



Shape Your Future

Yarra Ranges Shire Council

Engagement Summary Report
May 2024

Prepared by

Conversation Co.



Conversation Co respectfully acknowledges the Wurundjeri and other Kulin Nations as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands and waterways also known as Yarra Ranges Shire. We pay our respects to all Elders, past, present, and emerging, as well as to all First Nations communities who significantly contribute to the life of the area.

1. Executive Summary

Project Overview

The Local Government Act 2020 (the Act) requires councils to develop a suite of plans every four years - these plans are:

- Community Vision (ten year outlook).
- Council Plan (four year outlook).
- Financial Plan (ten year outlook).
- Asset Plan (ten year outlook).
- Revenue and Rating Plan (four year outlook).

To inform the development of these documents for Yarra Ranges, Council is conducting two phases of engagement - broad engagement with the community and deliberative engagement with a small Panel of residents. This engagement report describes the process and outcomes of the pop ups and survey engagements conducted during the broad engagement phase.

The purpose of this phase is to explore what matters most to the community, to identify the community's needs and priorities. Feedback from the broad engagement phase will be handed to the deliberative panel - who are tasked with thinking about not just the outcomes they would like to see - but what would reflect the desires of the wider community.

Engagement Methodology

The engagement activities were based on the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum under 'Inform' and 'Consult'. Following Council endorsement of the engagement program on 26 March 2024, community engagement was conducted from 27 March to 8 May 2024. Engagement activities consisted of an online and hardcopy survey, community pop-ups and community summits. Outcomes from the community summits will be reported separately as they are still in progress.

Participation

A total of 916 participants were involved in the broad engagement, through the community pop-ups (213 people) and completing the online survey (703 people). Additional participants will be involved in the three community summits that are currently in progress.

There was strong participation from Yarra Ranges residents - they represented 93.7% of the participating individuals. In terms of the four broad planning areas, residents of the Urban areas (e.g. Lilydale, Mount Evelyn, Mooroolbark) had the highest participation (42.9%) followed by the Hills community (26.7%). Females were over-represented (61.1%) compared to their proportion of the Yarra Ranges community (50.5%). Conversely, males were under-represented (36.1%).

The age profiles of the participants with the highest participation were those aged 35 to 44 years, 45 to 54 years and 55 to 64 years. Compared to their proportion of the Yarra Ranges population, those aged 16 - 24 years and 25-34 years were under-represented.

Key findings - Overall

Priorities

Community members across the Yarra Ranges prioritised the protection and maintenance of the environment and surrounding natural beauty of the area, increased and improved management of infrastructure and services such as roads, paths, drainage and community amenity and a focus on how the municipality manages planning and development. Participants also prioritised a robust relationship between the Council and the Yarra Ranges community seeking more avenues for meaningful engagement in decision making, Council transparency and aligning the structure and remit of Councils' organisation to be more responsive to community needs, provide quality services and value for money.

Division

This project invited feedback from across the Shire, with strong conflicting views on priority areas including:

- More affordable housing and simplified development processes vs. restricting population growth, urbanisation and multi-storey/high density development.
- Encouraging and supporting tourism vs. restricting tourism or putting residents before tourists
- A desire for increased Council involvement and support in community strengthening and sustainability activities vs. Council sticking to basic service provision
- A perception of Council bias towards urban areas vs rural areas and vice versa

Key findings - Future of Yarra Ranges

Survey respondents were asked to think about the communities, environment, visitors, business and residents over the next thirty years in Yarra Ranges. They responded to three key open-ended questions:

- One thing our Council must keep is...?
- One thing our Council must change is...?
- One thing our Council must let go of or stop doing, is...?

Free text data was analysed thematically, allocating participant responses to the relevant sections of the Council Plan. The top five main areas that participants raised are listed in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Participants' views on the future of Yarra Ranges

	Council must keep	Council must change	Council must let go of or stop doing
1	Parks, green spaces preservation	Increased development and maintenance of roads	Development and planning - relax regulation, high density, stop development (divided views)
2	Small community feel and character/beauty	Planning and development (mixed views)	Rates amount, spending on 'vanity' projects
3	Protecting the environment, bush regeneration and land management	Council structure/remit - split municipality, focus of organisation, streamline services	Waste services - opt out of FOGO, no hard rubbish collection
4	Maintenance/upgrade of roads and trails	Improved waste services - public bins, more frequent waste collection	Political views of Council - stop involvement in State/Federal issues, social justice
5	More/upgraded public infrastructure	Council spending - lower rates, more value, wasting money	Infrastructure (mixed views)

Data sources: Community pop ups, online survey

Keep

Overall, participants highly valued and wanted to preserve parks and public green spaces, the small community feel and character and beauty of local areas and the environment, suggesting expanded or improved bush regeneration and land management practices to achieve this. Participants in rural/semi-rural areas preferenced parks and green space maintenance above those in urban areas who prioritised public amenity and community programs and events. All rural/semi rural areas also prioritised the preservation of small towns and community feel, with a focus on regulation of development in the Hills and the Healesville Yarra Glen area. All planning areas also prioritised road maintenance, seeking maintenance and upgrade to roads (repair, sealing, safety), footpaths and trails (more connections, better pedestrian safety in townships) and bike infrastructure (safer routes, connections and leisure trails) across the municipality.

Change

Participants wanted to change the way roads are managed and maintained in the Yarra Ranges, with a desire to expand and repair road networks. Participants also sought to change how development and planning is undertaken in the Shire with divided community views; some wishing for streamlining and relaxing requirements and others in favor of further restricting or stopping development. Participants also wanted to see changes to the Council spending; seeking lower rates. There was a perception among participants that Council inefficiencies or the spending on current projects was not in line with all community wants or delivering value for money.

Stop

Participants feedback for what Yarra Ranges should stop doing, reaffirmed changes to planning and development and Council spending. suggested. Participants also shared dissatisfaction with current waste services and desired more value for their rates money.

Key findings - Describing Yarra Ranges today and in the future

Participants in the online survey were asked to use three words to describe 'Yarra Ranges today' and 'Yarra Ranges in the future'. A sentiment analysis was used to explore if sentiment changed between the two questions (positive, neutral, negative). This feedback shows that the majority of respondents have a positive outlook for their community in the future, with a substantial shift to more positive words to describe Yarra Ranges..

Participants used the following words to describe their aspirations for health and wellbeing in the future - inclusive, safe, community, accessible, affordable, caring, healthy, welcoming, family and supportive. Their aspirations for the physical environment in the future used the following words - environment, sustainable, beautiful, natural, clean, peaceful, green, protected and spacious. They described their aspirations for community attitudes in the future as: good/great, work, vibrant, cultural, resilient, thriving, tourism, progressive and unique. They also expressed their wishes for the way Council will govern/operate in the future using terms such as efficient, responsible, financially responsible, accountable and responsive.

Key findings - 'Check-in' on Community Vision

Participants were asked to rank (online survey) or prioritise (community pop-ups) five different elements of the current Community Vision. From a list of 20 elements from the current Community Vision, pop up participants selected their top five elements. Survey respondents were asked to rank in order the full list of 21 vision statements. Overall, the top priorities for the Community Vision across both methods are shown in Figure 2.

When asked if there was anything missing from the community vision, the bulk of participants shared feedback suggesting improvements or expansion of services provided under the Council Plan. The top areas mentioned were: roads, paths, access (n=60), development and planning (n=40), amenity (n=37), regeneration and land management (n=31) and neighbourhood character, heritage, history (n=31).

Figure 2: Top ten ranked Community Vision elements

	Vision Element	Survey Weighted Average Rank (lower is better)	Pop-up Counts (higher is better)
1	Council listens to community, responds to community needs and aspirations	2.37	76
2	Climate change risks are reduced	2.46	58
3	Sustainability and the protection of biodiversity are prioritised	2.78	59
4	Roads, footpaths and trails are maintained	2.86	109
5	Drainage is well maintained	2.89	58
6	Community are connected, volunteer and support each other	2.80	50
7	Community is prepared for natural disasters	2.92	55
8	The area's natural beauty and landscapes are considered in decisions	3.02	56
9	Disadvantaged residents are well supported	3.31	62
10	Population growth and development are managed responsibly, sustainably	3.18	38

Data sources: Survey, community pop-ups. Note: 'A reputation for fantastic local produce' was not included in the pop-up vision statements.

Participants who shared 'other' feedback raised priority areas that posed an opportunity for community or private sector partnerships within the Community Vision. Affordable housing, housing availability, access to healthcare from birthing to aged care, access to higher education locally, Improved access to school education, local newspapers and safety and security.

Key findings - Council Plan priorities

Survey respondents were asked to rank in order their service priorities for the Council Plan. Figure 3 demonstrates protecting the natural environment was the highest priority (weighted average rank of 2.5), followed by looking after infrastructure to help people move around (weighted average rank of 2.58) and looking after drains and water (weighted average rank of 2.89).

Figure 3: Top ten ranked Council Plan priorities

Rank	Council Plan priority	Survey Weighted Average Rank (lower is better)
1	Protecting our natural environment and reducing impacts of climate change (including tree planting, rubbish collection and sustainability initiatives)	2.50
2	Looking after our infrastructure to help people move around Yarra Ranges (e.g. building and looking after our footpaths, trails and roads)	2.58
3	Looking after our drains and water (e.g. flood prevention, water quality and conservation)	2.89
4	Keeping you safe and healthy (e.g. managing emergencies and animals, school crossings, immunisations, maternal and child health)	3.00
5	Supporting our community in all stages of life (e.g. services and information for individuals and families, from babies to the elderly and everyone in between)	3.05
6	Running an efficient and responsible organisation (e.g. managing Council assets, advocacy, engagement, governance)	3.19
7	Supporting our community to thrive (e.g. community development, grants, local and cultural venues, access and equity and Indigenous work)	3.22
8	Planning and developing our towns (e.g. building and planning permits, building safety and compliance, planning for future development)	3.23
9	Looking after our sporting facilities, open spaces and reserves	3.24
10	Supporting our local economy and businesses (e.g. advice, advocacy, permits, networking)	3.64

Participants were then asked if they wanted to highlight any services specifically as priorities for the Council Plan. Of the 425 open-ended responses to this question, 366 comments mentioned improving or strengthening the current services being provided under the Council Plan, e.g. 'Rubbish bins in car parks, shopping villages and parks'.

Additional feedback was provided (n=37) on 'Running an efficient and responsible organisation' in which community members raised issues including: value for money, community engagement and influence in decision-making, a focus on basic service delivery and desire for communication of planning and projects in an easy to understand and accessible way as major areas to prioritise.

There were also 24 comments suggesting new services or major changes and these are summarised below:

- Transforming waste services; reduced or pay by weight waste charges, Increased recycling initiatives.
 - Community grants for sharing Aboriginal culture.
 - Extended medical care services.
 - Social inclusion programs for community sport.
 - Mental health programs.
 - Support for disengaged children and young people.
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2. Introduction

2.1 Project background

The Local Government Act 2020 (the Act) requires councils to develop an integrated, longer-term and transparent approach to planning organised around a ten year community vision. The required deliverables for all Victorian councils are a:

- Community Vision (ten year outlook).
- Council Plan (four year outlook).
- Financial Plan (ten year outlook).
- Asset Plan (ten year outlook).
- Revenue and Rating Plan (four year outlook).

