

Sustainable Neighbourhoods

Volunteer Survey Results

November 2016



About Sustainable Neighbourhoods

Lake Macquarie City Council initiated the Sustainable Neighbourhoods program in 2008 to empower residents to act on local environmental and sustainability issues. The program aims include the following.

- Increase community responsibility and management for sustainable outcomes.
- Protect and enhance the natural environment.
- Reduce individual, household, and collective resource consumption.
- Increase community capacity to prepare for and respond effectively to environmental threats such as natural disasters.
- Encourage community spirit, and increase community resilience, connectedness and wellbeing.
- Encourage and enable people to participate fully and equitably in community life.

The program has established a network of active, skilled and supported citizens who make a meaningful contribution to local community life and address local sustainability challenges.

As part of the program, Council has worked with Sustainable Neighbourhood volunteers to establish the Lake Macquarie Sustainable Neighbourhood Alliance Incorporated (the Alliance). The Alliance was established in 2011 as an incorporated, not-for-profit community group, and currently supports 15 active Sustainable Neighbourhood groups. The Alliance provides the governance and support structure for groups to operate effectively, without each having to duplicate processes and resources.

Review of Sustainable Neighbourhoods

In July 2016, Council staff together with Alliance Board members initiated a review of the Sustainable Neighbourhoods program in order to:

- Identify the current status of the Sustainable Neighbourhood Alliance and network; and
- Assist with the development of an Alliance Strategic Plan.

The review process includes a range of engagement and research activities to gather input from various stakeholders to the Sustainable Neighbourhoods program.

This report details the results of the volunteer survey, conducted in August – September 2016.

An additional report will be produced, summarising the results of all of the review activities.

Further information

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Summary and discussion of results

Survey responses

The survey achieved a 14% response rate (74 responses), and represented volunteers from almost all active Sustainable Neighbourhood groups.

Current involvement

Respondents were asked about their current involvement, and were offered different questions based on their response. Where relevant, some comparisons were made between these 2 groups.

- Current volunteers, 68% (longer survey).
- Not currently volunteering, 32% (shorter survey)

Interest in Sustainable Neighbourhoods and motivation for being involved

Overall, the most common interests and motivations were reported as:

- Environmental sustainability is important
- Community participation and action is important

These results reflect a consistency with the aims of the Sustainable Neighbourhoods program, and identify potential to utilise these key messages to recruit new interest and participation.

"I believe strongly in community participation and in caring for the environment - both locally and globally."

The detailed results show considerable passion for a range of environmental issues, and community participation.

There was an apparent difference between current volunteers and those not currently volunteering.

- Current volunteers indicated a high motivation to "help or volunteer in my community", whereas those who do not currently volunteer did not as readily indicate this as an interest.
- Those not currently volunteering are interested in "knowing what's happening in my local neighbourhood", whereas this did not score highly as a motivating factor for current volunteers.

These insights can be useful to tailor promotional messages and increase participation in the program. For example, focussing on Sustainable Neighbourhoods as a valuable way to help may attract more volunteers.

Respondents who are not currently volunteering were asked what would encourage them to participate more actively. The biggest encouragement indicated was "If there was an event or project that interested me, or directly affected me".

A number of people indicated that they "could take on a small task, but don't want to attend regular meetings". This indicates the importance of breaking larger projects up into specific or smaller roles, and promoting those more defined opportunities to contribute.

communities working together



Demographics

Approximately 80% of respondents are aged over 50; over 50% are retired; and 88% do not have any children under 18.

Those who work (part time or full time), were less likely to be currently volunteering; and retirees and students appeared more likely to volunteer.

Those who are currently volunteering spend approximately 1 hour per week (median) doing Sustainable Neighbourhood work, and have been involved with the program for an average of 3 years.

Promotion

Throughout the survey, respondents identified increased and more effective promotion as a priority. Volunteers want Sustainable Neighbourhoods to be widely recognised, respected, and accepted as a mainstream part of community life.

The most common way respondents heard about Sustainable Neighbourhoods was through face-to-face interactions (eg events, promotional stalls, and friends/family), and email newsletters. These are clearly effective. The apparent lack of reach of other promotional avenues (eg websites, social media) may reflect our relative inexperience in using these mediums. Skill development in these areas could assist and improve our reach to engage with different demographics and audiences.

