

Nillumbik Shire Council
Nillumbik Biodiversity Strategy
Stage 1 Engagement Consultation Findings Report

Final-12/09/2023

Acknowledgement

Nillumbik Shire Council and ChatterBox Projects respectfully acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung people as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the Country on which Nillumbik is located. We pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging; and extend that respect to all First Nations People. We respect the enduring strength of the Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung and acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded.

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1 Executive summary

ChatterBox Projects was engaged to support Nillumbik Shire Council to plan and deliver engagement activities to seek community feedback and ideas to inform the development of a new Biodiversity Strategy.

The purpose of the strategy is to guide the protection and enhancement of biodiversity across the Shire. The new strategy, which will update the previous 2012 version, will:

- identify biodiversity values and the threats across the Shire
- outline Council and stakeholder responsibilities
- set a vision, with objectives and a framework for action
- outline monitoring including methodologies and indicators, and
- provide a framework to develop yearly action plans, which can adapt depending on new biodiversity threats and opportunities.

An essential component of developing the new strategy is community and stakeholder input. Council has developed an engagement program that involves two stages of community consultation:

- Stage 1: gather feedback to inform the development of a draft Biodiversity Strategy, and
- Stage 2: community consultation on the draft Biodiversity Strategy to finalise document.

In addition, in March 2023, Chatterbox Projects undertook a research project to review previous community feedback received on a range of other Council policies and projects over the past few years. A report ([What Council has already heard so far](#)) was developed providing insights into community sentiment and views about the Nillumbik environment. The findings from this work will also help inform the new strategy.

This report focusses on the findings from community and stakeholder feedback from Stage 1 Engagement.

1.1 Overview of engagement activities

People who live, work, and visit Nillumbik were identified as the target population for this engagement. The consultation was open for five weeks from 26 June to 30 July 2023.







Engagement activities where people could provide feedback included:

- survey (available in hardcopy and online via Council's Participate Nillumbik engagement platform);
- place-based pop-ups x 2 (St Andrews Market and Diamond Creek Regional Play Space);
- online stakeholder workshops x 2;
- Youth Council survey; and
- school workshop (Edendale Community Environment Farm).

These engagement activities were supported by a range of communication activities including:



- information on Council's Participate Nillumbik engagement platform including a video, FAQ's, research report, timelines, and a feature to share a nature image;
- information in Nillumbik News/e-News and other relevant Council newsletters;
- social media posts on Council's social media platforms as well as paid social media advertisements;
- posters and postcards placed at libraries, Council's customer service areas and other community facilities;
- direct notification to relevant community groups;
- promotion on community newsletters, such as school newsletters; and
- promotion through Council's advisory committees and community groups.

1.2 Overview of participation and participation profile

	The engagement activities were effective in obtaining feedback from: a total of 350 participants.
	184 survey responses (online and hard copy)
	130 participants at the two place-based pop-up engagement activities (St Andrews Market and Diamond Creek Regional Play Space)
	19 participants at the two online stakeholder workshops
	9 Youth Council survey responses
	8 students participating in the school workshop (Edendale Farm)

Please note that some individuals may have participated in more than one engagement activity.

In addition, the communications activities were effective in reaching over 400 people with:

	440 visitors to the Participate Nillumbik project page including 162 contributors and 30 project page followers
	79 people being directed to the project page via social media posts

Participant demographic data was mostly captured via the online and hard copy surveys (184). Most survey participants reported their connection to Nillumbik as they live there (153 or 84.5%) and there was some representation of people who visit, work, or play in Nillumbik.

In relation to residential location, most of the survey participants (170 or 92.4%) live within Nillumbik, many

in Eltham (64). Other areas represented included Bend of Islands (18), Hurstbridge (13), Diamond Creek and Eltham North (11), North Warrandyte (9), Panton Hill and Research (7) and St Andrews and Wattle Glen (6). No participation was recorded for the townships of Kinglake West, Strathewen, Watsons Creek, Yan Yean, or Yarrambat. Low participation was recorded for Arthurs Creek, Christmas Hills, Doreen, Greensborough, Kangaroo Ground, and Plenty.

Other details provided by the survey participants included:

- Gender: Females, Males and Self-describe were represented. Females were particularly engaged (126 or 69.6%).
- Age: All age groups were represented except those aged 85 years and older. Many respondents identified as 65 to 84 years (69 or 35.4%).
- Connection: In addition to the 84.5% that indicated they live in Nillumbik, some participants also indicated a connection to a community group such as BICA/RTBCC - Resident of Bend of Islands (2), Hurstbridge Primary School Environmental Leaders, and Nillumbio (5).
- Diversity characteristics: Eight participants identified as LGBTQIA, four participants selected Disability inclusive of mental illness, three selected Speaking English as a second language, and two selected Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent.

1.3 Key findings

Biodiversity is important and valued in Nillumbik

Over 98% of survey respondents indicated that biodiversity was very important or important. Across all engagement activities, community members consistently and strongly indicated biodiversity was important.

Participants said they value biodiversity in Nillumbik for a variety of reasons which have been grouped into the following themes:

- Connection to nature when interacting with the natural environment (80 responses)
- Living close to nature in Nillumbik's Green Wedge and environmental areas (47 responses)
- The importance of biodiversity for physical and mental wellbeing (38 responses)
- Call for more action to protect what is valued and enjoyed about biodiversity (37 responses)
- The role biodiversity plays in mitigating climate change in Nillumbik and beyond (22 responses)
- Interconnections between biodiversity, trees, and clean air (21 responses)
- The opportunity to learn through observing and recording biodiversity (20 responses)
- Interconnections between biodiversity and respect for Indigenous knowledge and cultural practices (12 responses)

Biodiversity in Nillumbik and local areas today is okay, but declining

Many people (just over 50% of survey participants) reported biodiversity across Nillumbik today was in a fair condition and around 27% felt it was in good condition. However, the majority of people felt that biodiversity across Nillumbik and in their local areas was in decline.

Almost 75% of survey participants reported biodiversity across Nillumbik was declining, with around 36% of those people saying it was declining significantly. This was also reflected when people were asked to comment on biodiversity in their local area. Just over 58% of survey respondents indicated that biodiversity in their local area was declining significantly or moderately.

Biggest threats to biodiversity in Nillumbik include habitat loss, climate change impacts, development of land, non-native/pest animals, and tree canopy loss in urban areas

Across all engagement activities, concerns consistently reported included loss of trees, mature trees, and vegetation due to land clearing and development. Other perceived threats are lack of resourcing and funding to implement the strategy, and a lack of understanding about the importance of biodiversity, how to protect it, and regulations. Concerns and threats are perceived to be amplified by insufficient enforcement, fines, or consequences for non-compliance.

This insight is amplified by survey responses which indicated the top five threats to biodiversity in Nillumbik as:

- Habitat/vegetation loss (rated by 82.6% of participants)
- Climate change impacts (78.8% of participants)
- Subdivision and development of land (rated by 78.8% of participants)
- Non-native pest animals (74.9% of participants)
- Tree canopy loss in urban areas (69.4% of participants)

Other important threats identified by participants across the engagement activities and general comments include:

- Lack of resourcing and funding to implement the strategy and undertake biodiversity-related actions.
- Lack of understanding, awareness, and education about the importance of biodiversity, how to protect it and rules/ regulations.

Enforcement, Council decision making, advocacy and education are the priorities to protect biodiversity

Participants were asked to identify the top three actions that Council could take to protect and enhance biodiversity in Nillumbik, from a list of 10 actions. The most frequently selected responses align closely with the largest threats to biodiversity.

The top four priority actions that people want to see Council undertake to protect and enhance biodiversity include:

- Greater use and enforcement of planning rules and other regulatory tools to protect trees/ native vegetation and other biodiversity on private land
- Embed consideration of nature and biodiversity into all Council decision-making
- Advocate to state and federal governments to take biodiversity supportive actions
- Community education and awareness raising about protecting and enhancing biodiversity.

These priority actions for Council were reinforced in the feedback gathered from participants at workshops, pop-up engagement activities as well as general feedback gathered via the survey.

Other actions community member could take to protect and enhance biodiversity

Participants were asked what other actions they and others in the community could take to protect and enhance biodiversity in Nillumbik. Participants reported for a variety of actions which have been grouped as follows:

- Educating the community about the importance of biodiversity and providing opportunities to get involved (63 responses)
- Participating in local 'Friends of' or community groups that are protecting biodiversity (55 responses)
- Appreciating biodiversity, actively planting trees and indigenous vegetation, and managing weeds in our own homes (49 responses)
- Protecting and enhancing bio-links and biodiversity habitats (36 responses)

- Advocating to Councillors to consider biodiversity when making decisions, resource actions from the Biodiversity Strategy, and advocate to other levels of government (36 responses)
- Encouraging responsible pet ownership, restraining domestic pets, and managing pest animals (29 responses)
- Managing and controlling existing weeds, and eliminating further invasive weeds (26 responses)
- Supporting Council's controls and enforcement of land clearing regulations (24 responses)
- Increasing knowledge in land management, environmental management, and integrating Indigenous knowledge (20 responses)
- Supporting candidates who value and prioritise the protection and reinvigoration of biodiversity and the natural environment (19 responses)
- Balancing greening on roadsides and nature strips with animal and wildlife injuries (11 responses)

Based on this feedback, it appears that high-level actions such as making biodiversity a priority in Council decision-making, advocating to other levels of government, supporting the community to do more and know more, and implementing strong enforcement and accountability measures, may assist to address many biodiversity threats (big and small) across Nillumbik.

2 Project background and engagement overview

2.1 Background and purpose

Nillumbik Shire Council is developing a new Biodiversity Strategy (Strategy). The purpose of the strategy is to guide the protection and enhancement of biodiversity across the Shire.

Biodiversity is all of the various kinds of life found in an area, including the variety of animals, plants, fungi, and microorganisms like bacteria that make up the natural world. All of these species and organisms work together in ecosystems, like an intricate web, to maintain balance and support life on earth, and many things such as clean water, fresh air, habitat, medicines, and food.

Developing a new Biodiversity Strategy is an action outlined in the Council Plan Annual Action Plan 2023-2024.

The new Strategy, which will update the previous 2012 version, will:

- identify biodiversity values and the threats across the Shire
- outline Council and stakeholder responsibilities
- set a vision, with objectives and a framework for action
- outline monitoring including methodologies and indicators, and
- provide a framework to develop yearly action plans, which can adapt depending on new threats and opportunities.

There are a range of inputs that are considered to inform the development of the new Strategy including State and Federal policy and legislation, Council adopted strategies, biodiversity reports and data, as well as community and stakeholder feedback and ideas.

To gather community and stakeholder feedback, Council will undertake two stages of consultation:

- Stage 1: aims to gather feedback to inform the development of the draft Strategy.
- Stage 2: will consult on the draft Strategy to inform finalisation of the document.

In addition, in March 2023, a research project was undertaken to interrogate previous community feedback received on a range of Council projects, using a biodiversity lens. A report was produced and provides insights into community sentiment and views about the Nillumbik environment. The findings from this work informed the engagement program and will inform the new Strategy.

This report presents the findings from the analysis of community and stakeholder feedback gathered in Stage 1 consultation.

2.2 Engagement overview and program

Stage 1 consultation was undertaken over five weeks from 26 June to 30 July 2023. The aim of the Stage 1 consultation was to seek views and ideas from the community about Nillumbik's biodiversity, including threats and ideas for how it can be protected and enhanced.

The first stage of engagement also involved educating the community about biodiversity, what it is, what it looks like in Nillumbik, and why biodiversity is important.

Other objectives for Stage 1 engagement included:

- understanding what the community knows, thinks, and values about biodiversity;
- ascertaining the community's biodiversity priorities for Nillumbik;
- capturing the views and ideas from a wide range of people across Nillumbik including those from urban and rural areas, those who are highly engaged on the topic and those who have lower levels of awareness; and
- building on what Council has heard already.

People who live in, work in, play or visit were identified as the target population for this engagement. ChatterBox Projects was engaged to support Council to plan and deliver the engagement activities and to analyse and report on the community feedback.

The engagement program provided many options for people to provide feedback:

- survey (available in hardcopy and online via Council's Participate Nillumbik engagement platform) – see Appendix 1 to view a copy of the consultation survey;
- two place-based pop-ups (St Andrews Market and Diamond Creek Regional Play Space);
- two online stakeholder workshops;
- Youth Council survey; and
- school workshop (Edendale Community Environment Farm).

