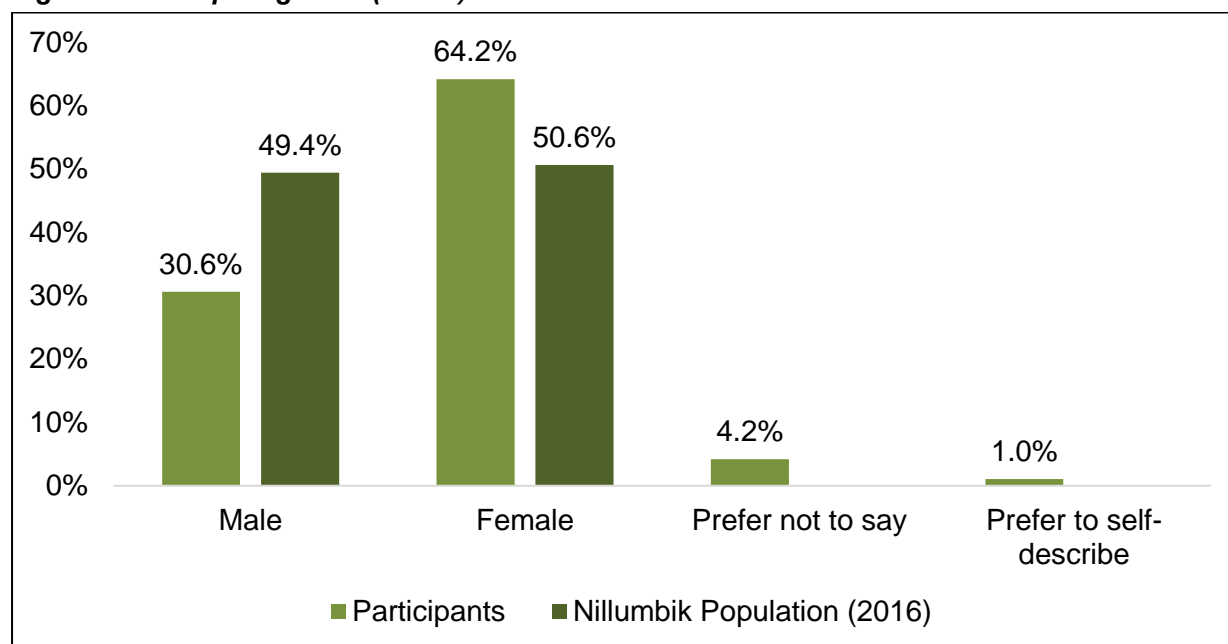
Participants

To understand who we reached through the engagement program, we asked a series of demographic questions including age, gender, and location as well as questions pertaining to access, equity, and inclusion. This information was important to record as we wanted to ensure that we had heard the views of a range of people from the Nillumbik community. The collection of this information also provides an opportunity to reach out to those groups that were underrepresented.

Age and gender

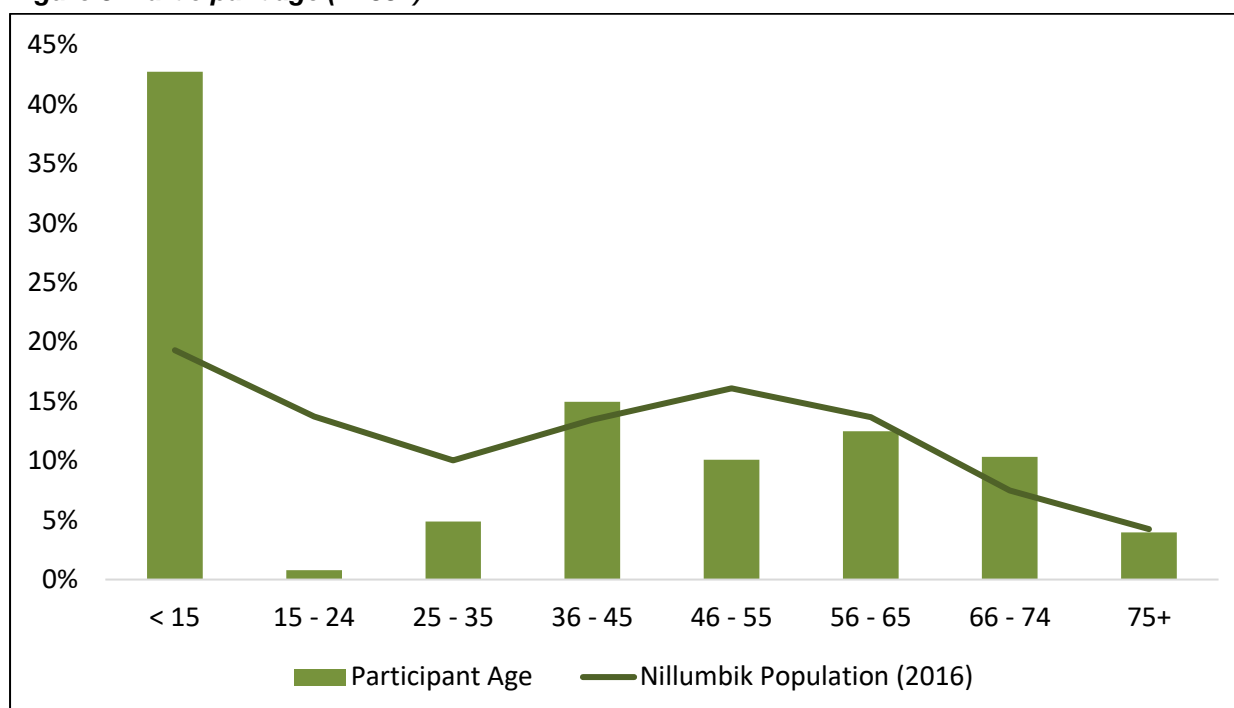
Of the respondents that provided their demographic information, 64.2% identified as female, 30.6% identified as male, 1% preferred to self-describe and 4.2% preferred not to say (Figure 7). Based on Nillumbik's population breakdown according to the 2016 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), we engaged a higher percentage of females and a lower percentage of males than the Nillumbik population.

