

Nillumbik Green Wedge Management Plan Community Engagement Report

AUGUST 2018



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Introduction

An introduction from Nillumbik Shire Council

Nillumbik Shire Council is asking the community to help it prepare a new Green Wedge Management Plan to guide the future of our iconic rural areas, the 'Green Wedge', which covers 91 per cent of the Shire. We're asking:

'What is the best way for us to manage Nillumbik's Green Wedge, now and in the future?'

Thank you to everyone in our community who shared their thoughts and experiences of the Green Wedge through the six week community engagement period from late May until mid-July 2018. Feedback was captured through survey, community workshops, sharing stories and photos, and by popping in to our Coffee and Chat sessions.

Everything we heard through the community engagement phase is summarised in this report, and will be presented to the Community Panel and provided to the wider community.

The Community Panel is made up of 40 randomly selected members from the community. The panel will sit for five days from August to October 2018 to hear about and consider the many issues impacting the management of the Green Wedge. The panel will make recommendations to Council that will inform the preparation of a draft Green Wedge Management Plan.

Further community consultation on the draft Green Wedge Management Plan will take place over a 3 month period from December 2018 until March 2019. Council will consider submissions from the community and the final plan will be presented to Council for adoption by June 2019.

Methods of engagement

An extensive community engagement process was undertaken including:

1. 10 facilitated community workshops with 181 people attending.
Workshops held were for rural landowners (3 workshops), wider community (2 workshops), Landcare, Friends of Groups, tourism and business operators, equine community and CFA members.
2. A survey which received 688 responses.
3. A youth survey which received 48 responses.
4. Online stories about the Green Wedge which received 38 responses.
5. 23 coffee and chat sessions and 3 attendances at markets to collect stories.
6. 40 drawings of the Green Wedge by primary school children and 1 piece of artwork from Nillumbik Youth Theatre Group.
7. 7 additional responses outside the formal process.

This report

This report has been developed by Wayfarer Consulting. Wayfarer Consulting are an independent consultancy specialising in community engagement, facilitation, report and strategy development.

This document reports on the key themes raised during community engagement activities. All comments received via the surveys and workshops were reviewed and key themes established. The comments were then grouped into the most relevant themes and quantified. Where multiple themes were mentioned the main theme was used. Where it was not possible to establish a clear theme, comments were described as “other”. Examples of actual comments have been included to provide context. The comments are provided as they were written and so may include colloquialisms and value statements. These have been left in to honour the intent of the comment, small typos and spelling mistakes have been corrected. All comments can be found in Appendix 3 (available in a separate document).

The responses indicated under each graph refer to the actual number of responses. In some cases people may not have responded to individual questions so the numbers may differ from the number of people engaged. In the workshops, attendees often worked in groups, so the number of responses represents the number of times feedback was recorded rather than the number of people it may represent.

Differences in responses between residents living in rural and urban areas have been analysed and where the difference was greater than 10%, these have been highlighted.

Comments that have been received via the online story option, coffee and chat sessions and comments received outside the formal engagement process have not been themed but are provided, verbatim, in Appendix 3 as a separate document along with all verbatim comments received as part of all processes.

Key findings

The key findings of all engagement activities are provided below.

What I like about the Green Wedge

Respondents indicated that the key elements they liked about the Green Wedge were:

- Space, peace and wellbeing – this related particularly to how the Green Wedge made people feel, an appreciation of views and fresh air along with the less stressful environment.
- Environment, biodiversity, plants and animals – this related to the importance of the natural environment for plants and animals as well as humans.

What are the challenges of living, working and visiting the Green Wedge?

The challenges cited by respondents included:

- Over development and over population – this was a consistent theme with concerns that the population will be increased and the area developed further. While the term “over development” was used by respondents, the meaning of this term is not definitive and may not be consistently used by respondents.
- Transport issues – particularly poor quality and congested roads and lack of good public transport options. Lack of safe cycling and horse riding options were also mentioned.
- Bushfire – the risk of bushfires and the need to manage land to reduce its impacts.
- Environmental degradation – a reduction in the quality of the land through poor land management, development and neglect.
- Costs – for individuals living in the Green Wedge and the importance of finding funding options from other levels of governments, to reduce the financial pressure on local residents of maintaining the Green Wedge.
- Balance – finding the balance between people and the environment and between different groups, such as farmers, conservationists, recreational users who live, work and spend leisure time in the Green Wedge.
- Planning – difficult, costly and time intensive and unfair planning processes were considered a challenge by some respondents.

What are the challenges the Green Wedge will face in the future?

The future challenges were broadly similar to those currently experienced with the addition of:

- The possible lack of job and business opportunities.
- Climate change and the associated risks such as bushfire, lack of water and environmental damage.

What are the opportunities for the Green Wedge?

The opportunities for the Green Wedge broadly mirror the challenges:

- Health and wellbeing – utilising the Green Wedge for health and wellbeing services and industries and to educate people about the environment and its opportunities to improve human health and wellbeing.
- Improve infrastructure – to encourage people to come to the Green Wedge and to assist the local community in day to day activities.
- Community building – to build on the community strengths and work with existing groups and develop a shared understanding of living in the Green Wedge.
- Sustainable tourism – to look at tourism opportunities to encourage people into the Green Wedge and local towns.
- Environmental Protection – the opportunity to protect the Green Wedge for future generations.

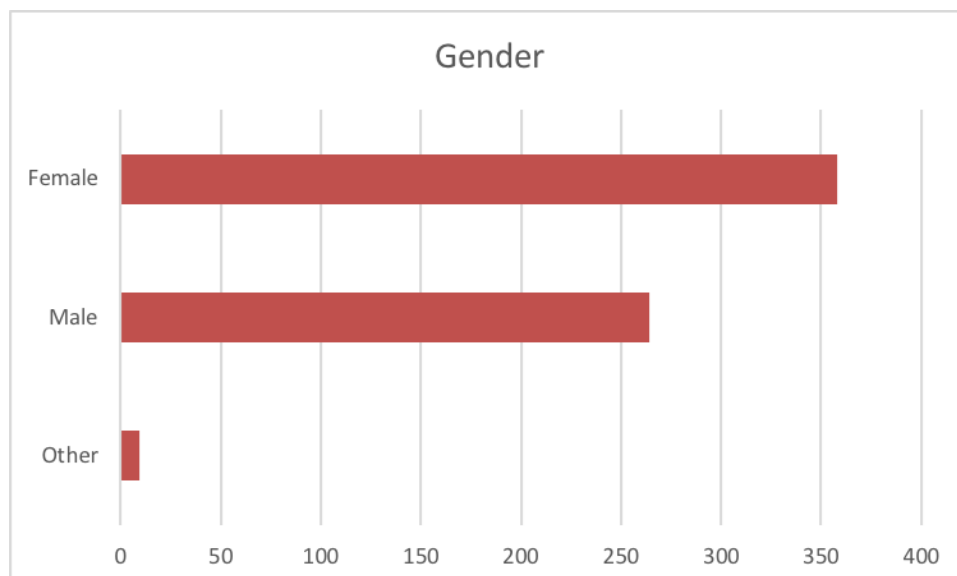
Any other comments

Survey respondents were invited to provide any further comments and the strong response was to protect the Green Wedge and ‘not mess it up’.

Who we heard from

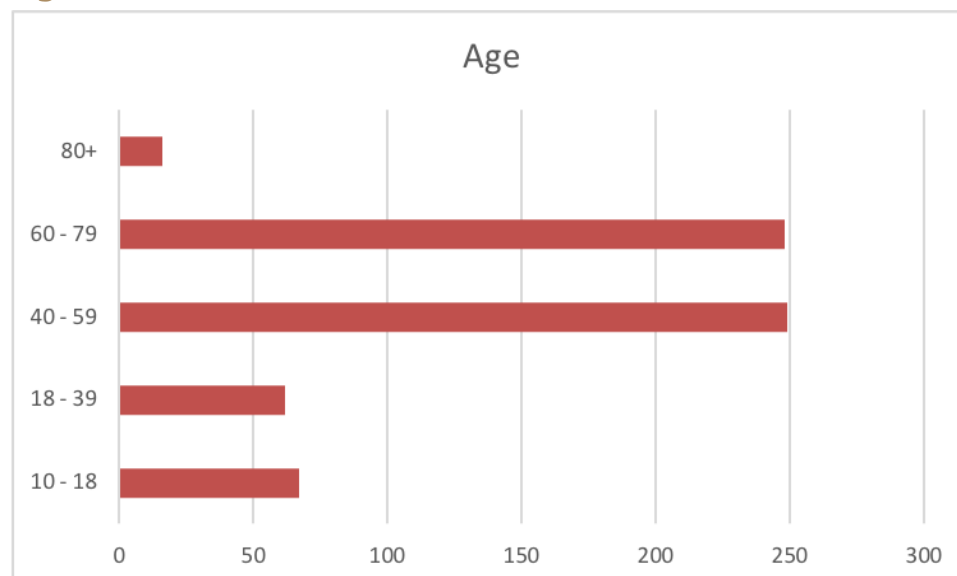
Survey respondents were asked to provide some basic data about who they are and their relationship to the Green Wedge. Not every respondent provided these details, the number of responses to the question is provided under each graph.