In line with the Act, these strategic planning documents should be developed with community engagement, and with regard to financial management, public transparency and service delivery. The focus of the engagement process is to inform the next Council Plan and Asset Plan and, reconfirm the existing Community Vision and Financial Plan.

To inform the development of these documents for Yarra Ranges, Council is conducting two phases of engagement; broad engagement to understand the wider community sentiment, and deliberative engagement, to explore in detail the issues facing the community and Council. This engagement report describes the process and outcomes of the broad engagement phase.

2.2 Engagement purpose and scope

The purpose of the broad engagement phase is to explore what matters most to the community, to identify the community's needs and priorities. It allows a wide range of people to participate, especially those who might not have the time to commit to a deliberative process. Feedback from the broad engagement phase will be handed to the deliberative panel - who are tasked with thinking about not just the outcomes they would like to see - but what would reflect the desires of the community.

3. Engagement Methodology

Appendix 1 provides an overview of the methodology for the entire project, both the broad and deliberative engagement phases.

3.1 Engagement Objectives

The specific objectives of the broad engagement phase were to:

- Test the relevance of the current themes of the Community Vision 2036 (revised in 2021).
- Identify any gaps or possible inclusions in the Community Vision 2036.
- Understand community priorities for the next four years with regards to Council services, facilities and assets.

3.2 Methodology

Prior to the broad engagement phases, a document review was conducted to highlight the key issues raised by the community in the previous three years. There were clear, consistent themes arising from previous community engagement and research; road maintenance and construction, emergency management, tourism, listening to the community, preserving character of townships and traffic management.

The broad engagement activities were based on the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum under 'Inform' and 'Consult'. Following Council endorsement of the engagement program on 26 March 2024, community engagement was conducted from 27 March to 8 May 2024. Engagement activities consisted of an online and hardcopy survey, community pop-ups and community summits. Outcomes from the community summits will be reported separately as they are still in progress.

Online and hardcopy survey

An online survey was hosted on the *Shaping Yarra Ranges* engagement portal to allow community members to participate when and where suits them. A hardcopy version was made available for Council to distribute for those who did not have online access.

Community Pop-ups

Seven community pop-ups were conducted (refer to Appendix 2 for details). Conversation Co provided props, some materials and training in conducting the activities at the first two sessions. Council staff then completed the remaining five sessions.

There were two main engagement activities at the community pop-ups:

- Ranking of five priority actions for the next four years (selected from a list)
- Voting on five key community priorities for the long-term future, by selecting five "leaves" and placing them on the wooden tree prop. Each leaf represented a different Community vision element.

Image 1: Wooden tree prop used at community pop-ups



Community Summits

To allow for more detailed face-to-face conversations to inform the deliberative Panel, three 2-hour Community Summits are being held during May 2024. At each Summit a brief presentation on the background and context to the project will be provided before asking participants to discuss the key engagement questions in small groups. The three community summits will be concluded by late May 2024.

3.3 Strategies to support participation

The promotional strategies used by Council were very effective in informing the community and encouraging participation.

Social media promotion

Council ran four paid advertisement campaigns on Facebook, targeting Mt Evelyn and Healesville as well as the wider municipality. There were also seven project updates on Facebook, six updates on Instagram and three updates on LinkedIn.

Council e-newsletters

Three updates were sent to the 11,300 subscribers to the Yarra Ranges Shire e-newsletter with an average 'open rate' of about 4000. Other Council e-newsletters that featured the project were Hills Community Update x 2 (360 subscribers), Yarra Ranges Sports Newsletter x 2 (176 subscribers), CEO

Update x 2 (1301 subscribers), Valley Update (170 subscribers), Disability Inclusion Newsletter x 2 (503 subscribers) and Business (6547 subscribers).

Email promotions

Two emails were sent to alert engagement portal members of the project - the first project notification was sent to 2,189 recipients with a 'click-through' rate of 9.3%. The second email regarding Summit and Panel dates was sent to 43 recipients with a 'click-through' rate of 39.5%. Many visitors used a direct link to the page (60.8%) or a social media link (26.6%).

Engagement portal statistics

The project page on the *Shaping Yarra Ranges* engagement portal attracted 3,822 visitors, for 5,015 visits or sessions. A total of 189 persons subscribed to follow the project.

Nearly a third of project visits (29.4%) involve at least two visitor actions (a download, a contribution, click on a new page). There were 92 document downloads, with 54 downloads of the Council Plan and 38 downloads of the Long-Term Financial Plan.

4. Who Participated?

4.1 Participation by engagement activity

Table 1 shows a summary of the engagement activities which involved a total of 916 participants at this stage in the project. Participation and the outcomes from the community summits will be reported separately, as they are still in progress.

Table 1. Participation by Engagement Activity

Engagement Activity	No.	%
<i>Have Your Say</i> online survey	703	76.7
Community pop ups	213*	23.3
TOTAL	916	100

*An underestimate as some pop-up participants did not fill in the demographic 'postcard' so were not counted in this total.

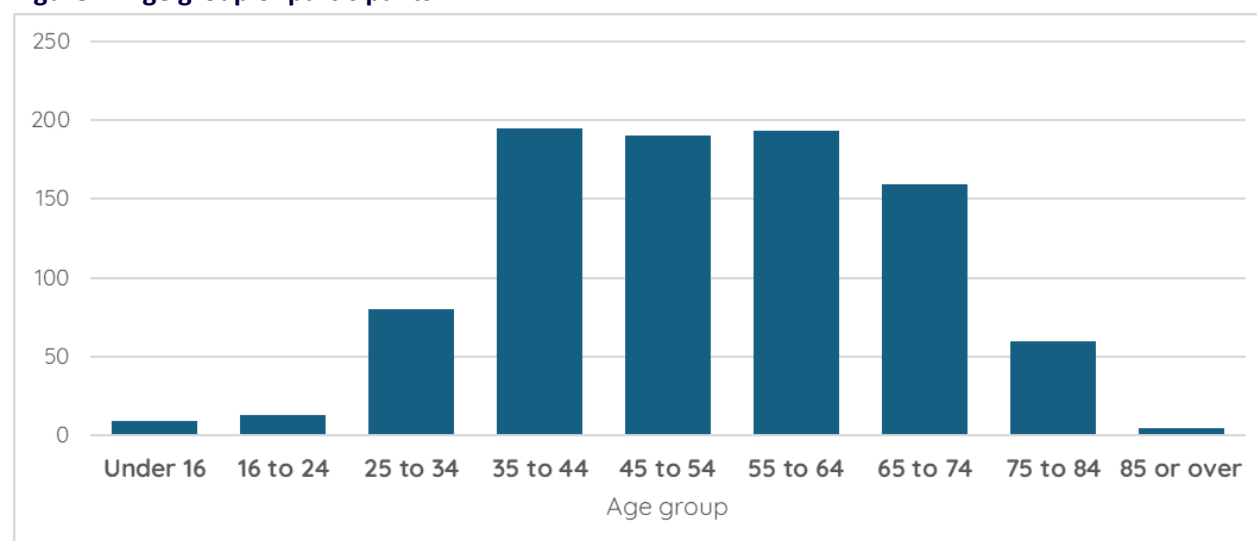
4.2 Characteristics of participants

The characteristics of the survey and community pop-up participants are shown in Table 2.

As with many other community engagement projects, females were over-represented (61.1%) compared to their proportion of the Yarra Ranges community (50.5%) (Census 2021). Conversely, males were under-represented (36.1%).

Table 2 and Figure 4 show the age profiles of the participants with the highest participation were those aged 35 to 44 years, 45 to 54 years and 55 to 64 years. Compared to their proportion of the Yarra Ranges population, those aged 16 - 24 years and 25-34 years were under-represented.

Figure 4: Age group of participants



Participants were asked to identify their communities of interest, and were able to select all that apply. The largest groups were people with disability or other chronic conditions, and unpaid carers of a person with a disability.

Table 2. Characteristics of Participants

Selected characteristics	No.	%	2021 Census %
Gender			
Woman/female	536	61.1	50.5
Man/male	317	36.3	49.5
Non-binary	3	0.3	-
Prefer not to say	21	2.4	-
Age Group			
Under 16 years	9	1.0	19.8
16 - 24 years	13	1.4	10.4
25-34 years	80	8.8	12.3

Selected characteristics	No.	%	2021 Census %
35-44 years	195	21.6	13.1
45-54 years	190	21.0	13.8
55-64 years	193	21.3	13.0
65-74 years	159	17.6	10.5
75-84 years	60	6.6	5.5
85+ years	5	0.6	1.7
Communities of interest			
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander background	11	1.3	1.1
Culturally and linguistically diverse	32	3.8	-
Migrant, refugee or asylum seeker	28	3.3	-
Person with disability or other chronic condition [#]	82	9.8	5.4
An unpaid carer of a person with a disability [#]	49	5.8	14.7
Identify as LGBTIQ+	38	4.5	-
Prefer not to say	62	7.4	-
None of these apply to me	598	71.4	-

Data sources: Survey, community pop-ups.. Data source for 2021 Census data is <https://profile.id.com.au/port-phillip/>

[#] Census data 'Need for Assistance' is only a proxy measure of disability. Carers recorded in Census were carers of people with a disability, with a health condition or old age.

4.3 Connection to Yarra Ranges

The online survey and community pop-up participants were asked to indicate their connection to Yarra Ranges. They were able to nominate more than one connection to the area, so there were 1,477 responses from 916 individuals. As a percentage of all participating individuals, residents made up 93.7% of the participants.

Table 3 shows the total number of responses (n=1,477) and the corresponding percentages. Residents were the highest represented group followed by those who worked in the municipality.