Figure 7. Participant gender (n=575)



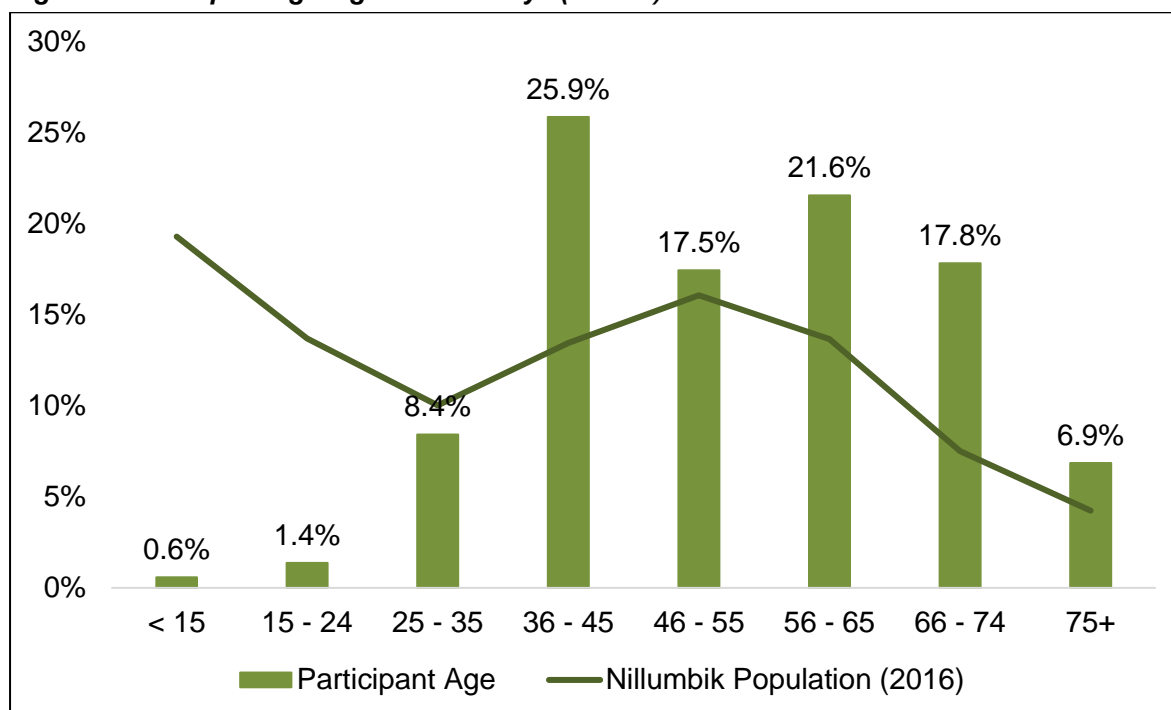
A total of 884 participants provided their age in the standard, children's, and easy read surveys (Figure 8). Of these, the highest proportion were aged <15 years (42.7%), with a median age group of 36-45, and an age range of 3–75+ years old.

Figure 8. Participant age (n=884)



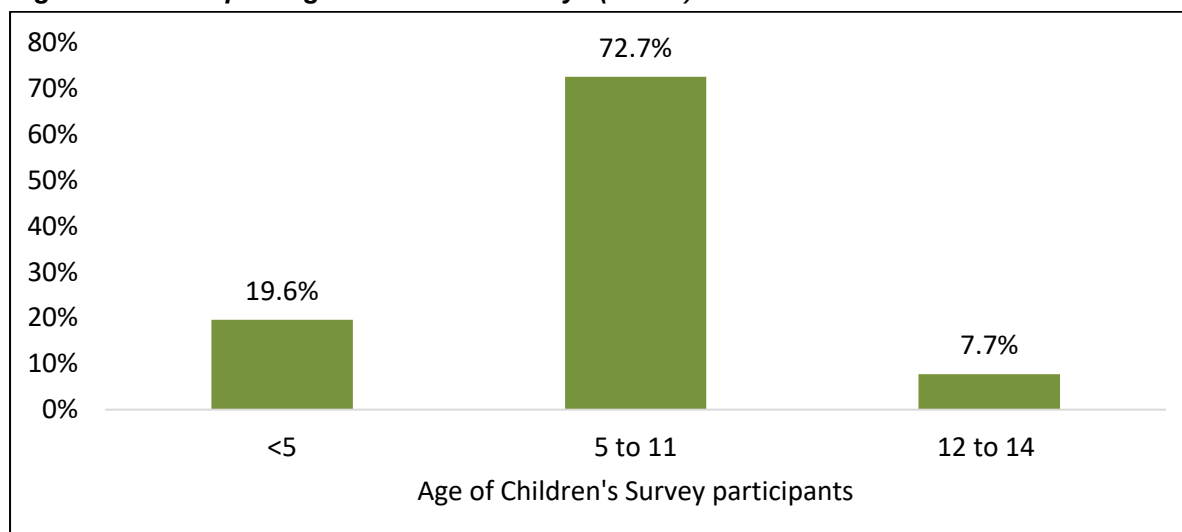
For the general surveys (Figure 9), the highest proportion were aged 36-45 (25.9%), followed by 56-65 (21.6%). The median age group was 46-55.

Figure 9. Participant age – general surveys (n= 510)



Of the 362 children who provided their age (Figure 10), the majority were aged 5 to 11 years old (72.7%), with a median age of 10 years old.

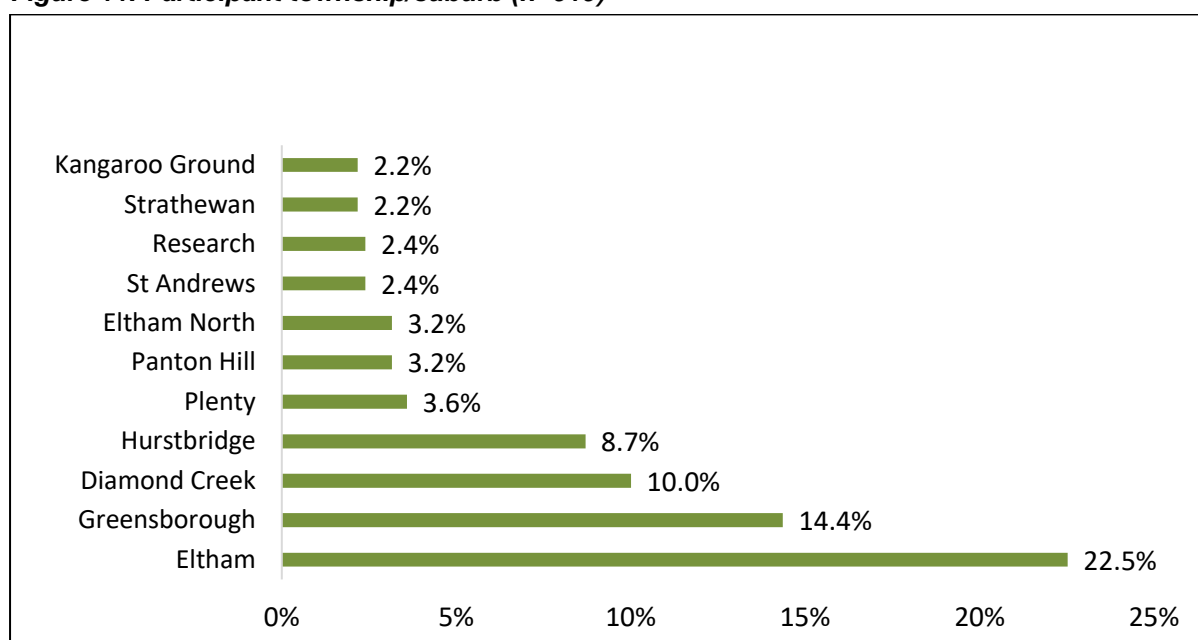
Figure 10. Participant age - children's surveys (n=362)



Location

As shown in Figure 11, 919 participants provided their township or suburb, with the highest proportion residing in Eltham (22.5%), Greensborough (14.4%), Diamond Creek (10%), and Hurstbridge (8.7%).