These engagement activities were supported by a range of communication activities including:

- information on Council's Participate Nillumbik engagement platform including a video, FAQ's, research report, timelines, and a feature to share a nature image;
- information in Nillumbik News/e-News and other relevant Council newsletters;
- social media posts on Council's social media platforms as well as paid social media advertisements;
- posters and postcards placed at libraries, Council's customer service areas and other community facilities;
- direct notification to relevant community groups;
- promotion on community newsletters, such as school newsletters; and
- promotion through Council's advisory committees and community groups.

Place based Pop-ups

The engagement program included two place-based community pop-up engagements. These were held:

1. Saturday 15 July, from 9am to 2pm at the St Andrews Market.
2. Sunday 16 July, from 10am to 1pm at the Diamond Creek Regional Play Space.



The pop-ups were designed to encourage and invite people to learn about the project, talk about biodiversity, ask questions, and provide their feedback and ideas. The pop-ups were held in busy high-traffic locations to intercept a wide range of community members, include those who may not usually engage in Council consultations.

Feedback at the pop-ups could be provided via hard copy surveys, dotmocracy board, two chatboards, and a voting pod.

The chatboards (where people can write their responses on a board with chalk) asked:

- What actions should Council consider to improve biodiversity across Nillumbik?
- What actions could you and others in the community take to protect and enhance biodiversity in Nillumbik?

The dotmocracy activity (where people can place an allocation of dots on a board to indicate their priorities) asked: In your view, what are the three most important actions Council can take to protect and enhance biodiversity in Nillumbik?

Participants were invited to identify their top three priorities from the below options:

- Advocate to State and Federal Government to take biodiversity supportive action
- Consider nature and biodiversity in all Council decision making
- Greater use of enforcement and planning rules and other regulatory tools to protect tree/ native vegetation and other biodiversity on private land
- Manage pest animals on Council land
- Manage weeds on Council land
- Increase urban tree canopy
- Community education and awareness raising about protecting and enhancing biodiversity
- Provide support/ grants to residents and landowners and local groups to help them take action to protect and enhance biodiversity

The voting pod (where people can indicate their preference by placing one ball into a tube) focused on the state of biodiversity in local areas. Participants were asked if biodiversity in their local area was improving, staying the same, or declining. This engagement activity provided an interactive way of encouraging thinking about biodiversity in the local area and starting a conversation while gathering feedback.

The place-based pop-up engagement activities were designed to mirror the questions in the survey to ensure consistency in data collection.

Online stakeholder workshops

Two online stakeholder workshops were held on Thursday 20 July from 12pm to 1.30pm and 6pm to 7.30pm. The workshops were attended by community members who represented a variety of environmentally focussed groups as well as interested residents.

The workshops included a background presentation about the project and then sought feedback and ideas from participants about:

- threats and challenges to biodiversity;
- ideas and opportunities to enhance and protect biodiversity in Nillumbik; and
- what the priorities should be.

School workshop



A workshop with school students was held at Edendale Community Environment Farm on Monday 24 July from 9.30am to 11.30am. Schools across Nillumbik were invited to participate in one of the two workshops (one for primary school students and one for secondary school students). However, Hurstbridge Primary School was the only school that were able to participate.

The workshop involved a presentation about biodiversity as well as a Farm Tour. The students were then asked to respond to the following questions:

- What is your favourite place outdoors?
- What can we do to protect and improve biodiversity in Nillumbik?
- What can we do to protect and improve biodiversity at your school?
- What can we do to protect and improve biodiversity at your home?

The students were asked to draw a picture of how they would like their neighbourhood to look in the future.

2.3 Overview of participation

The engagement activities were effective in seeking feedback from approximately 350 participants; however, the overall reach of communications was greater. An overview of participation outcomes is presented in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1. Overview of communication and engagement activities with participation outcomes

Communication and engagement methods	Participation outcomes*
Engagement activities	
Survey (online and hard copy)	184
Two place-based pop-ups (St Andrews Market and Diamond Creek Regional Play Space)	130
Two online stakeholder workshops	19
Youth Council survey	9
School workshop (Edendale Community Environment Farm)	8
TOTAL (approximate)	350
Communications activities (inform and raise awareness)	
Visitors to Participate Nillumbik project page	440 visitors
Contributors and number of contributions to the project page	162 contributors 170 contributions
Followers of the Participate Nillumbik project page	30 followers
Click through to the project page from social media posts	79 people

*Please note: Some individuals may have participated in more than one engagement activity.

3 Description of participation profile

Around 350 individuals provided feedback. The survey was the most comprehensive data gathering activity, capturing demographic information as well as in-depth feedback on key topics of interest. This section describes the demographic profile of the participants. Not all engagement activities captured participant demographic information or the same information, so this profile is mostly based on the survey unless stated otherwise.

With regard to participants' relationship to Nillumbik, as shown in Figure 3.1, many of the 181 participants reported they Live in Nillumbik (153). While lower numbers were recorded for other categories, there was some representation of people who visit, work, or play in Nillumbik.

In relation to residential location, most of the survey participants (170 or 92.4%) live within Nillumbik, many in Eltham (64). Other areas represented included Bend of Islands (18), Hurstbridge (13), Diamond Creek and Eltham North (11), North Warrandyte (9), Panton Hill and Research (7) and St Andrews and Wattle Glen (6). No participation was recorded for the townships of Kinglake West, Strathewen, Watsons Creek, Yan Yean or Yarrambat. Low participation was recorded for Arthurs Creek, Christmas Hills, Doreen, Greensborough, Kangaroo Ground, and Plenty.

The consultation also included participants from a range of local groups who attended the stakeholder and school workshops.

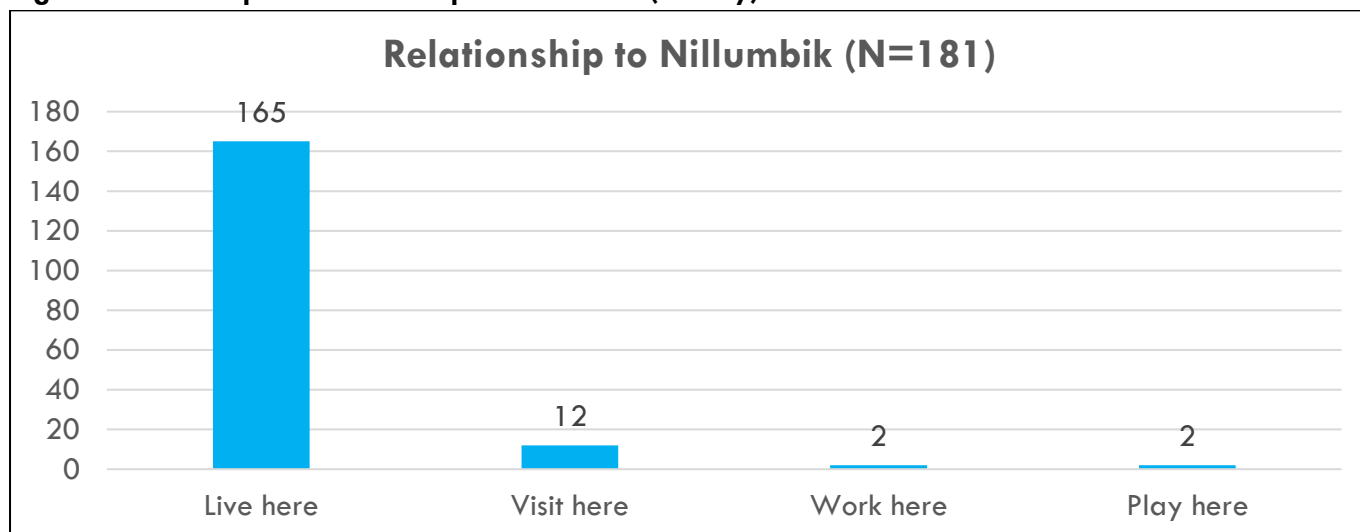
As shown in Figure 3.3, there were more Female participants (126) than Male participants (49). The two participants who indicated they use a different term for gender both reported Non-binary.

In terms of age, Figure 3.4 shows many participants (69) were aged 65 to 84 years. The 55 to 64 years age group was well represented (36) and 31 participants were aged 45 to 54 years. Younger voices were also represented and captured via the Youth Council survey and School Workshop. There were no participants aged 85 years and over. As shown in Figure 3.5, the place-based pop-up activities (voting pod and dotmocracy) were effective in engaging around 52 children and young people under 18 years (noting some individuals participated in more than one activity).

As shown in Figure 3.6, 17 (or 9.2% of 184) survey participants identified with one of the listed diversity characteristics. Some participants identified as LGBTQIA (8), four (4) selected Disability inclusive of mental illness, three (3) selected Speaking English as a second language, and two (2) selected Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent.

Overall, the consultation successfully engaged a broad cross-section of the Nillumbik community, with a strong response from people who live in the Shire.

Figure 3.1. Participant relationship to Nillumbik (Survey)



School workshop participants and stakeholder workshop participants reported the following relationship to Nillumbik:

- BICA
- BICA/RTBCC - Resident of Bend of Islands (2)
- DEECA Friends of Grove St Reserve
- Farmer 15 acres
- Friends of Edendale
- Friends of group
- Hurstbridge Primary School Environmental Leaders
- NESAC Ex-farmer
- Nillumbio (5)
- Nillumbik Climate Action Team
- PAAC
- Panton Hill Bushland Advisory Committee
- Student
- Teacher

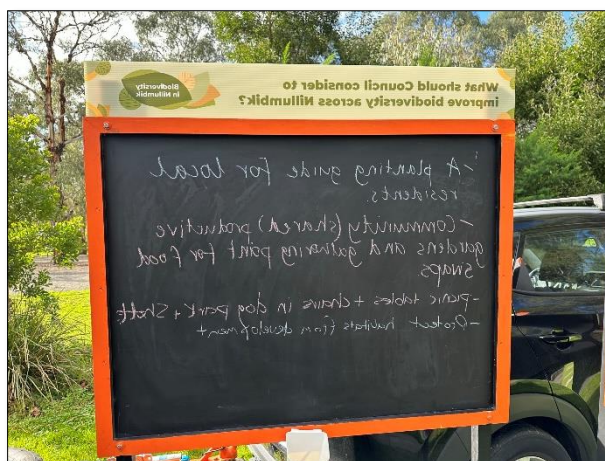
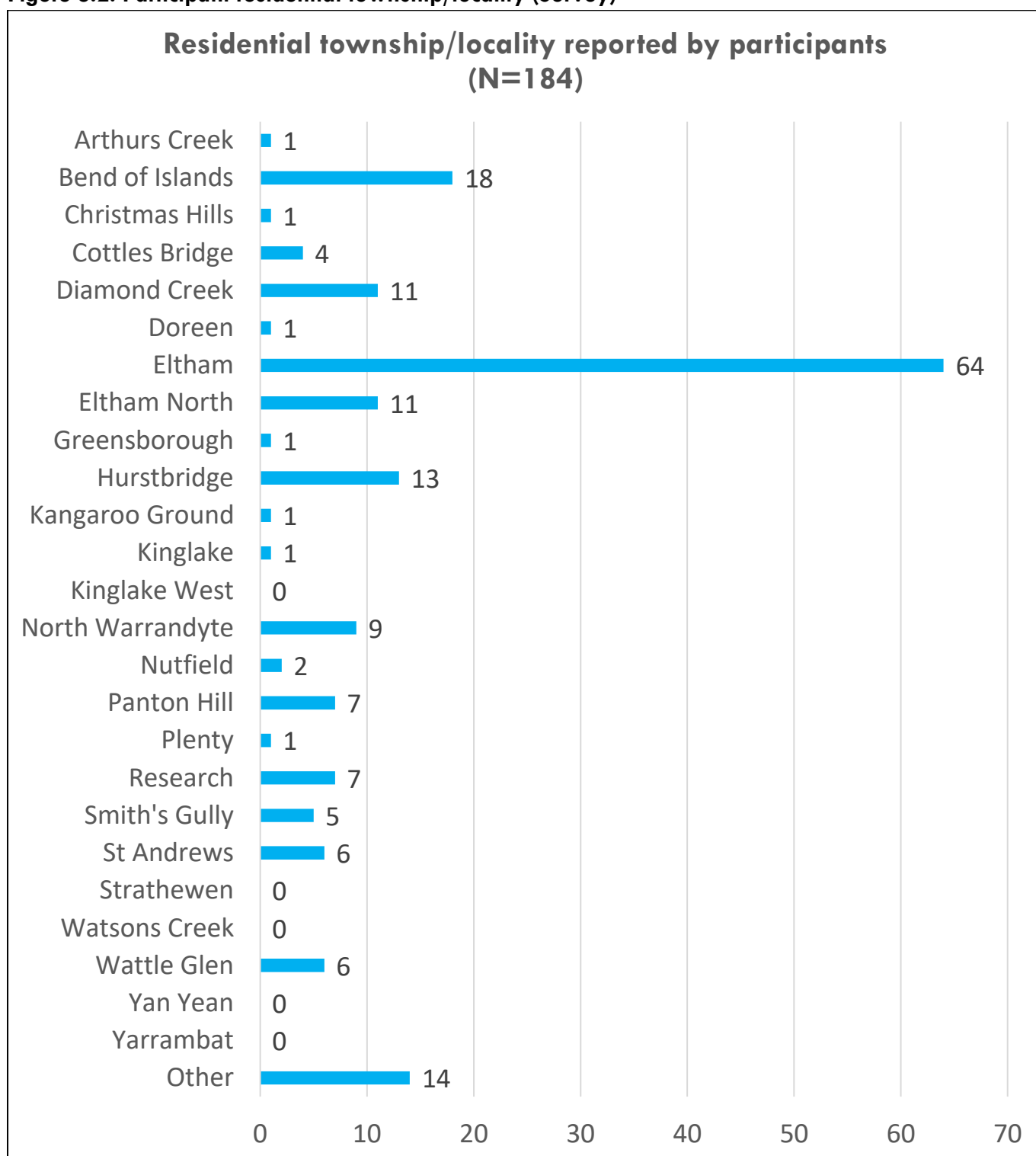


Figure 3.2. Participant residential township/locality (Survey)



The 14 participants who selected 'Other' reported the following locations: Banyule (border of Banyule and Nillumbik), Bendigo, Brunswick West, Clifton Hill, Healesville, Longwood East, Lower Plenty, Montmorency, Moonee Ponds, Northcote (2), Reservoir, St. Kilda, and Yallambie.