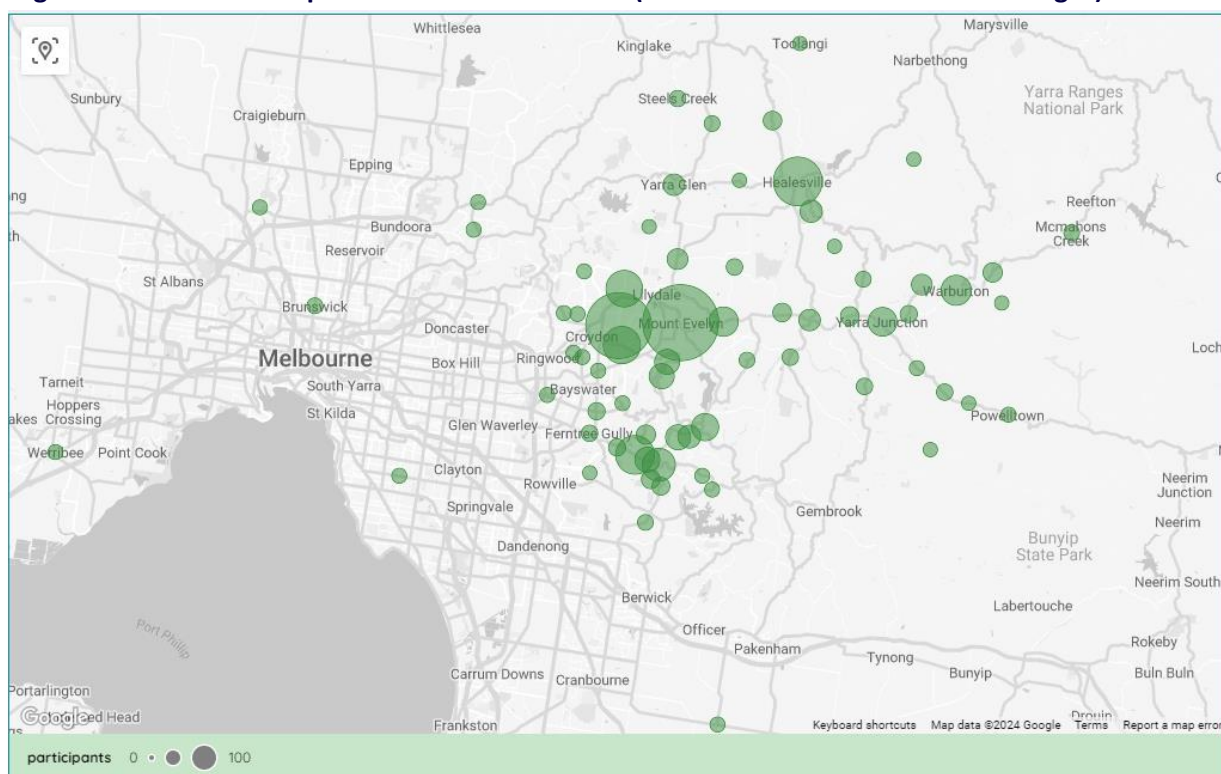
Table 3. Connection to Yarra Ranges

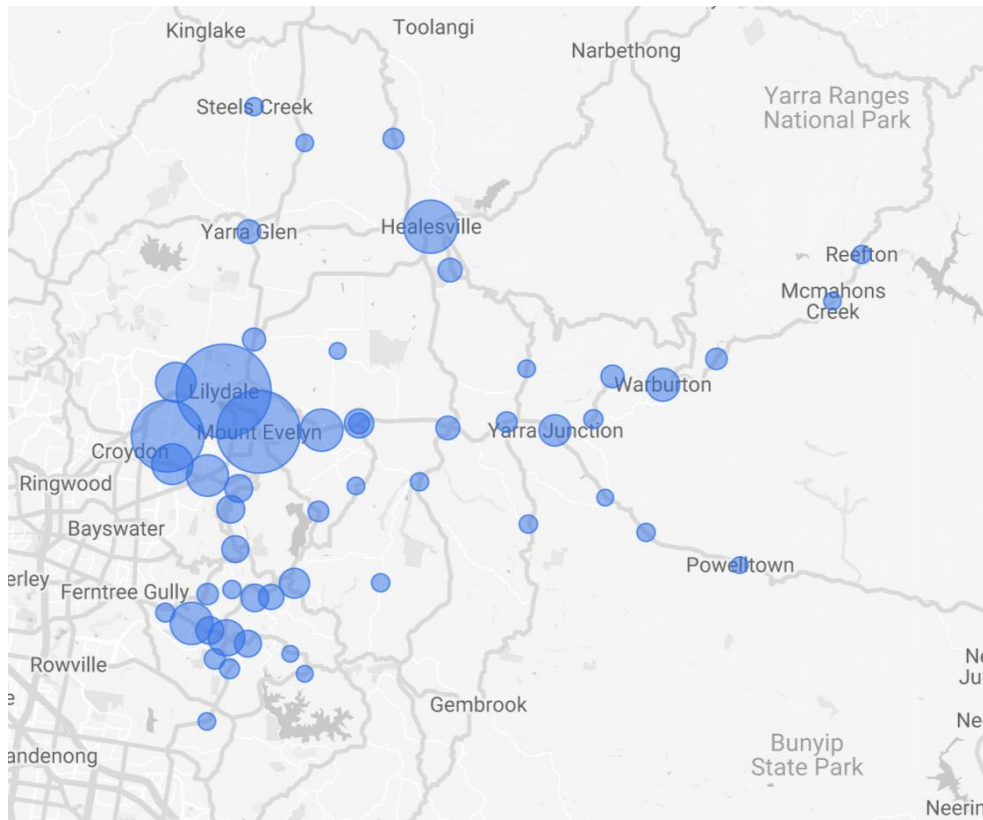
Connection	No.	%
Live here	859	58.2
Work here	342	23.2
Visit the Yarra Ranges	128	8.7
Own a business	122	7.6
Study/go to school	36	2.4
TOTAL responses	1,477	100

Data sources: Survey, community pop-ups. Multi-response question.

4.4 Participants' residential suburb/town

Of the 916 participants, 847 provided their residential suburb or town. Appendix 3 shows the full list of participant numbers for each suburb or town.

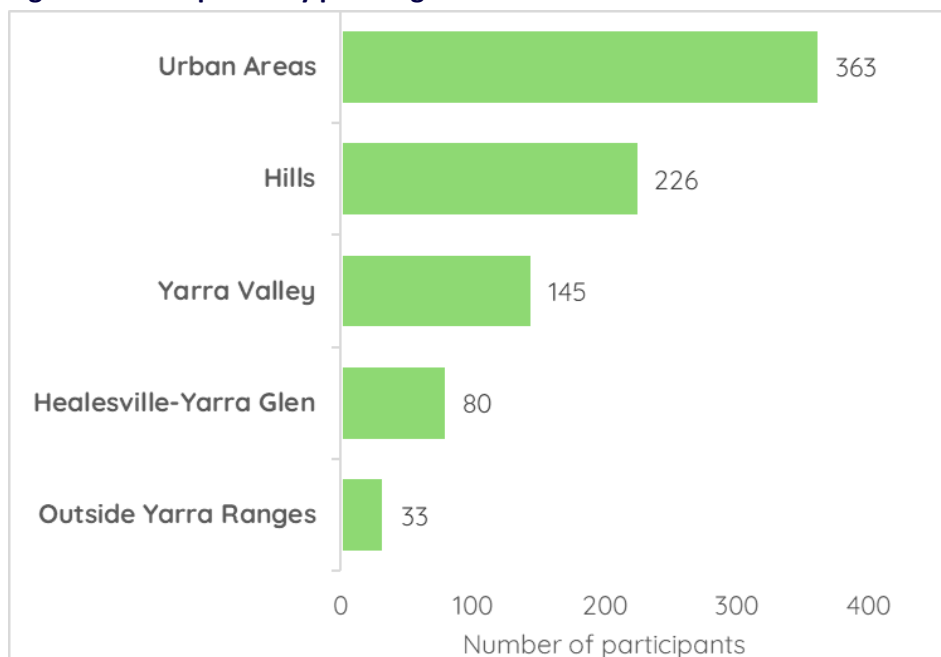
Figure 5a and 5b: Participants residential locations (Eastern Melbourne and Yarra Ranges)



Data sources: Survey, community pop-ups.

There are 69 towns and suburbs in the municipality, which Council has grouped into four broad planning areas. Figure 6 shows the number of engagement participants living in each planning area. Residents of the Urban areas (e.g. Lilydale, Mount Evelyn, Mooroolbark) had the highest participation (42.9%) followed by the Hills community (26.7%).

Figure 6: Participation by planning area



Data sources: Survey, community pop-ups. Census 2021 for planning areas sourced from profile.id

However, compared to their proportion of the Yarra Ranges population, Urban Areas residents were under-represented in the engagement (52.2% of Yarra Ranges) and the Hills residents were slightly over-represented (22.8% of Yarra Ranges).

5. Key Findings

The following section presents the key findings from the online survey and the community pop-ups.

5.1 Focusing on the future

Survey respondents were asked to think about the communities, environment, visitors, business and residents over the next thirty years in Yarra Ranges. They responded to three key questions:

- One thing our Council must keep is...?
- One thing our Council must change is...?
- One thing our Council must let go of or stop doing, is...?

5.1.1 Things to keep in Yarra Ranges

Participants were asked to respond to the statement; ‘One thing the Yarra Ranges should keep is...’ providing their own verbatim feedback. There were a total of 638 responses to this question. Participant comments were analysed thematically using a coding framework and then summarised into the five Strategic Objectives of the current *Council Plan 2021-2025*. Many participants mentioned more than one theme and these responses have been counted accordingly.

Figure 7: Things Yarra Ranges should keep by Strategic Objective (Council Plan 2021-2025)

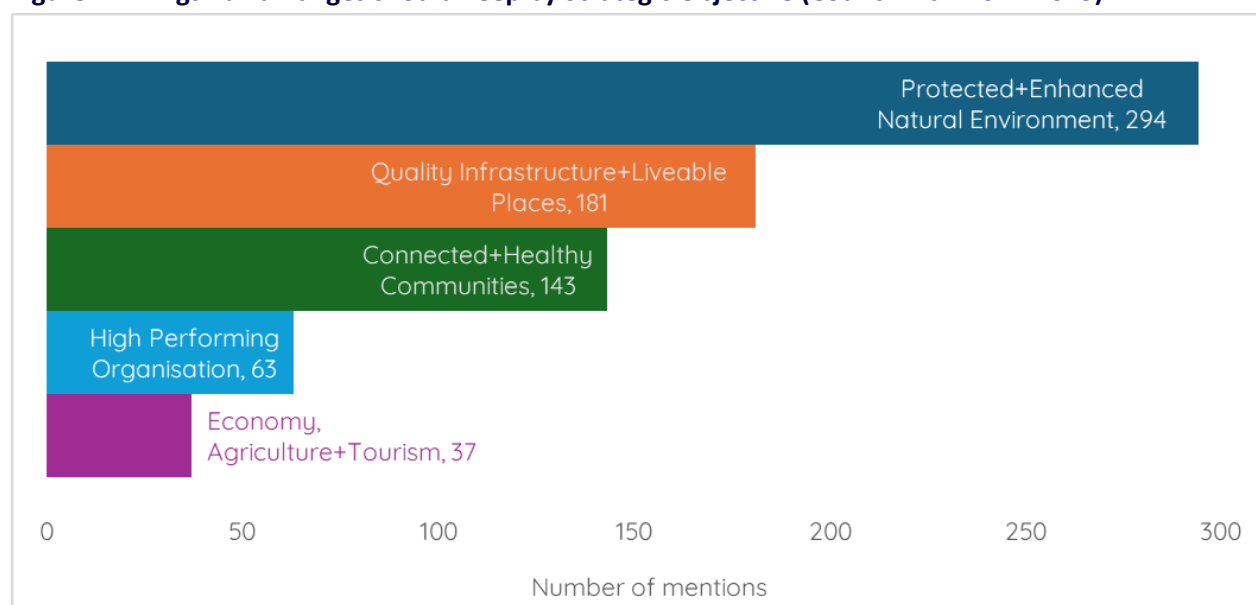


Figure 7 presents the collation of participant feedback themes by the Strategic Objectives, demonstrating the areas participants in this engagement were most keen to preserve or strengthen were: Protected and Enhanced Natural Environments (n=294), Quality Infrastructure and Liveable Places (n=181) and Connected and Healthy Communities (n=143). Economy, Agriculture and Tourism received the least feedback.

Table 4 lists the common themes that emerged from feedback in more detail. Feedback comments are shown in descending order. Where feedback on an issue was divided, the number of comments is shown (n=).