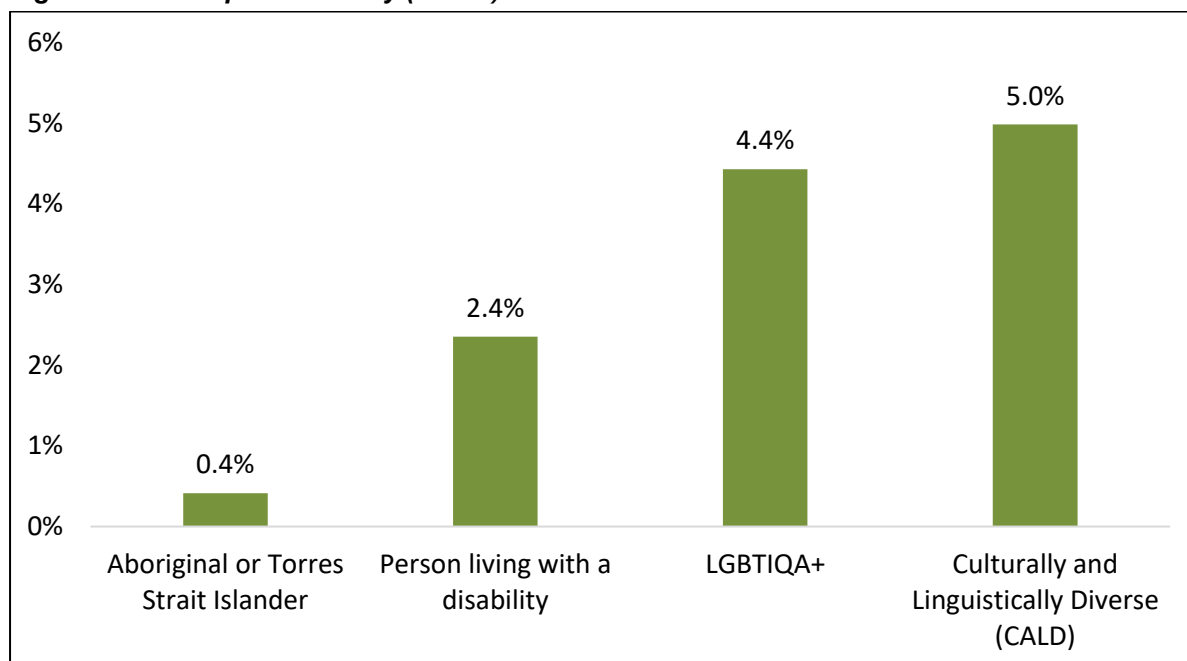
Figure 11. Participant township/suburb (n=919)



Access, equity and inclusion

Of the 722 general survey participants, 5.0% identified as Culturally or Linguistically Diverse (CALD), 4.4% identified as LGBTQIA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual +), 2.4% identified as a person with a disability, and 0.4% identified as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person (Figure 12).

Figure 12. Participant diversity (n=722)

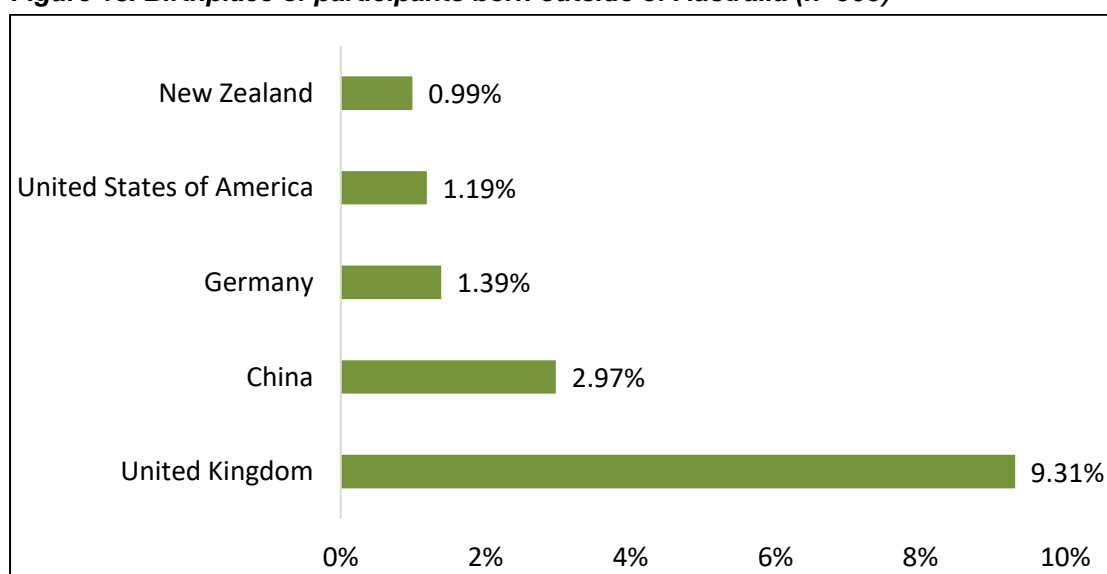


We engaged with a higher proportion of people who identify as LGBTQIA+ (4.4% of participants compared to 2% of households, as per 2016 Census).

We engaged with a representative sample of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (0.4%, the same amount as the 2016 Census).

We engaged with a higher proportion of people who were born overseas (22.4% compared to 16% from the 2016 Census).

Figure 13. Birthplace of participants born outside of Australia (n=505)



Our People

We wanted to understand what the community prioritised in relation to their wellbeing. We asked the community to identify the top three most important priorities under the themes of inclusion, healthy behaviours, employment and learning, resilient and safe and connected and engaged. We also asked participants to share their other “People” ideas. These questions were incorporated into the general and easy read surveys, and also formed the focus for conversations and activities at community pop-ups and workshops.