Figure 3.3. Gender of participants (Survey)

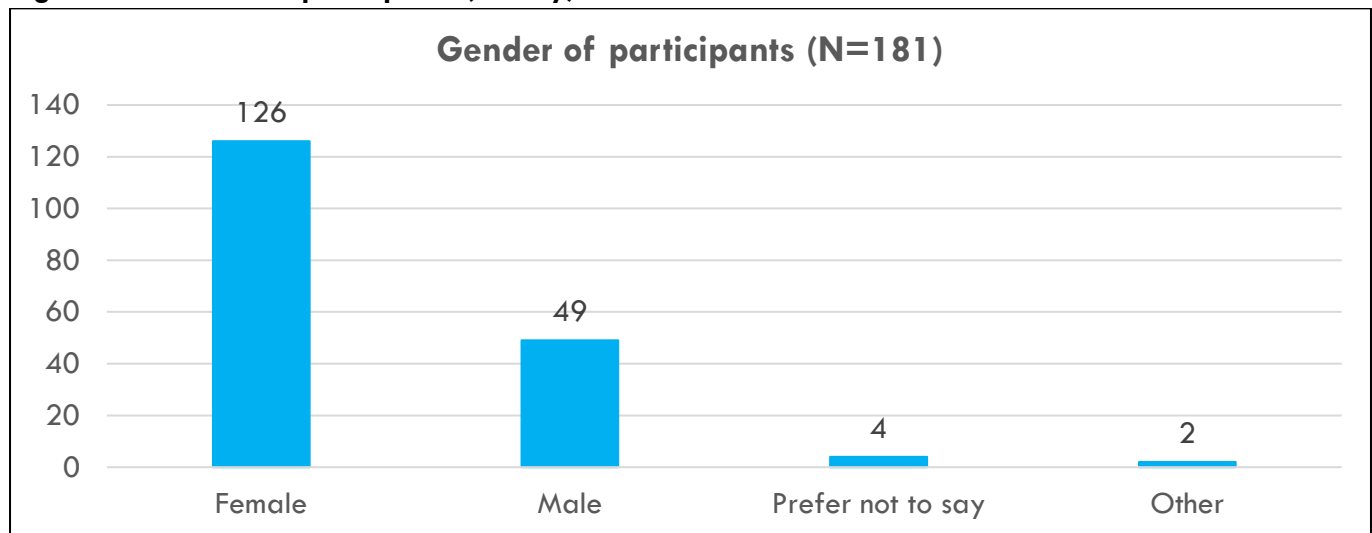


Figure 3.4. Age of participants (Survey, Youth Council survey, School workshop)

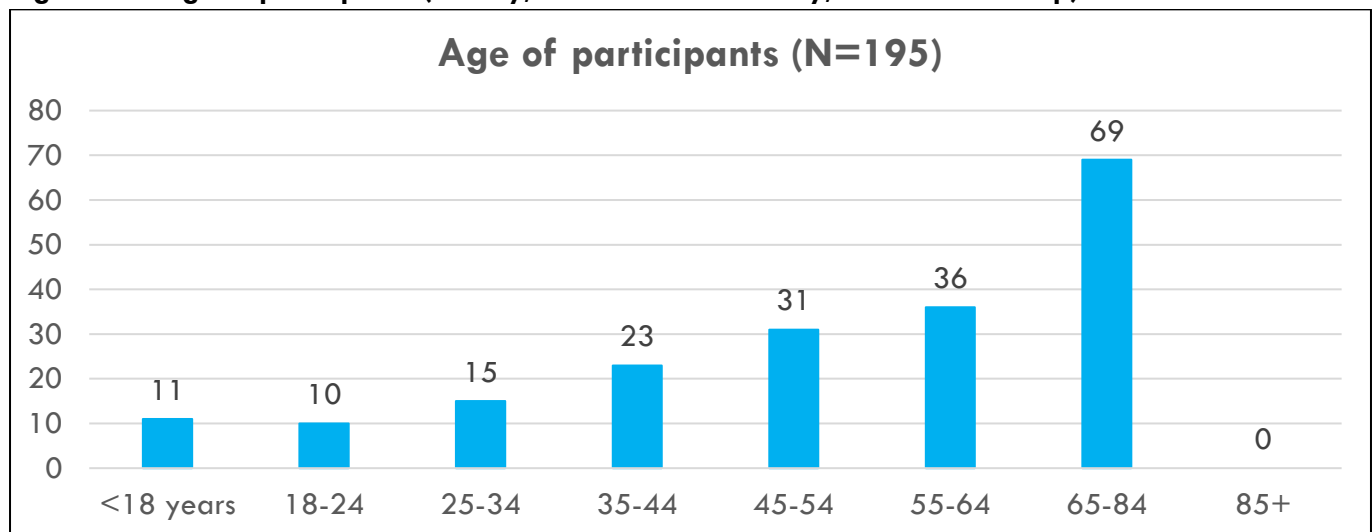


Figure 3.5. Age of participants (Pop-up)

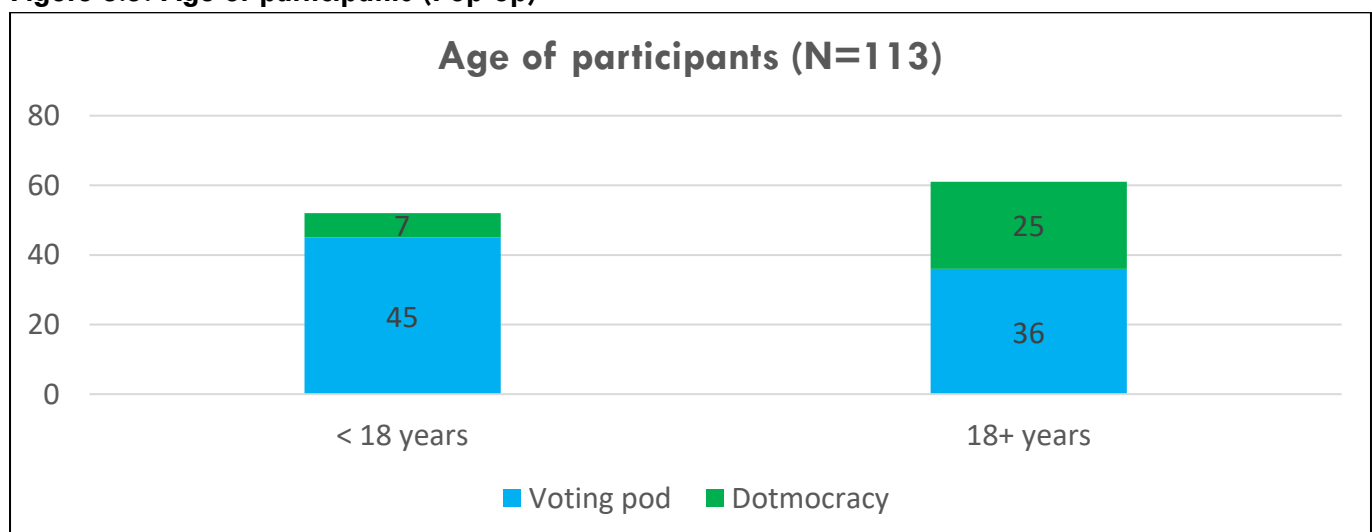
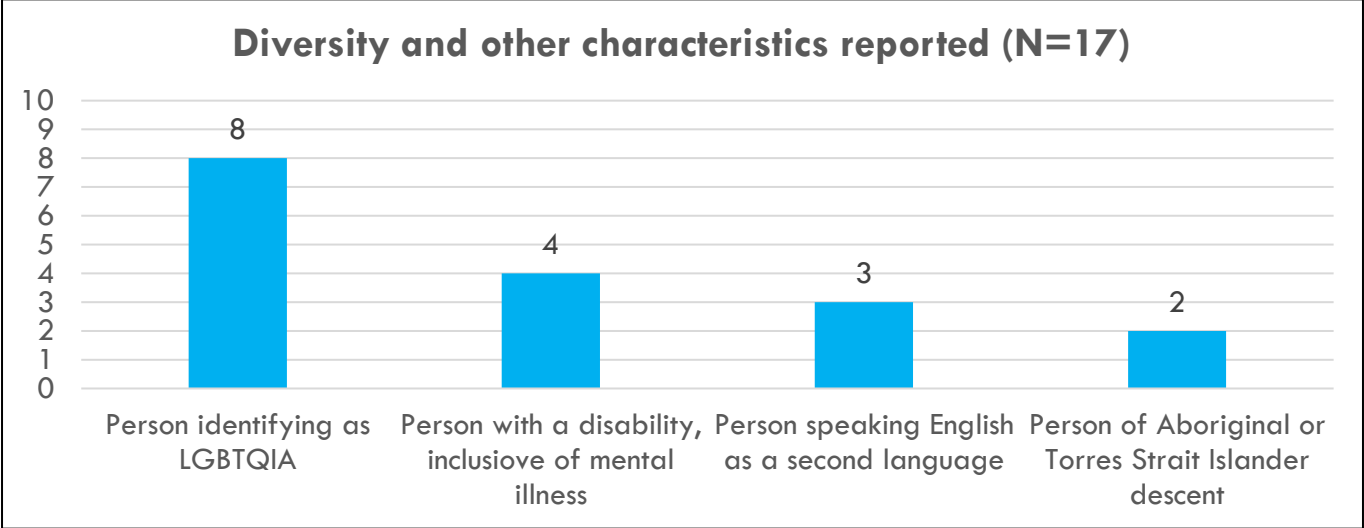


Figure 3.6. Diversity and other characteristics of participants (Survey)



4 Findings from the analysis of the community feedback – Nillumbik now

This section presents the findings from the analysis of the community feedback with a focus on biodiversity in Nillumbik now. Findings and insights are presented regarding the overall importance of protecting and enhancing biodiversity in local areas within Nillumbik; what is valued most about biodiversity and favourite places in nature; ratings and thoughts about the condition of biodiversity in local areas and across Nillumbik, and views on threats to biodiversity in Nillumbik.

When asked **how important it is to protect and enhance biodiversity in local areas**, majority of participants (189 or 98.4%) reported Very important or Important, with 178 (or 92.7%) reporting Very important. Three participants reported Slightly important or Not at all important.

Participants reported a variety of **aspects of biodiversity are valued or enjoyed in local areas** which have been grouped into the following themes: Connection to nature when interacting with the natural environment (80 responses); Living close to nature in Nillumbik's Green Wedge and environmental areas (47 responses); The importance of biodiversity for physical and mental wellbeing (38 responses); Call for more action to protect what is valued and enjoyed about biodiversity (37 responses); The role biodiversity plays in mitigating climate change in Nillumbik and beyond (22 responses); Interconnections between biodiversity, trees, and clean air (21 responses); The opportunity to learn through observing and recording biodiversity (20 responses); and Interconnections between biodiversity and respect for Indigenous knowledge and cultural practices (12 responses).

When asked how they would **rate the current state of biodiversity** across Nillumbik, many participants (95 or 51.6%) indicated Fair while 50 (or 27.2%) reported Good. Some participants reported Poor 27 (or 14%) and three reported Excellent.