Table 4. Things Yarra Ranges should keep - detailed feedback

Strategic Objective	Theme (most commonly mentioned listed first)	Detailed feedback presenting main sub-themes
Protected and enhanced natural environment (294 mentions)	Parks and green spaces (183 mentions)	Preserve green spaces: - parks, gardens and recreational spaces - National parks, bushland and reserves - access to green space - green wedge - street trees, canopy and public plantings - open spaces - dog off-lead areas Specific areas mentioned: Lilydale lake, Sherbrooke Forest, Badgers Weir, Council Care Park, Kinley, green wedge between Coldstream and Healesville
	Protecting the environment, bush regeneration and management (75 mentions)	Protecting the natural environment by: - conserving natural spaces, old growth, reserves, rural and wild places - protecting/ strengthening biodiversity - protecting wildlife - bush regeneration - native/endemic planting - caring for waterways - protecting national parks - weed removal
	Waste management (28 mentions)	Maintain or improve waste services - regular rubbish collection (weekly n=6, fortnightly n=1) - municipal bins - prevent illegal dumping - FOGO - Hard rubbish collections
	Sustainability and climate (8 mentions)	- Commitment to sustainability - Preparedness for and mitigation of climate related natural disaster - Eco friendly and strong environmental policy
Quality infrastructure and liveable places (181 mentions)	Maintenance/ upgrades to roads and trails (63 mentions)	Maintain and expand: - road maintenance: upgrade, seal, removal or dangerous trees, potholes; Warburton, Melba ave railway crossing - walking tracks and trails, connections between areas - pedestrian routes and footpaths in town centres - bike routes, paths and mountain bike trails; Yering Rail Trail - horse riding trails

Strategic Objective	Theme (most commonly mentioned listed first)	Detailed feedback presenting main sub-themes
	More/upgraded public amenity (57 mentions)	Public spaces and recreation: - swimming/ leisure centres - upgrading/maintaining sports facilities and sporting grounds - improving/expanding playgrounds - community spaces, centres, buildings - public toilets - bike parks - horse agistments/facilities Specific areas mentioned: Kilsyth pool (n=11), Seville water park, Olinda pool, Lilydale pool
	Regulation of development (48 mentions)	- participants who wanted to preserve low density living and small populations n=30 - participants who wanted to keep the green wedge n=7 - participants who wanted sensitive development n=6 - participants who wanted mixed density housing n=3
	Preserve history and heritage (13 mentions)	- historical landmarks - settler history - historic buildings, garden, parks, places - equal recognition of settler and Aboriginal histories - wayfinding, signage and naming
Connected and healthy communities (143 mentions)	Small community feel, character and natural beauty (79 mentions)	Participants who wanted to preserve the unique character of the Yarra Ranges: - natural beauty - character of small towns/village atmosphere - country feel - rural lifestyle - strong communities - the landscape Specific areas mentioned: Monbulk, Warburton, Mt Evelyn, the hills
	Support for community groups and events (36 mentions)	Participants who wanted to keep community services, organisations and events: - volunteer programs - disability - community sport - local clubs, non profits - community grants - 'Friends of' groups - markets - festivals - community outreach
	Council services (22 mentions)	Preserve and strengthen great quality services: - public libraries - meals on wheels - local health services - maternal and child health - children's services - childcare

Strategic Objective	Theme (most commonly mentioned listed first)	Detailed feedback presenting main sub-themes
		- Upwey Link - gambling harm services - homelessness services
	Emergency services and disaster risk reduction (6 mentions)	Continue support, preparedness and adaptability to disaster: - community-centred, mental health focussed support - storms - fire
High performing organisation (63 mentions)	Transparency and accountability in Council (37 mentions)	Participants who desired more commitment to transparency and accountability of local government - open communications and updates on changes - customer service - independence and integrity - responsibility to local residents and ratepayers
	Community engagement opportunities (26 mentions)	Prioritise community engagement and input into decision making - resident issues and feedback being heard - focus on local residents - more diverse options to give feedback
Economy, agriculture and tourism (37 mentions)	Tourism (12 mentions)	Attract more tourism (n=8) - supporting local business and employment through tourism - identity promotion, attracting visitors, arts and culture destination - tourist information centres and hubs - maintaining parks and public spaces to attract visitors Prioritise residents over visitors (n=4)
	Local economy (25 mentions)	- support for local, small, independent businesses investment in arts and culture - support for local primary producers and agriculture and industry - expand/diversify local shopping opportunities and markets
Other (37 mentions)	Mixed responses	- lower rates/ prioritise ratepayers (n=10) - general comments i.e 'common sense', 'good policy', 'the basics' (n=8) - general negative comments i.e 'nothing change everything' (n=6) - safety and security (n=2) - technology/online support/customer service (n=2) - affordable housing - woodfire heating - medical services

Overall, participants wanted to keep; access to well managed green spaces (n=183), maintain the community feel and character of local areas (n=79), preserve the local environment, biodiversity and wildlife (n=75) and the maintenance or upgrade of roads and trails (n= 63) across the Yarra Ranges.

To understand what community members wanted to preserve by region, Table 5 demonstrates the top themes that participants wanted to keep or strengthen/ improve by planning area. Participants in rural/semi-rural areas preferenced parks and green space maintenance above those in urban areas who prioritised public amenity and community programs and events. All rural/semi rural areas also prioritised the preservation of small towns and community feel, with a focus on regulation of development in the Hills and the Healesville Yarra Glen area. All planning areas prioritised road maintenance.

Table 5. Top five things Yarra Ranges should keep - residents' views by Planning Area

Planning areas	Top five things Yarra Ranges should keep
Hills	1. Parks, green spaces preservation 2. Protecting the environment, bush regeneration and land management 3. Small community feel and character/beauty 4. Maintenance/upgrade of roads and trails 5. Regulation around development (mixed views)
Healesville-Yarra Glen	1. Parks, green spaces preservation 2. Maintenance/upgrade of roads and trails 3. Small community feel and character/beauty 4. Regulation around development (mixed views) 5. Local economy
Yarra Valley	1. Parks, green spaces preservation 2. Small community feel and character/beauty 3. More/upgraded public amenity 4. Transparency and accountability in Council 5. Protecting the environment, bush regeneration and land management
Urban Areas	1. More/upgraded public amenity 2. Support for community groups/events 3. Maintenance/upgrade of roads and trails 4. Preserve history/heritage buildings 5. Sustainability/climate

Data sources: Survey, community pop-ups.

5.1.2 Things to change in Yarra Ranges

Participants were asked to respond to the statement; 'One thing the Yarra Ranges should change is...' providing their own verbatim feedback. There were a total of 646 responses to this question. Participant comments were analysed thematically using a coding framework and then summarised into the five objectives of the current *Council Plan 2021-2025*. Many participants mentioned more than one theme and these responses have been counted accordingly. Figure 8 below presents things Yarra Ranges should change, by Strategic Objective.

Overall, participants most commonly suggested changes to 'Quality Infrastructure and Liveable Places' (n=415) followed by 'High Performing Organisation' (n=180) and 'Connected and Healthy Communities' (n=72).

Figure 8: Things Yarra Ranges should change by Strategic Objective (Council Plan 2021-2025)



Table 6 lists the common themes that emerged from feedback in more detail. Feedback comments shown in descending order where applicable. Where feedback on an issue was divided, the number of comments is shown (n=).

Table 6. Things to change in Yarra Ranges - detailed feedback

Strategic Objective	Theme (most commonly mentioned listed first)	Detailed feedback presenting main sub themes
Quality Infrastructure and Liveable Places (415 mentions)	Roads (95 mentions)	Increased development and maintenance of roads - road maintenance - road sealing - increase routes to manage congestion: Lilydale bypass, Mooroolbark railway bridge, Nelson Rd - traffic calming, road safety: Montrose roundabout, - wildlife safety, corridors - more parking: Lilydale, Warburton, USPS, Botanic Gardens, - dust suppressant on dirt roads - reduce speed limits in town centres - increase speed limits on major roads
	Planning and development (94 mentions)	Participants who were opposed to development (n=37): - green wedge - minimise urban sprawl - subdivision - high density housing - high rise development - shopping centres Participants who wanted faster planning and decreased regulation (n=32): - decrease delays

Strategic Objective	Theme (most commonly mentioned listed first)	Detailed feedback presenting main sub themes
		- permits for tiny homes - permits for property improvements Participants who wanted increased/affordable/diverse housing (n=6) Participants who wanted sensitive development, stronger regulation and planning (n=5)
	Waste management (53 mentions)	Improve waste services: - more public rubbish bins - opt out for FOGO - more frequent waste collection - cheaper waste disposal/tip fees - hard rubbish booking system - bin collection for businesses
	Maintain/ upgrade public amenity (48 mentions)	Investment in maintaining, expanding public amenity: - Public pools - wayfinding, signage - seating in public places - public toilets - accessibility for public buildings, places (wheelchairs, prams) - sporting facilities - street sweeping, maintenance of streets - leisure facilities: bike tracks, playgrounds - more community gathering spaces, function rooms Specific areas mentioned: Yarra Junction pool, Lilydale, Mooroolbark Football Club, Sherbrooke forest, Kilsyth pool
	Paths, trails and accessibility (28 mentions)	- increase pedestrian and bike paths/links - maintenance - seal footpaths/ bike paths - improve wheelchair access - change reliance on motor vehicles, focus on active transport - divert spending from trails, eg Warbuton bike trail to pedestrian friendly town centres Specific areas mentioned: Olinda, Warburton, connection between Selby and Belgrave, Warby Hwy Seville
	Parks and green spaces (25 mentions)	Maintain, expand and improve parks, recreation areas, reserves and public green space: - public space maintenance (pruning, gutter cleaning, weed management, graffiti, tree removal) - increased canopy - river access - increase dog off-leash areas - enforcement of dog on-lead rules - improved playgrounds (fencing, equipment for all ages, shade) - more facilities (bbqs, undercover areas, community spaces) Specific areas mentioned: Mt Evelyn Bowens Park, Mooroolbark

Strategic Objective	Theme (most commonly mentioned listed first)	Detailed feedback presenting main sub themes
		Terrace, Healesville main street, The Patch, Monbulk, Montrose Rec Reserve
	Public transport (24 mentions)	Increased route options, connections and services - links from country areas to major service centres i.e Lilydale-Healesville - weekend services - transport for older people - shorter travel times to the city
	Neighbourhood character (21 mentions)	Participants who wanted to preserve neighbourhood character of their local area: - identity of small towns/suburbs - beautify streetscapes - cleanliness of streetscapes - dilapidated buildings - preserve historic charm - opposition to McDonalds Mt Evelyn Specific areas mentioned: Mt Evelyn, Healesville, Yarra Junction, Lilydale, Belgrave, Mt Dandenong
	Drainage (16 mentions)	Maintain and improve drainage: - lack of drainage - lack of drain maintenance - concerns for stormwater and flooding - ageing infrastructure - divert water from creeks, waterways
	Energy and other services (11 mentions)	Maintain and improve access to essential services: - reliable electricity - improve access to digital services; 5G, phone and internet coverage - put power lines underground - affordable gas and electricity - sewage systems
High performing organisation (180 mentions)	Council structure and remit (54 mentions)	Participants who wanted to change aspects of Councils' organisational structure and role: - reduce the size of the LGA, split LGA - geographic bias: 'Lilydale centric', urban centric - focus on residents instead of tourists - more staffing needed - stop reliance on contractors - focus on essential services above 'political' or social justice issues: roads, rubbish etc - streamline services and process; reduce red tape, wait times