Gender



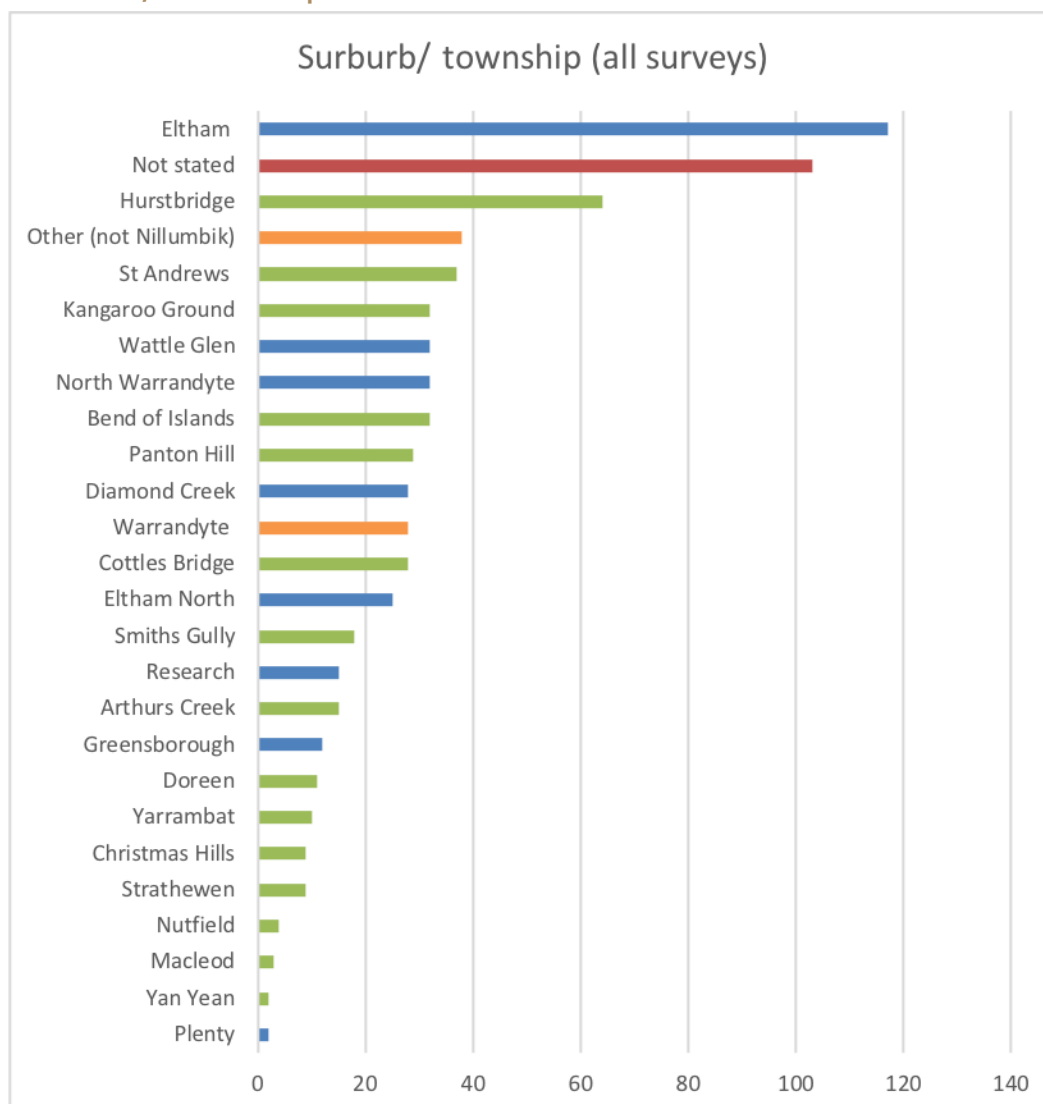
Responses: 631

Age



Responses 642

Suburb/township



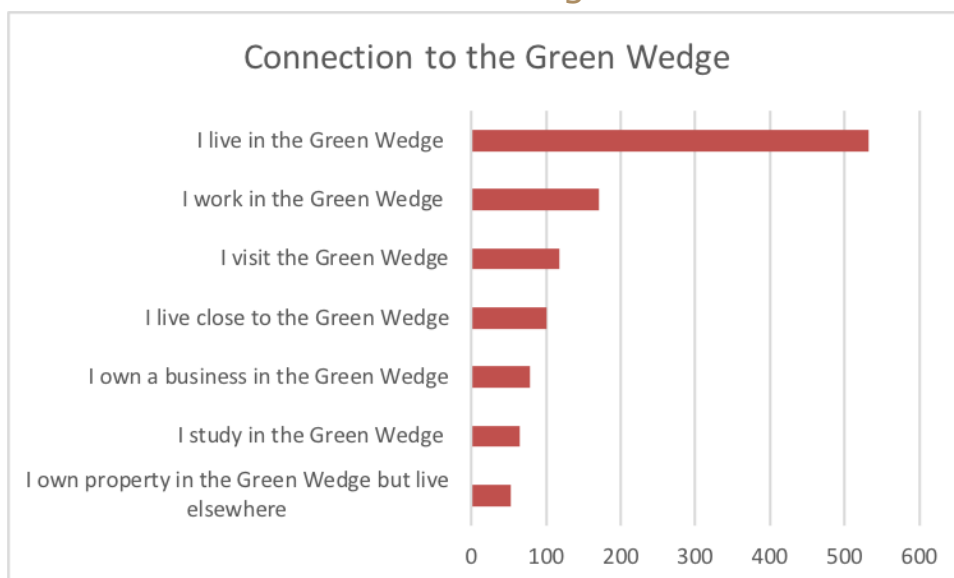
Responses: 631

Key

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|
| ■ | Rural |
| ■ | Urban |
| ■ | Outside Shire |
| ■ | Not stated |

The suburbs of Doreen, Greensborough, Eltham North and Yan Yean are located both within Nillumbik and neighbouring municipalities. For the purposes of this report, respondents who reside in these suburbs were assumed to all be residents of the Shire.

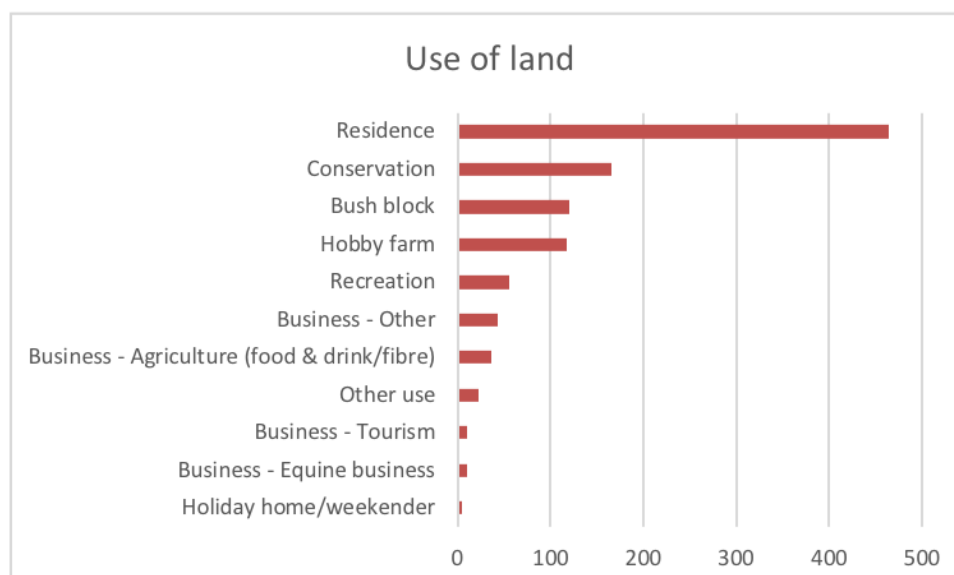
Connection to the Green Wedge



Responses: 1115 (multiple responses permitted)

* While the majority of respondents stated that they reside in the Green Wedge (77%), the number of survey respondents residing in the rural area of Nillumbik was 40%.

Use of land



Responses: 1048 (multiple responses permitted)

The results

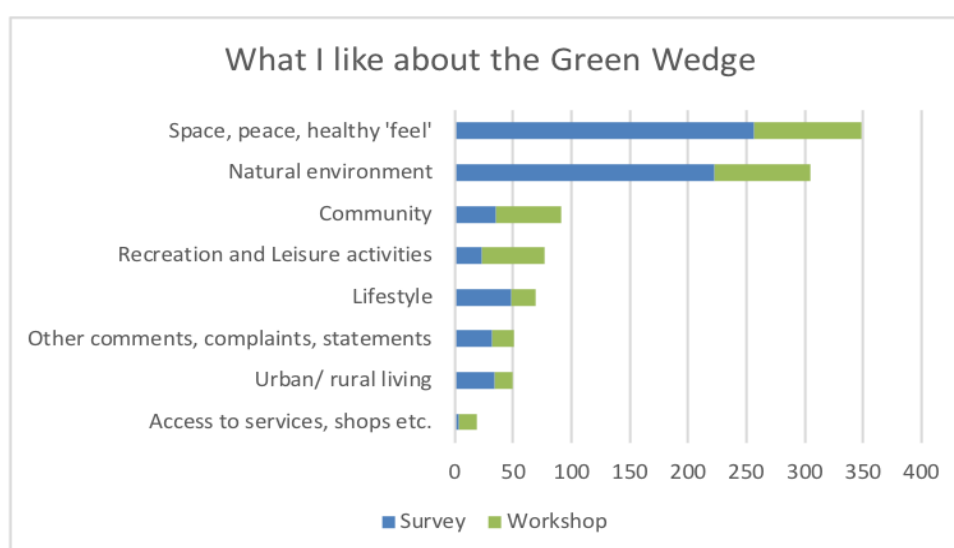
This section reports on the result of the main survey and the workshops. Workshops used the same questions as the survey, to allow for easier analysis and provide continuity. The Youth Survey responses can be found on page 43. Responses have been themed and quantified. Examples of comments have been used to illustrate the themes. The examples of comments have been provided verbatim and may include colloquialisms and value statements. Minor spelling errors have been corrected to improve readability.

Rural and urban comparisons

The results of all questions were compared to see if there were any significant differences between the answers of people living in rural and urban areas of Nillumbik. A total of 275 survey responses from people living in rural areas and 246 from people living in urban areas were received however not all respondents answered every question. Where the responses from urban and rural residents varied by greater than 10% these have been indicated. Survey responses from outside Nillumbik and responses where place of residence was not stated were not compared for the purpose of rural and urban comparison but have been included in all other sections of this report. Demographic data was not collected for workshop participants, so this has not been included.

Question: What do you like about living, working and/or visiting Nillumbik's Green Wedge?

The results over the range of engagement activities were broadly similar although workshop attendees were more likely to indicate a greater appreciation of the community and access to activities than survey respondents. This was an open-ended question and many responses touched on multiple themes.



Responses: 1012

Themes

Space, peace, healthy 'feel'

The most cited response from all engagement activities indicated the appreciation of the Green Wedge for the space, peace and healthy feel.

"It's been my home for 40 years and I love the atmosphere, the greenery, trees, wildlife, the (general) quiet, the community feel. Like living in the country and "far from the madding crowd" (till recently.)"

- Survey respondent

Natural Environment

The environment including plants, animals and the bush was also considered important by respondents from all engagement activities.

"Natural environment - native vegetation / waterways / flora and fauna, and that this is substantial and interconnected and still in remarkably good condition given the proximity to Melbourne."

- Workshop attendee

Community

The importance of the community, the friendliness, shared understanding and 'village feel' of the area.

"In retirement I turned my back on suburbia preferring space, a wide horizon and the quiet of a bush setting. I found more than that; a friendly welcoming community, people who care about each other and the environment in which they live and, after a bit of adjustment, an easy train ride to the cultural life of Melbourne."

- Survey respondent

Recreation and leisure activities

Respondents indicated they enjoyed the easy access to a range of activities including horse riding, cycling, bushwalking, sports and other activities such as visiting wineries and markets.

"Readily accessible green space & the opportunities that provides physical activities."

- Workshop attendee

Lifestyle

The lifestyle outlined included the space and access to land and the community spirit.

"I love the lifestyle it affords our family. We enjoy taking the family dog for a walk, riding our bikes along the Yarra River, bike tracks, playgrounds and off the track new spaces we find all the time."

We love living in a space that is green, has a great community spirit and people with like minded ideas about protecting our green space for future generations to come."

- Survey respondent

Urban/ rural living

Easy access to Melbourne, its services, job opportunities and facilities was considered important.

"Best of both worlds. We are close to beautiful open spaces but only less than one hour away from the exciting city area."

- Survey respondent

Access to services

Easy access to a range of services such as public transport, shops and education was something people liked about the Green Wedge.

"Being close to shopping facilities."