Figure 14. Community workshop with the Eltham Chinese Senior Citizens group, and the activity table at the Eltham North Adventure playground pop-up.



Inclusion

Social inclusion covers factors that determine how well an individual can participate in their community. Inclusion is a key determinant of health and plays a significant role in our community’s wellbeing. It is particularly important from a built environment and service perspective, to ensure that people with a disability or physical limitation can access services, people who speak a language other than English can source the information they need, people in low-income households have equal opportunity to access basic resources, and people of all genders and sexualities have equal opportunities in workplaces and social situations.

Inclusion – top 3 issues	
1. Opportunities for all	28% of participants
2. Accessible community and health services	17% of participants
3. Support for children and families	15% of participants

“A community that, although is less diverse than other LGAs, shows more awareness and respect for underrepresented groups - especially people with a disability and the LGBTQIA+ community” – Survey Respondent

“A health hub for rural communities” – Survey Respondent

“It is our big opportunity to do whatever we can to make women and women with children safe” – Survey Respondent

Healthy behaviours

There are a range of behaviours that are broadly recognised as contributing to poorer health outcomes for individuals including smoking, poor eating habits, psychological distress and family violence. However, these behaviours are modifiable.

Council has a role in understanding these behaviours and in working to improve both the built and social structures that can help to minimise these behaviours. Council also has an important role in encouraging positive health behaviours through the provision of services and facilities.

Healthy behaviours – top 3 issues	
1. Mental wellbeing	24% of participants
2. Physical wellbeing	19% of participants
3. Active lifestyles	18% of participants

“A stronger focus on mental health for post-pandemic life” – Survey Participant

“Connectedness to others makes you feel like you belong. Promoting tolerance, acceptance of difference, and a sense of belonging is important in our towns. It is also important that everyone’s physical and mental well-being is supported and provided for.” – Survey Respondent

“Free to low cost opportunities for people to socially connect, to be creative, physically active and social. Connecting people with their local community.” – Survey Respondent

Employment and learning

Employment, education and learning have significant impacts on financial capabilities, which impacts an individual’s ability to participate in society. Having an understanding of education, employment, income and local businesses allows Council to better position itself from an economic sustainability standpoint.

Employment and learning – top 3 issues	
1. Education and lifelong learning	28% of participants
2. Local business mix	23% of participants
3. Social enterprise	18% of participants

“Continue and expand upon courses through Living and Learning Nillumbik for local employment in community and personal care roles” – Survey Respondent

“Value add to our smaller communities by encouraging development of small boutique businesses” – Survey Respondent

“Improve work from home opportunities” – Survey Respondent

Resilient and safe

Resilient communities foster social cohesion by increasing a sense of belonging and engagement which in turn strengthens self-reliance and empowerment to address a range of issues including health and environmental emergencies.

Resilient and safe – top 3 issues	
1. Climate health	26% of participants
2. Community safety	24% of participants
3. Fire and emergency preparedness	23% of participants

“Reduce risk of bushfires. Educate the community about climate change causes and actions for a safe climate future including how they can access financial assistance to do this.” – Survey Respondent

“I believe it is essential that people in the shire are aware of the dangers of bushfires and the need for measures that ensure our safety” – Survey Respondent

“Good public lighting in the shopping centre, carparks and around the libraries. Footpath safety maintenance. More signage to slow cyclists down on the shared recreational trails.” – Survey Respondent

Connected and engaged

The health and connectedness of communities can be measured by the presence of social capital. Social capital is the benefit obtained by having links that bind and connect people within and between groups. It can provide sources of resilience against poor health, and can help people find work or cope with hardship.

Connected and engaged – top 3 issues	
1. Informed and consulted communities	18% of participants
2. Social connections	14% of participants
3. Local recreation and leisure options	11% of participants

“Authentic, transparent community outreach and engagement” – Survey Respondent

“Promoting social connections to prevent social isolation and improved mental health for our community” – Survey Respondent

“Engage with sporting and recreation clubs to help people connect with these groups” – Survey Respondent

Our Place

We wanted to understand what the community prioritised in relation to their neighbourhoods, townships and surroundings. We asked the community to identify the top three most important priorities under the themes of healthy environments, housing, open space and sustainability and accessible transport. We also asked participants to share their other “Place” ideas. These questions were incorporated into the general and easy read surveys and also formed the focus for conversations and activities at community pop-ups and workshops.

Healthy environments

Healthy environments include both the built and social structures within the community that promote health, wellbeing and resilience. These structures include community infrastructure, activities, and services that are available to residents and visitors to utilise. Community safety is also an important aspect of a healthy environment which has implications for Council in relation to public space management and vegetation, drainage and road maintenance.

Healthy environments – top 3 issues	
1. Public amenities	19% of participants
2. Parks and playgrounds	17% of participants
3. Clean and inviting spaces	15% of participants

“Access to amenities by bike and walking should be a main priority for our residents – a great way to reduce our carbon footprint” – Survey Respondent

“Weatherproof parks and playgrounds. Playgrounds for all ages and abilities, including older people” – Community Pop-up Participant

“Safe clean spaces for people to exercise, play, catch up without fear of violence, infection, or littering” – Survey Respondent

Housing

Safe, affordable and secure housing is associated with better health, which in turn impacts on people’s participation in work, education and the community. Understanding how people live can help identify opportunities to support people who are in insecure housing and is also key to developing housing and residential strategies that are responsive to the needs of our community. Knowledge of the particulars of housing within our municipality can also help to identify opportunities for improving sustainability outcomes at a household level.

Housing – top 3 issues	
1. Protection of local history and heritage	19% of participants
2. Eco-friendly design	16% of participants
3. Ageing in place	15% of participants

“Maximising the heritage values of places such as the old Killeavey property, Laughing Waters, the mud brick homes, artists colonies etc. Some are appropriately publicised, others are not. An interpretive sign or two in significant sites can make a walk so much more.” – Survey Respondent

“Offer rate reductions for the first few years for new building plans where people are taking ecofriendly built designs including gardens” – Survey Respondent

“Increase housing diversity in the Shire” – Community Workshop Participant

“In a society that has so many aged people (over 60) take more time to understand their needs and totally incorporate this in your planning and development processes” – Survey Respondent

Open space and sustainability

Public open spaces play a critical role in local communities as they provide accessible spaces and places that are unencumbered by economic or social constraints. Understanding how people use public open space assists in maintenance and infrastructure planning. Further, open spaces make an important contribution to health, wellbeing, biodiversity and environmental conservation.