Strategic Objective	Theme (most commonly mentioned listed first)	Detailed feedback presenting main sub themes
	Council spending (49 mentions)	Participants who wanted change in Council spending: - lower rates - stop wasting money - value for rates - corruption, dishonesty, greed, high paid staff - inefficiencies in service delivery
	Transparency and communications (48 mentions)	More communication and information sharing with community: - response times - respect for community wishes - closing the loop - communicate updates, achievements, impact - monitoring communications: environment, infrastructure projects - complaints handling - keep promises
	Engagement opportunities (29 mentions)	Participants who wanted improved engagement processes: - prioritise local residents over visitors - the sentiment that Council decision making is guided by a 'noisy minority' - mistrust in the current community engagement process' ability to impact decision making - desire for more collaboration and codesign - a desire for outreach/targeting of hard to reach groups (geographic, demographic) - diversity of engagement and feedback options
Connected and Healthy Communities (72 mentions)	Affordable housing, homelessness support (27 mentions)	More support needed to support people in need and manage a housing crisis in Yarra Ranges: - support for people experiencing homelessness - affordable housing - diversity of housing stock; more 1 bedroom housing - restricting Airbnb - fast tracking, simplifying, extending planning permissions to support housing supply: granny flats, tiny home, subdivision - affordable housing for young people - public, community and crisis housing - residential aged care, retirement villages - remove social housing (safety issues)
	Council Services (20 mentions)	Extend or improve existing Council services: - access to MCH - improved kinder, family and children's services - ageing services - improved service provisions in rural areas - domestic animal management: enforcement, education - youth programs - mental health services - advocate for improved medical services (access, quality,

Strategic Objective	Theme (most commonly mentioned listed first)	Detailed feedback presenting main sub themes
		facilities, staffing)
	Emergency and disaster risk reduction (14 mentions)	- resilience to natural disaster - improve response times in emergency - regeneration and recovery after storms (cleanup, erosion control and tree planting) - flood mitigation - decrease neighbourhood back burning to protect air quality (n=6) - increase back burning to reduce fire risk (n=2)
	Social inclusion and community building (7 mentions)	- better connection spaces for residents - support for young people - promote sense of community and cohesion
	Food security (4 mentions)	- support for disadvantaged communities - creating an holistic and sustainable food system - local produce and businesses to promote healthy eating
Protected and enhanced Natural Environment (41 mentions)	Land management and regeneration (23 mentions)	- prioritise weed eradication (n=4) - ban herbicide (n=2) - wildlife protection - further restrict tree removal, deforestation (public and private property) - increase native planting, regeneration of natural places - removal of dangerous trees - stop/ enforce restrictions for burning off on private property
	Climate and sustainability (18 mentions)	Climate action and sustainability (n=16): - ecological regulation in the planning scheme (new builds, sustainable design, materials used, construction) - renewable energy, diverse from fossil fuels - community battery networks - reuse resources- soft plastics, building materials - support for community sustainability programs Climate change and sustainability is not a priority/real (n=2)
Economy, agriculture and tourism (35 mentions)	Tourism (18 mentions)	Reduce tourism in Yarra Ranges (n=11) - regulate Airbnb - the perception that decision making preferences tourists over residents Support tourism in the Yarra Ranges (n=4) - provide more accommodation options - improve amenity to support and encourage visitors Manage tourism sensitively (n=3) - focus on infrastructure and capacity before branding

Strategic Objective	Theme (most commonly mentioned listed first)	Detailed feedback presenting main sub themes
	Local economy (17 mentions)	- more local work opportunities (trades, industry, - support for independent, small, local business - opposition to corporations like McDonalds Mt Evelyn - extend local business opening hours, diversity of retail options - supporting arts and culture

Overall, the top areas participants felt needed change were: roads, planning and development, the structure and remit of Council and the waste management system. Looking at priorities for change by planning area, all areas prioritised changes to how planning and development are managed. This included supporting sensitive and informed development, desire for more development, a desire for less development and a desire for faster approval processes and less regulation.

‘Council structure and remit’ was a priority to change for rural/semi rural areas, with many participants noting geographic bias in Council functions or the size of the municipality as impacting on governance and service provision. There was desire for open communications from Council with community and desire for more responsible Council spending across the planning areas. Residents from all areas prioritised roads.

Table 7. Top five things Yarra Ranges should change - residents' views by Planning Area

Planning areas	Top five things Yarra Ranges should change
Hills	1. Increased development and maintenance of roads 2. Planning and development (mixed views) 3. Council spending - lower rates, more value, wasting money 4. More/upgraded public amenity 5. Council structure/remit - split municipality, focus of organisation, streamline services
Healesville-Yarra Glen	1. Council structure/remit - split municipality, focus of organisation, streamline services 2. Planning and development (mixed views) 3. Tourism (mixed views) 4. More transparency/open communication 5. Council spending/Climate and sustainability/Roads/Improved waste services/ Neighbourhood Character/Economy (tied)
Yarra Valley	1. Planning and development (mixed views) 2. Increased development and maintenance of roads 3. More transparency/open communication 4. Improved waste services 5. Council structure/remit - split municipality, focus of organisation, streamline services
Urban Areas	1. Planning and development (mixed views) 2. Increased development and maintenance of roads 3. Improved waste services - public bins, more frequent waste collection 4. More/upgraded public amenity 5. More transparency/open communication/Council spending (tied)

Data sources: Survey, community pop-ups.

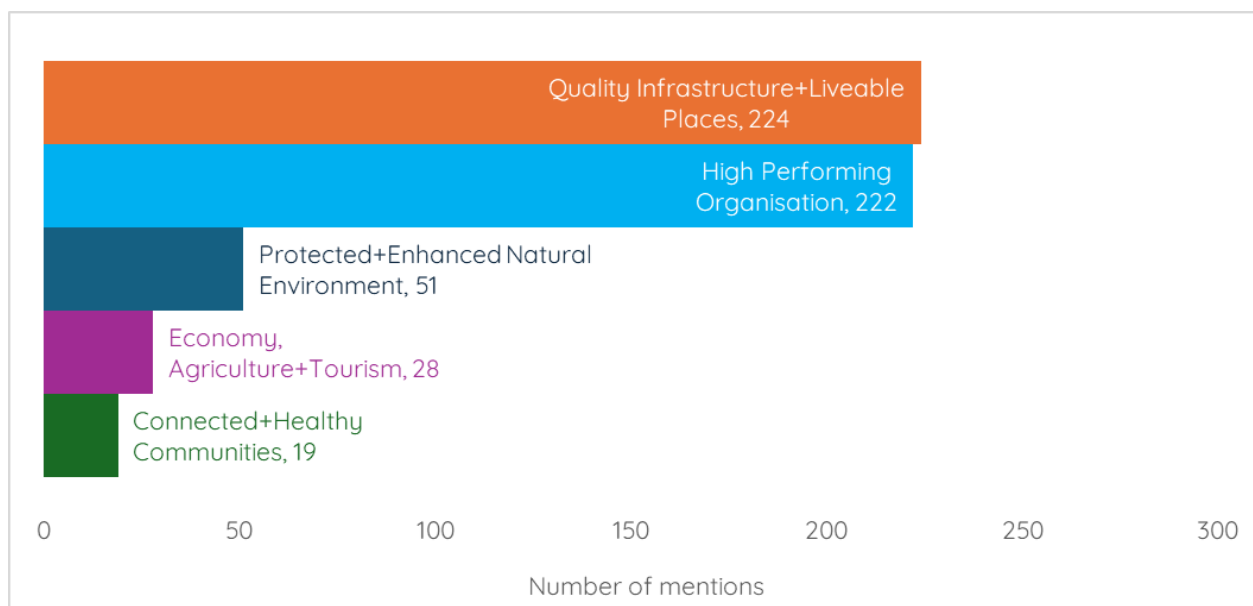
5.1.3 Things to let go of/stop doing in Yarra Ranges

Participants were asked to respond to the statement; 'One thing the Yarra Ranges should let go of/stop doing is...' providing their own verbatim feedback. There were a total of 571 responses to this question. Participant comments were analysed thematically using a coding framework and then summarised into the five objectives of the current *Council Plan 2021-2025*. Many participants mentioned more than one theme and these responses have been counted accordingly.

Figure 9 presents the total feedback comments under each strategic objective demonstrating participants more commonly wanted to see major changes to 'Quality infrastructure and liveable places' (n=224) and 'High performing organisation' (n=222).

For both the 'change' and the 'stop/let go' questions, there were substantially more comments for 'High Performing Organisation', reflecting the mostly critical commentary about the organisation and its governance.

Figure 9: Things Yarra Ranges should let go of/stop doing by Strategic Objective (Council Plan 2021-2025)



It is worth noting that many participants in response to this question highlighted what changes they would like to see rather than what should be removed. Table 8 presents the feedback in terms of participants' stated desired outcomes. Instances where participants have noted Council should stop certain practices have been indicated. Feedback comments shown in descending order where applicable. Where feedback on an issue was divided, the number of comments is shown (n=).

Table 8. Things to let go of/stop doing - detailed feedback

Strategic Objective	Theme (most commonly mentioned listed first)	Detailed feedback presenting main sub themes
Quality infrastructure and liveable places (221 mentions)	Development and planning (92 mentions)	Stop development (n=54): - high density, greenfield, multistorey, environmental implications, infrastructure and parking before builds - stop Warburton bike trail - concern for gentrification of rural towns Relax regulation and controls over development and permits (n=29): - streamline approvals, plan for high density and varied housing - desire for more diverse housing (1 bedroom) Desire for a planning scheme sensitive to Yarra Ranges (n=9)
	Waste management (54 mentions)	Dissatisfaction with the bin system - opt of for FOGO - stop Hard Rubbish collections - stop expensive tip fees - more soft plastics recycling
	Infrastructure (48 mentions)	- improve road maintenance - improve drainage - improve sewage and septic systems - stop dangerous trees near roads

Strategic Objective	Theme (most commonly mentioned listed first)	Detailed feedback presenting main sub themes
		- raise speed limits - stop car centric infrastructure - stop investment in walking trails, bike tracks, paving and signage in natural areas - stop light pollution
	Amenity (15 mentions)	- more local sport and recreation infrastructure: pools, horse riding, sports clubs - invest in underutilised infrastructure - stop selling public land/assets
	Heritage and character (14 mentions)	- stop commercial development (McDonalds) - preserve streetscapes in small towns - stop empty and dilapidated buildings
High performing organisation (214 mentions)	Value for money (68 mentions)	- lower rates - stop wasting money - stop spending on consultants, contractors - stop spending on ceremonial, vanity projects, 'political' projects, social justice - stop funding unpopular projects
	Political views (45 mentions)	Participants who raised concerns about the political nature of Council sharing the sentiment that Council should 'stick to the basics' - stop local government involvement in international, Federal or State government issues - stop 'Smart Cities agenda' - concerns surrounding social justice issues, 'wokeness', political correctness, virtue signalling, support for minority groups i.e LGBTQIA+, trans and non-binary communities, First Nations
	Opportunities for engagement (44 mentions)	Participants who wanted a greater commitment to meaningful community engagement and participation in decision making: - the sentiment that decisions are made without community input - the sentiment that community engagement does not contribute to predetermined outcomes - more public meetings - residents who feel unheard or ignored - the perception that Council does not respect community views - the perception that Council only listens to a 'loud minority'
	Council structure and remit (13 mentions)	- stop short term focus - stop hiring contractors, complete jobs in house - stop bureaucracy and red tape - focus on action rather than planning - more Council officers, less leadership positions - stop geographic bias: 'northern focus' (n=5), 'Lilydale centric' (n=3), focus on larger towns