- Survey respondent

Rural and urban comparison

There were no notable differences between responses of urban and rural residents.

Question: What challenges have you experienced living, working in and/or visiting the Green Wedge?

Survey respondents and workshop attendees were invited to provide information on the social, environmental, economic and regulatory challenges they had experienced. These responses have been themed and quantified. Where responses were not directly related to the question or were unclear in their meaning they have been themed as 'other'.

The results from the workshops have been recorded without separating feedback based on social, environmental, economic and regulatory responses. The survey results and analysis captured data across these four broad categories and data and analysis is provided.

Workshop participants



Responses: 385

Themes

Over development and population growth

The pressure of development and the impacts on infrastructure, people and the environment was the most commonly cited challenge.

"Urban growth outside of Nillumbik & outside of Green Wedge placing pressures on infrastructure."

Workshop attendee

Transport Issues

Issues relating to transport included road congestion, lack of public transport and the frequency of public transport services.

“Traffic pressure on road system & neighbourhoods. Carving up communities.”

- Workshop attendee

Regulation and landowner autonomy

The number and types of regulations that must be adhered to was cited as a challenge. These included how land could be managed, and issues relating to building additional homes on allotments.

“Some allotments too large, should be able to have dual occupancy on 5 acres. Can be developed in harmony with environment or family needs.”

-Workshop attendee

Planning process issues

The challenges faced by the community in relation to Council decisions in terms of planning, planning process. Some comments related to the process to review the Green Wedge Management Plan as well as difficulties in working with Council.

“Clear up the contradictions with legislation/ guidelines for new tourism business.”

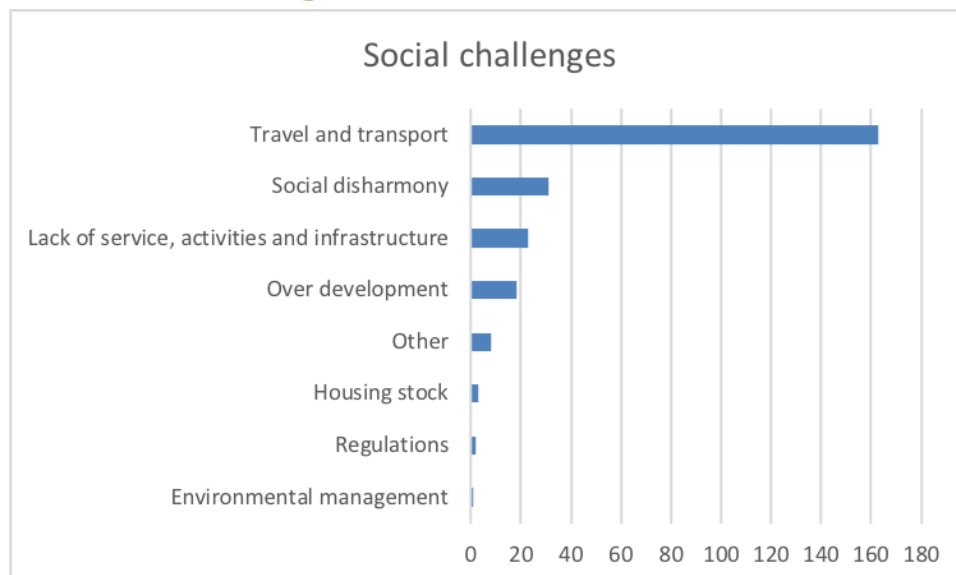
- Workshop attendee

Additional themes

Additional themes related to conflicting agendas such as land management for wildlife, agriculture and bushfire mitigation. Environmental, land and ecological management, with concerns over how some land is managed. There were a number of comments related to the general concern over bushfires.

Survey participants

Social challenges



Responses: 395

Themes

Travel and Transport

The most cited response to the current social challenges was related to travel and transport. This included the quality of roads, congestion and poor public transport services and difficulties parking at train stations.

"Traffic overflow impacting on road safety and congestion."

- Survey respondent

Social disharmony

There were a number of responses relating to community. Some indicated a dislike or distrust of other community members while others were more positive about how the community worked together and coexisted. Some concerns related to changes in the community and community expectations.

"Once this community was a wonderful and cohesive place, most people were polite and caring. Too much development has led to a rise in population pressure, disagreements and some pretty awful social media."

- Survey respondent

“Working at getting to know diverse people & ideals different from mine especially about environmental. This is interesting though & getting into community events & festivals. Land care, church all helps.”

- Survey respondent

Lack of services, activities and infrastructure

The general lack of services or poor functioning services was cited as a challenge. This included telecommunications, recreational infrastructure and basic services such as water and sewage.

“Communications is a challenge in that we do not have a reliable mobile or internet service. This is particularly important for emergencies & when there is a bushfire incident. Access to an ambulance service in an emergency.”

Survey respondent

Additional themes

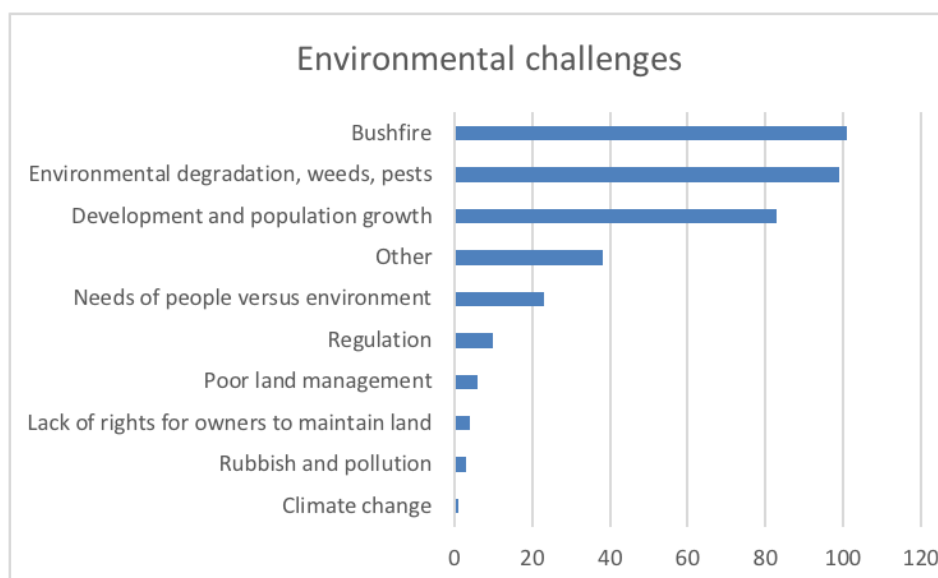
Other social challenges mentioned related to over development and particularly population growth and a lack of suitable housing stock in the area.

Rural and urban comparison

The notable differences were:

- Urban residents were more likely to cite (32%) over development and growth as a challenge than rural residents (21%).

Environmental challenges



Responses:668

Themes

Bushfire

The threat of bushfire was cited regularly as a specific challenge for people living in the Green Wedge. Issues related to bushfire preparation and management were also raised. Managing pressures of maintaining the bush feel of the Green Wedge while making it safe from bushfire was a common theme.

"We were very worried by the Black Saturday bushfires being so close to us, viewable from the KG Fire Tower. We are worried about the possibility of Warrandyte going up in a bushfire."

-Survey respondent

Other respondents were concerned about regulations preventing them from making their properties safe from bushfire threat.

"Bushfires are a challenge, we had 5 through our property in the early years. It is essential as property owners we are able to maintain our property so as to limit the spread of fire. Just as it is essential that bush fires can be controlled in the green wedge and not reached the densely vegetated urban areas."

- Survey respondent

Environmental degradation and pests

Concerns over the environment were raised. These particularly related to the current state of the environment. Some respondents believed that the environment was not being well managed and indicated issues related to weeds and feral and other animals (such as kangaroos).

"There are large pockets of weeds growing along road ways that then spread into private property, the increase in noisy minor birds is also a concern."

- Survey respondent

"Weeding to preserve and manage the bush can be hard work but worth the effort. Bushfire protection is an ever-present challenge, but each year we make improvements and learn more survival skills."

- Survey respondent

Development and population growth

The issue of development is a consistent theme throughout the consultation. In terms of the environmental challenge, development, particularly related to population growth, was considered a particular threat to the environment of the Green Wedge.

"The encroachment of development on these open spaces, and the slow destruction of native bush. (Illegal) Land clearing appears to be on the rise in this Shire over the past 2 years."

- Survey respondent

Additional themes

Other environmental challenges related to the challenge of managing the Green Wedge for the needs of people and the environment, and the difficulty in getting the balance right. The problem of land not being managed appropriately and the difficulty that regulation placed on landowners and the rights of owners to manage their land as they consider appropriate were also raised.

"Every weed on my property has more rights than I do. The Council has taken an extremely harsh view on preserving the lives of every single living at all costs."

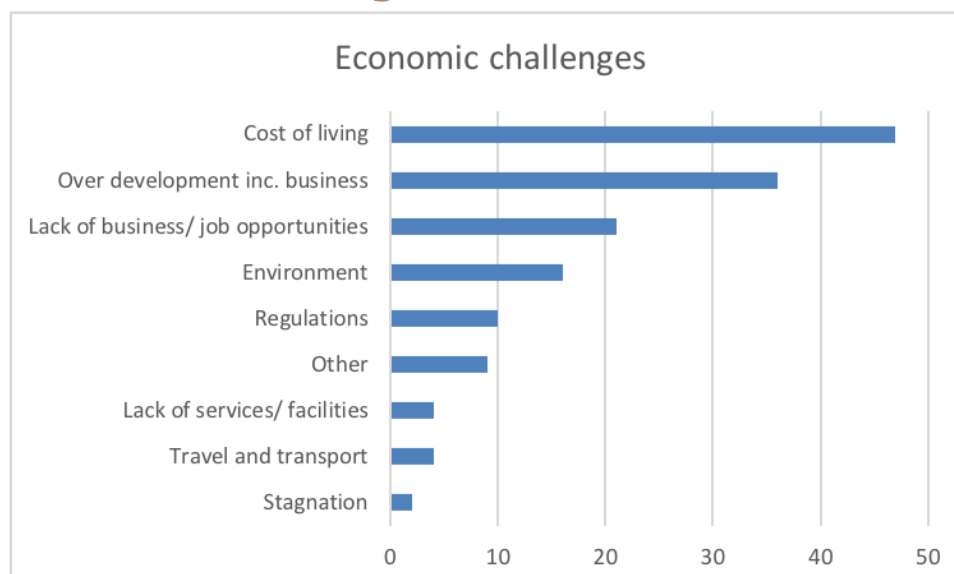
- Survey respondent

Rural and urban comparison

The notable differences were:

- Urban residents were more likely to cite (32%) development and population growth as a challenge than rural residents (16%).
- Rural residents were more likely to cite (36%) bushfire as a challenge than urban residents (24%).

Economic challenges



Responses: 149

Themes

Cost of living/finance and funding

Issues relating to the cost of living in the Green Wedge were cited as key challenges. Key costs related to rates, housing, transport and access to services. Some respondents linked the cost of living to the need to find additional ways to fund the Green Wedge including assistance from other levels of government or increasing the rate base.