When asked overall how they would **rate the condition of biodiversity** in Nillumbik, most participants (151 or 74.8%) indicated Declining moderately or Declining significantly, and 74 (or 36.6%) reported Declining significantly. Some participants reported Staying the same (25) or Improving (10).

When asked how they would **rate the condition of biodiversity in their local area** (or close to where they live), many participants (154 or 58.3%) indicated Declining moderately or Declining significantly, and 64 (or 24.2%) reported Declining significantly. Some participants reported Staying the same (56) or Improving (42).

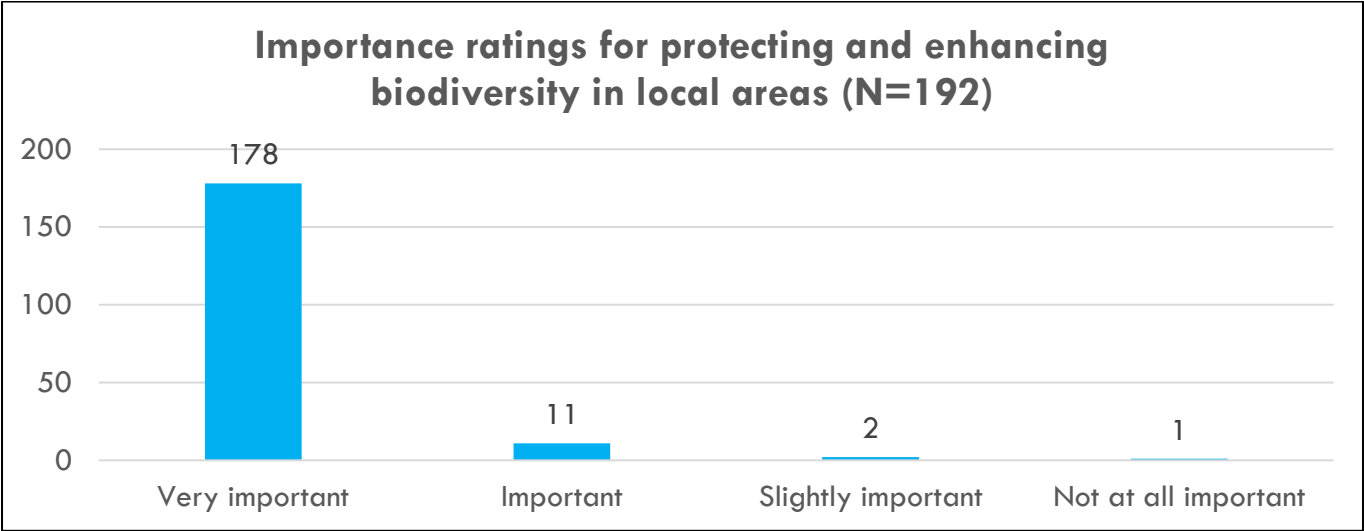
Participants were asked to what extent they think **biodiversity threats** apply in Nillumbik and presented with a listing of 13 statements. Many participants rated most of the biodiversity threats as a large or medium threat in Nillumbik. The top five threats to biodiversity most frequently identified as a Large threat were Habitat/vegetation loss (152 or 82.6% of participants), Climate change impacts (145 or 78.8%), Subdivision and development of land (145 or 78.8%), Non-native/pest animals, and Tree canopy loss in urban areas.

4.1 Overall importance of protecting and enhancing biodiversity and what is valued most

Survey participants including Youth Council survey participants were asked overall how important is protecting and enhancing biodiversity in your local area and presented with four response options.

Figure 4.1 shows the majority of participants (189 of 192) indicated Very important or Important, with 178 (or 92.7%) reporting Very important. Three participants reported Slightly important or Not at all important.

Figure 4.1 Importance ratings for protecting and enhancing biodiversity in local areas (Survey, Youth Council survey)



Survey participants were asked overall, what they most valued or enjoyed about biodiversity in their local area and 152 participants provided a personalised response which referred to one or more topics. The responses were reviewed and grouped into themes. Eight themes emerged during the analyses and are presented in Table 4.1. Each theme is accompanied by a descriptive summary, indicator of the number of responses referring to a topic within the theme, and a selection of verbatim quotes which reflect the general sentiment in the feedback.

Table 4.1. Aspects of biodiversity that are most valued or enjoyed in local areas (Survey)

1. Connection to nature when interacting with the natural environment (80 responses)
Having a deep connection to nature when interacting with the natural environment. Valuing the opportunity to connect with nature, observe seasonal changes and admire the variety of flora and fauna. Sighting common and less common wildlife, birds, animals, and insects is enjoyable. Feeling a sense of awe, wonder, and gratitude for the beauty and complexity of the natural world. Appreciating the unique natural environment and biodiversity being essential for the health of the planet and all living organisms. Having a connection to nature is seen as a vital part of life and a legacy to leave for future generations. <i>“I love to marvel at the textures, organic forms, colours and patterns of animals, insects, trees and plants and even the earth, at moments when I am in the garden, or going for a walk”.</i> <i>“I’m passionate about nature and am highly appreciative of the amazing beauty that surrounds us”.</i> <i>“Living in a biodiverse area reassures me that the delicate balance of Life is being supported and maintained”.</i>
2. Living close to nature in Nillumbik's Green Wedge and environmental areas (47 responses)
Recognition of the Green Wedge as a significant contributor to climate change mitigation and the prosperity of biodiversity values. An appreciation of biodiversity, natural environment, waterways, open spaces, and being able to live amid tree canopies. Realisation that the natural environment attracts visitors, and economic benefits associated with tourism. <i>“I deeply value the ability to feel closer to nature, to breathe clean air, to live amid a tree canopy”.</i> <i>“The ‘green wedge’ is how Nillumbik is described and without our tree canopy, urban and regional bushland reserves, our Shire loses its character and its sense of uniqueness”.</i> <i>“We need to live in our environment in a manner that minimises our impact on biodiversity. Nillumbik’s Green Wedge and associated planning restrictions have assisted this”.</i>
3. The importance of biodiversity for physical and mental wellbeing (38 responses)

An appreciation for the mental and physical health benefits derived from being surrounded by biodiversity and nature. The significant contribution of the natural environment to overall well-being and how it provides a sense of peace, connection, and inspiration. Being in a biodiverse environment helps to relax and recharge. The importance of biodiversity for physical and mental health is highlighted. The overall sentiment is that biodiversity has a positive impact on the health and well-being of individuals and the community.

"As a doctor I know how biodiversity affects human health both physical mental and spiritual".

"Seeing and engaging with our biodiversity is essential for my health and wellbeing and is the main reason I live and work in Nillumbik".

"I value the beauty and peace a truly biodiverse area brings".

4. Call for more action to protect what is valued and enjoyed about biodiversity (37 responses)

Sense of frustration with the lack of action and protection by local government in preserving biodiversity, particularly in relation to planning and development decisions. Highlights the need for habitat connection and buffer zones, weed control, feral animal management, managing waterways, and fire management. Emphasises the importance of ongoing support, consultation, community involvement, education, and individual actions in supporting and enhancing biodiversity.

"Local government can make a positive difference with enlightened and appropriate policies, actions and active and intelligent community relations and education".

"Ongoing support and consultation with community groups is needed to ensure future prosperity of biodiversity values in areas of education, restoration, revegetation, and recreation".

"Weed control, feral animal management, illegal vegetation removal or vandalism, fire management and pollution issues are paramount".

5. The role biodiversity plays in mitigating climate change in Nillumbik and beyond (22 responses)

Biodiversity is a significant contributor to climate change mitigation, with a biodiverse environment being more resilient to damaging climate change impacts and functioning as a vital mechanism to draw down excess carbon from the atmosphere. The maintenance of biodiversity and natural processes is critical to ongoing ecosystem integrity and effective climate mitigation. Biodiversity is a key component of ecosystem services, including climate regulation which humanity relies upon. Biodiversity is seen as essential for the survival of our species and the health of the wider ecosystem. It is also recognised as contributing to the health, vitality, and sustainability of Melbourne and the wider ecosystem.

"Biodiversity is a key contributor to climate mitigation".

"Biodiversity is a significant contributor to climate change mitigation. What we do locally in Nillumbik does contribute to the health of Melbourne and beyond".

"Healthy environment equals more resilience to climate change by creating microclimate properly adapted to local conditions".

6. Interconnections between biodiversity, trees, and clean air (21 responses)

Strong appreciation for the importance of trees in maintaining biodiversity and the unique natural environment of Nillumbik. Recognition of the crucial role trees play in supporting biodiversity and acting as the lungs of Melbourne. A deep appreciation for the importance of trees and the beauty, tranquillity, and peace they bring to the living environment. Trees providing essential habitats for wildlife and playing a key role in supporting mental and physical wellbeing and breathing clean air. The importance of protecting and enhancing biodiversity, including trees, is emphasized as a responsibility for the present and future generations.

"As an adult I find the presence of big old trees amazing and comforting - to have hollow dependent species in the suburbs is a privilege".

"I value the clean fresh air that the trees provide".

"Our connection to the ecosystem is vital as a community if we are to enable the environment to survive and thrive together".

7. The opportunity to learn through observing and recording biodiversity (20 responses)
<p>An appreciation of the importance of recording and documenting biodiversity in Nillumbik, both to raise awareness and contribute to the understanding and preservation of the area's unique flora and fauna.</p> <p><i>"I want to observe and learn from an ecological system that support diverse and unique life forms that somehow are operating in concert with each other to create a buzzing vibrant resilient strong environment".</i></p> <p><i>"Observe the seasonal changes. Record as much of the biodiversity as possible, including the many rare and threatened plants and animals – see flora and fauna lists on BICA & RTBCC websites".</i></p> <p><i>"We actively seek out and record as much of the biodiversity as we can manage through our work parties".</i></p>
8. Interconnections between biodiversity and respect for Indigenous knowledge and cultural practices (12 responses)
<p>Indigenous knowledge and cultural practices are crucial in understanding and valuing biodiversity in Nillumbik, and essential for respecting and protecting the environment and ensuring a healthy and sustainable future for all. Respecting and valuing the knowledge and practices of Australia's Indigenous people in relation to biodiversity. Biodiversity in Nillumbik being seen as part of the legacy of Australia's Indigenous people, providing direct links and opportunities. The importance of connection to country and appreciation of all living things. Biodiversity being seen as an opportunity to work towards reconciliation and to show recognition and respect for Australia's Indigenous people.</p> <p><i>"Biodiversity is a direct reflection of Indigenous knowledge acquired, refined, and transmitted over millennia. It is critical that we protect and reinvigorate that knowledge and all it holds or activates".</i></p> <p><i>"If we seek to respect Australia's Indigenous people, looking after biodiversity is essential".</i></p> <p><i>"Indigenous understanding and knowledge of this topic, although fractured, must be reflected upon. Respecting Australia's Indigenous people, looking after biodiversity is essential".</i></p>

School workshop participants were asked what they love about where they live and their favourite place in nature to visit, and provided the following personalised responses:

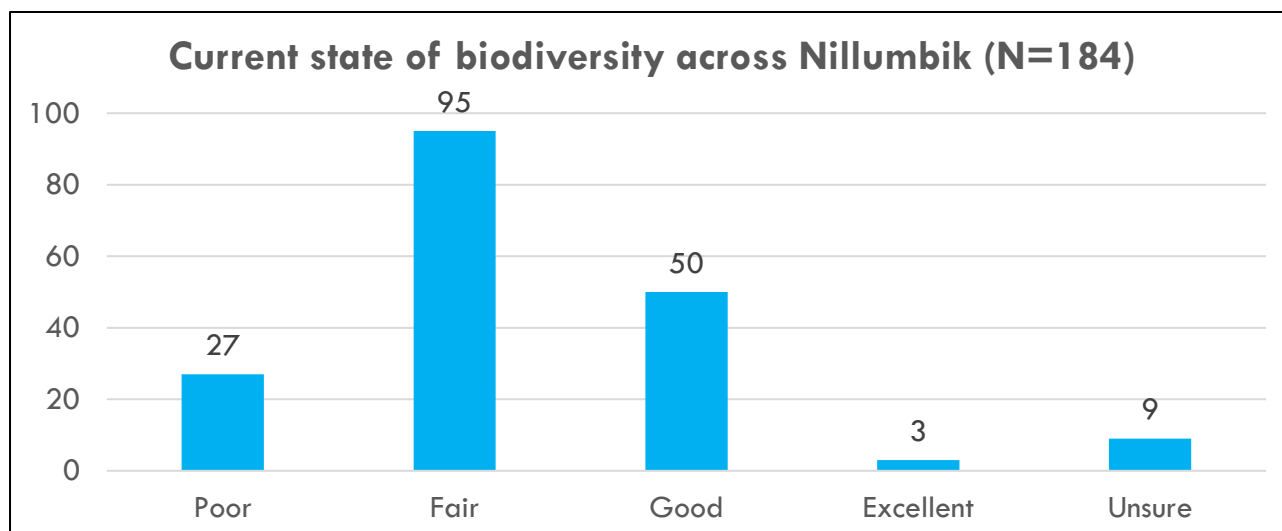
- I like going to climb big trees at my house
- I love going on walks along my road and going to the dam at my house
- My favourite place which I love I can't tell you as it's a secret
- Cararong Park
- A tiny lake (about 1 metre wide and 1.5 metres long) between heaps of trees
- A huge bushy hill with an amazing view
- I like going out to find tadpoles near the creek and saving them from puddles
- Anzac Memorial Park

4.2 Biodiversity condition ratings and views on biodiversity in local areas and Nillumbik

Survey participants were asked how they would rate the current state of biodiversity across Nillumbik and presented with five response options.

