

Sugar Valley Sustainable Neighbourhood survey report

June 2022



Executive Summary

This report details the results from a community survey, completed as part of Lake Macquarie City Council's Sustainable Neighbourhoods Program in April 2022. The survey of residents in the 'Sugar Valley' area explored neighbourhood values, community attitudes about local environmental challenges and community project ideas.

Respondents indicated they most value the peace and quiet of their neighbourhood, followed by natural beauty and wildlife, and proximity to the lake, beach, ocean or bush. They are most concerned about overdevelopment and litter or illegal dumping.

The most commonly suggested project ideas included community gardening and projects to enhance urban greening and habitat. This was closely followed by ideas to advocate for bushland retention, waterway rehabilitation, and to improve footpaths and cycleway infrastructure.

1. Background

The Sustainable Neighbourhoods Program was initiated by Lake Macquarie City Council as a way to work with residents to help build strong community relationships as citizens discover the values and strengths of their neighbourhood, understand their community assets and work alongside their neighbours on projects that will make their neighbourhood an even better place to live.

Sustainable Neighbourhood groups are made up of local residents who take actions to:

- reduce our resource consumption (energy, water, waste)
- increase community involvement in protecting and caring for environment and place
- increase our capacity to respond effectively to environmental threats
- increase community wellbeing and pride in our local areas.

Council is seeking to strengthen and expand the Sustainable Neighbourhoods Program, and has the opportunity to help renew or establish two groups in the 2022 calendar year. Following an engagement process with local Sustainable Neighbourhood groups and the broader community, the West Wallsend District Sustainable Neighbourhood Group was selected for renewal.

In consultation with the group, the renewed neighbourhood area will include the existing group catchment of Barnsley, Holmesville, Killingworth, West Wallsend, Seahampton and O'Donnelltown, and to expand the area to include Cameron Park and Wakefield.

This survey is part of ongoing community development and engagement activities which aim to collect input from a broad range of residents to inform the projects and priorities of the Sugar Valley Sustainable Neighbourhood.

For convenience, we are using the name 'Sugar Valley' for the new Sustainable Neighbourhood group locality. We will liaise with participants to either confirm the suitability of this name or decide on an alternative.

2. Methodology

In late March 2022 hardcopy surveys were posted to about 6200 households in the Sugar Valley area. The hardcopy surveys were in self-return format, with a reply-paid envelope provided.

A digital version was also made available and promoted on the front of the hard copy survey, via a link on the Sustainable Neighbourhoods website, and via email to 208 local contacts subscribed to Council's Eco Advocate enewsletter.

The survey was open for three weeks. During this time, 144 people responded using the hard copy forms, and 100 people responded directly using the online form. There was a total of 244 responses, resulting in a return rate of 4 per cent.

The response rate is low relative to previous Sustainable Neighbourhood surveys. Since 2010, 16 surveys have been completed with an average response rate of 10 per cent, and ranging from 5-18 per cent. In previous years a prize draw for a small gift, up to \$100 has been provided as an incentive to complete the survey. In this case, an incentive was not included in order to test the potential impact.

There was an error on last question on the hard copy survey form. The question asked for the suburb of residence, but listed incorrect suburbs that are not in the Sugar Valley area. Most respondents simply wrote in their correct suburb on the form, but around one quarter (25 per cent) left the question blank. The error did not impact the online survey responses.

3. Key findings

Neighbourhood values

The top aspects people value about their neighbourhood include:

- peace and quiet (79 per cent)
- natural beauty and wildlife (69 per cent)
- proximity to the lake, beach, ocean or bush (63 per cent).

Environmental issues

Respondents are most concerned about:

- overdevelopment (76 per cent)
- rubbish, litter, and/or illegal dumping (71 per cent)
- health of the natural environment and biodiversity (53 per cent).

Community participation

Respondents indicated which actions from a list they would consider participating in. The four highest rated activities included:

- caring for natural areas, local habitat and biodiversity (68 per cent)
- learning about local plants, animals and natural environments; or growing native gardens (63 per cent)
- preparing for environmental threats like bushfires, storms or floods (60 per cent)
- community building, cultural programs, community picnics or historical talks (60 per cent).

Community projects

A wide range of ideas for community projects and actions were suggested. The most popular project ideas included:

- community garden
- urban greening and habitat projects
- advocacy for bushland retention; waterway rehabilitation; footpaths and cycle paths.

Prior knowledge of Sustainable Neighbourhoods

Fifty-four respondents (24 per cent) had heard about the Sustainable Neighbourhoods Program before and eleven (5 per cent) had participated before. Seventy-one per cent of respondents (161) had not heard about the program before. Most heard about it through either a Council newsletter, social media or leaflet.