"Our Council is too small and consequently rates are too high. This places financial stress on people who already live here."

- Survey respondent

Over development, including business

Over development of the Green Wedge in terms of housing growth and business growth was cited as a challenge, particularly large business or tourist development and activities.

"The balance between tourism and historic use of the land needs to be respected."

- Survey respondent

Lack of business / job opportunities

The lack of both business and employment opportunities was considered a challenge. Removing the impediments to business and job growth was considered important by some. The types of potential business suggested varied from small specialist businesses to agriculture to tourism.

“Change land overlays to encourage agriculture and sustainable landcare for the owners now and future generations.”

- Survey respondent

Environment

The challenge to manage the environment and concerns over environmental damage were cited as a challenge.

“Short term pressure for economic gain via development, inappropriate subdivision, undermine long term opportunities that can achieve from environmental tourism.”

- Survey respondent

Additional themes

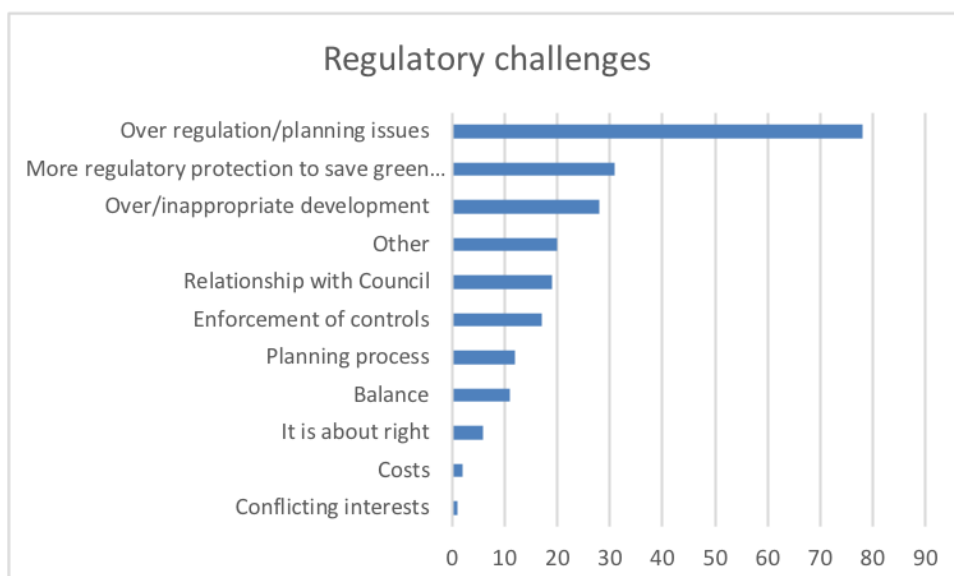
The pressures of development, regulations, travel and transport, and lack of services and facilities were also considered economic challenges to the Green Wedge.

Rural and urban comparison

The notable differences were:

- Urban residents were more likely to cite (30%) over development as a challenge than rural residents (13%).
- Rural residents were more likely to cite (40%) cost of living pressures as a challenge than urban residents (21%).

Regulatory challenges



Responses: 225

Themes

Over regulation and planning issues

The most commonly cited regulatory challenge related to over regulation (as defined by respondent) and planning issues. This included the time and cost of obtaining permits and the volume of regulation related to living and running businesses in the Green Wedge.

"For many years, the GWMP and planning scheme has been rigged against people. It will take years of fighting to fix the problem."

- Survey respondent

More regulatory protection to save the Green Wedge

Some respondents indicated that there were not sufficient regulations or that they were not adequately enforced to protect the Green Wedge.

"I think there will be ongoing attempts to soften planning regulations to allow for increased housing density and more development."

- Survey respondent

"I find it difficult to understand the lack of follow up when illegal clearing and grazing is reported. Nothing happens. It's become common to knock down some bush on a Sunday, burn the heap and when a by laws officer turns up the next working day, there is no evidence and we are told they have to be caught in the act. Clearing by stealth."

- Survey respondent

Relationship with Council

Respondents indicated that working with Council particularly in relation to planning issues was a challenge with complex and time consuming processes. Some respondents indicated a lack of faith in Council process and Councillors.

"It is very difficult to deal with Council, especially over the Sacred Eucalypt issue. It is not easy for a pleb to apply for a planning permit. Easy for the (in the know) developers though. The Shire acknowledges physical disabilities but ignores mental. Someone who has anxiety and depression, for example, cannot make a planning application."

-Survey respondent

Additional themes

Other comments related to concerns about conflicting interests and the need to find a balance between the competing demands on the Green Wedge.

Rural and urban comparison

The notable differences were:

- Urban residents were more likely to cite (19%) relationships with Council as a challenge than rural residents (3%), although it should be noted that the numbers were very small (3 and 13).
- Rural residents were more likely to cite (51%) planning issues as a challenge than urban residents (21%).

Question: What challenges do you think Nillumbik's Green Wedge will face in the future?

Survey respondents and workshop attendees were invited to provide information on the social, environmental, economic and regulatory challenges they thought Nillumbik's Green Wedge would face in the future. These responses have been themed and quantified. Where responses were not directly related to the question or were unclear in their meaning they have been themed as 'other'.

Future social challenges



Responses: 395

Themes

Travel and transport

Travel and transport was the most commonly cited challenge, particularly poor public transport and road infrastructure that was not able to cope with population growth and was congested and poorly maintained.

"Transport continues to be a major problem. I think the introduction of more regular and more reliable bus services would be very beneficial."

- Survey respondent

"Getting around with all the traffic is a disaster. People are getting irritated with all the congestion, more road rage as a result."

- Survey respondent

Over development

Development, over development (as described by respondents), particularly related to population growth was a common theme. Pressure from developers and Melbourne's growing population was also mentioned. Some respondents commented on the pressure on infrastructure and green space as a result of this development.

*"Pressure to develop areas of the Green Wedge due to population growth.
Diminishing sense of community as more people move into the area.
The negative effect on our health and wellbeing with the loss of natural environment."*

- Survey respondent

"Challenges of increased development and population growth with accompanying increase in traffic adding to the threats to wildlife and our precious biodiversity."

- Survey respondent

Community disharmony

A range of challenges relating to community were cited including changes to the community, a lack of community interaction and a lack of shared values. Some respondents had challenges with individual people or neighbours.

"More and more people are moving out here to be "close to Melbourne" in a pleasant, rural environment but they don't live by the "neighbourly" rules. Often because of long commute times to/from work and commitments, they don't become part of a community and this fragment action means less volunteers in our small communities esp. CFA."

-Survey respondent

Additional themes

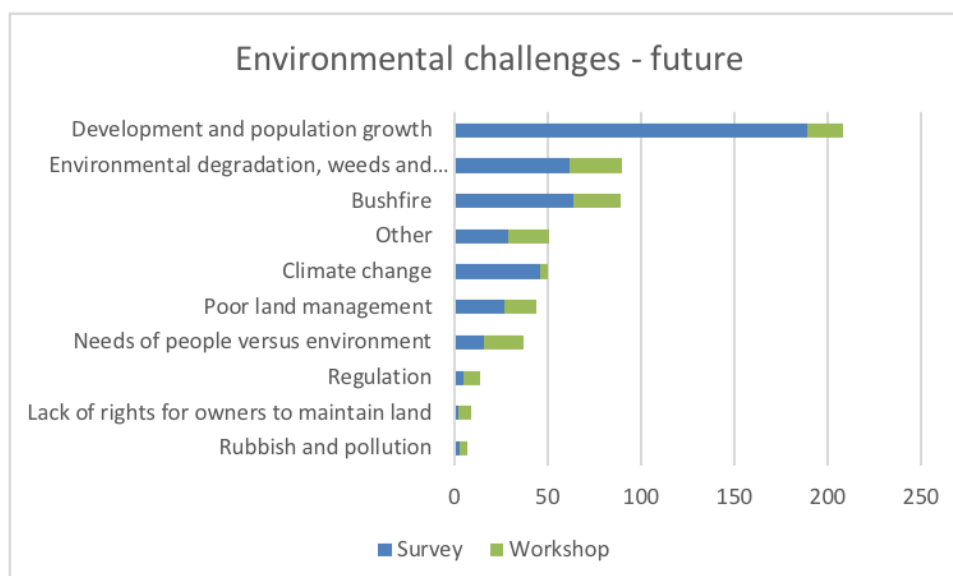
Other themes included a lack of services, activities and infrastructure particularly for sport and recreation.

Rural and urban comparison

The notable differences were:

- Urban residents were more likely to cite (32%) over development as a challenge than rural residents (21%).

Future environmental challenges



Responses: 599

Themes

Development and population growth

Development and population growth was the most cited response. Most comments were general in nature indicating a desire to resist development. Some comments indicated a concern over the impact of general population growth on the Green Wedge. A few comments related to concerns over subdividing bush blocks and incremental population growth. A few respondents indicated a concern that Council was pro development and would weaken existing controls.

"The unrelenting onslaught from population pressures, developers and business entrepreneurs will exert enormous pressure on the Green Wedge to create even more suburbs and business precincts. The economic development lobby, who have plenty of money to advertise and hire lawyers, will apply enormous pressure on decision makers to relax restrictions that protect the Green Wedge."

- Survey respondent

Environmental degradation weeds/ pests

There were concerns relating to environmental degradation. These were varied and included wild and feral animals, weed species, pollution and rubbish, and the loss of tree canopy.

"Understorey degradation. Unmanaged eucalypt regeneration. Massive wildfires. Cats and dogs. Spur drains being put in the wrong positions by Council when grading dirt roads, causing massive erosion and floristic changes. Weeds. Horses."

- Survey respondent

“Degraded waterways and riparian zones”

- Workshop attendee

Bushfire

Comments relating to bushfires indicated a general concern over the potential for bushfire and the threat to life, property and the environment, along with some concerns over the capacity for landowners to sufficiently prepare for bushfire.

The prevention of bushfires will continue to be of a major concern & how to contain fires before reaching urban residential zones”.

- Survey respondent

“Unmaintained bushland and spread to adjacent urban area is rising. Risk of catastrophic bushfire.”

-Workshop attendee

Climate change

Climate change was cited as a challenge in itself and also relating to other challenges such as bushfire, damage to the local environment and water supply.

“Climate change will continue to impact us and our natural environment, locally and regionally. Our challenge is to adapt and do things differently and to put the environment first.”