Open space and sustainability – top 3 issues	
1. Preservation of the Green Wedge	21% of participants
2. Protecting agricultural use	13% of participants
3. Action on climate change	11% of participants

“Climate change affects us all. Make it easier for us to reduce energy and recycle re-use, and reduce waste” – Survey Respondent

“We need small-scale sustainable agriculture set up to provide employment and healthy local food. To make this work we need good infrastructure for water, energy, mulch, drainage, and runoff controls. We need to link this in with education, so we are always building and enhancing knowledge about how to make small scale farms work well.” – Survey Respondent

“Trees, trees and more trees” – Community Pop-up Participant

Accessible transport

Understanding how people move throughout the Shire can assist Council to plan for future road, bike-path and footpath infrastructure. It can also assist in advocacy to State and local governments to increase opportunities for increased public transport options and improved road infrastructure. Planning that results in less traffic congestion, shorter commute times and greater public transport options can have significant benefits on people’s health and wellbeing.

Accessible transport – top 3 issues	
1. Public transport options	30% of participants
2. Community transport	23% of participants
3. Connected walking paths/trails	16% of participants

“Better public transport and connections” – Survey Respondents

“We have to make this area less reliant on individual cars, have more pedestrian-friendly areas and paths and have robust public transport” – Survey Respondent

“More bike parking in Eltham” – Community Pop-up Participant

Our People and Our Place summary findings

The following provides an overall summary of what we heard across the themes of Our People and Our Place.

More broadly, our residents consider community connectedness and social inclusion as very important as they are viewed as a way to build resilience, foster a sense of belonging, improve mental health and is key in preventing and reducing social isolation.

Participation in life-long education, volunteering, social and sporting groups are key contributors to community connectedness.

The role of leisure and recreation facilities and activities were often cited by participants, as were community festivals and events.

The need for easier access to public and community transport is seen as essential for enabling connections, especially for younger people and older residents.

Participants value the proximity to open space and the natural environment, notably for the physical and mental health benefits these provide through encouraging a range of readily accessible outdoor activities including walking, cycling, sports and leisure activities.

Community pop-up and workshop participants placed a high value on the natural bushland environment and Green Wedge that Nillumbik contains. Specific comments addressed the need to protect and enhance the environment with a particular focus on loss of biodiversity and mitigating the effects of climate change.

Survey participants placed high importance was placed on access to local services and amenities, including health, retail, dining and education options.

References to Nillumbik’s culture and neighbourhood character were frequent. Comments were often focused on the protection of local history and heritage, both Indigenous and non-indigenous.

All themes referenced throughout the engagement and evaluation were dependent on the Council taking a lead role in keeping the community informed and connected. Community engagement was viewed as fundamental to all Council business regardless of its theme.

Our Future

What is valued and what needs to change?

Looking ahead to 2040, we wanted to understand what the community valued about Nillumbik and also what they felt needed to change to protect the things that were valued. These questions were incorporated into the general and easy read surveys, and also formed the focus for conversations and activities at community pop-ups and workshops.

In reviewing the feedback, it was noted that many things that were valued in Nillumbik were also listed as things that needed to change. In evaluating the feedback it became clear that the 'changes' referred to actions that respondents felt needed to occur in order to protect and/or promote what was valued. For example, respondents reported having important connections with their local townships and valued the neighbourhood character, generally appreciating the limits and controls placed on residential development, particularly in the Green Wedge areas of the Shire. Overdevelopment was cited as a concern, however appropriate housing development in line with neighbourhood character and green wedge values were identified as ways that could address areas of concern including local business development, local employment opportunities and affordable housing.

The following tables and quotes represent the 'top three' highest rated 'things you would like to see valued' along with the 'top three' rated areas that 'need to change in Nillumbik'. Quotes by respondents have been included to provide context for these results.

Things you would like to see valued in Nillumbik	
1. Preservation of the Green Wedge	41% of participants
2. Protection of environment and biodiversity	12% of participants
3. Action on climate change	7% of participants

Participants also identified a sense of neighbourhood character and identity as being something that they valued, along with access to passive recreation spaces such as parks and reserves. Participants also referenced 'informed and consulted communities' as being something that was of significance.

What needs to change in Nillumbik	
1. Responsible urban housing development	27% of participants
2. Community leadership	15% of participants
3. Traffic management	15% of participants

Issues relating to reducing waste and recycling, and taking more decisive action on climate change also featured in participants responses to 'what needs to change in Nillumbik'. Issues relating to transport and amenity throughout the Shire also featured.

"The very special Green Wedge environment we are privileged to live in and which can never be replaced."

"Protection of the Green Wedge"

"Leadership that puts a greener future at the core."

"Climate change, biodiversity loss, environmental reinvigoration."

"Leadership to tackle climate change"

"Protection of, and an increase in biodiversity."

"The character of our townships, including community volunteerism supporting each other, and protection of that character."

"Preservation of local character – don't turn it into just another suburb."

"More medium density housing close to shops and train stations and a stop to housing development of bush land."

"Sense of community, collaborative relationships, sustainable lifestyles."

"Social connections, environment and local character."

"Climate action, green space and responsible development."

"Respect for community input."

"Genuine and transparent community engagement and consultation."

"Roads. Bike paths. Making locals safe accessing facilities."

"Safer roads."

"Roads and dedicated bike paths. Improving these facilities to handle increasing traffic in the congested, once rural communities."

Participant ideas

During the engagement process we encouraged participants to 'think big', asking them to share their big idea for Nillumbik.

These 'big ideas' were collected through survey responses, captured on interactive boards at community pop-up events and discussed in community forums, school classrooms, and online sessions. During the engagement period we collected over 550 'big ideas' which included the following:

"We should go out on Mondays and clean up the parks"

"Put a stronger focus on and campaign for community gardens, increasing resilience and educating children on where their food comes from and how it's made"

"A more diverse, inclusive and better informed community"

"A community hospital and health hub"

"Declare a climate emergency and take fundamental action to address the underlying structural and strategic basis for climate change, and implement actions and response that will have a direct effect"

"Splash park, youth hub, gallery and performance space"

"A mix of residential, agriculture, education and tourism, with careful controls on development to maintain the green wedge"

"A community power scheme where locals access local power"

"Nillumbik becomes the perfect example of a sustainable, carbon neutral, climate friendly, largely self-sufficient (food, energy, water) community that leads the way in Australia of an example of what is possible"

"Maintain the green wedge and improve walking and cycling infrastructure"

"Being a positive and inclusive community"

"A playground for older people"

"I would like Nillumbik to be wheelchair friendly. When my daughter became disabled 10 years ago I had never realised how difficult it was for a disabled person to negotiate around the shire on their own."