Strategic Objective	Theme (most commonly mentioned listed first)	Detailed feedback presenting main sub themes
	Communication and leadership (23 mentions)	- desire for transparency and open communications - disrespect towards residents - digital communications are exclusive
Protected and Enhanced Natural Environment (50 mentions)	Land management and regeneration (21 mentions)	- pest management (cats, foxes) - more regulation needed to reduce deforestation on private property - protecting waterways - opposition to pesticide use - more weed control
	Parks and public green space (20 mentions)	- maintenance (parks, median strips) - ease dog restrictions - tree removal - investment in unwanted/undesirable parks and playgrounds: football ovals, Monbulk oval, Black Springs Rd
	Climate and sustainability (10 mentions)	- green energy, localised grids, underground power lines (n=6) - deprioritise climate and sustainability (n=4)
Connected and Healthy Communities (19 mentions)	Disaster risk reduction and emergency (13 mentions)	- reduce regulation and permits to support residents on rural properties to be fire ready - stop back burning and burning off on private property - better fire planning
	Community building and social cohesion (6 mentions)	- more youth programs - streamline approvals for community organisations and clubs
Economy, agriculture and tourism (28 mentions)	Tourism (28 mentions)	- stop Council focus on tourism in the Yarra Ranges - manage Airbnb - preferencing tourism over residents needs and desires
Other (54 mentions)	Mixed responses	- stop focussing on services that private providers offer (health, childcare) - stop focus on business - more support for business - concern about diversity quotas - domestic animal management - concerns with First Nations acknowledgement - safety and security

Overall, participants wanted Council to let go of their current approach to development and planning. Participants shared mixed views on alternative actions, favouring: stopping high density development followed by easing or simplifying development processes and governance. Value for money was the

next highest priority with participants desiring affordable rates and more efficient use of budgets, followed by dissatisfaction with the current waste services.

Looking at feedback by planning area, Tourism management was the top concern for the Yarra Valley. Infrastructure and development planning were priorities across the Yarra Ranges. Healesville, Yarra Glen and the Yarra Valley also wanted more opportunities for meaningful engagement with Council.

Table 9 presents the top five things participants wanted Council to let go of/stop doing by planning area. It is worth noting that many participants in response to this question highlighted what changes they would like to see rather than what should be removed.

Table 9. Top five things Yarra Ranges should let go of/stop doing - residents' views by Planning Area

Planning areas	Top five things Yarra Ranges should let go of/stop doing
Hills	1. Development and planning - relax regulation, high density, stop development (mixed views) 2. Infrastructure (mixed views) 3. Rates amount, spending on 'vanity' projects 4. Imbalance in digital only communication, disrespect to residents 5. Waste services - opt out of FOGO, no hard rubbish collection
Healesville-Yarra Glen	1. Development and planning - relax regulation, high density, stop development (mixed views) 2. Political views of Council - stop involvement in State/Federal issues, social justice 3. Infrastructure (mixed views) 4. Rates amount, spending on 'vanity' projects 5. Making decisions without community input, outcomes are pre-determined
Yarra Valley	1. Preferencing tourism over residents' needs 2. Development and planning - relax regulation, high density, stop development (mixed views) 3. Rates amount, spending on 'vanity' projects 4. Waste services - opt out of FOGO, no hard rubbish collection 5. Making decisions without community input, outcomes are pre-determined
Urban Areas	1. Development and planning - relax regulation, high density, stop development (mixed views) 2. Waste services - opt out of FOGO, no hard rubbish collection 3. Rates amount, spending on 'vanity' projects 4. Infrastructure (mixed views) 5. Political views of Council - stop involvement in State/Federal issues, social justice

Data sources: Survey, community pop-ups.

5.2 Describing Yarra Ranges today and in the future

Survey participants were asked to nominate three words that describe 'Yarra Ranges today' and another three words that describe 'Yarra Ranges in the future'.

5.2.1 Sentiment Analysis

The sentiment of each word provided by participants was analysed using the Relevance AI software. This coding was then spot-checked by Conversation Co. for data quality purposes. Words were allocated to the neutral category if interpretations were uncertain, for example; busy, rural, green, changing could be understood as both positive and negative.

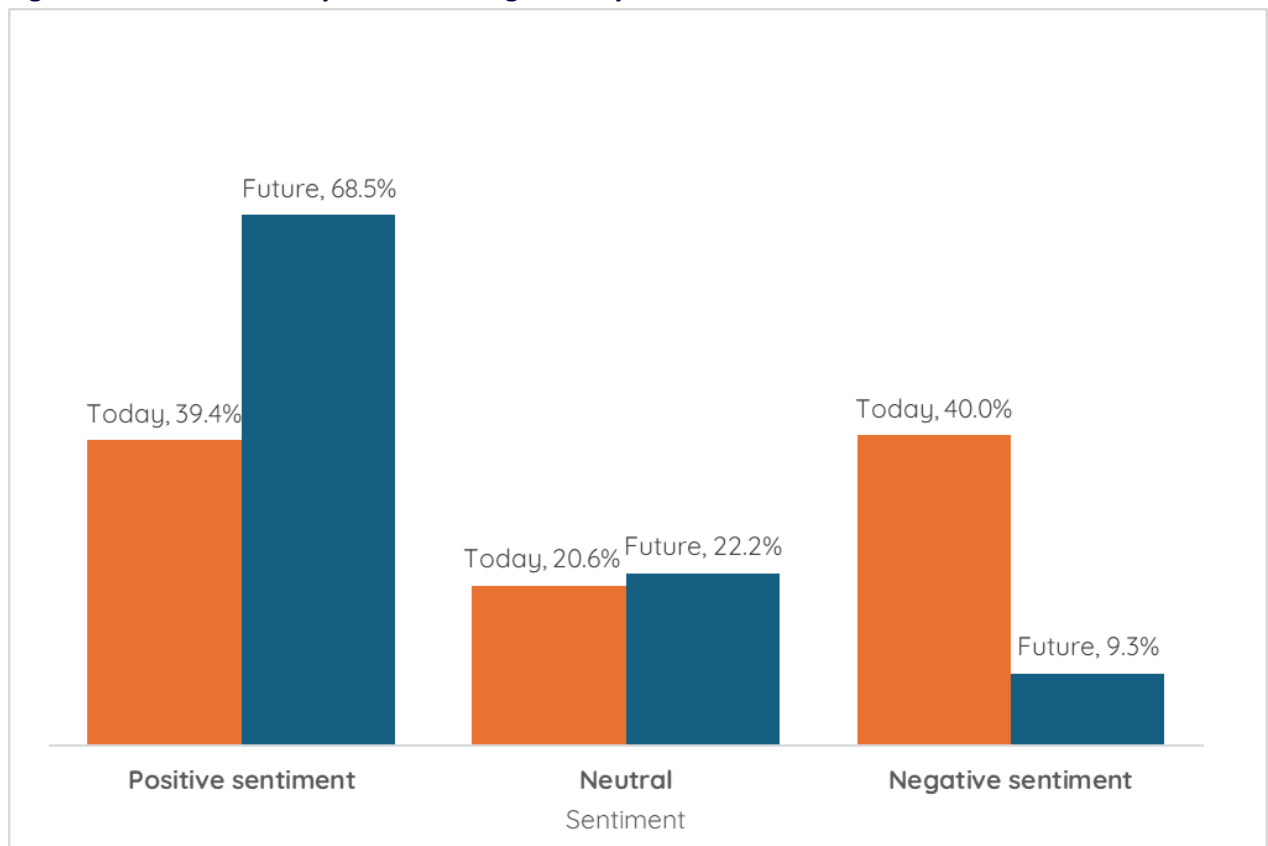
Looking at sentiments (positive, neutral, negative), there was a substantial shift to more positive words to describe Yarra Ranges in the future. As shown in Table 10 and Figure 10, participants' current sentiment towards Yarra Ranges was an even balance between positive (39.4%) and negative (40%) describing words however 20.6% of participants used neutral words to describe Yarra Ranges today. The majority of participants shifted to positive sentiments (68.5%) when describing the future with a small number remaining negative (9.3%).

Table 10. Sentiment analysis - Yarra Ranges Today and in the Future

Sentiment	Today No. of words	Today %	Future No. of words	Future %	Change
Positive	739	39.4	1286	68.5	+29.0%
Neutral	386	20.6	417	22.2	+1.6%
Negative	749	40.0	175	9.3	-30.6%
TOTAL	1874	100	1878	100	

Data sources: Survey, community pop-ups.

Figure 10: Sentiment analysis - Yarra Ranges Today and in the Future



5.2.2 Words that describe Yarra Ranges today

Figure 11 shows the commonly mentioned words that participants used to describe Yarra Ranges today. The words in the larger font sizes were mentioned more often by participants.

The image displays two word clouds side-by-side, representing feedback for the village of Broomfield. The left cloud, representing positive feedback, features the word 'beautiful' as the largest, followed by 'community', 'green', 'natural', 'welcoming', 'diverse', 'area', 'slow', 'big', 'full', 'rural', 'local', and 'nature'. The right cloud, representing negative feedback, features 'friendly' and 'peaceful' as prominent words, along with 'expensive', 'growing', 'council', 'needs', 'roads', 'good', 'liveable', 'live', 'clean', 'urban', 'large', 'vibrant', 'residents', 'changing', 'vast', 'environment', 'safe', 'place', 'home', 'great', 'tourism', 'quiet', 'rates', 'touch', 'traffic', 'woke', 'losing', 'people', 'scenic', 'lacking', and 'poor'.

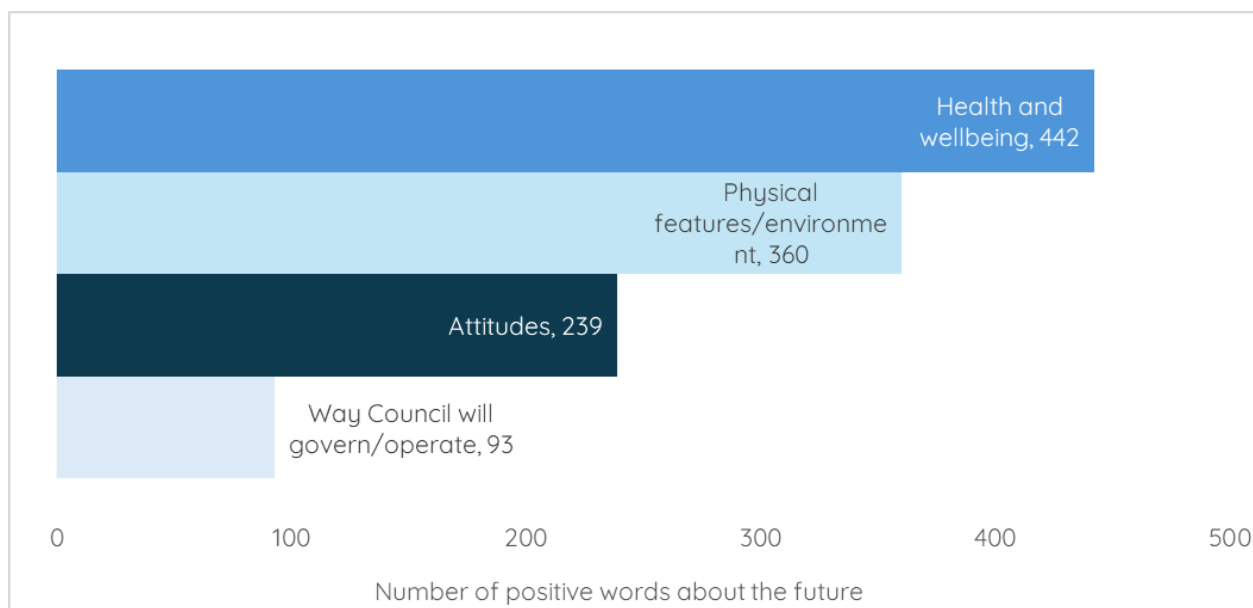
5.2.3 Words that describe Yarra Ranges in the future

Figure 12b: Words that describe Yarra Ranges in the future



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Participants used the following words to describe their aspirations for health and wellbeing in the future (in descending order of frequency): inclusive, safe, community, accessible, affordable, caring, healthy, welcoming, family and supportive.