- Survey respondent

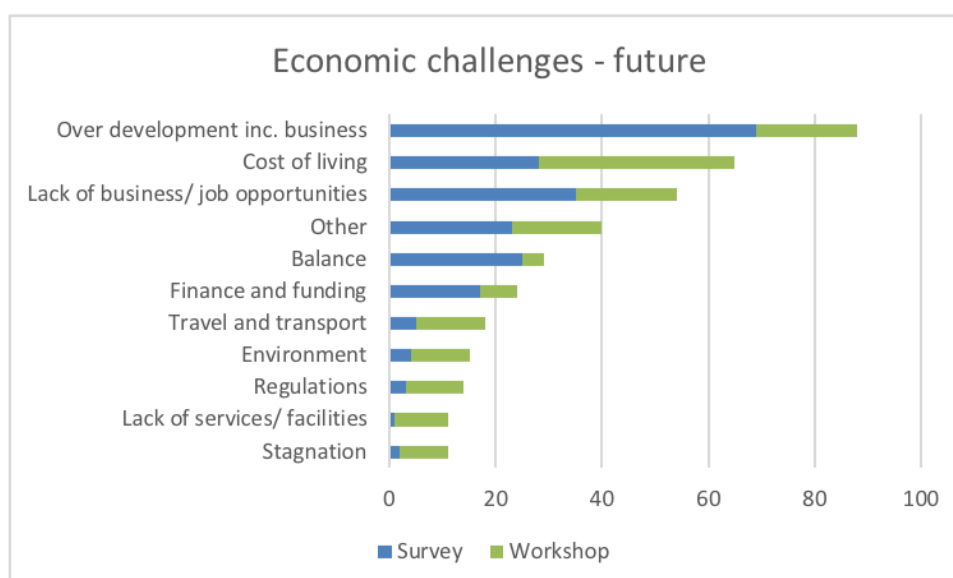
Additional themes

Other comments related to poor land management practices, the challenge of managing the balance between the needs of different groups and the environment, and comments about general environmental issues such as energy production and political leadership locally and nationally.

Rural and urban comparison

There were no notable differences between responses of people living in urban and rural areas.

Future economic challenges



Responses: 369

Themes

Over development

Over development (as described by respondents) was the most commonly cited response. Predominantly this was housing and large developments. There were a very limited number of responses relating to 'inappropriate' business and tourism developments that was out of keeping with the area.

"Threats from over development and subdivisions turning area into small blocks with inappropriate housing and shedding, clearing of land and unproductive, weed infested landscapes."

Sensitive tourism around current strengths of the area: arts, wineries, Sugarloaf park, local trails etc should be encouraged without any new development."

-Survey respondent

Cost of living and maintaining the Green Wedge

The cost of living and maintaining the Green Wedge was cited as a challenge. This related to personal finances and the capacity of Nillumbik Council and residents to fund the Green Wedge.

"It is impossible to put a value on the "Lungs of Melbourne" and Nillumbik needs to lead the way to show that the Green Wedge is for all of Melbourne and it is our collective responsibility to ensure that it is retained and valued."

- Survey respondent

Lack of business and job opportunities

The challenge of lack of business and job growth was cited. This related to all forms of business including agriculture and tourism.

“Much more has to be done to promote our unique history, art, commerce and tourism. Council needs to find and nurture new revenue streams which will serve us into the information age. Council decisions need to be bipartisan and not along party lines, decisions and planning need to be made longer than 3 or 4 year election phases. Business and government require longer term planning and commitment than 3 or 4 years.”

- Survey respondent

Balance

Managing competing interests was cited as a challenge. These competing interests included business, tourism, nature, environment, people and development.

“Balancing keeping our area quiet, natural, green, with enabling some people to run businesses, foster tourism and agriculture.”

- Survey respondent

Additional themes

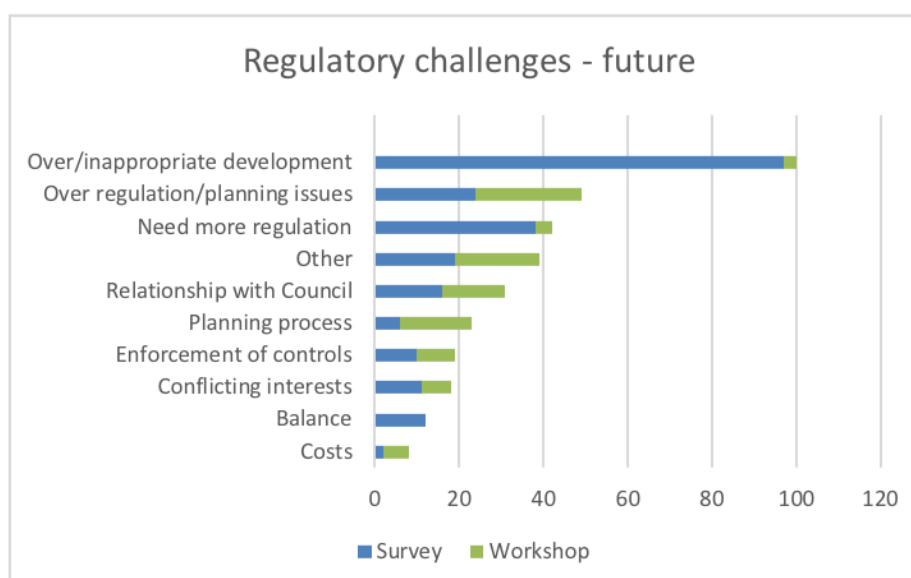
Other responses included the need to look for additional funding opportunities to pay for the Green Wedge, travel and transport challenges and the concern the area will become stagnated.

Rural and urban comparison

The notable differences were:

- Rural residents were more likely to cite (18%) cost of living pressures as a challenge than urban residents (7%) although the numbers were small (18 and 5).

Future regulatory challenges



Responses:342

Themes

Over/ inappropriate development

The challenge of over development (as described by respondents) was the most often cited response. This included generic comments related to over development as well as concerns about the watering down or changing of current regulations.

"I fear the temptation for the local council to give in to the promise of more income from developers (forgetting a corresponding loss in environmental appeal and hence tourism dollars), and watering down the current protections for the Green Wedge."

- Survey respondent

Over regulation

Over regulation was cited as a future challenge. The difficulties of running a business or maintaining land within current or future regulations was raised.

"If land is over regulated it won't encourage investment and therefore protection from land owners."

- Survey respondent

“Over governance and excessive micromanagement.”

- Workshop attendee

Need for more regulation/ protection

One of the challenges cited was regulation and protection for the Green Wedge. This related to the need to maintain or increase current protection and the fear of future weakening of protections.

“I think there will be ongoing attempts to soften planning regulations to allow for increased housing density and more development.”

-Survey respondent

Additional themes

Other responses related to issues in dealing with Council, particularly Council not understanding the issues, the inconsistent enforcement of controls and regulations and the need to get the balance between competing interests right.

Rural and urban comparison

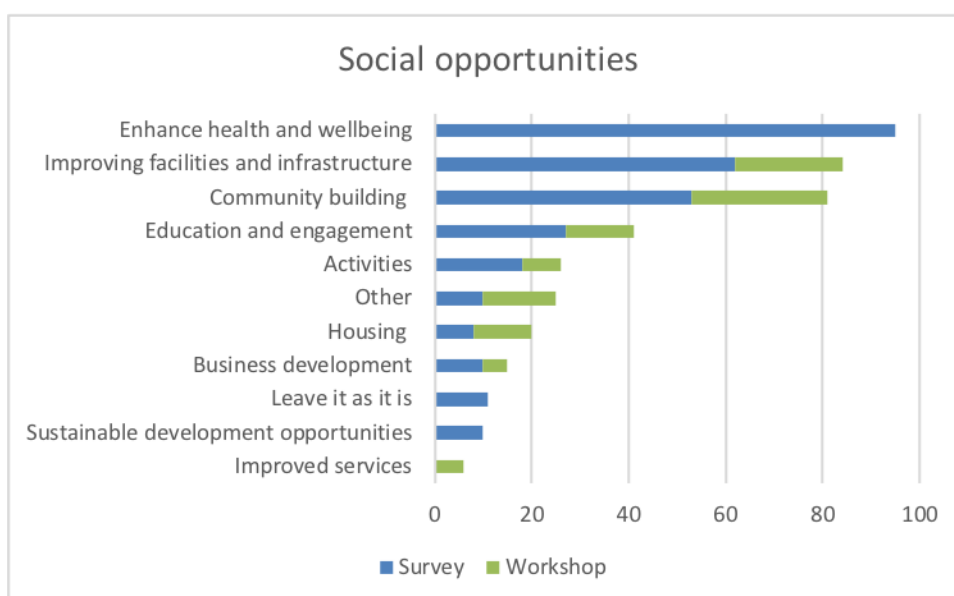
The notable differences were:

- Rural residents were more likely to cite (18%) the need for additional protection for the Green Wedge as a challenge than urban residents (9%) although the numbers were small (19 and 7).

Question: What opportunities do you think there are for Nillumbik's Green Wedge in the future?

Survey respondents and workshop attendees were invited to provide information on the social, environmental, economic and regulatory opportunities for the Green Wedge. These responses have been themed and quantified. Where responses were not directly related to the question or were unclear in their meaning they have been themed as 'other'.

Social opportunities



Responses: 414

Themes

Enhance health and wellbeing

Respondents to the survey indicated that they believed there were opportunities to use the Green Wedge to promote personal health, wellbeing and environmental understanding by linking people to nature. Many of the comments mentioned the need to ensure that the Green Wedge is maintained. This response was not evident in the workshops.

"Green wedge can provide opportunities for families and social groups to come together. It also plays a vital role in lowering stress and enhancing wellbeing through access to nature."

- Survey respondent

"Promoting the well-being impact of being close to the natural world."

- Survey respondent

Improving facilities and infrastructure

Respondents indicated that improving facilities and infrastructure would encourage visitors into the Green Wedge and improve conditions for residents. The types of infrastructure mentioned included transport, cultural and recreation facilities such as horse trails, walking and cycling tracks.

“Destination for quality sporting & recreation opportunities allowing residents & tourists to enjoy Nillumbik instead of passing through it.”

- Survey respondent

“There are many opportunities for social, cultural and recreational activities in the Shire. Better transport would make these activities easier to get to and from. The Green Wedge could be promoted as a healthy place to live, play and work.”

- Survey respondent

Community building

Community development and supporting existing groups was seen as a key opportunity. Many respondents indicated that there was already a strong community and this could be built on and utilised more widely.

“The sense of community that has developed over many years in the Green Wedge is one of the factors that separates it from greater Melbourne. It's vital to preserve and hopefully expand this. In this age of widespread social isolation and loneliness, a community spirit will be much more useful for people's health and wellbeing than another shopping centre. Council should be looking after the people already here, not bringing more in for the sake of higher rates.”

- Survey respondent

“Our effective fireguard group is an example of an effective type of community group for this semi-rural area. Families get together socially a couple of times a year and all manner of contacts and friendships follow.”

- Survey respondent

“Support for local community groups / self-help groups to encourage community cohesion.”

- Workshop attendee

Education and engagement

It was suggested that there are opportunities to use the natural assets of the Green Wedge to educate residents and the wider community around a number of topics including the environment and sustainability. The Green Wedge was seen as a place where people could experience or be educated on practical environmental sustainability.

"I think there are opportunities to raise the profile of the importance of protecting (and expanding) our Green Wedge areas of natural habitat. One example is to develop environmental support education programs as part of the local primary and secondary school curricula where students visit Green Wedge habitats and conduct projects on the importance of their preservation and expansion."