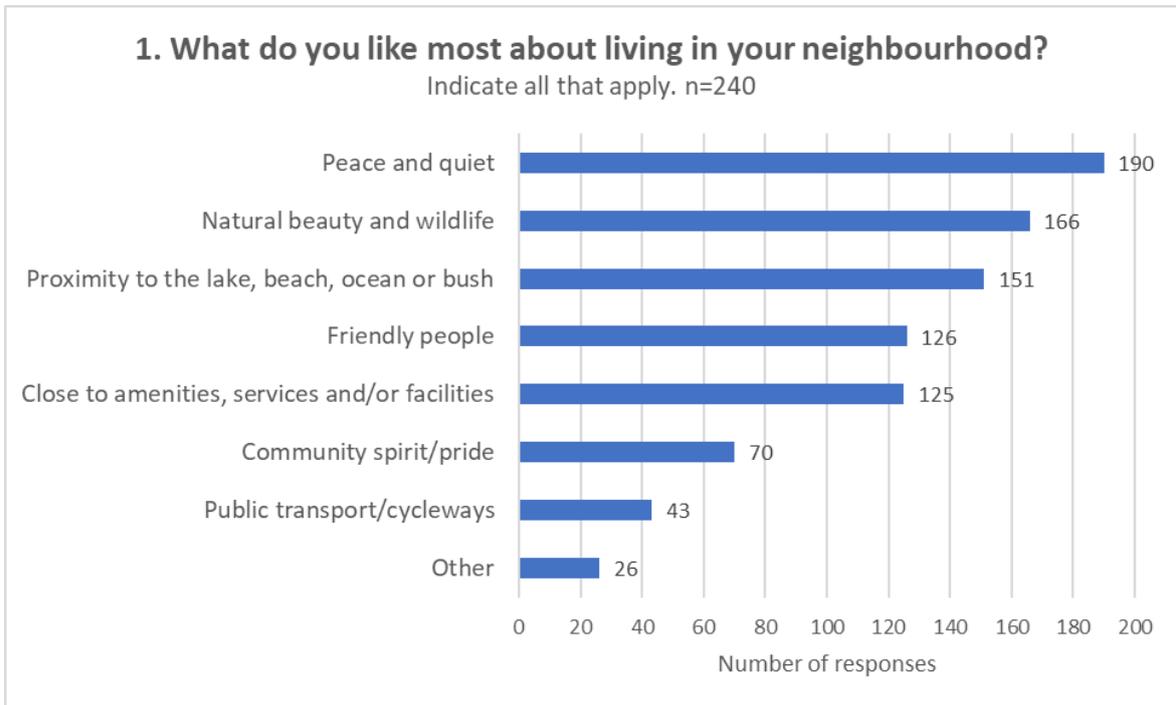
Forty seven per cent of respondents (115) asked to be subscribed to the Sugar Valley Sustainable Neighbourhood email list.

Demographics

- More than 40 per cent of respondents are aged over 60 years, 34 per cent are aged between 40-60 years, and 25 per cent are aged less than 40 years.
- Most respondents either own their homes outright (48 per cent), or are paying a mortgage (40 per cent).
- Most households (43 per cent) consist of two people.
- A majority of respondents (56 per cent) have lived in the neighbourhood for more than 10 years.
- Responses were received from all suburbs in the neighbourhood area, with the highest number of responses from Cameron Park (41 per cent), West Wallsend (24 per cent) and Holmesville (13 per cent).

Detailed survey results and analysis

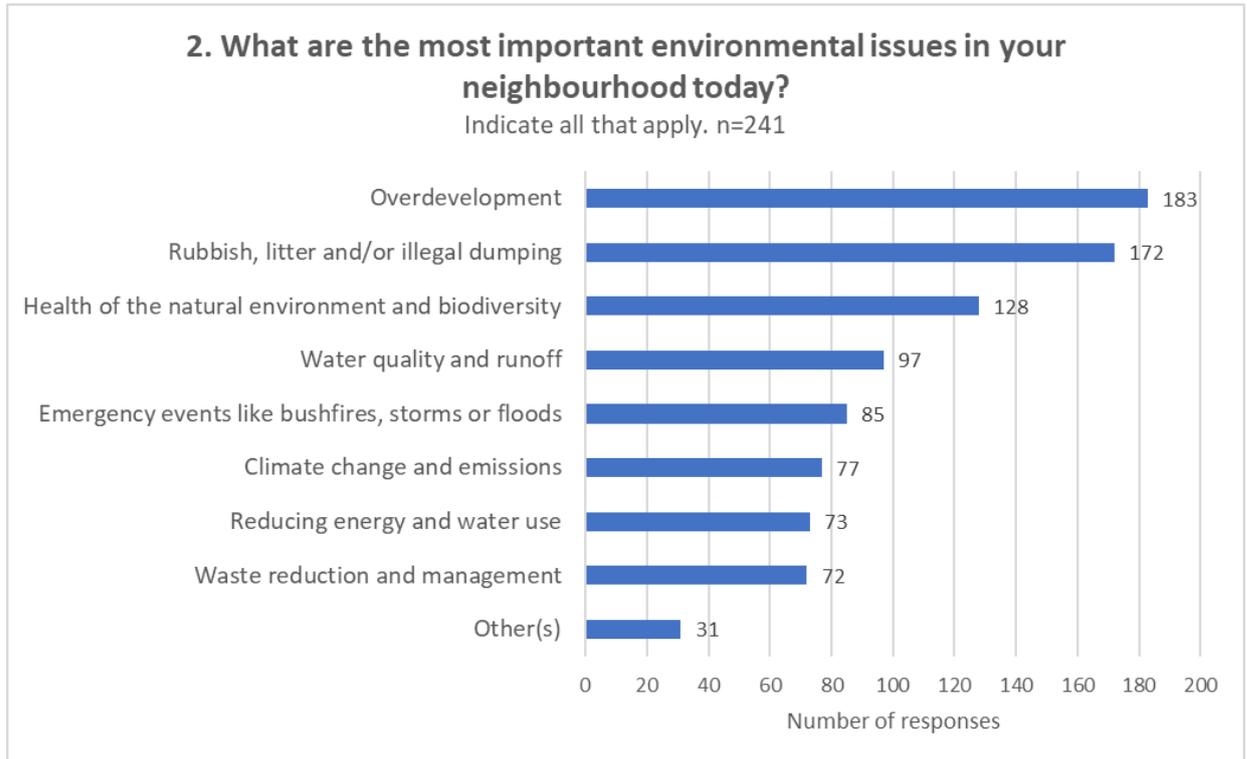
1. Neighbourhood values



Other responses are summarised in the word cloud below or detailed in Appendix 1. Word cloud created with worditout.com. More frequently occurring words or phrases are shown in larger font.