Participants used the following words to describe their aspirations for the physical environment in the future (in descending order of frequency): environment, sustainable, beautiful, natural, clean, peaceful, green, protected and spacious.

Participants used the following words to describe their aspirations for community and council attitudes in the future (in descending order of frequency): good/great, work, vibrant cultural, resilient, thriving, tourism, progressive and unique.

Participants used the following words to describe their aspirations for the way Council will govern/operate in the future (in descending order of frequency): efficient, responsible, financially responsible, accountable and responsive.

5.3 Checking in with the Community Vision 2036

Participants were asked the question; 'Where should we focus?' and presented with 21 vision statements from the Community Vision. Survey respondents were then prompted to rank the 21 statements in order of priority (1 most important- 21 least important). Pop up participants were presented with 20 options linked to multicoloured leaves and asked to select their top five priorities and place leaves on a tree prop (see Image 1). Table 11 presents participant priorities for the Community Vision across both engagement methods.

Table 11. Participant rankings of Community Vision elements

Community Vision element	Survey: Weighted average rank (lower is better)	Survey: highest priority	Pop-ups: Number of tree leaves votes (higher is better)	Pop-ups: highest priority
Council listens to community and responds to community needs and aspirations	2.37	1	76	2
Climate change risks are reduced	2.46	2	58	5
Sustainability and the protection of biodiversity are prioritised	2.78	3	59	4
Community are connected, volunteer and support each other	2.80	4	50	9
A reputation for fantastic local produce	2.85	5	na	na
Roads, footpaths and trails are maintained	2.86	6	109	1
Drainage is well maintained	2.89	7	58	5
Community is prepared for natural disasters	2.92	8	55	8
The area's natural beauty and landscapes are considered in decisions	3.02	9	56	7
Population growth and development are managed responsibly and sustainably	3.18	10	38	12
Agricultural land is protected by regenerative farming practices	3.20	11	33	17
Appearance of commercial and industrial areas is improved	3.25	12	6	20
Disadvantaged residents are well supported	3.31	13	62	3
Yarra Ranges is a world-class destination for visitors and investors	3.36	14	15	18
Services are accessible and inclusive	3.41	15	46	11
Access to digital services, networks and infrastructure	3.44	16	36	14
Our community are proud of where they live	3.45	17	35	15
First Nations people's identity, culture stories and history are showcased	3.47	18	37	13

Community Vision element	Survey: Weighted average rank (lower is better)	Survey: highest priority	Pop-ups: Number of tree leaves votes (higher is better)	Pop-ups: highest priority
Education and training facilities support local employment	3.51	19	35	15
Focus on responsible ecotourism	3.55	20	8	19
Residents value their health and wellbeing	3.61	21	46	10

Data sources: Survey, community pop-ups. Note: 'A reputation for fantastic local produce' was not included in the pop up vision statements.

Figure 13 presents the top ten most important areas of the community vision culminated across both engagement activities.

Figure 13: Top ten ranked Community Vision elements

1	Council listens to community, responds to community needs and aspirations
2	Climate change risks are reduced
3	Sustainability and the protection of biodiversity are prioritised
4	Roads, footpaths and trails are maintained
5	Drainage is well maintained
6	Community are connected, volunteer and support each other
7	Community is prepared for natural disasters
8	The area's natural beauty and landscapes are considered in decisions
9	Disadvantaged residents are well supported
10	Population growth and development are managed responsibly, sustainably

Overall, participants prioritised 'Council listening and responding to community needs', followed by 'Reducing risk of climate change' and 'Sustainability and the protection of biodiversity'. Participants were least likely to prioritise 'Community value their health and wellbeing', 'Responsible ecotourism' and the 'Appearance of commercial and industrial areas'.

Looking at free text feedback, many participants understood health and wellbeing as a given or central function of Council and other community services which may explain its place in the ranking. Participant feedback on tourism was largely around the responsible management of tourism rather than its promotion or innovation.

Missing elements from the Community Vision

Participants were asked the open-ended question 'Is there anything missing in the Community Vision?' which received a total of 385 responses. The majority of participants shared feedback similar to their responses under the 'Keep', 'Change', 'Stop/Let go of' questions in [Key findings - Future of Yarra Ranges](#).

The top 5 themes that emerged were:

- Roads, paths, access (n=60).
- Development and planning (n=40).
- Amenity (n=37).
- Regeneration and land management (n=31).
- Neighbourhood character, heritage, history (n=31).

Of the 22 'other' feedback that was shared presented opportunities for partnerships within the Community Vision:

- Affordable housing, housing availability
- Access to healthcare from birthing to aged care; medical services, improving hospitals, allied health, community health support and promotion and specialist services.
- Access to higher education locally.
- Improved access to school education.
- Local newspapers.
- Safety and security; reducing crime, police presence.

5.4 Community priorities for Council Plan 2025-2029

Survey respondents were asked to rank in order their service priorities for the Council Plan. Table 12 demonstrates 'Protecting the natural environment' was the highest priority, followed by 'Looking after infrastructure to help people move around' and 'Looking after drains and water'.

Table 12. Ranked community priorities for Council Plan 2025-2029

Council Plan priorities	Weighted average rank (lower is better)	Highest priority
Protecting our natural environment and reducing impacts of climate change (including tree planting, rubbish collection and sustainability initiatives)	2.50	1
Looking after our infrastructure to help people move around Yarra Ranges (e.g. building and looking after our footpaths, trails and roads)	2.58	2
Looking after our drains and water (e.g. flood prevention, water quality and conservation)	2.89	3
Keeping you safe and healthy (e.g. managing emergencies and animals, school crossings, immunisations, maternal and child health)	3.00	4
Supporting our community in all stages of life (e.g. services and information for individuals and families, from babies to the elderly and everyone in between)	3.05	5
Running an efficient and responsible organisation (e.g. managing Council assets, advocacy, engagement, governance)	3.19	6
Supporting our community to thrive (e.g. community development, grants, local and cultural venues, access and equity and Indigenous work)	3.22	7
Planning and developing our towns (e.g. building and planning permits, building safety and compliance, planning for future development)	3.23	8
Looking after our sporting facilities, open spaces and reserves	3.24	9
Supporting our local economy and businesses (e.g. advice, advocacy, permits, networking)	3.64	10

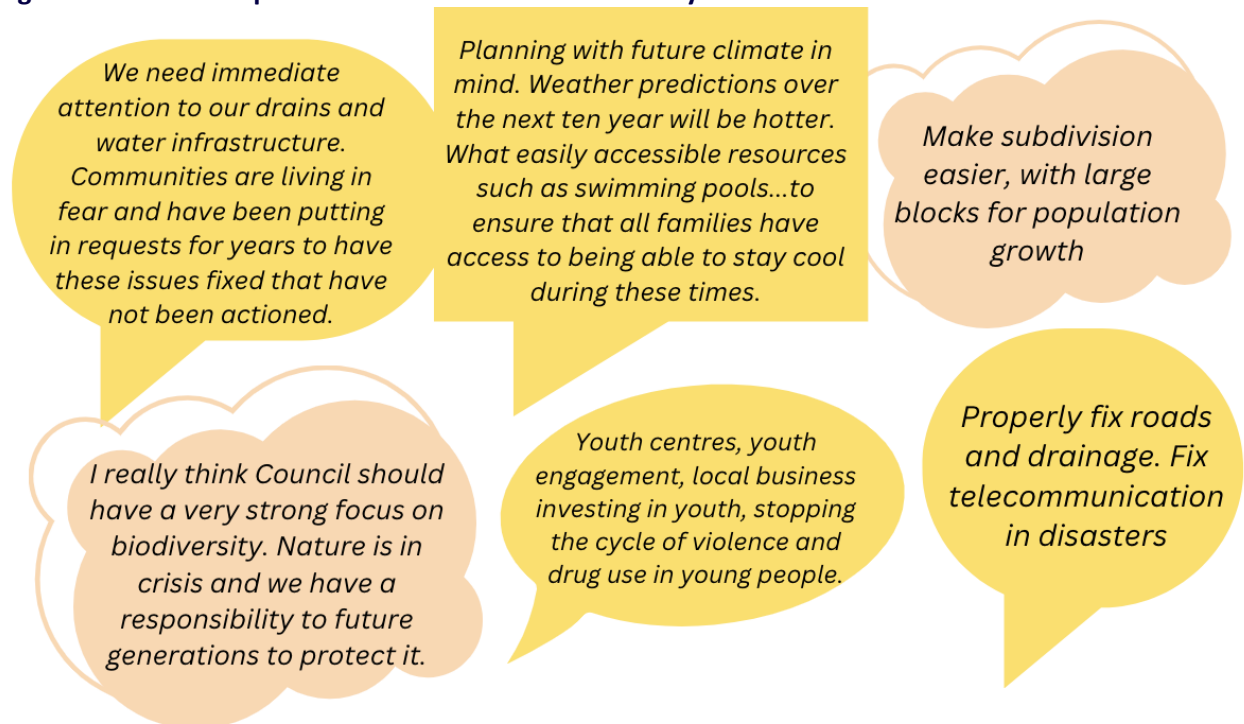
Note: On the pop-up postcards, responses marked as 'Yes' instead of a ranking were all assigned a ranking of 3.

Participants were asked 'Are there any services specifically you would like to highlight as a priority?' There were a total of 425 open-ended responses to this question. Of these responses, 366 comments mentioned improving or strengthening the current services being provided e.g. 'Rubbish bins in car parks , shopping villages and parks'. A sample of these comments is shown on the following page.

There were 37 comments providing additional feedback on 'Running an efficient and responsible organisation'. Common themes mentioned were:

- Value for money.
- More opportunity for meaningful community engagement and influence in decision-making.
- Concerns about 15/20 minute cities.
- A desire for Council to focus on basic service delivery.
- A desire for communications of planning and projects in an easy to understand and accessible way.
- Geographic bias in planning and service delivery and a desire for a smaller municipality.

Figure 14: Verbatim quotes about current service delivery



Permits are slow for anything and maintaining low density is essential so it doesn't lose its charm - keeping the fast food chains out

You should separate out footpaths and trails from roads, while they're lumped together it won't be a priority for me, but we are screaming for footpaths and trails throughout towns in the Dandenongs, not just the ridgetop and easy wins, time to tackle the harder routes to ensure connections across all townships

Support for sole traders and local small business

Bushfire mitigation strategies need to be prioritised.