"To see Nillumbik as a balanced, progressive and bushfire-safe Shire that attracts businesses and people to work and live"

"A greyhound slipping track"

"Preserve the existing environment especially the Green Wedge for future generations"

"More social housing"

"A regional destination playspace featuring a ninja warrior course (park warrior) that will draw crowds from near and far and boost local economy in the process"

"A Shire that is completely off the grid"

"Regenerative farming alongside environmental zones as a foundation that is fully integrated into township, lifestyle, business and recreation activities"

"A better way to tackle traffic congestion"

"Making Nillumbik more accessible - firstly by foot, by bicycle (safely) and for children, older people and people with disabilities. Nillumbik is beautiful, unique and full of potential, however it is not fully functional due to lack of access and infrastructure"

"I want Nillumbik to remain a green and inspirational community space"

"A Shire which celebrates and sustains its leafy, treed and green environment to support a community that is healthy and happy"

As detailed above, responses spanned a variety of areas identified by the community as a key or priority. The responses ranged from aspirations for the Shire to practical improvements and innovative projects as well as the preservation of things the community values now.

Children's surveys

Thinking about Nillumbik's future, it was of paramount importance that we heard from our future leaders. In addition to hearing from our youngest residents at community pop-ups and events, we designed a children's survey to capture their thoughts. We received over 340 responses. These responses were evaluated in the same way as the general survey, where responses were assigned a theme. Below represents the top three priority areas for participants.

Quotes and illustrations from participants have also been included into this report to provide context and sentiment to what was broadly received.

What do you love about where you live?	
Parks and playgrounds	23% of participants
Social connections	12% of participants
Accessible places and spaces	12% of participants

"There is a park across the road from my house. I play at the park on the slide and swings." Isabelle, age 4

"There's fun parks nearby and there's fun bike trails to go on" Apollo Parkways Primary School, age 9

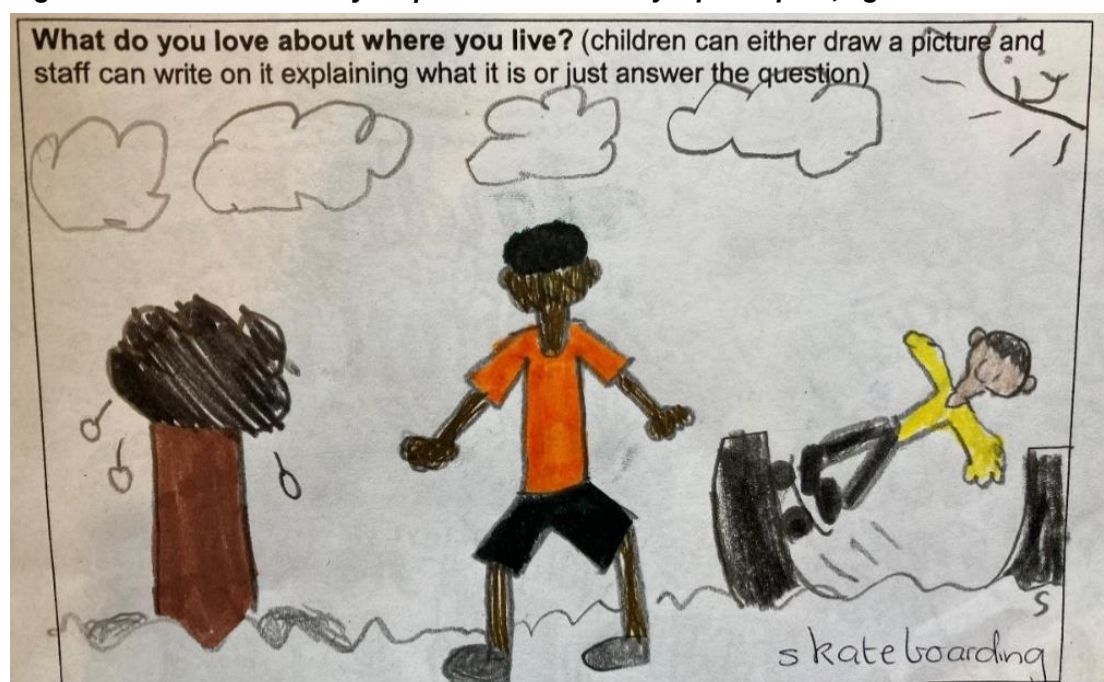
"I love that I live close to my friends" Jack, age 4

"I am very close to school and my friends" Apollo Parkways Primary School, age 12

"It's close to everything, there's a lot of animals, my sport is just down the road, there's a CFA and a police academy nearby, my friends live close by, it's a safe place" Apollo Parkways Primary School, age 10

"I love that where I live is so close to the bush and that it is so close to the shops. I love where I live is that I can walk home." Apollo Parkways Primary School, age 9

Figure 15. Children's survey response submitted by a participant, aged 7½



Why should adults listen to kids?	
Informed and consulted communities	47% of participants
Support for children and families	22% of participants
Community leadership	13% of participants

"Kids should be allowed to have a say" Maddie, age 11

"Kids have many ideas that make this community better" Apollo Parkways Primary School, age 10

"Because we want to be safe. I feel safe at Playhouse. I feel happy." Hazel, age 3 ½

"Because they help me do things" Violet, age 4

"Adults should listen to kids because they have great ideas" Kinglake, age 9

"Adults should listen to kids because they also have good ideas and they have great imaginations. And were fresh and their stale :)" Flynn, age 11

"Adults should listen to children because we might have some great ideas adults don't know of" Shani, age 10

Figure 16. Lachlan and Isabelle, age 4, from Community Kids Haven Greensborough, with their completed surveys.