Fewer respondents reported hearing about Sustainable Neighbourhoods through traditional media such as newspaper and radio. This is likely because articles or interviews appear relatively infrequently.

Group dynamics

A high proportion (>70%) of current volunteers agreed with a range of positive factors about how their local group operates. Most agreed their groups:

- are welcoming
- relevant
- work well together
- hold well planned events
- have productive meetings
- understand common objectives
- recognise and value individuals' skills; and
- enjoy each other's company.

Areas for improvement include:

- Sharing the workload among group members
- Putting the most energy into the most important things.

communities working together



Volunteering and recruitment

There was a clear and strong indication that more volunteers and increased participation is needed, to take the load off committee members, and to 'replenish' the group as people move away or drop out.

Current volunteers also indicated they require additional resources (money, time, volunteers, equipment, advice etc) to successfully complete their projects. Over 80% of volunteers indicated the most need for:

- Volunteers (to help plan and implement our projects)
- Participants (to attend our events and engage with our projects)
- Increased public promotion of Sustainable Neighbourhoods

"We only have an extremely small number of people who are active in our group, therefore everything is left to the same people to undertake."

Personal impact

Current volunteers reported a number of positive impacts resulting from their involvement, including:

- Making new friends,
- Learning something new,
- Feeling more connected, and
- Making a valuable contribution.

"The most part it has been a very positive experience for me overall. I have learned a lot and gained new skills that I have never done before."

All of these factors are valuable as positive reasons to get involved and to encourage increased participation.

The major negative impact is "frustrated by lack of action or too much bureaucracy".

Detailed results reveal a number of sources of frustration, including:

- apparent apathy from the wider community;
- inaction or unresponsiveness from sections of Council; and
- reliance on a small group to do the majority of work.

"Several of our projects have been held up because relevant Council officer had moved to another job."

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Wider impact of Sustainable Neighbourhoods

The majority of respondents indicated that “we have an effective forum to raise and address local issues”.

A range of successful projects and achievements were highlighted as inspiration for future activities.

There was some indication of a number of additional positive impacts, but most were reluctant to attribute impacts as resulting directly from Sustainable Neighbourhood activities.

“I strongly believe that our work has just begun.”

The Sustainable Neighbourhood Alliance

Current volunteers generally demonstrated a consistent and accurate understanding of the role of the Alliance and the Alliance Board, including

- supporting local groups
- providing insurance
- risk management
- financial assistance
- incorporated body
- administration
- guidance
- coordination, and
- oversight.

The most important function of the Alliance is to support the activities of local groups, and over 70% of volunteers indicated that they thought this function is currently being fulfilled.

Two functions were identified as needing improvement by about 40% of volunteers. These were:

- Assist with fundraising and financial management
- Develop, coordinate and implement projects common to all member groups

Future vision

Increased visibility, engagement, and community participation in Sustainable Neighbourhoods is a clear priority, along with developing a more coordinated network of groups.

When forced to prioritise issues, the top 3 priorities for each topic area included:

Natural environment

1. Protecting natural areas
2. Cleaning up and preventing litter
3. Regenerating native bushland (Landcare)

Sustainable living

1. Advocating for improved footpaths and cycleways
2. Encouraging uptake of renewable energy
3. Reduce household waste and general consumption

Community wellbeing

1. Encouraging community events
2. Neighbourhood beautification and place-making
3. Developing effective neighbourhood communications

Many respondents reported that it was difficult to prioritise, as all of the issues listed were considered very important.

communities working together



Appendix 1. Methodology

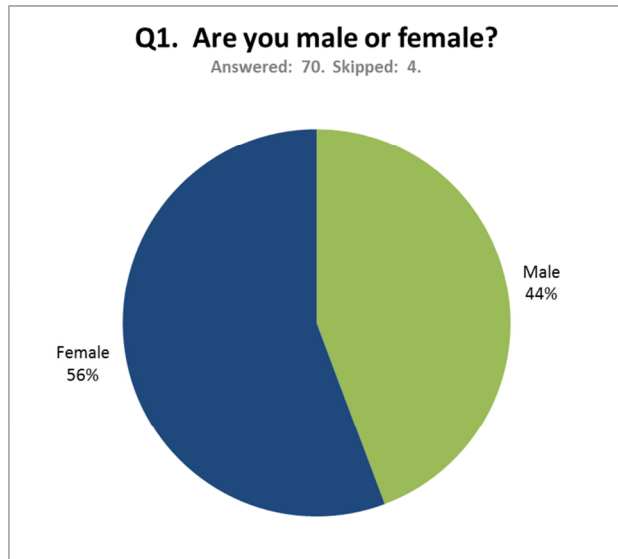
The survey was developed using www.surveymonkey.net, and the website link was emailed to the Sustainable Neighbourhood Key Contacts List, and the contact list for the 'Sustainable Neighbourhood News' e-newsletter (527 subscribers). Three reminders were included in the 'newsletter' in August – September 2016.