- Survey respondent

"Setting an example for living in harmony with and enhancing the existing environment and combatting climate change; working more closely with Wurundjeri people."

- Survey respondent

Activities

More activities such as arts and sporting events were cited by some respondents as an opportunity.

"Local events and activities that celebrate community and promote Nillumbik as the place to be. To live and to visit."

-Survey respondent

Housing

Some respondents believed there were opportunities to put more than one house on a block. One respondent also suggested there was an opportunity to build an aged care facility.

"There should be more opportunities to have more than one house on properties over 1 ha so family members can live nearby."

- Survey respondent

"Make it easier to accommodate multi generations on land so owners can age in place."

- Workshop attendee

Additional themes

Other responses indicated the potential to improve or increase business opportunities and the opportunities for limited development.

Rural and urban comparison

The notable differences were:

- Urban residents were more likely to cite (40%) enhance health and wellbeing as an opportunity than rural residents (21%).
- Rural residents were more likely to cite (30%) community building as an opportunity than urban residents (14%).

Environmental opportunities



Responses: 460

Themes

Keep it as it is

There was a strong focus on maintaining the Green Wedge. This included managing it to protect the environment, recognising the responsibility of current generations to keep the Green Wedge intact, and the understanding that if it is lost it could never be replaced.

"Keep it as it is. That's why we all live here."

- Survey respondent

"The more we conserve what we have the more important and special the Green Wedge will become. We will never regain what we lose. This includes maintaining healthy biodiversity."

- Survey respondent

Protection of the environment

The need to protect the environment and its biodiversity was often mentioned in conjunction with the theme of 'keep it as it is'. While this is strictly not an opportunity a number of respondents provided it as an answer to this question.

"Sustainability is not good enough. Need to reverse decline of biodiversity and maintain long term commitment to consistent planning laws."

- Workshop attendee

"Stop people from removing trees and demand replacements are planted within the Shire.

Enforce breaches of regulations and publicise to dissuade others for acting badly.

Protect the creeks and rivers from pollution.

Use the old tips for a large solar farm."

- Survey respondent

Promotion of sustainable tourism

The opportunities to promote sustainable and boutique tourism was considered by many respondents to be an excellent use of the Green Wedge.

"Promote areas healthy lifestyle; utilise river more for recreation- canoes, kayaks, swimming holes/beach."

- Survey respondent

"Capitalising on our natural environment with low key, boutique tourism experiences and experiential visitation."

- Workshop attendee

Education

Respondents indicated the opportunity for Nillumbik and the Green Wedge to promote itself as a leader in sustainability with the potential to educate communities and other organisations in sustainability.

"Fostering an appreciation for the natural world in people who will hopefully work to protect it.

Improving habitat for flora and fauna could have good biodiversity outcomes."

- Survey respondent

"The environmental wonders of the NGW can be better appreciated by locals and Melburnians more generally IF there were greater efforts to improve education programs about the NGW's plants and animals and ecological values."

- Survey respondent

As a sustainability leader

Some respondents suggested that Nillumbik should be a leader in sustainability and environmental protection. Some suggested that Nillumbik could help promote and educate other councils and individuals on sustainability.

"Opportunities to show case best practice in terms of conservation of the bush around Melbourne."

-Survey respondent

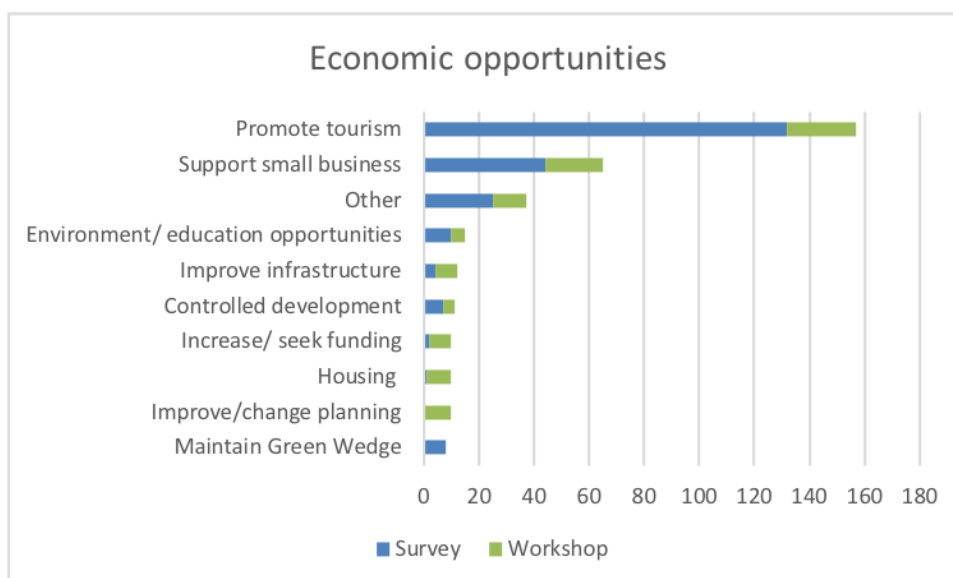
Additional themes

Other comments related to the opportunities to build on community skills and resilience, the importance of land management, including agriculture, appropriate business and other development.

Rural and urban comparison

There were no notable differences between urban and rural residents.

Economic opportunities



Responses: 335

Themes

Promote tourism

The opportunity to promote tourism within the Green Wedge was a commonly cited idea. The particular areas of tourism mentioned include artisan food, sustainability, and health and wellbeing.

"Nillumbik should be able to capitalise on being the green wedge so close to the city - there should be a lot of tourism opportunities."

- Survey respondent

"Tourism - Council to work in conjunction with operators to build 'suitable' tourism opportunities."

- Workshop attendee

Support small business

A number of respondents indicated the opportunity to build on existing and develop new small business. These included traditional business such as agriculture and newer business such as food production and other artisan businesses.

"The rural villages and artisan & artistic businesses are a key attraction. With expanding population - this must provide more opportunities for operators."

- Survey respondent

“If the cleared land is preserved for agriculture, this will help to feed the city and reduce food miles. This benefits the whole country.”

- Survey respondent

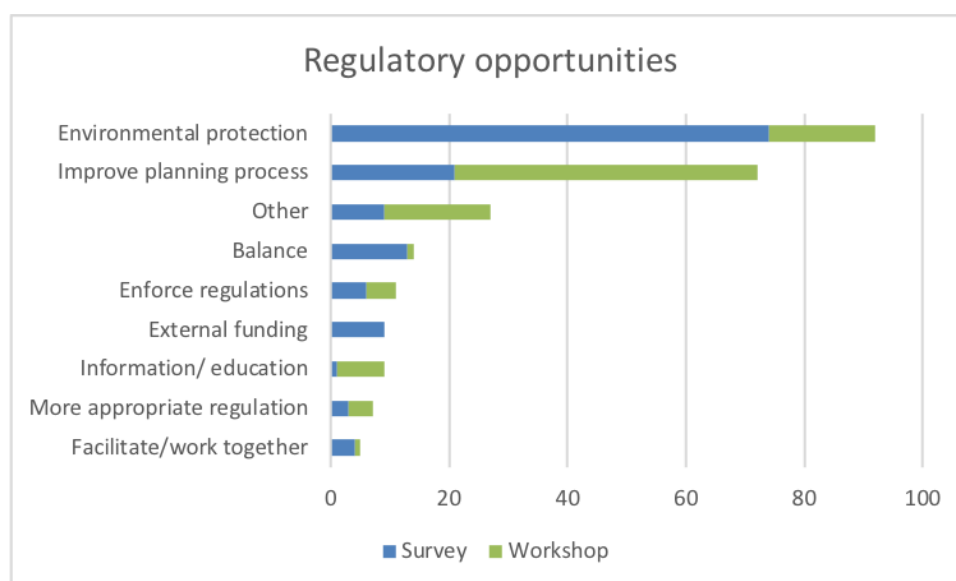
Additional themes

Many of the opportunities that had previously been mentioned in other questions were also mentioned in this answer including opportunities for environmental education, sustainable development, to seek additional funding to help maintain the Green Wedge, improve infrastructure and housing stock.

Rural and urban comparison

There were no notable differences between urban and rural residents responses.

Regulatory opportunities



Responses: 246

Themes

Environmental protection

Environmental protection continued as a theme with a particular focus on how this could be done. Although this is not strictly an opportunity a number of respondents provided it as a response to this question.

"The green space should be legislated to NEVER be developed. The area will become more valuable for Eco tourism as the years past. Never allow sell off as it cannot be recovered."

- Survey respondent

"Protect the green wedge for all for ever."

- Workshop attendee

Improve planning processes

Many respondents indicated an opportunity to improve planning processes. Comments indicated that the current process was confusing and subject to time delays and high costs.

"To have clear planning guidelines that are easy to understand and follow."

- Workshop attendee

"The whole permit process needs to be looked at, I don't have the answer(s) but council and small minority groups are really hurting land owners mentally and financially."

- Survey respondent

Balance competing needs

Some respondents indicated there was an opportunity to balance competing needs. These needs were between the environment and people, as well as particular groups of people such as farmers, horse riders and environmentalists.

"Government have a responsibility to ensure the green wedge provides lifestyle opportunities while protecting the environmental values for today and the future."

-Survey respondents

Additional themes

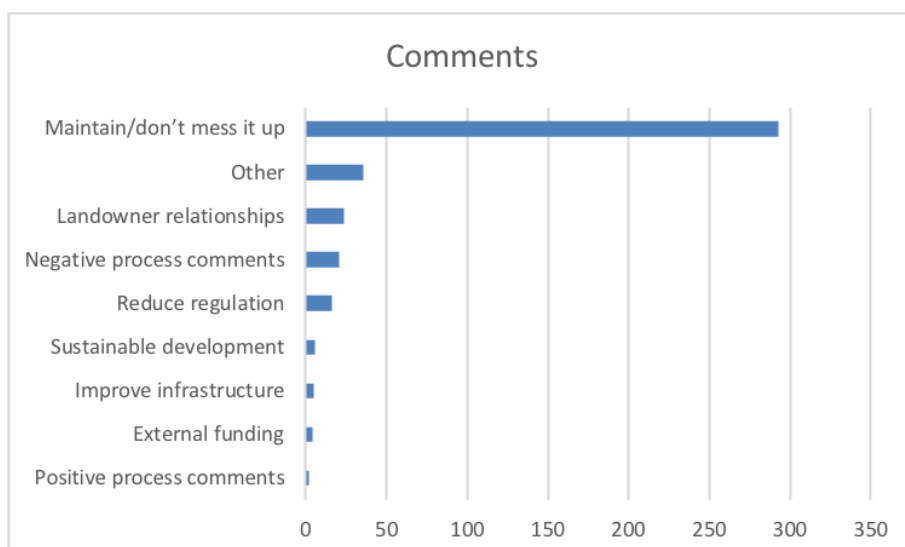
Other opportunities indicated include the possibility of finding additional funding predominantly from other levels of government to support the Green Wedge and the provision of information.