2. Environmental issues

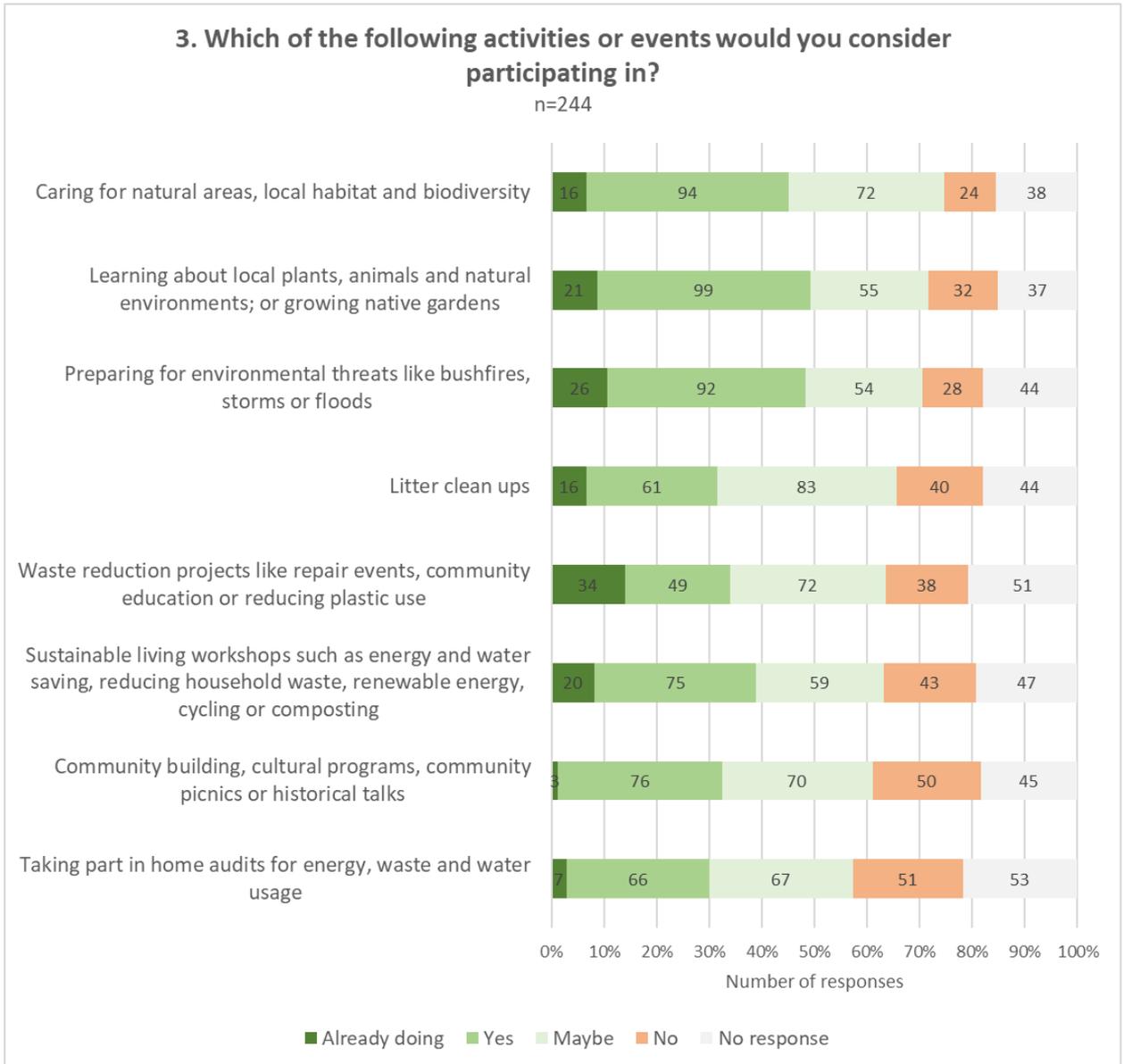


Other responses are summarised in the word cloud below or detailed in Appendix 2.



WordItOut

3. Participation in activities



This question also asked for particular suggestions for workshops, educational events or other community projects they would like to attend. These responses are included in the project ideas below and detailed in Appendix 3.

4. Community projects

The survey asked respondents for their project ideas. “Sustainable Neighbourhood groups are made up of active residents who work together to create positive change. Do you have a project idea that you would like to make happen in your neighbourhood? Please tell us your idea(s).”

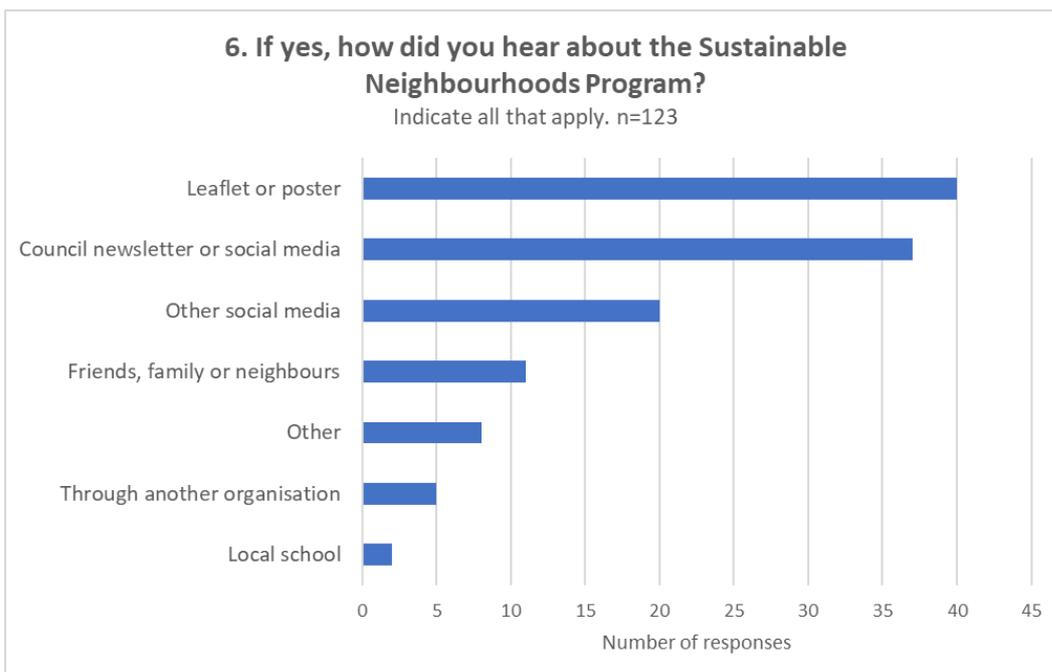
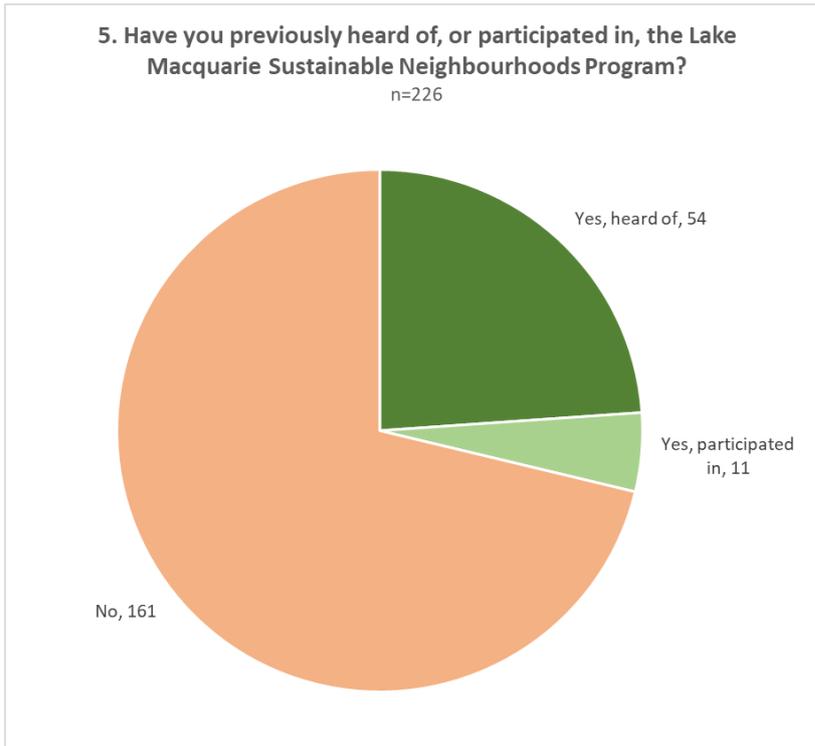
Open ended responses from Question 3 and Question 4 were categorised into project type, category and topic.