Figure 4.2 shows the majority of participants (95 or 51.6%) indicated Fair and 50 (or 27.2%) reported Good. Some participants reported Poor (27) or Excellent (3). Nine participants reported Unsure.

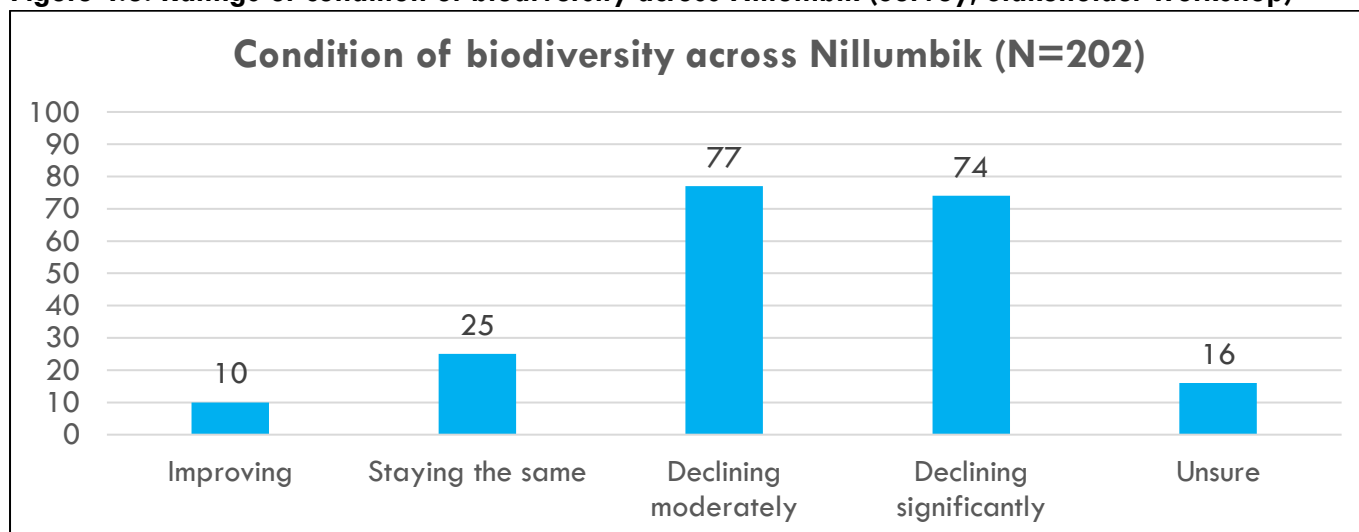
Figure 4.2. Ratings for the current state of biodiversity across Nillumbik (Survey)



Survey participants and Workshop participants were asked overall how they would rate the condition of biodiversity in Nillumbik and presented with five response options.

Figure 4.3 shows the majority of participants (151 or 74.8%) indicated Declining moderately or Declining significantly, and 74 (or 36.6%) reported Declining significantly. Some participants reported Staying the same (25) or Improving (10). Sixteen participants reported Unsure.

Figure 4.3. Ratings of condition of biodiversity across Nillumbik (Survey, Stakeholder Workshop)



Survey participants were then invited to provide an example supporting their response to the previous question (shown in Figure 4.3) and 108 participants provided a personalised response. The responses were reviewed and grouped into themes. Five themes emerged during the analyses and are presented in Table 4.2 along with a descriptive summary and selection of verbatim quotes which reflect the general sentiment in the feedback.

Table 4.2. Examples supporting participant ratings of condition of biodiversity across Nillumbik (Survey)

There is a loss of habitat for native species and destruction of bushland due to development and land clearing
<p>The loss of habitat mostly due to the clearing of land for housing, the cutting down of mature trees, especially for new developments, and the clearance of topsoil and vegetation prior to building. Concerns about weeds and pest species contributing to the degradation of the habitat. The loss of hollow trees and the impact on native hollow dwelling species, the loss of roadside remnant bush plantings and reduction of green areas, and the destruction of bushland due to development and land clearing are also significant issues. Concerns about the expansion of government roads and insufficient compensation for loss of habitat.</p> <p><i>“People continue to cut down trees and hollow-bearing trees and we lose habitat every day”.</i></p> <p><i>“The total clearance of topsoil and vegetation prior to building”.</i></p> <p><i>“Where there were large swathes of wildflowers along fire track and roadsides there are now none”.</i></p>
There is a need for stronger enforcement and management by Council and a well-resourced Biodiversity Strategy
<p>A call for more robust conservation measures, better resources, and stricter enforcement of regulations to prevent land clearing and habitat destruction. A call for the new Biodiversity Strategy to be well-resourced and staffed with increased staffing levels and expertise to address the ongoing decline in biodiversity. A further call for council to emphasise the importance of habitat protection, promoting indigenous plantings, taking action to restore biodiversity, and taking more action against inappropriate land clearing.</p> <p><i>“Inappropriate land clearing continues unabated. Council needs to step-up to stop this and hopefully this Biodiversity Strategy will be the impetus needed to reverse this”.</i></p> <p><i>“The new Biodiversity Strategy must be well resourced and staffed otherwise this paper exercise will be a waste of ratepayer and government funds”.</i></p> <p><i>“Wildlife corridors are not enforced - there are more and more fences going up, no regulation or regard to wildlife”.</i></p>
Increase in weed infestations and call for more resourcing to manage them
<p>Concerned about the increase in weeds and negative impact of weed invasion on biodiversity. Weeds are spreading and getting out of control due to insufficient Council resources to effectively manage them, and more needs to be done to address this issue.</p> <p><i>“Declining orchids and wildlife and increase in weeds”.</i></p> <p><i>“Weed invasion is relentless and has degraded many areas of high biodiversity”.</i></p> <p><i>“Weed plants are a serious issue, especially during winter. Currently all nature strips are bursting with weed species which invade into small bushland reserves”.</i></p>
The loss of native birds and fauna, including declining numbers of certain species and impact of feral and invasive species
<p>Concerns about the decline in the sightings of native bird species such as Gang Gang Cockatoos, Powerful Owls, and Rosellas. Concerns about the increase in invasive species like foxes and deer as well as rabbits and feral cats and general decrease in the abundance of native fauna. Declines in orchids, wildlife, insect populations, frogs, skinks, and lizards are also noted.</p> <p><i>“Noticeable loss of indigenous canopy and replacement with weedy species resulting in an increase of night light in our neighbourhood and a reduction of owls and nocturnal native animal activity”.</i></p> <p><i>“We now have less owls, cicadas have disappeared, Less frogs, less of everything”.</i></p> <p><i>“We used to see rosellas and cockatoos regularly as the seasons dictated. Now they are becoming rarer and do not seem to stay locally as long anymore”.</i></p>
The impact of climate change on biodiversity
<p>The impact of climate change is seen as a significant threat and having a profound impact on biodiversity. Disruptions in ecosystems due to climate change have become increasingly evident. Changes include</p>

alterations in the behaviour and distribution of bird species, with some becoming increasingly dominant and aggressive, driving out smaller species. There are also changes in the timing of natural events, such as flowering seasons for certain plants occurring earlier, and potential impacts on insect populations.

“Disruptions of rhythms and imbalances in ecosystems due to climate change have become increasingly evident, for example, flowering seasons for wattles are earlier, some bird populations such as noisy miners have become increasingly dominant and aggressive, driving out smaller species of birds such as pardalotes and smaller honeyeater”.

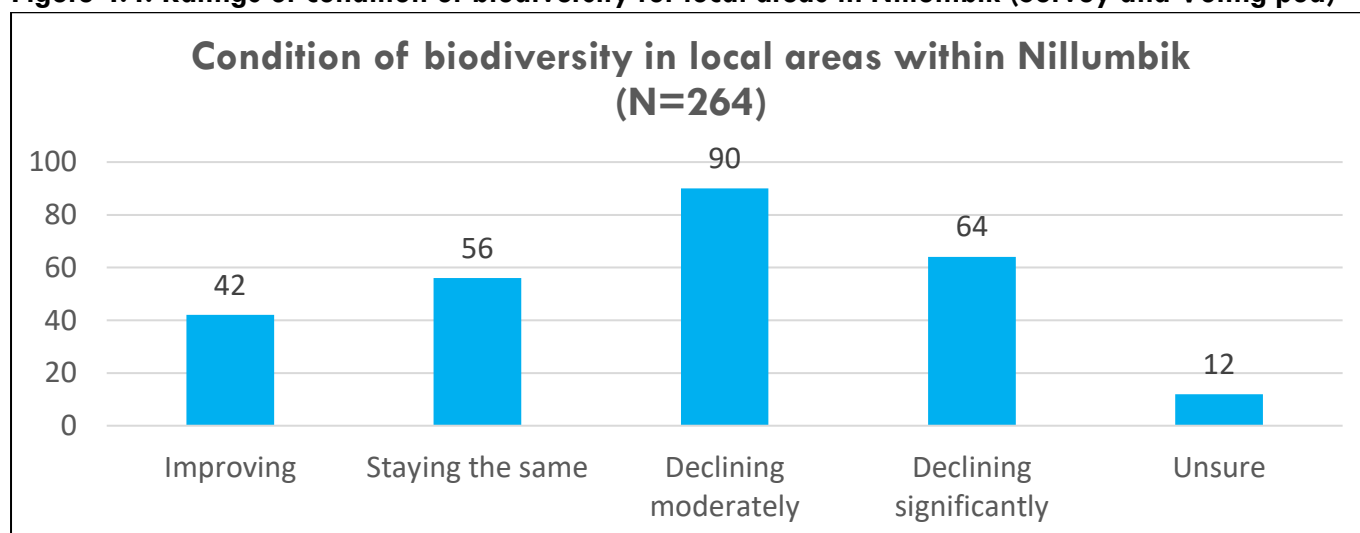
“Riparian ecosystems degrading or not being maintained reduces fish and beneficial insect populations (example dragonflies)”.

The effects of climate change are having profound impacts everywhere. In Nillumbik, I see a change in nature patterns”.

Survey participants and place-based pop-up (Voting pod) participants were asked overall how they would rate the condition of biodiversity in their local area (or close to where they live) and presented with five response options.

Figure 4.4 shows the majority of participants (154 or 58.3%) indicated Declining moderately or Declining significantly, and 64 (or 24.2%) reported Declining significantly. Some participants reported Staying the same (56 or 21%) or Improving (42 or 16%). Twelve participants reported Unsure.

Figure 4.4. Ratings of condition of biodiversity for local areas in Nillumbik (Survey and Voting pod)



Survey participants were then invited to provide an example supporting their response to the previous question (shown in Figure 4.4) and 121 participants provided a personalised response. The responses were reviewed and grouped into themes. Five themes emerged during the analyses and are presented in Table 4.3 along with a descriptive summary and selection of verbatim quotes which reflect the general sentiment in the feedback.

Table 4.3. Examples supporting participant ratings of condition of biodiversity, by local area (Survey)

Invasive plants and weed infestations are a significant change
Invasive plants are proliferating uncontrollably, encroaching on bushland, reserves, nature strips, and private properties. Frustration as notifications about weed infestations often remain unaddressed. Concerns about the detrimental effects of this invasion, including the degradation of areas with high biodiversity, loss of native vegetation, and negative impact on waterways. There is a need for regular monitoring and control of weeds, and community involvement in removing and preventing the spread. Despite community

efforts to improve biodiversity, such as weed removal and planting native species, these are often seen as insufficient to counteract the overall decline.

“Decline in health of waterways”.

“There are a lot of invasive plants out of control”.

“Weeds along the Diamond Creek and Watery Gully Creek and on private properties have been exploding for years; and notifications to Council seem to fall on deaf ears”.