Rural and urban comparison

There were no notable differences between urban and rural responses.

Question: Do you have any other comments about the Green Wedge?

Comments



Responses: 418

When survey respondents were asked for further comments, the most common theme was to protect the Green Wedge or 'don't mess it up'. Comments included the need to maintain it as it is, to protect it from development and to manage it with consistent and positive planning for the future.

"It needs to be maintained in a proactive manner, preserving the characteristics of the landscape and biodiversity."

- Survey respondent

"Melbourne's Green Wedges are more important to the health and wellbeing of all Melbournians than ever before .

Climate Change effects are already being felt . The Wedges are becoming the last refuges of much of our wildlife as human population increases .

Weakening of Green Wedge protections is short sighted -- and once again our kids will pay the price."

- Survey respondent

Variation in workshop responses

Workshops were held with key interest groups and the wider community. They were invited to come together and discuss values, challenges and opportunities in the Green Wedge. Not all planned workshops proceeded due to low registrations, while additional workshops were held in response to demand.

The key themes from each individual workshop are outlined below. Where there was one clear theme this is indicated. Where there were a number of themes cited, up to three are shown. There is broad agreement in terms of what attendees liked. The challenges are more varied.

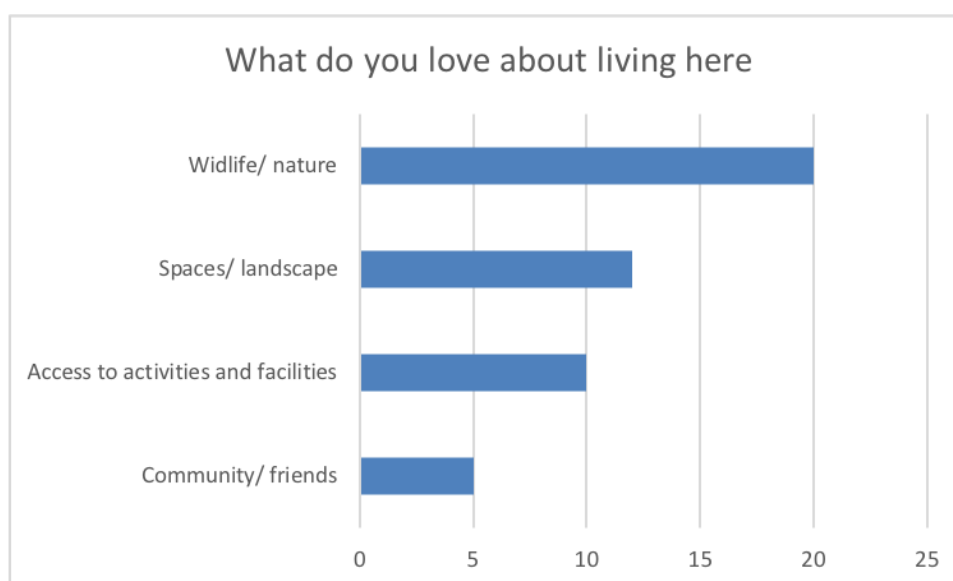
| Date | Group | Likes | Challenges |
|---------|---|---|---|
| 12 June | Landowners (1) 35 Participants | 1. The environment/nature 2. The space/ place/ landscape 3. Community | 1. Regulation 2. Bushfire |
| 14 June | Landcare Members 16 Participants | 1. The environment/nature | 1. Over development 2. Managing the environment/ecology |
| 16 June | Public (1) 7 Participants | 1. The space/place/ landscape 2. The environment/nature | 1. Transport issues 2. Managing the environment/ecology |
| 18 June | Friends of Groups 25 Participants | 1. The environment/nature 2. The space/ place/ landscape | 1. Over development |
| 18 June | Landowners (2) 25 Participants | 1. The space/place/landscape | 1. Planning and process issues 2. Bushfire risks 3. Regulation |
| 20 June | Nillumbik Tourism and Business 11 Participants | 1. Access to activities 2. The environment/nature | 1. Transport issues |
| 27 June | Public (2) 10 Participants | 1. The space/place/ landscape | 1. Over development 2. Transport issues |
| 2 July | Landowners (3) 14 Participants | 1. The space/place/nature 2. The environment/nature | 1. Regulation 2. Bushfire 3. Planning and process issues |
| 4 July | Equine Community 29 Participants | 1. Access to activities 2. Community 3. The space/place/nature | 1. Transport 2. Balance – maintaining Green Wedge and owners' rights |
| 9 July | CFA members (not representing the CFA) 9 Participants | 1. The space/ place/nature 2. Community | 1. Access to services and facilities 2. Planning and process issues |

Children and young people engagement

Children and young people aged 10-18 were invited to provide their views via the survey. The youth survey asked similar questions to the main survey but in slightly different language. In addition one group of school children from Kangaroo Ground Primary School provided drawings of their views on the Green Wedge. A total of 48 responses were provided through the survey and 40 drawings were submitted.

An additional 67 people aged between 10 – 18 years completed the main survey. Their responses have been included in the main body of this report.

Question: What do you love about living here?



Responses: 47

Themes

Space and place

Respondents indicated a love of the space and the opportunities it afforded them.

"I love the land because there is so much space and you can raise a lot of different animals breeds - especially if you have land."

- Youth survey respondent

Environment

Respondents indicated a love of nature and the environment, particularly animals and plants.

"I love the nature, the trees and large properties. It's a very peaceful place to live. I love seeing animals all over the place."

- Youth survey respondent

Lifestyle

Respondents liked being able to access activities and spaces to play.

"I love being able to walk anywhere I want, the new playground down near Fergusons Paddock and the friendly community."

- Youth survey respondent

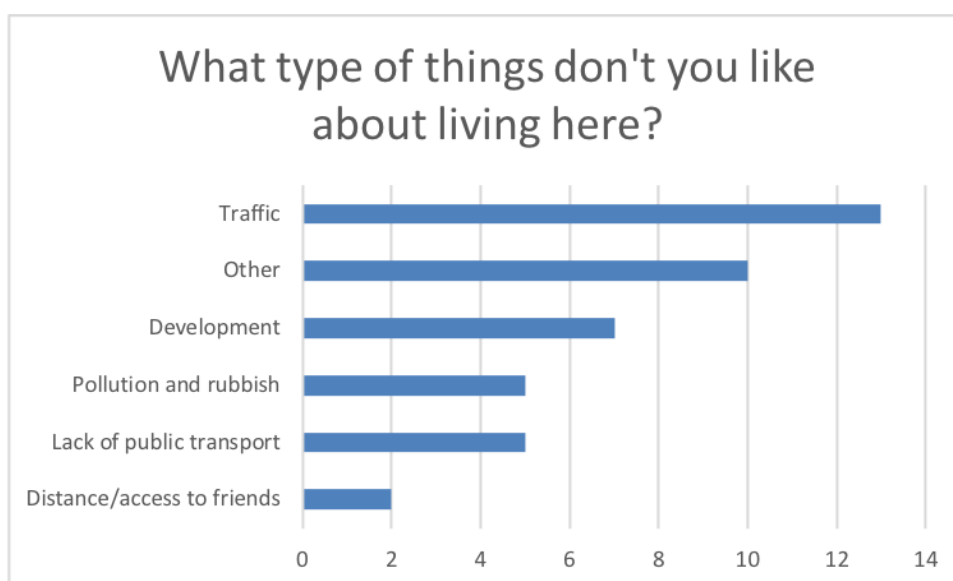
Community

Respondents liked their friends, family and the broader community.

"I love how in our community all of us kids have big properties that we can do what we want."

-Youth survey respondent.

Question: What type of things don't you like about living here?



Responses: 42

Themes

Traffic

The most commonly cited response related to traffic, the noise and pollution it caused and damage to animals and the environment.

"The traffic is too much when I walk to school."

- Youth survey respondent

Development

Respondents were concerned about more houses being built and trees being cut down as a result.

"That it keeps getting more populated, meaning more apartments and town houses are being built which means the trees need to be chopped down."

- Youth survey respondent

Pollution and rubbish

Pollution and littering were a concern for respondents.

"Way too much pollution in rivers / lakes and around in yards and stuff."

- Youth survey respondent

Lack of public transport

The lack of public transport and how that impacted on young people was an issue.

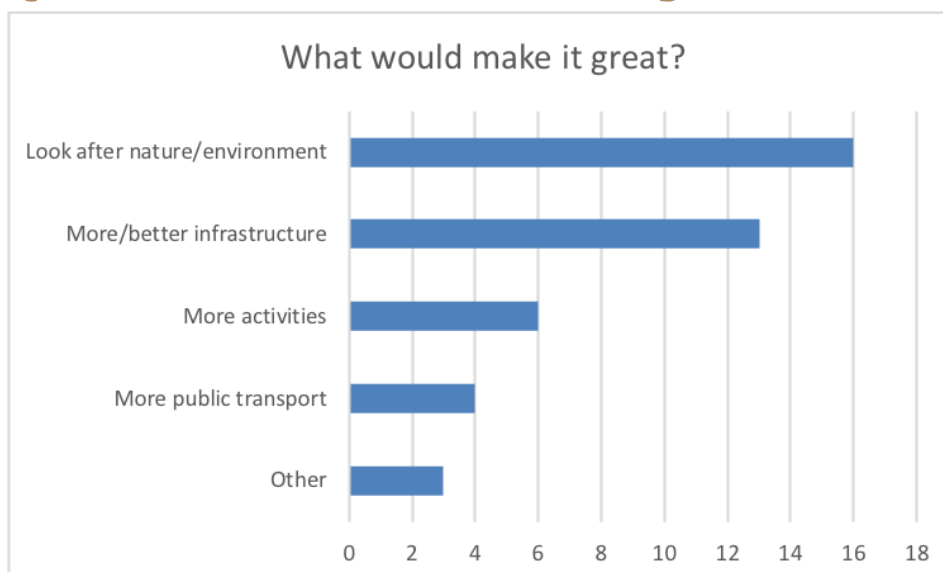
"Public transport isn't very accessible, especially on weekends. Trains aren't frequent past Eltham and buses don't assist in going around Nillumbik easily."

- Youth survey respondent

Other

Other responses included complaints about the rain, animal poo, school and the desire to ride a motor bike.

Question: What would make it great?



Responses: 42

Themes

Nature and the environment

Respondents valued the natural environment and wanted it preserved. They also indicated a need to look after it. Many were concerned about littering.

"Leave things as they are, nice and quiet as that's what we love."

- Youth survey respondent

"Don't cut down trees! Keep it natural, it's already great!"

- Youth survey respondent

More/ better infrastructure and facilities

Young people indicated a need to improve infrastructure and facilities including public transport, and recreation facilities, particularly the adventure playground. Some requested a youth theatre.

"Two lane Diamond Creek Road

- Make progress to the Adventure Playground"

- Youth survey respondent

More activities

Respondents indicated a desire for more activities including a greyhound track, movies and a theatre.

“Build a theatre for Nillumbik Youth Productions Inc. !!

In all seriousness, easily accessible performance spaces would be a great asset to the community and small theatre groups in Nillumbik.”