Project ideas (by topic) raised by more than 4 people are summarised here:

- community garden (16)
- urban greening and habitat (6)
- advocacy for bushland retention and corridors (5)
- advocacy for waterway rehabilitation and erosion control (5)
- advocacy for footpaths and cycleways (5)
- repair, reuse and DIY projects (4)
- plastic reduction and recycling (4)
- Landcare and bushland rehabilitation (4)
- litter education and clean up (4)
- advocacy for traffic safety (4).

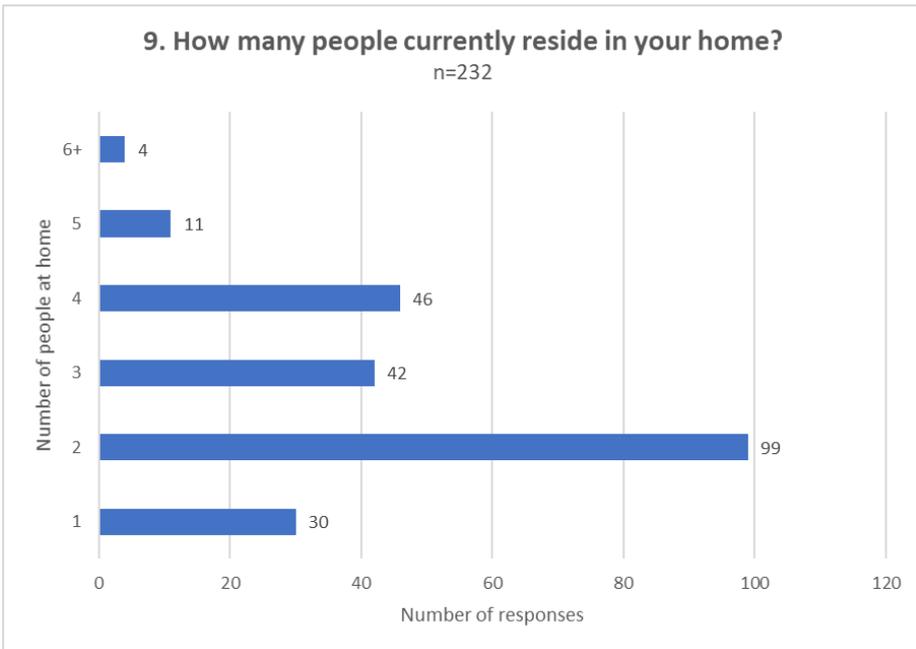
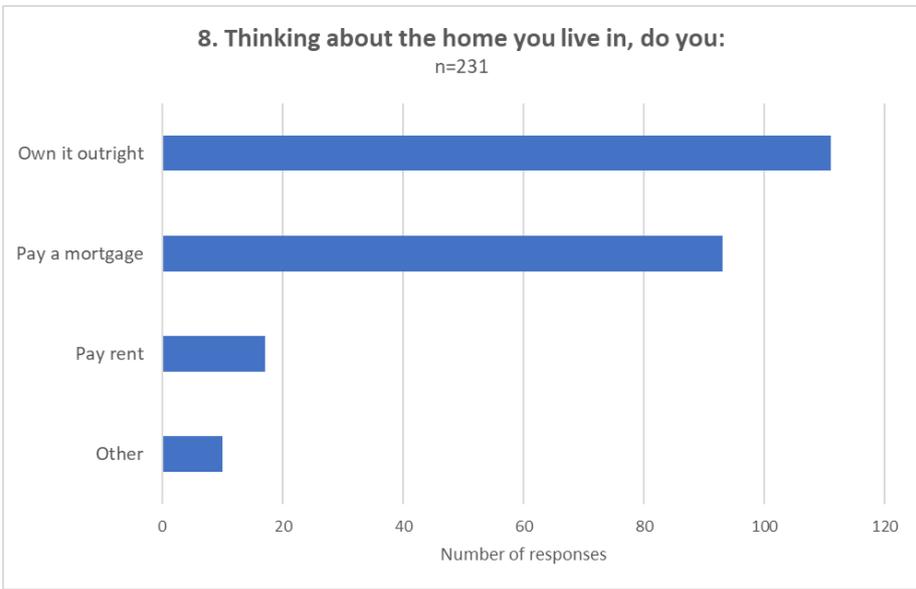
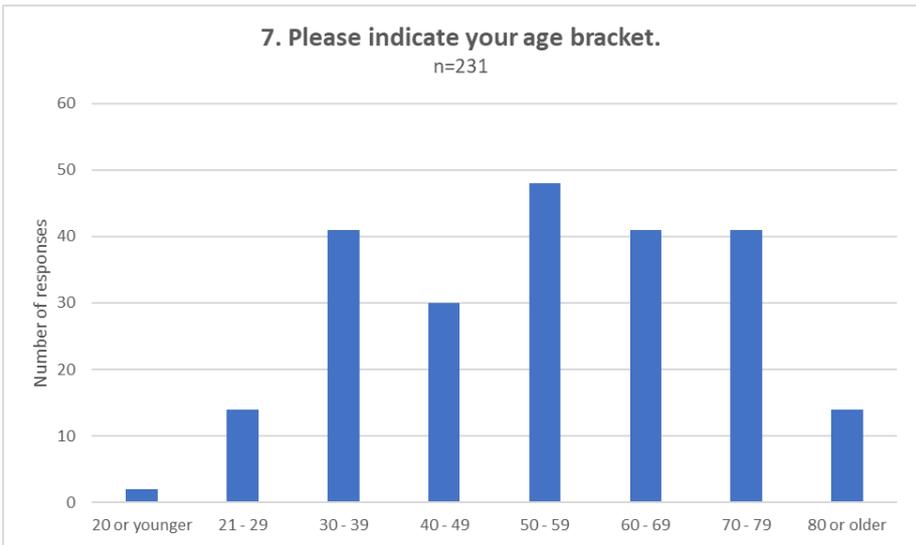
A complete list of project ideas and comments is included in Appendix 4.