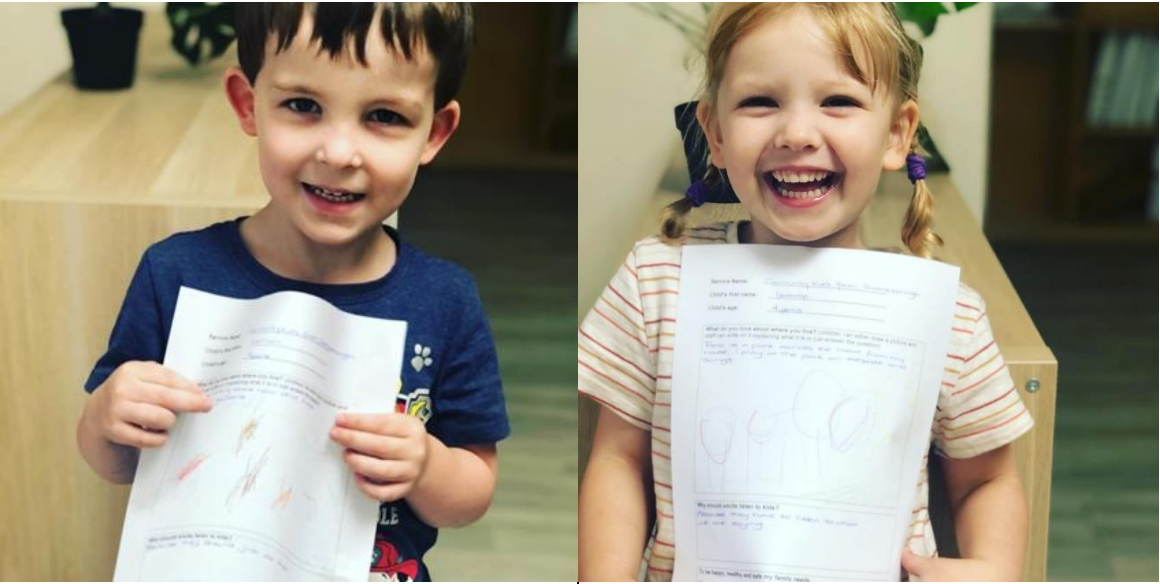


Figure 17. Community workshop with the Little Scooters Early Learning Centre & Kindergarten



To be happy, healthy and safe my family needs ...	
Physical wellbeing	30% of participants
Healthy eating and drinking	21% of participants
Social connections	18% of participants

“We need to stay away from snakes, eat all our vegetables and stay in bed all night without calling” Sylvie, age 4

“We need fresh food, clean and fresh water, a nice house to be warm in, a nice play to have a nice sleep in” Apollo Parkways Primary School, age 10

“Fresh food and fresh and clean water” Apollo Parkways Primary School, age 10

“Fruit, eating veggies” Mila, age 4

“Vegetables and fruit. Puppy dogs.” Ashton, age 4¾

“Mummy and daddy and my brother” Ash, age 4

“Support & love.” Stella, age 12

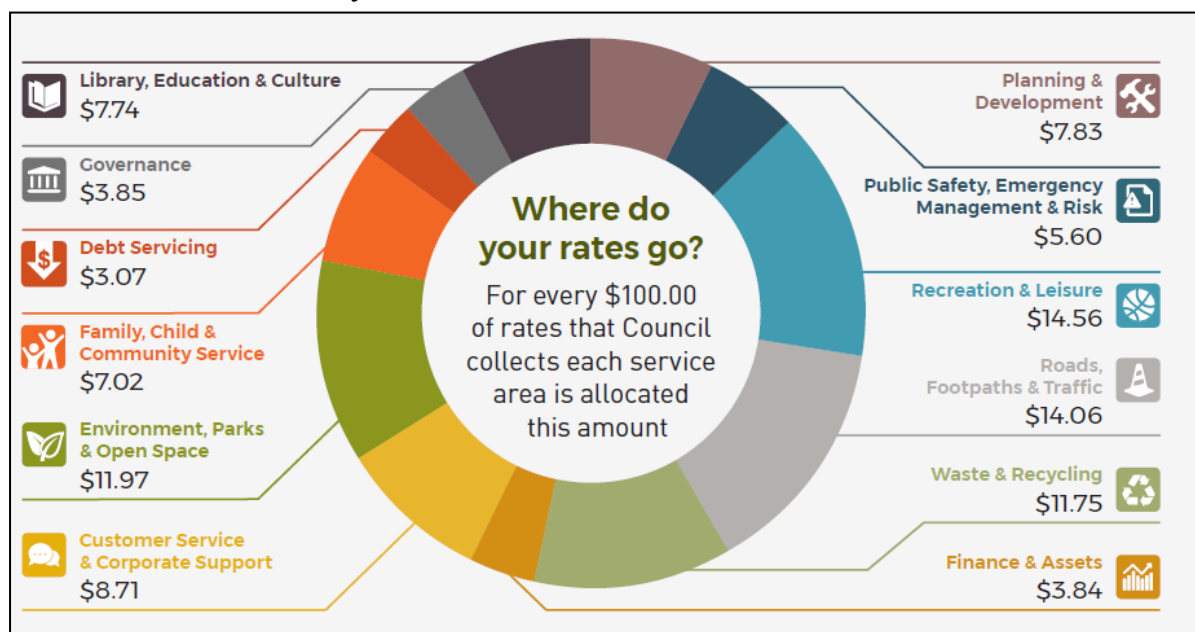
Financial and asset management

Councils have limited means to raise funds, and currently have their rates capped under State Government policies. Nillumbik’s financial sustainability continues to require active management year-on-year. Due to the lack of diversity in its rate-base, Nillumbik faces significant challenges in meeting the needs of the community, maintaining existing assets, and developing new infrastructure. Compared to other municipalities, the revenue growth obtained from residential and non-residential sources is limited, as is the ability to grow these rate-bases.

We wanted to find out what the community thought about Council’s current expenditure across its main services, as well as its’ spend on capital works.

Survey participants were presented with a chart that detailed how Council allocates its expenditure across the main services it delivers for every \$100.00 of rates it collected. Participants were asked to think about whether or not funds needed to be directed from one service to another, by indicating ‘spend more’, ‘spend the same’ or ‘spend less’, and where a redirection took place, the reasoning for this.

Figure 18. The chart below details how Council allocates its expenditure across the main services it delivers for every \$100.00 of rates that Council collects.