There were a total of 74 responses, which is 14% of the subscriber list. Of those, 16 were incomplete. Three people reported technical issues that prevented them from completing the survey.

Appendix 2. Detailed Survey Results

Section A. Demographics

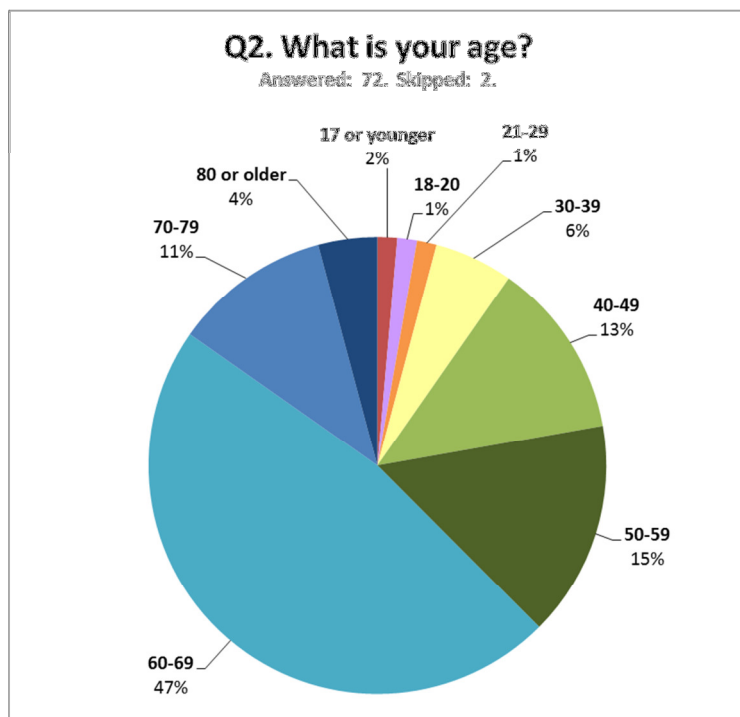
Question 1. Gender



Over half (56%) of all respondents were female.

For the section of respondents who 'do not currently volunteer', this figure rises to 68% female. For current volunteers, it's 51% female.

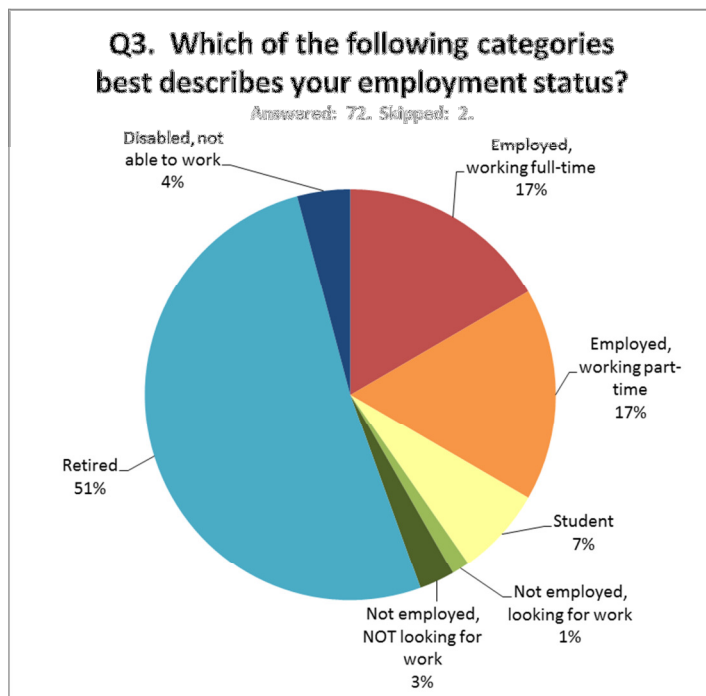
Question 2. Age



Approximately 80% of respondents were aged over 50.