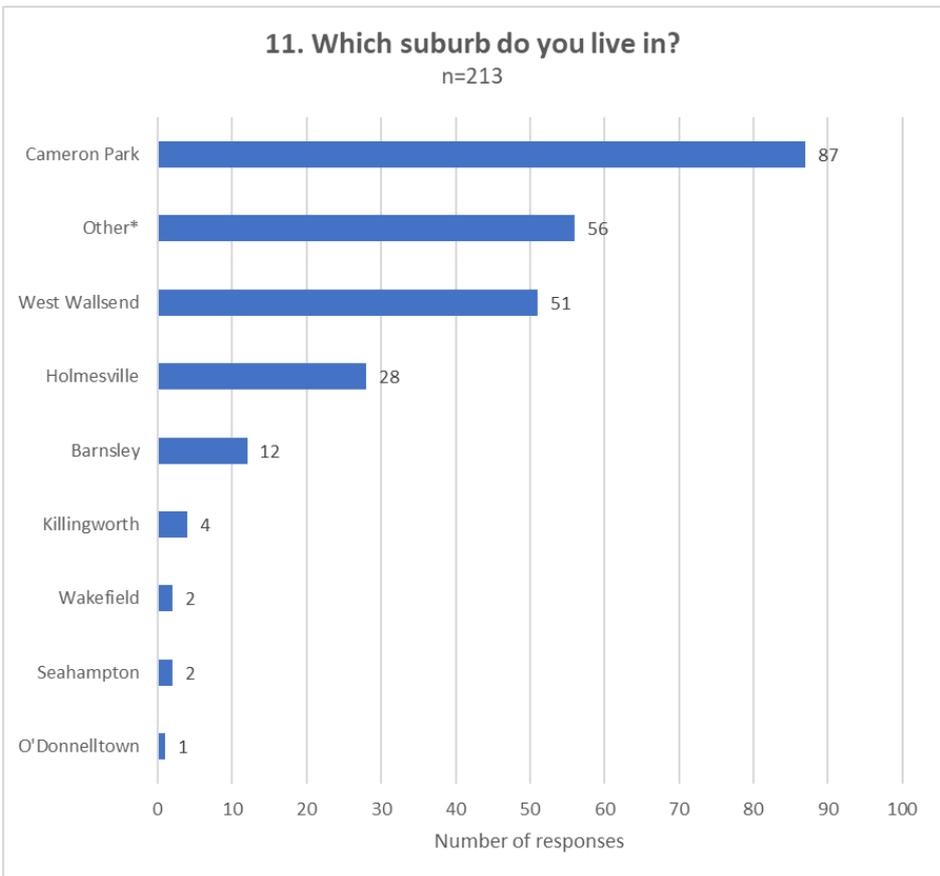
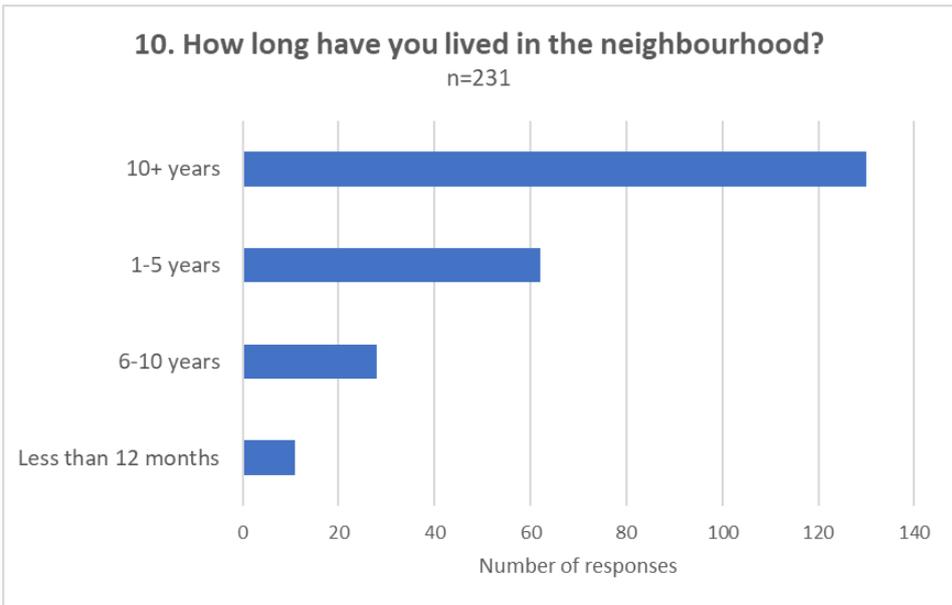
5. Demographics