Meals on wheels and other support services for the elderly. Weekly waste collection. Ensuring public toilets stay clean.

Maintenance and development of infrastructure and facilities to promote the movement of residents and visitors within the shire and particularly to/from activity centres and to/from areas outside the shire into the shire

There were 24 comments suggesting new services or major changes:

- Transforming waste services; reduced or pay by weight waste charges, Increased recycling initiatives.
- Community grants for sharing Aboriginal culture.
- Extended medical care services.
- Social inclusion programs for community sport.
- Mental health programs.
- Support for disengaged children and young people.

6. Evaluation

The following measures of success were identified prior to the broad engagement phase.

Table 13. Measures of success for engagement evaluation

Measure	Success Criteria	Result
Participation by 1000 community members across the engagement activities	Participation totals from community survey, pop-ups and summits	Participation numbers should exceed 1000 people, with 916 people already involved through the survey and pop-ups. Community summit attendances will be recorded at the end of May 2024.
Engagement represents the diversity of the Yarra Ranges - showcasing a wide variety of voices and opinions	Participant demographics are representative of Yarra Ranges community profile	Males and young people were under-represented but this is typical for most community engagement projects. There was a representative proportion of people from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander backgrounds.
Council Plans consider long-term planning goals (10 - 20 years) rather than a 4-year planning cycle	Council has a clear understanding of the long-term desires of the community, clear report with documented rationale	Project team to assess during the preparation phase for the Panel.
Community are more aware of how they can engage with Council in the future and more willing to engage	Increased sign ups to e-newsletters and Shaping Yarra Ranges page	Council communications team to advise.

7. Next Steps

Broad Engagement - Community Summits

The three community summits are being held during May 2024. Two of the three Summits are targeting community groups, businesses and other regional stakeholders (governments, peak bodies). One Summit was held for the general community to attend.

Deliberative Panel

The Panel will involve between 30-40 members who reflect the diversity of the Yarra Ranges community (age group, cultural background, area lived). The Panel will meet on four occasions over the July to August 2024 period, to deliberate on issues raised from the broad engagement phase.

Election period and 2024 Council elections

Councils must comply with special arrangements in the lead up to elections, known as the caretaker period. For the 2024 Council election, the election period will be from Tuesday September 17 until 6pm Saturday 26 October 2024. Community engagement is usually halted during this time.

Broad Engagement - Testing Panel recommendations

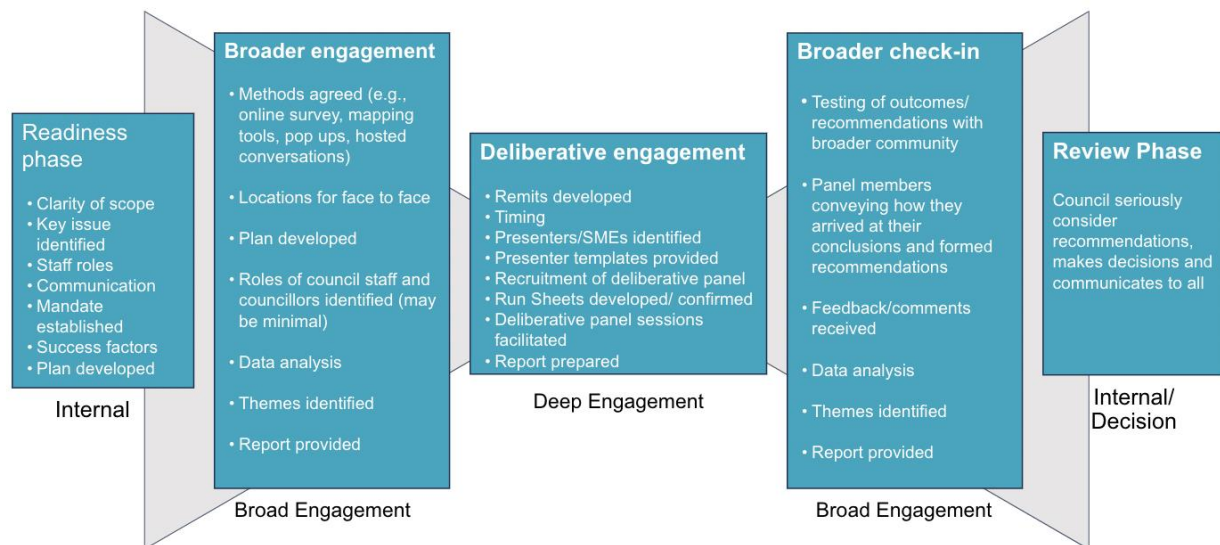
A second broad engagement phase will be conducted to test the Panel recommendations and the draft plans with the community. This will commence in November 2024 and conclude in early 2025.

Vision and Plans adoption by Council

The revised Community Vision, the 2025-2029 Council Plan, the Financial Plan, the Asset Plan and the Revenue and Rating Plan will then be considered by Council, for adoption.

8. Appendices

Appendix 1: Methodology Overview



An 'accordion' approach has been used for this project to minimise the risk of Council engaging deeply with only the small group selected for the Deliberative Panel. Using this approach 'Broad Engagement' is completed first to understand high-level community sentiment. This feedback informs the 'Deliberative Engagement' where participants have the time to think deeply about the Council's most tricky dilemmas and then their recommendations are tested with the community through another round of broad engagement.

This approach provides the benefits of allowing the most people to participate in the engagement process while clearly conveying the journey taken to the community to reach the recommendations. This approach can also minimise the perception that deliberative engagement is focused on allowing a small group of people to make recommendations on behalf of the entire community as it is made clear that information is fed in from broad community engagement and then tested with the community again once recommendations are made.

Appendix 2: Community Pop-ups Locations

Date and Time	Suburb/Town	Location
Thursday 4 April, 10am-3pm	Mt Evelyn	Wray Crescent shopping strip
Sunday 7 April, 11am-3pm	Healesville	Healesville Homegrown Food Fair and Community Voices in the Park, River Street and Coronation Park
Monday 8 April, 9am-12 noon	Yarra Junction	Outside Yarra Centre
Saturday 13 April, 11am-4pm	Montrose	Montrose Community Festival, Mt Dandenong Tourist Road
Sunday 14 April, 9am-2pm	Belgrave	Belgrave Big Dreams Market, Reynolds Lane
Thursday 18 April (2 x 2 hour sessions)	Kilsyth	Churinga Shopping Centre and Collins Place
Sunday 5 May, 10am-4pm	Kalorama	Kalorama Chestnut Festival, Mt Dandenong Tourist Road

Appendix 3: List of participants' residential suburb/town

Suburb/town	No.
Badger Creek	11
Beenak	0
Belgrave	26
Belgrave Heights	6
Belgrave South	5
Big Pats Creek	0
Cambarville	0
Chirnside Park	31
Chum Creek	6
Clematis	1
Coldstream	9
Dixons Creek	2
Don Valley	2
Emerald	1
Fernshaw	0
Ferny Creek	7
Gilderoy	0
Gladysdale	1
Gruyere	3
Healesville	48
Hoddles Creek	3
Kallista	15
Kalorama	15
Kilsyth	32
Launching Place	6

Suburb/town	No.
Lysterfield	0
Macclesfield	3
Matlock	0
McMahons Creek	2
Menzies Creek	1
Millgrove	9
Monbulk	18
Montrose	33
Mooroolbark	72
Mount Dandenong	15
Mount Evelyn	86
Mount Toolebewong	0
Narre Warren East	2
Olinda	14
Powelltown	1
Reefton	3
Sassafras	9
Selby	14
Seville	17
Lysterfield	0
Macclesfield	3
Matlock	0
McMahons Creek	2
Menzies Creek	1
Seville East	6

Lilydale	100
Silvan	6
Steels Creek	3
Tarrawarra	0
Tecoma	15
The Patch	12
Three Bridges	3
Toolangi	0
Toorong	0
Tremont	0
Upper Ferntree Gully	4
Upwey	34
Wandin East	2
Wandin North	21
Warburton	22
Warburton East	7
Wesburn	4
Woori Yallock	10
Yarra Glen	10
Yarra Junction	20
Yellingbo	3
Yering	0
<i>Bayswater North</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Bentleigh East</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Boronia</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Brunswick</i>	<i>2</i>

Sherbrooke	3
<i>Croydon</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Croydon Hills</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Croydon South</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Diamond Creek</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Eltham North</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Ferntree Gully</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Maroondah</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Mulgrave</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Ocean Grove</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Seaford</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Somerville</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>The Basin</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Wantirna</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Warranwood</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Werribee</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Westmeadows</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Wonga Park</i>	<i>1</i>

<i>Cardinia</i>	<i>1</i>
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Appendix 4: Community pop-ups postcard

What is your connection to the Yarra Ranges?

☐ I live here

☐ I work here

☐ I study/go to school here

☐ I own a business here

☐ I visit the Yarra Ranges

What is your age group?

☐ Under 16

☐ 16 to 24

☐ 25 to 34

☐ 35 to 44

☐ 45 to 54

☐ 55 to 64

☐ 65 to 74

☐ 75 to 84

☐ 85 or over

What township/suburb do you live in?

.....

How do you identify?

☐ Man

☐ Woman

☐ Prefer not to say

☐ Self described

Do you identify as part of any of these communities? (optional)

☐ Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

☐ Persons with disability or other chronic condition

☐ An unpaid carer of a person with a disability

☐ Culturally and linguistically diverse

☐ Migrant, refugee or asylum seeker

☐ LGBTIQ+

☐ None of the above apply

☐ Prefer not to say

A bit about you

Council delivers over 120 services across the municipality. Below is a list of key themes provided by Council to support the community. Thinking about the next 10 years, which are your top priorities for investment?

On the postcard, mark your top 5 priorities from 1 being the highest priority to 5 being the lowest.

☐ Keeping you safe and healthy

☐ Looking after our drains and water

☐ Looking after our sporting facilities, open spaces and reserves

☐ Looking after infrastructure to help people move around Yarra Ranges

☐ Planning and developing our towns

☐ Protecting our natural environment and reducing the impacts of climate change

☐ Supporting our community to thrive with community development and grants

☐ Supporting our local economy and businesses

☐ Running an efficient and responsible organisation

☐ Supporting our community in all stages of life





Appendix 5: Community pop-ups tree activity

Leaf number		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Leaf color/style											
Vision statement		Drainage is well maintained	Good access to digital services (internet, phone)	Regenerative farming is used to protect our land	Improved appearance of commercial and industrial areas	Climate change risks are reduced	Community are connected and support each other	Community is prepared for natural disasters	Council listens to community and responds to their needs	Disadvantaged residents are well supported	Education and training facilities support local employment

11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
									
First Nations people's identity and stories are showcased	We are focussed on responsible ecotourism	Our community are proud of where they live	Population growth and development are managed responsibly	Roads, footpaths and trails are maintained	Residents value their health and wellbeing	Services are accessible and inclusive	Sustainability and biodiversity are prioritised	Natural beauty and landscapes are considered in decisions	Yarra Ranges is a world-class destination for visitors and investors

Appendix 6: Feedback about specific roads/streets, locations or features
(to be provided separately)