- Youth survey respondent

More public transport

Respondents indicated a need for better and faster public transport.

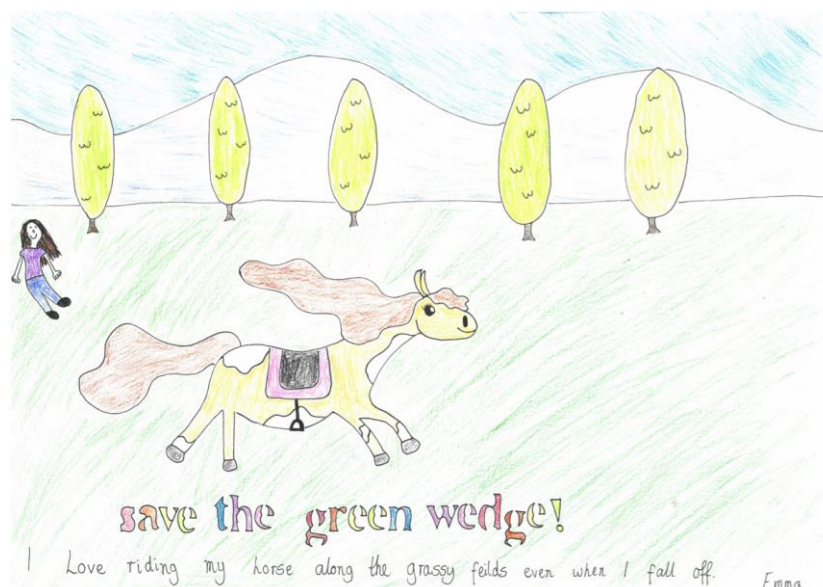
“More public transport and more affordable.

Sporting facilities to keep our community more involved.”

- Youth survey respondent

Drawings

Children were invited to draw a picture of the Green Wedge and what it meant to them. Many children annotated their drawings.



Children indicated that they liked living in the Green Wedge particularly the landscape, the quiet and waking up seeing trees, birds and the sunrise. Many children used ownership terms such as 'our' Green Wedge and indicated a concern the area being 'over developed' and a desire to 'save' it.

Appendix one – survey

Green Wedge Management Plan Review

Nillumbik Shire Council is asking the community to help it prepare a new Green Wedge Management Plan. We're asking: 'What is the best way for us to manage Nillumbik's Green Wedge, now and in the future?'

While the whole of Nillumbik is referred to as the 'Green Wedge Shire', the Green Wedge Management Plan Review is addressing land outside the urban growth boundary, including the townships of Hurstbridge, St Andrews and Panton Hill.(see map overleaf)

In summary, Nillumbik's Green Wedge:

- covers 91 per cent of the total area of the Shire;¹
- 79 per cent of it is privately owned;²
- approximately one fifth of our population resides in Nillumbik's Green Wedge.³

This survey forms part of the broad community engagement phase. The information collected through this survey and other community engagement activities will be provided to an independent community panel made up of 40 community members. The panel will meet over five days to consider key information, expert evidence and the community's thoughts and ideas, and will then make recommendations to Council.

The issues the panel will consider will generally fall under the broad categories which apply to all green wedges: *social, environmental, economic and regulatory*.

The questions in this survey ask you to think about your experience of the Green Wedge and share your thoughts about its future.

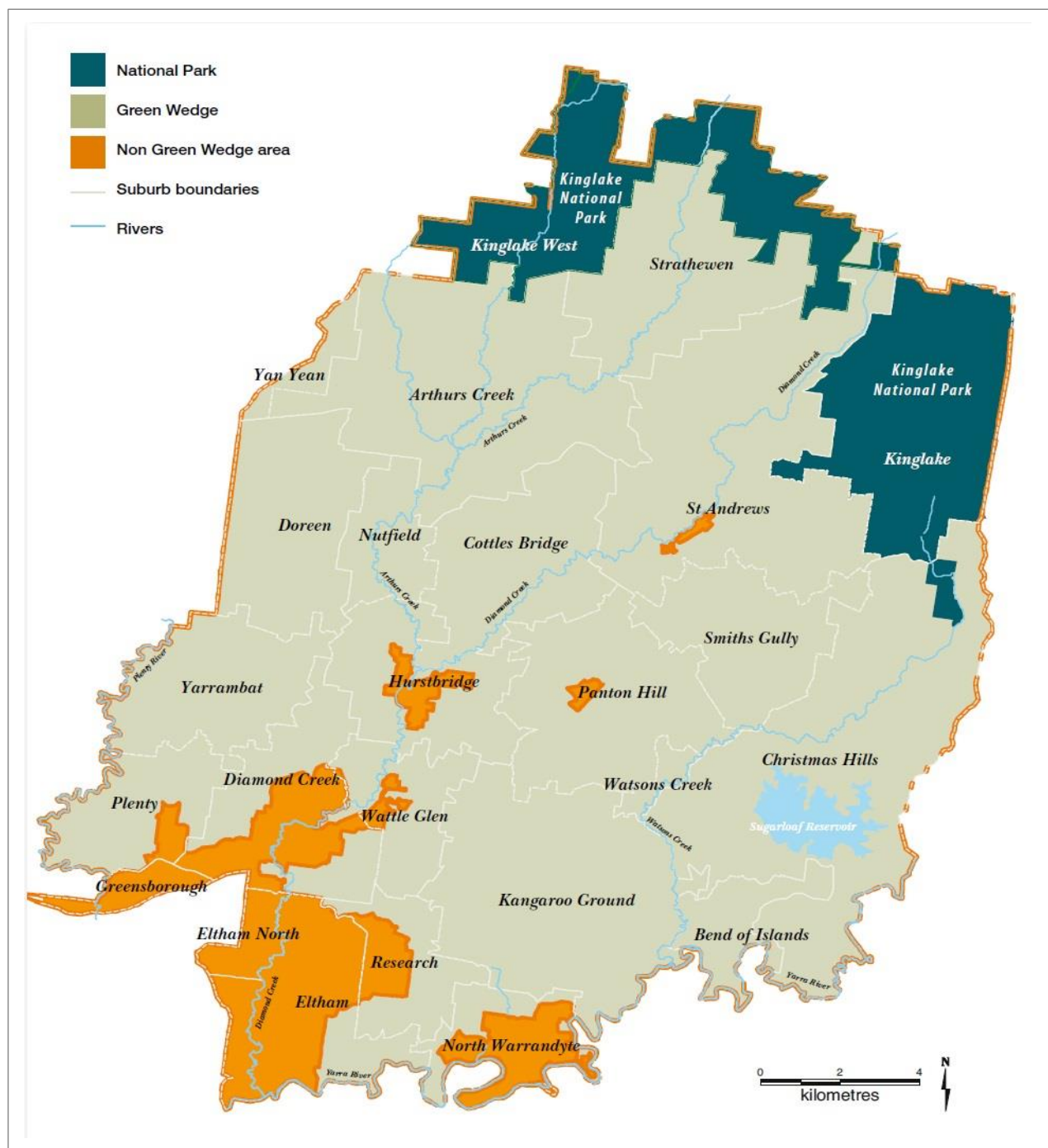
If you would like more information about the Green Wedge, other ways to contribute, or need more room to comment than is available on these pages, go to:
<https://participate.nillumbik.vic.gov.au/gwmp>

¹ Nillumbik Shire Council GIS mapping

² Nillumbik Shire Council GIS mapping

³ 2016 Census Data (Australian Bureau of Statistics)

Nillumbik's Green Wedge



NB: The Green Wedge Management Plan Review is addressing land outside the urban growth boundary, but including the townships of Hurstbridge, St Andrews and Panton Hill.

What is the best way to manage Nillumbik's Green Wedge, now and in the future?

1. What do you like about living in / working in / visiting Nillumbik's Green Wedge?

2. What challenges have you experienced living in / working in / visiting Nillumbik's Green Wedge?

Social (eg: family, recreation, community, cultural heritage, transport and infrastructure, health and wellbeing)

Environmental (eg: Biodiversity, climate change, bushfire, utilities and landscape)

Economic (eg: Agriculture, tourism, business development, personal finances)

Regulatory (Federal, State and Local Government requirements)

3. What challenges do you think Nillumbik's Green Wedge will face in the future?

Social (eg: family, recreation, community, cultural heritage, transport and infrastructure, health and wellbeing)

Environmental (eg: Biodiversity, climate change, bushfire, utilities and landscape)

Economic (eg: Agriculture, tourism, business development, personal finances)

Regulatory (Federal, State and Local Government requirements)

4. What opportunities do you think there are for Nillumbik's Green Wedge in the future?

| |
|--|
| <p>Social (eg: family, recreation, community, cultural heritage, transport and infrastructure, health and wellbeing)</p> |
| <p>Environmental (eg: Biodiversity, climate change, bushfire, utilities and landscape)</p> |
| <p>Economic (eg: Agriculture, tourism, business development, personal finances)</p> |
| <p>Regulatory (Federal, State and Local Government requirements)</p> |

5. Do you have any other comments about the Green Wedge?

6. What is your connection to the Green Wedge? (Choose all that apply)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I live in the Green Wedge | <input type="checkbox"/> I own a business in the Green Wedge |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I work in the Green Wedge | <input type="checkbox"/> I visit the Green Wedge |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I study in the Green Wedge | <input type="checkbox"/> I live close to the Green Wedge |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I own property in the Green Wedge but live elsewhere | |

What do you do when you visit the Green Wedge? (for example, visit family, bushwalking, shopping)

7. If you own or occupy land in the Green Wedge, approximately what size is it?

If you own or occupy land in the Green Wedge, approximately how long have you loved here/owned land?

8. If you own or occupy land in the Green Wedge, how do you use it?
(Choose all that apply)

Business:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture (food & drink/fibre) | <input type="checkbox"/> Equine business |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tourism | <input type="checkbox"/> Other business _____ |

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | <input type="checkbox"/> Residence | <input type="checkbox"/> Hobby farm |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bush block | <input type="checkbox"/> Holiday home/ weekender | |

☐ Recreation (please specify type) _____

Other use _____

If you own or occupy land in the Green Wedge, does it have a dwelling on it?

☐ Yes

☐ No

We'd appreciate it if you could provide us with a few details about yourself.

Age Group: ☐ Under 10 ☐ 10-18 ☐ 18-39
☐ 40-59 ☐ 60-79 ☐ 80+

Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Other

Suburb/Township: _____

Appendix two – youth survey

Nillumbik Shire Council is asking the community to help it prepare a new Green Wedge Management Plan. What we'd like to find out is: **'What is the best way for us to manage Nillumbik's Green Wedge, now and in the future?'** We'd love to hear your thoughts and ideas.

1. What do you love about living here?

2.What type of things don't you like about living here?

3. What ideas do you have that would make living here great?

We'd appreciate it if you could provide us with a few details about yourself.

Age Group: ☐ Under 10 ☐ 10-18 ☐ 18-24

Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Other

Suburb/Township: _____

Appendix three – verbatim responses (separate document)