Other / specific sources and comments included:

- *When important information is to be announced, council keep it quiet and do not advertise.*
- *Online search*
- *Not enough to do for young people. Just look at Croudace Park- PACKED! more should be happening here.*
- *Facebook*
- *Talked about it at Crop Swap*
- *regular email*
- *Letterbox drop*
- *Holmesville Community Garden*





* Note. An error on the hard copy survey form prompted the wrong suburbs. Most respondents wrote in their correct suburb on the form, but around one quarter (25 per cent) left the question blank – noted as 'Other' here. The error did not impact the online survey responses.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Neighbourhood values, detailed ‘other’ responses, unedited

- *Walking paths around Cameron Park estate*
- *proximity to freeway*
- *Climate - Sub tropical Comfort - No snow, mild summers*
- *Low density living, less traffic*
- *Located halfway between my two jobs acces to M1 and hunter freeway*
- *It is where I grew up and have always lived.*
- *Need more public services*
- *Too many vandals Buying my own home in the suburbs.*
- *Large blocks and no high rise. Mainly single homes.*
- *Peace and quiet - except for barking dogs*
- *The bushland in the area you keep bulldozing*
- *Close to freeway*
- *Land Holding size*
- *Much of what originally attracted me to this neighbourhood is being lost. yes, people have to have somewhere to live but much of what is now happening takes no consideration that which existed previously.*
- *Community spirit/pride - No pride, alot of dumping*
- *Green bins weekly for gardening Hospitals close*
- *Was nice and quite BEFORE the M1 went in the back paddock. Like the cycle tracks*
- *When we originally built there was so much bush and greenery, lucky right near us that hasn't changed but close by so much of the forest has been torn down making it much less desirable*
- *Lack of public transport*
- *I selected wildlife but unfortunately don't see much of it now*
- *Public transport is at a minimum. Difficult to access. More cycle ways needed.*
- *I like the feel of it. It's a little village close to everything but not too crowded.*
- *Local shops are a great bonus*
- *None of the above*
- *Larger blocks of land;*
- *Heritage and sense of place*

Appendix 2 – Environmental issues, detailed ‘other’ responses, unedited

- *Losing more trees for development we don't need or want*
- *high density development due to population growth*
- *Bushland has been removed all around Holmesville and further removal of bushland is proposed for the freight corridore, significant impact of flora and fauna*
- *Chemicals used in the area*
- *Lack of wide educational and professional qualifications*
- *Reducing food waste in house holds*
- *Unregistered motorbikes on roads and bushland*
- *Really disappointed with the removal of so many trees in our area for development of housing but no provision for more schools.*
- *Vandalism of assets (community)*
- *Cars, 4WD, Motorbikes destroying the bush and using roads. as burnt out tracks - rubbish dumping.*
- *Inpending train by pass*
- *Big problems for the future*
- *Anti social behavior*
- *There has been very little thought, no intelligent thought, to accommodating the additional runoff from the Cameron Park development. Retention dams and the water courses are only as good as*

the pipes which then take it away or under roads, ie a cubic metre of water dosent fit through a 10" pipe.

- lack of new trees planted in new residential streets
- Water quality and run off - Wet in all parks Overdevelopment- No not really Rubbish, litter and/or illegal dumping- Pathetic
- Slaty creek needs a good clean out
- Removal of trees and timber for firewood.
- Land clearing is affecting local wildlife and Iâ€™m getting more visitors Iâ€™d like to know more about how to protect them and what to plant in my garden for them to hide, breed or feed on.
- Young people vandalizing council playgrounds and dirty bike riders running people off bike paths
- Graffiti and destruction of public property
- Grass mowing in parks & along roadsides to provide a tidy town.
- Lack of trees/vegetation in the urban environment.
- Since all the new development the increase in crime has been scary! Also all the animals have been pushed out, I constantly have hawks and eagles circling my dogs, neighbors have had foxes etc
- Hoons
- All of the above
- Massive destruction of bushland for new estate at Cameron Park, no community consultation about the new estate
- heavy industry and v8 tracks
- Adjacent large-scale residential subdivisions resulting in whole-scale clearing of native vegetation, lack of adequate replanting and replacement with storm water basins rather than designed wetlands.
- So much rubbish dumped illegally on the fire trails
- Community plans for floods, fires and other natural disasters

Appendix 3. Workshop, event and project suggestions, detailed comments, unedited

	Category	Topic	Comments (unedited)
Advocacy	Development	Bushland retention and corridors	<i>I think public awareness with climate change and land clearing are top of the list. land clearing will effects groups who wouldnt have alot in common otherwise like motorbike riders and bush walkers, it should have broad support.</i>
		Overdevelopment	<i>Make individual councilors responsible for over development in planning and failure to take dumping in the bush seriously.</i>
	Local infrastructure	Playgrounds	<i>A local playground and fitness station in Seahampton so kids aren't socialising on the streets.</i>
		Dog poo bins and bags	<i>Better dealing with rubbish (more bins) and have dog poo litter bins at local parks in Barnsley</i>
	Natural environment	Waterway rehabilitation and erosion control	<i>As above slately creek needs cleaning</i>
	Services	Crime and vandalism	<i>Community awareness of vandalism and theft</i>
Local doctors		<i>Need more local doctors</i>	
Community	Natural environment	Landcare & bushland rehabilitation	<i>Making existing fire trails safe and sustainable for walkers and cyclists to enjoy the bush land. Control of damage by 4wd,s and motorcycles.</i>
	Sustainable living	Community garden	<i>Community Garden</i>
			<i>Community Garden beside young Wallsend Creek</i>
			<i>the development of community gardens</i>