There is a loss of native vegetation due to land clearing for housing and development

The loss of native vegetation in Nillumbik due to land clearing for housing and development. The main concerns revolve around the significant loss of trees and vegetation, particularly mature ones, due to subdivision and development. The negative effects of land clearing on waterways, erosion, and the spread of weeds are also highlighted. There is a sense of frustration over the lack of enforcement and accountability for landowners who clear vegetation illegally or fail to replant trees as required. Criticism is also directed towards Council for a perceived lack of action and resources in addressing these issues and protecting native vegetation.

“Mature trees pruned or removed for road widening”.

“Our canopy, therefore, wildlife habitat and carbon reducing capacity, is declining rapidly and every mature tree must be treated with weighted significance”.

“The illegal clearing of native vegetation and the mechanical spread of weed species seed in the process”.

The decline in bird species and presence of feral animals is a concern

Concerns about the impact on local wildlife, with the loss of habitat leading to a decline in bird and small mammal populations, and the displacement of native species by invasive and feral animals. A noticeable absence in bird diversity and reduction in bird numbers (such as the King Parrots, Rosellas, Spotted Quail-thrush, and Jacky Winter), with several species not seen for many years. The increase in the population of noisy miners and Indian miners is a factor displacing other bird species. Concerns about the presence of deer, foxes and rabbits, which can negatively impact the local wildlife and ecosystem and feral cats and other animals contributing to biodiversity decline.

“Increase in feral cats and other animals”.

“Over the last 3 years I noticed a significant decline in tree canopy in my closest area due to permitted and non-permitted tree clearing. I have noticed a decline in bird variety, we have stopped seeing King parrots and Rosellas and mostly have crows, currawongs, magpies, and noisy miners”.

“Too many deer every night, they do not just stop after the alleged autumn ‘rut’, going on all year. They destroy everything ecologically fragile”.

There is a need for stronger enforcement and management by Council and some landowners in protecting biodiversity

Some dissatisfaction with a perceived lack of enforcement and action by Council, particularly in the areas of illegal clearing of native vegetation on large private landholdings, and mismanagement of green wedge parcels. A need for stronger enforcement and resources to be committed to meaningful action plans for biodiversity, including setting a baseline of the current state of the environment and tracking performance over time.

“The strategy needs to build on this foundation ... a meaningful action plan, and additional resources”.

“There must be a commitment to setting a baseline of the current state of the environment, to enable tracking of performance over time”.

“Where properties in the Green Wedge have been reported for destruction of Indigenous vegetation Council officers do not seem to authorise any enforcement to dissuade them, and other landowners, from doing the same”.

The increase in urbanization and the declining health of waterways, including the Diamond Creek

Concerns about the condition of water or creeks and quality of habitats, particularly in Diamond Creek, due to issues such as weed infestations, erosion, litter, and declining water quality. Creeks are overgrown with invasive plants. Calls for more regular monitoring and control of these issues to protect and improve the health of the waterways.

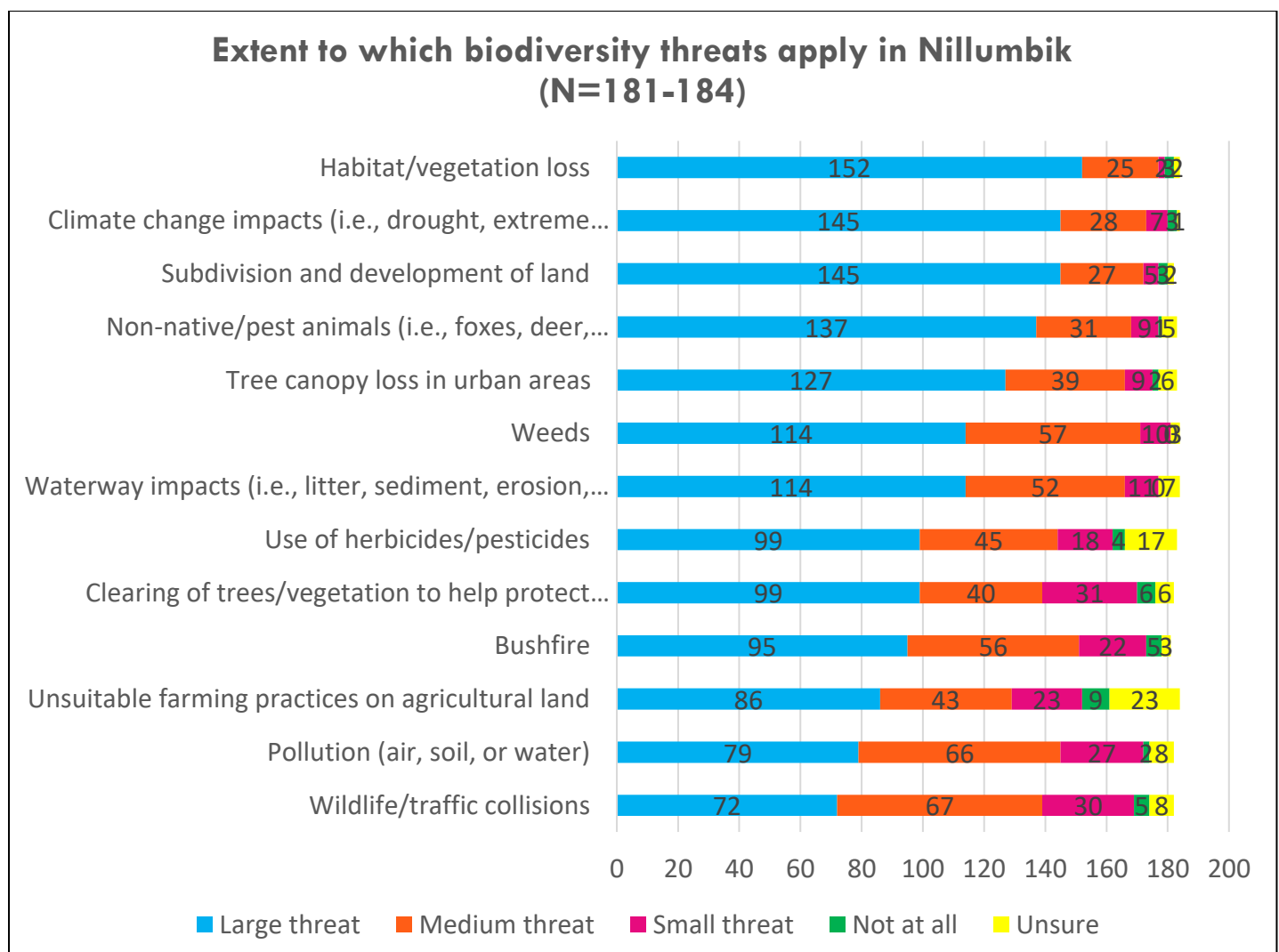
“Decline in health of waterways and increase in erosion”.
“Health of the creeks does not look to be in a good state with litter and erosion”.
“The quality of diamond creek and the rapidly declining habitat for platypus”.

4.3 Views on threats to biodiversity in Nillumbik

Survey participants were asked to what extent they think biodiversity threats apply in Nillumbik and presented with a prescribed listing of 13 statements each with five response options.

Figure 4.5 shows the majority of participants rated most of the biodiversity threats as a large or medium threat in Nillumbik. The top five threats to biodiversity most frequently identified as a Large threat for Nillumbik were Habitat/vegetation loss (152 or 82.6% of participants), Climate change impacts (145 or 78.8%) and Subdivision and development of land (145 or 78.8%), Non-native/pest animals (137 or 74.9%), and Tree canopy loss in urban areas (127 or 69.4%).

Figure 4.5. Extent to which biodiversity threats apply in Nillumbik (Survey)



Survey participants were then invited to describe other known biodiversity threats in Nillumbik and 107 participants provided a personalised response. Some responses repeated threats shown in Figure 4.5 and only other or new threats are paraphrased below, many of which signal the need for education, enforcement, and sustainable land management practices:

- Insufficient enforcement of regulations.
- Invasion by Noisy miner birds that displace other bird species and cause a decline in biodiversity.
- Lack of resident understanding and education about biodiversity and ecological processes and lack of understanding of biological processes by land management authorities.
- Lack of support for maintaining existing undisturbed parklands.
- Light pollution.
- Non-compliance with land management practices and regulations that protect biodiversity.
- Soil disruption and degradation.
- The management of domestic animals.

Stakeholder workshop participants were asked what they thought are the current threats and challenges to biodiversity in Nillumbik now and over the next 10 to 20 years and provided the following comments which have been grouped by commonality where applicable:

- Bushfire management actions: Clearing of understory in the name of bushfire management. Bushfire risk this year because of el-nina – back burning is needed.
- Climate change: Climate change and climate change threats.
- Council strategy, accountability, and enforcement: Council not having an urban forest strategy, being understaffed, lack of compliance and follow up, enforcement of protections. Measuring actions/ targets for increases. Not having measures in the strategy such as measurable actions or targets for increase in mature tree canopy, increase in habitat links, reduction in waste by households and businesses etc. Accountability if targets are not met.
- Habitat degradation: Loss of habitat and urban environment.
- Human behaviours: Lack of understanding about the environment biodiversity being in a critical state, level of ignorance and inactivity. People objecting to trees because they cannot park their cars, lack of investment in where people live, lack of education.
- Incorporation of introduced species to the overall environment.
- Insufficient funding or resources: Lack of Government funding to support biodiversity and the need more resources for Council and community to take actions (i.e., money and staff). Lack of resourcing to meet targets, lack of money and resources to support groups to remove weeds. Not being able to implement the Biodiversity strategy.
- Lack of Indigenous planting.
- Pest plants and animals: Predation by foxes and cats, weeds and invasive species, Deer in Bungil Reserve, feral animals, and insects such as deer, fox, millipedes, and cats.
- Pressure on the green wedge.
- Recreational spaces and open cleared land that could be used for native vegetation or trees.
- Reduction to tree canopy: Removing tree canopy when developing, steady reduction of urban tree canopy, and loss of habitat and tree coverage, tree removal, and lack of controls for mature trees (stop their removal).

- Urban development: The sprawl into unbuilt land and pressure on the green wedge, houses that are too large on blocks, loss of habitat and urban environment due to development, and impact of development on waterways.
- Waste and chemicals: Waste and consumerism, widespread use of chemicals/ pesticides, rat poison.

Stakeholder workshop participants were also asked what they, the community, or their organisation is already doing to address biodiversity threats and challenges and provided the following comments which have been grouped by commonality where applicable:

- Climate conversations, climate café or climate stall at Eltham market
- Education forums and increasing community understanding and appreciation of biodiversity
- Friends of Grove Street Reserve have a masterplan to improve vegetation, habitat values and human connection with nature
- Native planting of endemic species
- Nillumbik is doing education sessions, forums, regular nature walks, and provides information to educate and promote actions that people can take
- Panton Hill Bushland Advisory Committee meets three times per year, works with schools, Indigenous groups, and others to protect and maintain the reserves from Kangaroo Ground to St Andrews. Volunteers do planting, weeding, protecting threatened species, orchids, and are checking boxes.
- Planting natives and removing weeds in the garden
- Schools are planting trees and raising awareness through education
- Using the legal system to keep Government accountable
- Weeding during monthly Landcare

4.4 Spotlight on urban tree canopy in Nillumbik

The topic of urban tree canopy is an important consideration for Nillumbik's Biodiversity Strategy and the new Urban Canopy Plan. Urban canopy and vegetation are important and have multiple functions and benefits for both the environment and people, improving community health and wellbeing, reducing urban temperatures, and supporting ecosystems and biodiversity.

The most frequently reported large threats to biodiversity in Nillumbik reported by survey participants were Habitat/ vegetation loss and Subdivision and development of land which are interconnected with tree canopy loss. Tree canopy loss in urban areas was also identified as a large or medium threat to biodiversity in Nillumbik by many survey participants. Many participants residing in the following Nillumbik suburbs and townships rated tree canopy loss as a large threat:

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| ▪ Bend of Islands (13 of 18 participants) | ▪ North Warrandyte (7 of 9) |
| ▪ Cottles Bridge (3 of 4) | ▪ Nutfield (2 of 2) |
| ▪ Diamond Creek (8 of 11) | ▪ Plenty (1 of 1) |
| ▪ Eltham (46 of 64) | ▪ Research (3 of 7) |
| ▪ Eltham North (8 of 11) | ▪ St Andrews (4 of 6) |
| ▪ Greensborough (1 of 1) | ▪ Wattle Glen (5 of 6) |

Participants expressed concerns about the reduction to tree canopy and importance of protection. Concerns related to the removal of tree canopy due to subdivision and urban development, a steady reduction of urban tree canopy, loss of habitat and tree coverage, tree removal, clearing trees for bushfire prevention, and lack of controls for mature trees (to stop removal). The majority of the same participants also rated the condition of biodiversity in Nillumbik as declining significantly or declining moderately.