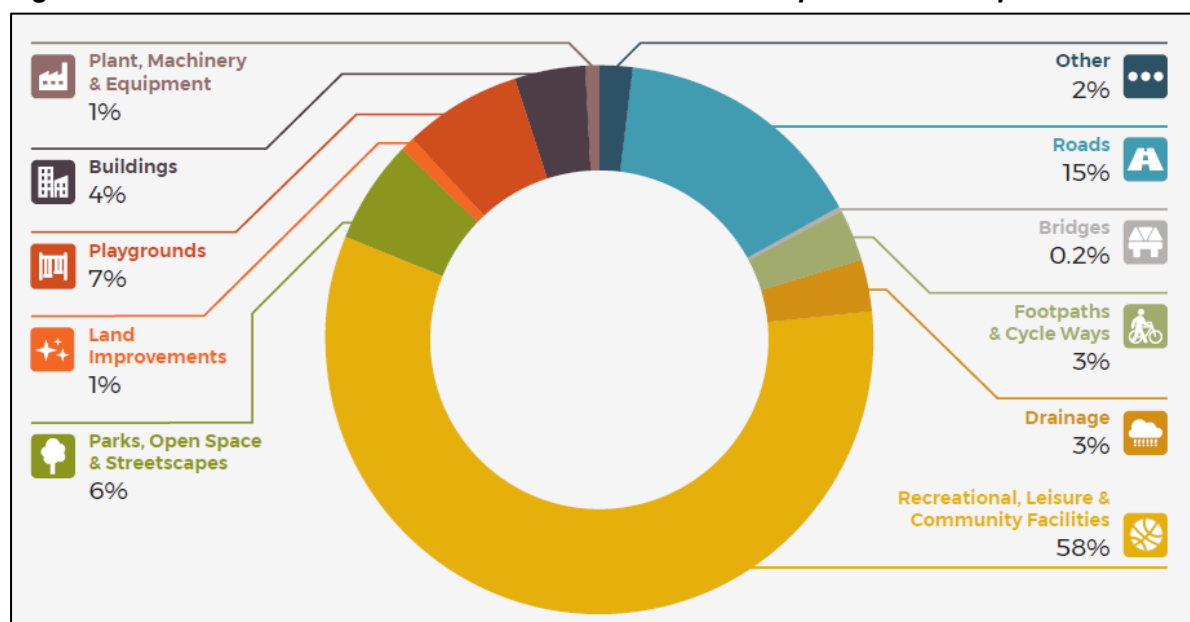


The following table represents the top three areas of redirections across the range of services presented.

Rate expenditure	
<i>Spend more</i>	
Environment, parks and open space	17%
Recreation and leisure	15%
Waste and recycling	12%
<i>Spend the same</i>	
Libraries, education and culture	9%
Planning and development	9%
Family, child and community services	9%
<i>Spend less</i>	
Customer service and corporate support	17%
Governance	14%
Debt servicing	13%

Survey participants were also presented with a chart that detailed how Council allocates its expenditure on capital works, and were similarly asked to think about whether or not funds needed to be directed from one area to another, by indicating 'spend more', 'spend the same' or 'spend less' and where a redirection took place, the reasoning for this.

Figure 19. The chart below details how Council allocates its expenditure on capital works.



The following table represents the top three areas of redirections across the range of assets presented.

Capital works expenditure	
<i>Spend more</i>	
Parks and open space	19%
Footpaths and cycle ways	15%
Recreation, leisure and community facilities	12%
<i>Spend the same</i>	
Plant, machinery and equipment	12%
Planning and development	11%
Family, child and community services	10%
<i>Spend less</i>	
Land improvements	17%
Roads	17%
Buildings	15%

Overall, participants reported that these questions were somewhat difficult to answer and that additional more detailed information was required. As a result, responses regarding redirections were limited.

Conclusion and next steps

This report presents a summary of the key findings from the first stage of the engagement program for the Our People Our Place Our Future initiative. The findings will be used to inform the development of key strategic planning documents for Council, including:

- Asset Plan
- Community Vision
- Council Plan
- Financial Plan
- Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan
- Municipal Planning Strategy.

Further analysis of the engagement data and subsequent engagement phases will be delivered over the coming months in line with individual document requirements and in line with the Our People, Our Place, Our Future engagement program.

This report will be made available on Council's website and communicated through social media channels. Respondents who provided contact details will be advised of how and where to access this report.

We wish to thank every person who made a contribution to this Our People, Our Place, Our Future community engagement exercise.

Appendix – Definitions of key themes

The below themes were informed by the ‘social determinants of health’ and ‘domains of liveability’.

Theme	Description
Accessible community and health services	Ensuring that all community and health services accommodate all members of the community, regardless of ability, gender, sexuality, race, religion, location, or socioeconomic status.
Accessible places and spaces	Ensuring that Council grounds and services accommodate all members of community, regardless of ability, gender, sexuality, race, religion, location, or socioeconomic status.
Action on climate change	Enacting plans, strategies, or targets to combat climate change.
Active lifestyles	Encouraging physical activity.
Ageing in place	Ensuring that residents can remain living in their own community.
Clean and inviting spaces	Ensuring all Council grounds and services provide a tidy and welcoming atmosphere.
Climate health	Responding to health issues caused by the increased intensity and frequency of extreme weather events (e.g. heatwaves)
Community leadership	Encouraging and providing opportunities for community members to play an active part in leading their community.
Community safety	Ensuring Nillumbik is a community where residents can live, work and play without risk to health or wellbeing.
Community transport	Providing transport options for those who would otherwise find it difficult to travel throughout their community.
Connected walking paths/trails	Creating and connecting walking paths and trails throughout the Shire.
Drainage and road infrastructure	Improving drainage and road infrastructure.
Eco-friendly design	Encouraging and enforcing environmentally sustainable buildings.
Education and lifelong learning	Provide funding and opportunities for community members to further their education.
Fire and emergency preparedness	Providing education and funding to ensure the community is prepared for any natural disasters, particular bushfires.

Healthy eating and drinking	Provide education about and opportunities to partake in healthy eating and drinking.
Informed and consulted communities	Ensure that community members are informed and consulted about any actions/plans that may affect them.
Local business mix	Provide support and opportunities for local businesses to thrive.
Local recreation and leisure options	Provide recreation and leisure facilities and events.
Mental wellbeing	Support, fund, and encourage services, initiatives, and facilities that support mental health and welfare.
Opportunities for all	Providing opportunities for all members of Nillumbik's community to participate and be heard.
Parks and playgrounds	Provide and maintain parks and playgrounds in the Shire.
Physical wellbeing	Support, fund, and encourage services, initiatives, and facilities that support physical health and welfare.
Preservation of the Green Wedge	Ensure that the Green Wedge is protected.
Protecting agricultural use	Ensuring that agricultural areas are retained and protected.
Protection of local history and heritage	Safeguarding the history and heritage of the Shire.
Protection of environment and biodiversity	Safeguarding the environment and the protection of biodiversity.
Public amenities	Providing public services, resources, and spaces.
Public transport options	Improve public transport services within the Shire.
Responsible urban housing development	Ensuring all future urban housing developments are in line with the long-term vision of the Shire.
Social connections	Encouraging and providing opportunities for interpersonal relationships and social interactions to occur and develop.
Social enterprise	Encouraging organisations and businesses which aim to function sustainably and improve the social, mental, and physical wellbeing of the community.
Support for children and families	Support, fund, and encourage services, initiatives, and facilities that support children and families.
Traffic management	Implement strategies and initiatives to reduce traffic around the Shire.

**References: Centre for Urban Research (2017) Developing a Pilot Liveability Index
Nillumbik Shire Council (2016) Nillumbik Health and Wellbeing Profile**