		Repair, reuse and DIY	<i>I would love to see more art workshops, pottery etc. if like more access to have riding facility's and more things for kid to do.</i>
Education workshops and skill sharing	Natural environment	Local wildlife	<i>I can present educational talks about spiders.</i>
		Urban greening and habitat	<i>Native garden design</i>
	Schools and young people	Schools and young people	<i>Presence in local schools so that sustainability is both a topic of conversation at school, home and in the community.</i>
			<i>Primary high school programs about sustainability that include practices in local areas.</i>
	Sustainable Living	Bee keeping	<i>Bee keeping</i>
		Gardening	<i>Anything to do with gardening is great.</i>
			<i>workshops around setting up and managing vegetable gardens in your backyard, cultural programs, historical talks.</i>
Waste	Waste reduction	<i>Pantry cook ups, learning how to use left over food items so they don't become waste</i>	
		<i>We live in an area with a lot of public housing. Some of these occupants need to be educated about waste reduction, not issued with extra bins and extra collections.</i>	
Other comments			<i>All very worthy but current health would preclud activity involvement. happy to help where possible</i>
			<i>I thought most of these are council responsibilities.</i>
			<i>involved in older sporting activities.</i>
			<i>No</i>
			<i>Organising community event that are note reliant on lakeside venues.</i>
			<i>Close off Warners Bay - make it a walk way - hate it. fix up Swansea - I hate it</i>

Appendix 4. Project ideas, detailed comments

	Category	Topic	Comments (unedited)
Advocacy	Active transport	Footpaths and cycle paths	<i>A playground in Seahampton so resident aren't having to travel to take kids to a safe play area and off the streets to play. a path and fitness for adults too as their is nowhere to exercise except the bush - (no patts to get to them either)</i>
			<i>Cycle way connecting Pasterfield park to Albatross avenue using existing bridge.</i>
			<i>Path to pasterfield oval from existing path under powerlines near flamingo drive. a bridge already exists however no formed path either side.</i>
			<i>The pathway that has been on councils agenda for sooooo long between the pond off Springvale circuit to connect up to the pathway at this straight to penderfield complex</i>
			<i>we need a bike track to connect cameron park to glendale</i>
	Traffic safety		<i>As I write this there is an accident on withers traffic is a nightmare-speed limits - lights at the schools, crossing at the high schools. Pedestrian crossings/ speed humps needed.</i>
			<i>I am a resident of George street Holmesville we need speed humps on local roads as cars, motorbikes go over the speed limit of 50km going to and from pub, hall, family cottage someone is going to get knocked or killed one day.</i>

			<i>I would love to see unrego bikes off North ridge Drive and something done about the hoon drivers. it is terrible also speed humps along Northridge.</i>
			<i>More signage (opps) signage for speeding! we have long straight roads near schools and soccer ovals. some motorists motorbikes go over 100kms. so dangerous</i>
Development	Bushland retention and corridors		<i>Create more save spaces from all the displaced wildlife due to cleaning all the bush for development between Edgeworth and west Wallsend</i>
			<i>I haven't thought of an idea however the kangaroos are losing their habitats with all the development. I would like to see something to address this</i>
			<i>looking into the overdevelopment of local bushland and the infrastructure that has become offensive to the local quietness and nature, animals and land.</i>
	Freight rail corridor		<i>Block the railway (Freight) that has been given the go ahead as the citizens of West Wallsend are treated as second class and the entitled and corrupt keep dumping polluting, noisy projects into our community.</i>
	Overdevelopment		<i>Look at overdevelopment and the effects it has on quality of life.</i>
Heritage	Mining history park		<i>Re-development of the former West Wallsend No.1 Colliery site as an industrial heritage park with a designed wetland based on the old dam site. The park could provide interpretation of the remaining relics of the colliery, while the wetland would improve water quality in the upper reaches of the Slatey Creek, as well as being a recreational and educational resource for the community.</i>
			<i>Would love to see the Mining History Park that is proposed for West Wallsend to be created. History is important.</i>
Local infrastructure	Electric scooter hire		<i>ELECTRIC SCOOTERS AVAILABLE NEAR THE LAKE FOR HIRE PLEASE</i>
	Fencing		<i>Fix up the fence at the end of adbvius street.</i>
	Guttering		<i>Guttering in charlton street</i>
			<i>yes gutterings for William street and George st</i>
	LED street lights		<i>Energy efficient led street lights</i>
	Playgrounds		<i>A playground in Seahampton so resident aren't having to travel to take kids to a safe play area and off the streets to play. a path and fitness for adults too as their is nowhere to exercise except the bush - (no patts to get to them either)</i>
			<i>A playground that kids can play in in West Wallsend. The local playground at Gregson Park is old and outdated with very little for the kids to play on.</i>
	Public place bins		<i>Better dealing with rubbish (more bins) and have dog poo litter bins at local parks in Barnsley</i>
Security cameras		<i>Security cameras at pasterfield to curb the ongoing vandalism that occurred every single week!!!!</i>	
Natural environment	Cat containment		<i>Stray cats are a problem here. They are killing all the little birds and blue tongues. They need to be rounded up. I would like for people to not let their cats roam the neighbourhood, but have to keep them inside.</i>
	Illegal dumping		<i>We have no power as residents to deal with confiscation of disruptive vehicles and dumpers who are destroying our bushland and ruining our peace and quiet.</i>
			<i>We have no power as residents to deal with confiscation of disruptive vehicles and dumpers who are destroying our bushland and ruining our peace and quiet.</i>
	Waterway rehabilitation and erosion control		<i>Clean up the waterways in Barnsley</i>
			<i>Erosion control on safety creek</i>
		<i>Help with fixing Flaggy/Slatey Creek from eroding and flooding residential property.</i>	