The approximate proportion of age groups is similar for volunteers and those not currently volunteering.

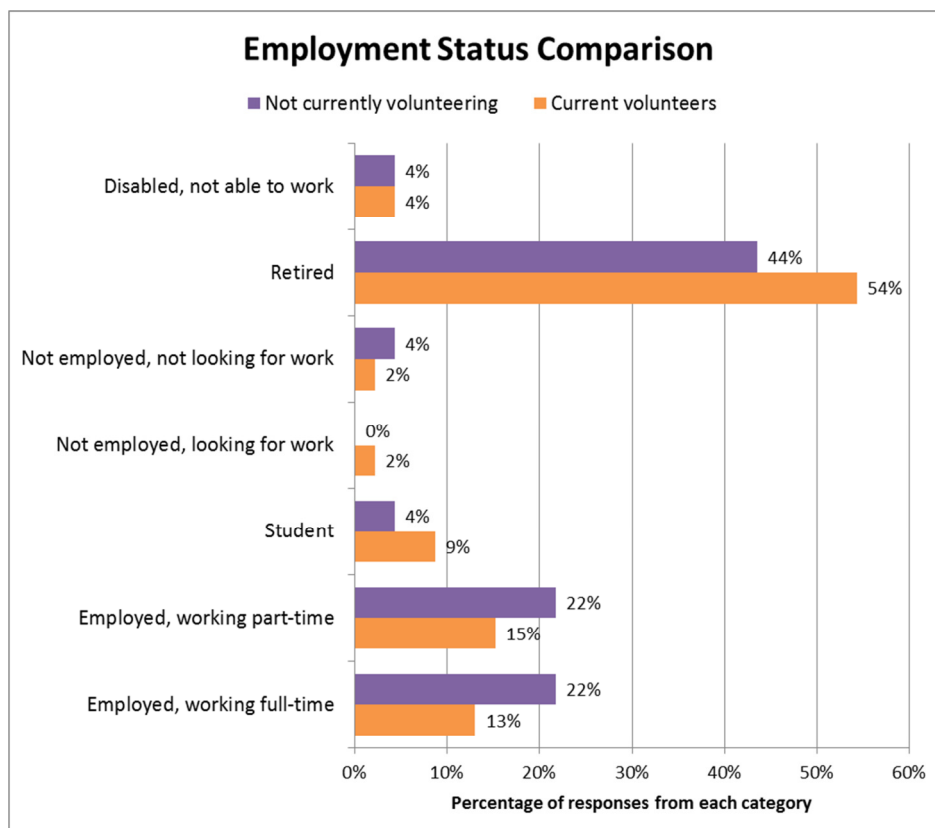
Question 3. Employment status



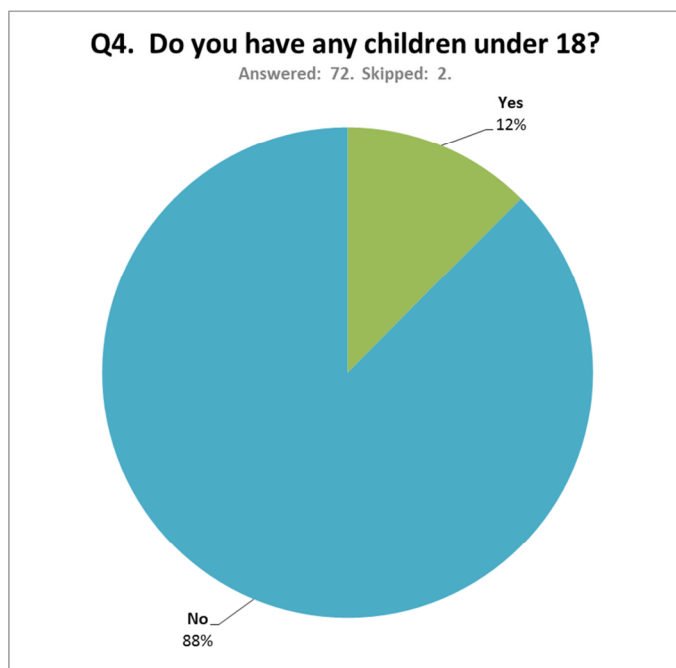
Over 50% of all respondents are retired.