5 Findings from the analysis of the community feedback - looking to the future

This section presents the findings from the analysis of the community feedback with a focus on biodiversity in Nillumbik, looking to the future. Findings and insights are presented regarding the most important actions for Council to take to protect and enhance biodiversity in Nillumbik as well as actions for community members and households. Other ideas and general feedback to inform the Biodiversity Strategy is also presented.

When asked to indicate the **three most important actions for Council to take to protect biodiversity in Nillumbik**, participants selected all of the listed actions to varying degrees. Many participants (124 or 55.1%) reported Greater use and enforcement of planning rules and other regulatory tools to protect trees/ native vegetation and other biodiversity on private land while 104 (or 46.2%) reported Embed consideration of nature and biodiversity into all Council decision-making (104 or 46.2%), and 88 or (39.1%) reported Advocate to state and federal governments to take diversity supportive actions.

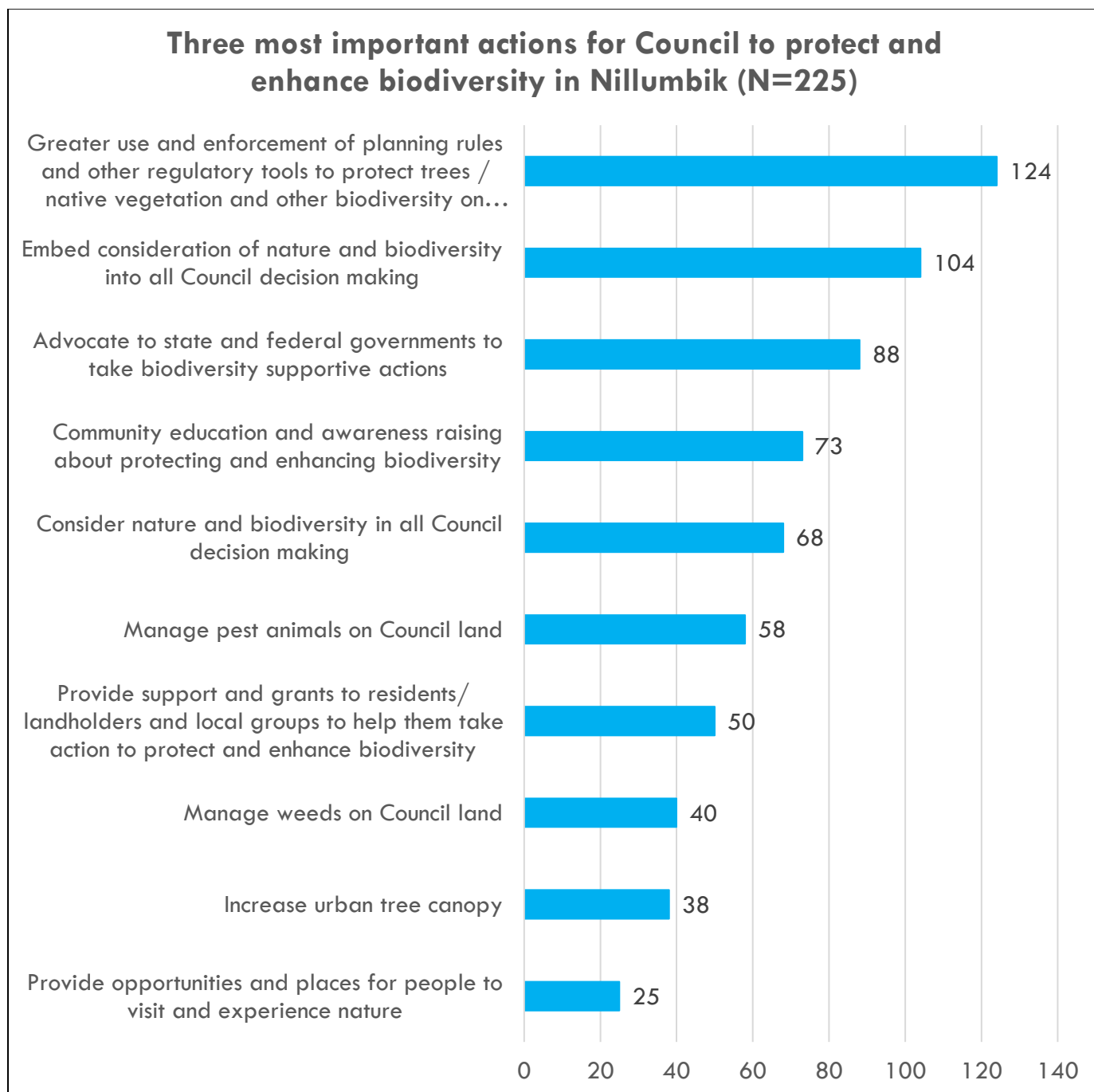
5.1 Most important actions for Council to protect and enhance biodiversity in Nillumbik

Survey participants, Youth Council survey participants, and place-based pop-up (Dotmocracy) participants were asked to indicate the three most important actions for Council to take to protect biodiversity in Nillumbik and presented with a prescribed listing of 10 statements.

As shown in Figure 5.1, all of the action statements were selected to varying degrees. Many participants selected Greater use and enforcement of planning rules and other regulatory tools to protect trees/ native vegetation and other biodiversity on private land (124 or 55.1%) and Embed consideration of nature and biodiversity into all Council decision-making (104 or 46.2%).



Figure 5.1. Most important actions for Council to take to protect biodiversity in Nillumbik (Survey, Youth Council survey, Pop-up)



5.2 Actions for community members to protect and enhance biodiversity in Nillumbik

Survey participants and place-based pop-up (Chatboard) participants were asked what actions they and others in the community could take to protect and enhance biodiversity in Nillumbik. 169 participants provided a personalised comment. The responses were reviewed and grouped into themes. Eleven themes emerged during the analyses and are presented in Table 5.1. Each theme is accompanied by a descriptive summary, indicator of the number of responses referring to a topic within the theme, and a selection of verbatim quotes which reflect the general sentiment in the feedback.

Table 5.1. Actions that community members could take to protect and enhance biodiversity (Survey and Chatboard)

<p>1. Educating the community about the importance of biodiversity and providing opportunities to get involved (63 responses)</p> <p>Raising awareness about the importance of biodiversity and ways that community members can protect, enhance, and support biodiversity. Sharing information and talking with neighbours, providing nature play experiences for children and schools. Providing opportunities for community members to learn more about the environment, monitoring biodiversity, and supportive actions they can take. Increasing awareness about weed and pest animal control to minimise harm to biodiversity.</p> <p><i>“Be(come) aware of the busy and fascinating non-human lives around us and learn more about them. The more we know, the more interesting they become and the more invested we become in them not disappearing”.</i></p> <p><i>“Talk about the importance of protecting the environment”.</i></p> <p><i>“Educate the community, participate in biodiversity activities, promote Biodiversity events”.</i></p>
<p>2. Participating in local ‘Friends of’ or community groups that are protecting biodiversity (55 responses)</p> <p>Joining and participating in local ‘Friends of’, Landcare, Nillumbio, FOWSP, BICA, Land for Wildlife, Trust for Nature, Round The Bend Conservation Cooperative or similar collectives and community groups. Volunteering with groups that comprise like-minded people who are actively increasing an appreciation of the natural environment, protecting the environment and biodiversity in Nillumbik.</p> <p><i>“Involvement in ‘Friends of’ and ‘Landcare’ groups which offer leverage to council inputs to protecting biodiversity”.</i></p> <p><i>“Join one or more of the many Friends groups in the Shire that are actively protecting biodiversity by removing weeds and restoring bushland by planting indigenous plants”.</i></p> <p><i>“Engage in the many activities/groups that support us in managing our environment”.</i></p>
<p>3. Appreciating biodiversity, actively planting trees and indigenous vegetation, and managing weeds in our own homes (49 responses)</p> <p>Getting out into nature and making time to appreciate it. Valuing and actively caring for biodiversity in our own homes and immediate environments. Actively prioritising and planting more trees. Increased planting of indigenous plant species, vegetation, and flora. Eliminating and managing noxious weeds. Creating wildlife habitats and environments that are welcoming for bees.</p> <p><i>“Manage our private land to enhance biodiversity”.</i></p> <p><i>“Landholders given awareness, could work harder to eliminate weed infestations (weed controls, machine hygiene), and to plant in ways to encourage native wildlife”.</i></p> <p><i>“Plant more native plants, get rid of weedy plants, start bee keeping”.</i></p>
<p>4. Protecting and enhancing bio-links and biodiversity habitats (36 responses)</p> <p>Looking after what we already have. Protecting and increasing bio-links and habitat throughout the landscape and along waterways while reducing disturbance. Actively cleaning up corridors, reducing landfill waste and litter, thinking about waste disposal, controlling grey water runoff, and eliminating the use of toxic chemicals. Consider the needs of natural life, reducing light pollution, and night lights unless for safety reasons.</p> <p><i>“Increase and protect bio-links (particularly habitat) throughout the shire – both rural areas and along creeks and through townships”.</i></p> <p><i>“Protect and enhance wildlife corridors/bio-links along waterways”.</i></p> <p><i>“Cut down on landfill waste, don’t use toxic chemical pesticides or herbicides”.</i></p>

<p>5. Advocating to Councillors to consider biodiversity when making decisions, resource actions from the Biodiversity Strategy, and advocate to other levels of government (36 responses)</p> <p>Advocating to Councillors to embed consideration of nature and biodiversity in Council decisions and to lobby state and federal governments to do more to protect the environment, biodiversity, habitat, and tree canopy. Urging Councillors to support and resource strong actions in the new Biodiversity Strategy and holding Council accountable for outcomes. Continually engaging with Council and Councillors about biodiversity, development, and land clearing. Protesting inappropriate new developments and reporting illegal activity which affects the environment and biodiversity.</p> <p><i>“Lobby Councillors to support resourcing the actions arising from this strategy and monitor how well the implementation of the strategy is going”.</i></p> <p><i>“Ensure that Council’s budget adequately supports all effort to improve Nillumbik’s biodiversity in both rural and urban areas”.</i></p> <p><i>“Continually engage with Council and councillors about the issues of biodiversity, development and land clearing”.</i></p>
<p>6. Encouraging responsible pet ownership, restraining domestic pets, and managing pest animals (29 responses)</p> <p>Encouraging responsible pet ownership. Restraining domestic pets by keeping cats inside or in large outdoor cages and keep dogs on-lead. Limit the number of domestic pets. Managing pest animals on Council land and discouraging animal grazing on roadways to avoid the loss of animal life and motor vehicle collisions. Controlling pest animals and using property fencing to contain feral pests.</p> <p><i>“Keep pets restrained. Enforce cat curfews and dogs on lead; discourage and limit the keeping of horses and goats on inappropriate terrain or property sizes”.</i></p> <p><i>“Discourage pet ownership and ensure that current pets are restrained (special cat and dog runs and enclosures, cats indoors and dogs on lead”</i></p> <p><i>“Manage pest animals on Council land”.</i></p>
<p>7. Managing and controlling existing weeds, and eliminating further invasive weeds (26 responses)</p> <p>Encouraging Council and community members to take responsibility for managing invasive weeds, controlling weeds, and working towards reducing weeds on Council land and private land. Undertaking weed control without glyphosate and other harmful chemicals and arranging community weeding sessions at reserves.</p> <p><i>“If we live in or near the bush, don’t plant invasive weeds or allow them to flourish along the road near us”.</i></p> <p><i>“Undertake weed control on my property without the use of glyphosate and other harmful chemicals”.</i></p> <p><i>“Control weeds on private land, and Council land through friends of groups and land care activities”.</i></p>
<p>8. Supporting Council’s controls and enforcement of land clearing regulations (24 responses)</p> <p>Supporting and advocating for existing Council controls when others are critical or resistant. Supporting Council’s enforcement of land clearing regulations. Strengthening the use and enforcement of planning rules and other regulatory tools to protect trees, native vegetation, and other biodiversity on private land. Increasing and protecting bio-links and habitat throughout the landscape while reducing disturbance. Increasing fines and penalties for the unauthorised removal of large trees, land clearing and other infringements relating to biodiversity.</p> <p><i>“Increase and protect bio-links/habitat throughout the landscape while reducing disturbance”.</i></p> <p><i>“The penalties for unauthorised large tree removal and land clearing are too affordable and not a deterrent for people to do the correct thing”.</i></p> <p><i>“Support Council’s enforcement of land clearing regulations on private properties – rural and residential zone”.</i></p>
<p>9. Increasing knowledge in land management, environmental management, and integrating Indigenous knowledge (20 responses)</p>

Managing land for biodiversity and protection. Educating landowners to take a precautionary approach to land management and consider the significance of their actions on the environment. Increasing knowledge in environmental management. Developing Land Management Plans for areas of great significance.