			<i>Slatey Creek that runs behind my house is terribly overgrown with weeds and is full of rubbish. It is creating a major flood risk for surrounding houses along the creek. A project to clean out the creek and remove weeds and plants would be of great benefit to the Barnsley neighbourhood.</i>	
	Services	Cemeteries	<i>yes open cemetery gates daily</i>	
		Mowing	<i>I would like council to better look after parks and reserves. mow the lawn before it gets so long you cant walk through it.</i>	
		Swimming and sauna facilities	<i>Swimming facilities, sauna facilities, heated pools and more skate parks</i>	
	Development	Bushland retention and corridors	<i>Replacement of bush demolished by developers. many birds and other wildlife have been displaced. Native bushland needs to be planted wherever possible developers need to leave unspoilt areas of bushland.</i>	
	Local infrastructure	Fitness station	<i>A local playground and fitness station in Seahampton so kids aren't socialising on the streets.</i>	
	Local infrastructure		<i>A playground in Seahampton so resident aren't having to travel to take kids to a safe play area and off the streets to play. a path and fitness for adults too as their is nowhere to exercise except the bush - (no paths to get to them either)</i>	
	Services	Skate park	<i>Swimming facilities, sauna facilities, heated pools and more skate parks</i>	
Community projects	Anti-social behaviour	Noise pollution	<i>Educating young drivers about noise reduction due to their loud noisy mufflers, whilst driving around the neighbourhood streets.</i>	
	Community resilience and civic pride	Diversity	<i>I would like to push the group to include lots of people from different backgrounds.</i>	
		Heritage	<i>Heritage infrastructure programs</i>	
		Neighbourhood Watch	<i>Bring back neighbourhood watch.</i>	
	Natural environment	Indian Myna control		<i>The culling of indian mynas, they are increasing in numbers and pushing out our smaller nature birds. They have also caused our noisy mynas to become more aggressive as they all try to fight for space. The destruction of the bushland in the area lately has made this even worse.</i>
				<i>Landcare projects. I see signs but never any action</i>
		Landcare & bushland rehabilitation		<i>Repair and revegetate severely eroded tracks south of Brooks St and Geordie St in Killingworth.</i>
				<i>weed removal in bush around slatey creek on west side of boundary road, West Wallsend.</i>
				<i>weed removal in bush around slatey creek on west side of boundary road, West Wallsend.</i>
		Litter education and clean up		<i>A leaflet promoting residents to clean their street (or a position) of litter and planting of trees. like a smaller version of 'Tidy towns'</i>
				<i>Clean up day's</i>
				<i>Clean up of bushland.</i>
				<i>Dog owner education to stop green or other bags of dog poo being thrown into the bush. People education re rubbish (litter) being dropped anywhere 'Its on you" campaign not working.</i>
		Urban greening and habitat		<i>A leaflet promoting residents to clean their street (or a position) of litter and planting of trees. like a smaller version of 'Tidy towns'</i>
				<i>Planting, caring for growing apple trees in parks along Apple Tree Road.</i>
			<i>re-greening homes/neighbourhoods that have limited green spaces. free plants giveaway? so many established trees/bush areas have been filled in our area to make way for new housing</i>	
	<i>Replacement of bush demolished by developers. many birds and other wildlife have been displaced. Native bushland needs to be planted wherever possible developers need to leave unspoilt areas of bushland.</i>			
	<i>Some how get duck life to the big pond near woolworths</i>			

		Waterwatch	<i>My wife carries out the water testing for lake council.</i>
	Sustainable Living	Community garden	<i>A community garden,</i>
			<i>Community food garden</i>
			<i>Community Garden</i>
			<i>Community garden</i>
			<i>Community Garden</i>
			<i>Community Garden</i>
			<i>Community garden/vegetable patch @ Cameron Park</i>
			<i>Community gardens</i>
			<i>Community Vegie/fruit garden</i>
			<i>Communtiy gardening,</i>
			<i>I would like to participate in the development of community garden.</i>
			<i>I would love to see a community garden or street gardens with produce being grown on the sidewalks</i>
			<i>I would love to see communal garden (full of herbs and vegetables) established somewhere in Cameron Park. that would be built by volunteers and utilised by all residents. it would be a free service which would be ideal for the homeless, as well.</i>
	Repair, reuse and DIY	<i>Craft groups - lean how to stuff - painting - DIY projects around the home.</i>	
<i>Open a Mens shed if there if there is not one</i>			
<i>Sustainable fashion - learn to repair clothes and create out of what we already have. can extend to how to repair to how to repair furniture, objects and take care of what's important to us in a cost friendly way</i>			
Waste	Plastics	<i>Reduce plastic waste</i>	
		<i>In addition to education and raising awareness about recycling - initiate community collection additional drop-off points for soft plastics (redcycle). Possibly provide homes with one off cost effective storage bins for said plastics.</i>	
		<i>More red-cycle community events - perhaps a door-to-door collection of soft plastics?</i>	
		<i>recycling centres for soft plastics and other items that can be recycled but are harder to return or cannot be put in the recycling bin.</i>	
Education workshops and skill sharing	Community and culture	Community capacity building	<i>Refugee assistance groups. Perhaps TESOL course or other work skills to assist refugee families to obtain employment; life skills like budgeting skills.</i>
		Aboriginal culture	<i>Awabal walks, history - flora,faune, thier indigenous culture - saged sites.</i>
	Natural environment	Nature trail	<i>Collation of walks / trails around West Wallsend and Sugarloaf. Overlapping with data on local species of flora and fauna and animals.</i>
			<i>More bushwalks with signs explaining First Nation history, local history especially mining, flora and fauna. Would love one of the guided walks like done at Green Point in last school holidays.</i>
	Schools and young people	Schools and young people	<i>Something for the kids, thereâ€™s nothing out this way for them to participate in and learn about sustainability</i>
	Sustainable Living	Energy	<i>Energy sustainability for regular households.</i>
	Waste	Recycling	<i>Recycling expo</i>
	Community and culture	Heritage	<i>workshops around setting up and managing vegetable gardens in your backyard, cultural programs, historical talks.</i>
	Resilience and natural disasters	Household preparedness	<i>Future proofing homes and garden</i>

Other comments			<i>Member of Holmesville group</i>
			<i>No</i>
			<i>Unfortunately working fulltime with family makes community involment hard but could contribute 2 or 3 times a year at most</i>
			<i>Warners Bay looks dirty - make it a walkway cars can be diverted to back street. I never so there would not eat there or Swansea.</i>