“Increase knowledge in environmental management”.
“Have a precautionary approach to land management”.
“Managing our land for biodiversity”.

10. Supporting candidates who value and prioritise the protection and reinvigoration of biodiversity and the natural environment (19 responses)

Supporting candidates nominating for Council who prioritise preserving, protecting, and restoring of biodiversity and support climate action. Voting for Councillors who value and will care for our environment and take action to protect and enhance the green wedge and enhance urban tree canopy.

“As a resident of Nillumbik, I will support candidates that prioritise the protection and reinvigoration of biodiversity”.
“Elect to Council only representatives who highly value our natural environment”
“I always attempt to support council candidates who have a strong stance on the environment and climate action”.

11. Balancing greening on roadsides and nature strips with animal and wildlife injuries (11 responses)

Planting nature strips and making better use of wide nature strips to grow plants that attract pollinators. While also considering clearing rural roadways of vegetation close to roads to discourage animal grazing and avoid the loss of animal life and motor vehicle collisions. Slowing drivers on the urban fringe, especially between dusk and dawn, to avoid colliding with native wildlife.

“Clear all rural roadways of vegetation close to roads to discourage animal grazing on roadways to stop the loss of animal life and motor vehicle collisions.”.
“I collect so much roadside litter, beer bottles, cyclists gel packs etc., just along my road”.

School workshop participants were asked what can be done to protect and improve biodiversity or nature at school and in the garden at home. The eight participants provided the following comments which have been grouped by commonality where applicable:

- Put the bins out on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesdays so less rubbish goes in the creek.
- School Environmental Leaders could monitor rubbish. Change the way kids deal with rubbish.
- Put up signs to tell people what to do with their rubbish and show them what happens when they litter.
- I want to see more plants. Plant more gardens, refresh old garden beds, and plant more plants near the creek.
- Have fences to protect gardens.
- Get better soil to plant more.
- Add more nesting boxes.
- Look at plants that attract bees and butterflies. Plant bushes for bees and birds. More bees, make more fruit.
- Plant some plants to attract frogs.
- When I get home I am going to make a little area to attract frogs and bees.

5.3 Other ideas and feedback to inform the Biodiversity Strategy

Survey participants, and Stakeholder Workshop participants were invited to share any other ideas to protect and enhance biodiversity in Nillumbik that they would like considered and if there was anything else that they would like to share to help inform the Biodiversity Strategy. 143 participants provided a personalised comment. The responses emphasise the importance of biodiversity and biodiversity being at the forefront of Council policies and decision making, with meaningful actions, resources, and outcomes, and are paraphrased below:

- Reinforce the importance of biodiversity. Biodiversity to guide Council decision making and actions, as biodiversity decline is a greater risk than bushfires.
- A healthy biodiversity can mitigate climate change and reduce risk.
- Stricter enforcement of planning rules and other regulatory tools to protect trees, native vegetation, and other biodiversity on private land.
- Measurable actions, with sufficient funding and resources
- Role of collaboration and education. Increase awareness and education about protecting and enhancing biodiversity.
- Guidance on good practice planting (use of water crystals, correct season etc.).
- Support and grants for residents, landholders, and local groups to act. Free plants for private land holders and discounted stakes and guards.

Stakeholder workshop participants, Youth Council survey participants, and place-based pop-up (Chatboard) participants were asked what they would like Council to consider. 41 participants provided personalised comments which emphasise a comprehensive approach to biodiversity protection that involves both the Council and the community, and includes both regulatory and educational measures, as paraphrased below:

- Reviewing and removing non-native plants
- The importance of community involvement and education
- The need for a robust regulatory system and enforcement
- Creating and protecting habitats
- Emphasising indigenous planting and land management
- Demonstrating Council accountability and reporting
- Provision of increased resourcing.

Stakeholder workshop participants were asked what they would like Council to trial, how they or their group could contribute, and what the priorities should be. Participants provided the following comments.

Council should consider...

- Future threats like wild pigs.
- Keeping the green wedge intact possibly expanding it.
- A climate and biodiversity lens on all decision making
- Supporting landowners
- Revegetation all lawn areas
- Much stronger penalties for destroying nature and biodiversity
- Reflect the priority of biodiversity in resourcing
- Urgent and bold action

Let's trial a....

- 24hr cat curfew
- Enforce the current curfew
- Stewardship program for volunteers

- Supporting schools / groups to adopt an area
- Ban lawns
- Schools program
- Biodiversity credits for households
- Different fencing methods to allow for Indigenous species and keeping pest animals out, having gates.
- Welcome pack for new residents that includes information about biodiversity, the Green Wedge, what residents can and cannot do

The priority should be....

- Advocacy: Advocate to VCAT not to overturn Council's planning decisions. Advocacy on a macro level to state and federal government. State and federal lobbying
- Communication and education: Education of community. Really communicate that biodiversity sits at the core of Council's values and is part of all decision-making. Gain knowledge, formulate your ideas, contribute them to community
- Council planning, resourcing, role-modelling, and accountability: A coherent action plan. An action plan that supports meaningful change not only measuring, mapping, assessing and identifying (as per the previous strategy action plan). Adequate resourcing. Council accountability. Need our CEO completely onboard. Appropriately informed Council executive management. Council must be exemplary in all actions. Evaluation of existing and future strategy, reporting of progress and regular KPI updates
- Restoring understory
- Weed and pest control
- Elect people to Government who will act
- Protect, protect, protect. Reinvigorate, reinvigorate, reinvigorate



Have your say- Biodiversity Strategy

Nillumbik Council is developing a new Biodiversity Strategy to guide the protection and enhancement of biodiversity across the Shire.

Biodiversity is all the different kinds of life you'll find in one area—the variety of animals, plants, fungi, and even microorganisms like bacteria that make up our natural world. All of these species and organisms work together in ecosystems, like an intricate web, to maintain balance and support life on earth and many things that humans require such as clean water, fresh air, medicines, and food.

We are seeking seek further feedback from the community to inform the development of our new draft strategy. Following this round of consultation, a draft Biodiversity Strategy will be developed and presented to the community for further input and feedback.

Share your thoughts by completing this survey.

You can also complete the survey online at Participate Nillumbik – go to participate.nillumbik.vic.gov.au/biodiversity-strategy or scan the QR code.



Feedback closes at 11.59pm on Sunday 30 July 2023.

To return by mail or email:

Attn: Environment Team
Nillumbik Shire Council
Civic Drive (PO Box 476) Greensborough
VIC 3088
Or by email: nillumbik@nillumbik.vic.gov.au



Survey

Name (required) _____

Email (required) _____

Section 1: Your views and experience of biodiversity in your local area within Nillumbik

Q1. Overall, **how important** to you is protecting and enhancing biodiversity in your local area? (select/tick one response option)

- ☐ Very important
- ☐ Important
- ☐ Neutral (neither important or unimportant)
- ☐ Slightly important
- ☐ Not at all important

Q2. What do you **value or enjoy** most about biodiversity in your local area?

Q3. Overall, how would you rate the condition of biodiversity in Nillumbik?

- ☐ Improving
- ☐ Static
- ☐ Declining moderately
- ☐ Declining significantly
- ☐ Unsure

Q4. To what extent do you think the following common biodiversity threats apply in your local area? (select/tick one response per row)

Potential threat to biodiversity	Not a threat	Small threat	Medium threat	Large threat	Unsure
Bushfires					
Clearing of trees and vegetation to help protect homes from bushfire					
Climate change impacts (i.e., drought, extreme weather events)					
Subdivision and development of land					
Habitat/vegetation loss					
Weeds					

Non-native / pest animals (such as foxes, deer, rabbits, feral cats)					
Pollution (air, soil, or water)					
Tree canopy loss in urban areas					
Unsustainable farming practices on agricultural land					
Use of herbicides and pesticides					
Waterway impacts (i.e., litter, sediment, erosion, flow)					
Wildlife/traffic collisions on roadsides					

Q5. If you are aware of other biodiversity threats in Nillumbik that are not listed, please list them here.

Section 2: Protecting and enhancing biodiversity in Nillumbik – looking to the future

Q6. In your view, what are the **three** most important actions that **Council can take** to protect and enhance biodiversity in Nillumbik? (Tick 3 options only)

- ☐ Advocate to state and federal governments to take biodiversity supportive actions
- ☐ Consider nature and biodiversity in all Council decision making
- ☐ Greater use and enforcement of planning rules and other regulatory tools to protect trees / native vegetation and other biodiversity on private land
- ☐ Manage pest animals on Council land
- ☐ Manage weeds on Council land
- ☐ Increase urban tree canopy
- ☐ Embed consideration of nature and biodiversity into all Council decision making
- ☐ Community education and awareness raising about protecting and enhancing biodiversity
- ☐ Provide support and grants to residents/ landholders and local groups to help them take action to protect and enhance biodiversity
- ☐ Provide opportunities and places for people to visit and experience nature

Q7. What actions could **you and others in the community** take to protect and enhance biodiversity in Nillumbik?

Section 3: Your thoughts about biodiversity across Nillumbik

Q8. Please share any other ideas to protect and enhance biodiversity in Nillumbik that you would like Council to consider.

Q9. Overall, how would you rate the current condition of biodiversity across **Nillumbik**?

- ☐ Poor
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Unsure

Q10. Do you think biodiversity across **Nillumbik**..... (tick one)

- ☐ Is improving
- ☐ Is staying the same
- ☐ Is declining
- ☐ Is declining significantly
- ☐ Unsure

Q10a. If you want; tell us why (you may like to provide an example)

Q11 Do you think biodiversity in **your local area** (eg close to where you live)? (tick one)

- ☐ Is improving
- ☐ Is staying the same
- ☐ Is declining
- ☐ Is declining significantly
- ☐ Unsure

Q11a If you want; tell us why (you may like to provide an example)

Q12. Is there anything else, in addition to the feedback you have already provided, that you'd like to tell us that would help inform the biodiversity strategy.

Section 4: About you

Please tell us a little bit about yourself so that we can understand who we're hearing from. We value diversity and want to ensure our consultations are capturing a cross-section of our community.

Q13. Age (select/tick one response option)

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5-9 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 35-44 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 10-14 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 45-54 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15-19 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 55-64 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 20-24 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 65-84 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 25-34 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 85+ years |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say |

Q14. Gender (select/tick one response option)

- ☐ Boy/man
- ☐ Girl/woman
- ☐ Non-binary
- ☐ Prefer not to say
- ☐ Prefer to self-describe (please state): _____

Q15. I identify as (select all that apply)

- ☐ A person with a disability (inclusive of mental illness)
- ☐ A person identifying as LGBTIQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer+)
- ☐ A person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent
- ☐ A person speaking English as a second language
- ☐ None of the above
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q16. Relationship to Nillumbik (select/tick one response option)

- ☐ Live

☐ Work

☐ Play

☐ Visit

Q17. Where do you live? (select/ tick one response option)

☐ Arthurs Creek

☐ Greensborough

☐ Research

☐ Bend of Islands

☐ Hurstbridge

☐ Smith's Gully

☐ Christmas Hills

☐ Kangaroo Ground

☐ St Andrews

☐ Cottles Bridge

☐ Kinglake

☐ Strathewen

☐ Diamond Creek

☐ Kinglake West

☐ Watsons Creek

☐ Doreen

☐ North Warrandyte

☐ Wattle Glen

☐ Eltham

☐ Nutfield

☐ Yan Yean

☐ Eltham North

☐ Panton Hill

☐ Yarrambat

☐ Plenty

☐ Other _____
(please specify)

Q18. How did you hear about this consultation?

☐ Nillumbik News

☐ Postcard

☐ Word of mouth

☐ Email

☐ Facebook

☐ Instagram

☐ Pop-Up

☐ Other _____ (please specify)

Privacy Collection Notice

Nillumbik Shire Council is inviting submissions for the purpose of facilitating effective community consultation in relation to the Biodiversity Strategy. The information will be collated into a Consultation Report which will be published in a Council or Committee business paper considering this strategy, and will help Council understand the views of the community. Name/s and contact information will be redacted.

Personal information may be used to keep you informed in relation to this engagement and will not be shared with third parties without your consent unless we are permitted or required to by law.

If you do not provide the mandatory information then your submission cannot be accepted.

You have the right to access and correct your personal information. Enquiries for access should be made to the Privacy Officer 9433 3271, privacy@nillumbik.vic.gov.au or PO Box 476, Greensborough Vic 3088.