The proportion of respondents employed (full time or part time) is larger for the respondents who are not currently volunteering (53.5%), than for current volunteers (28.3%).

This suggests that retirees and students are most likely to volunteer. And that people employed (full or part time) are less likely to volunteer.



Question 4. Children

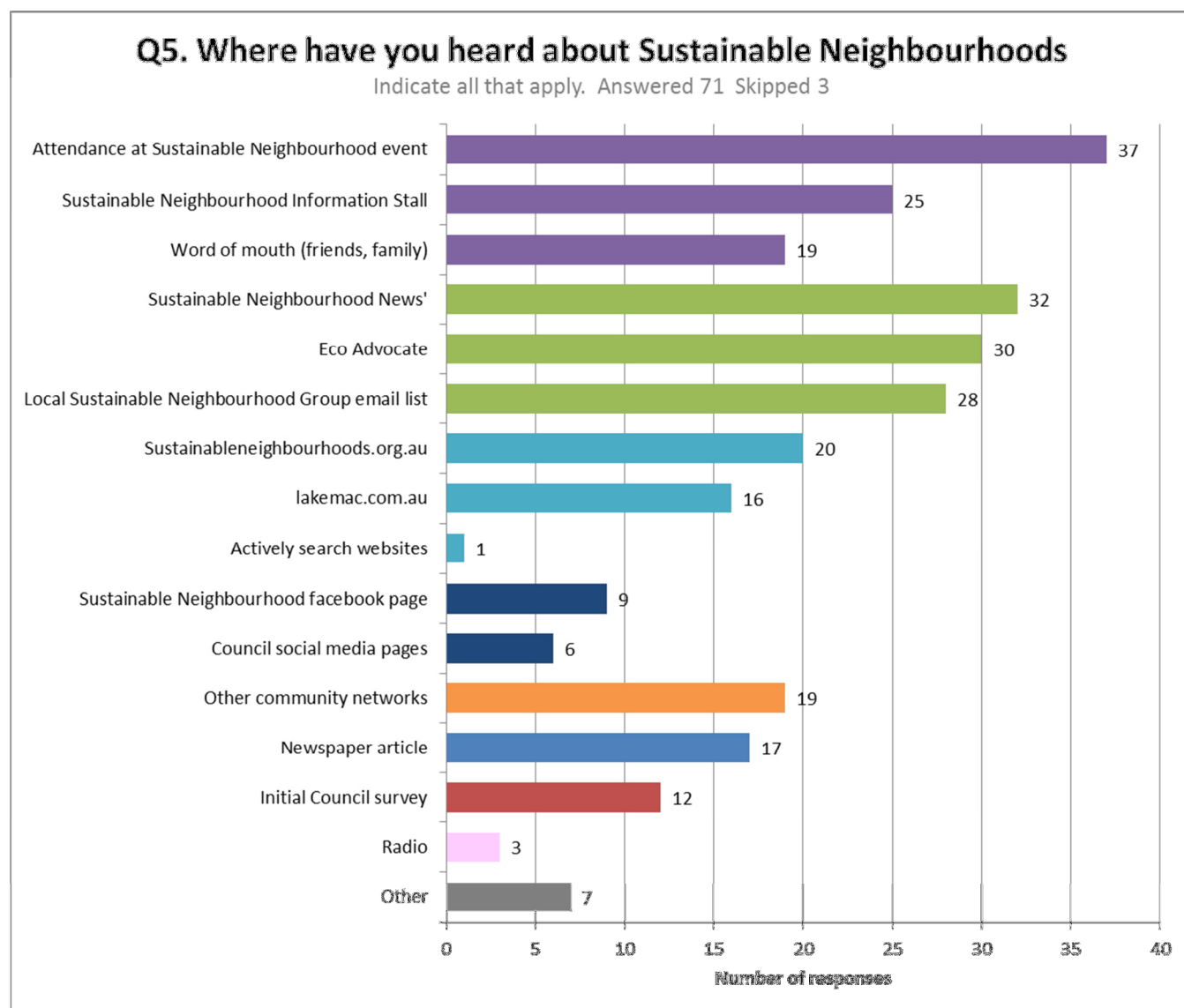


Over 85% of respondents do not have any children under 18.

A slightly higher proportion of current volunteers (13%) have children, compared to those not currently volunteering (9%).

Section B. Current involvement

Question 5. Promotion tools

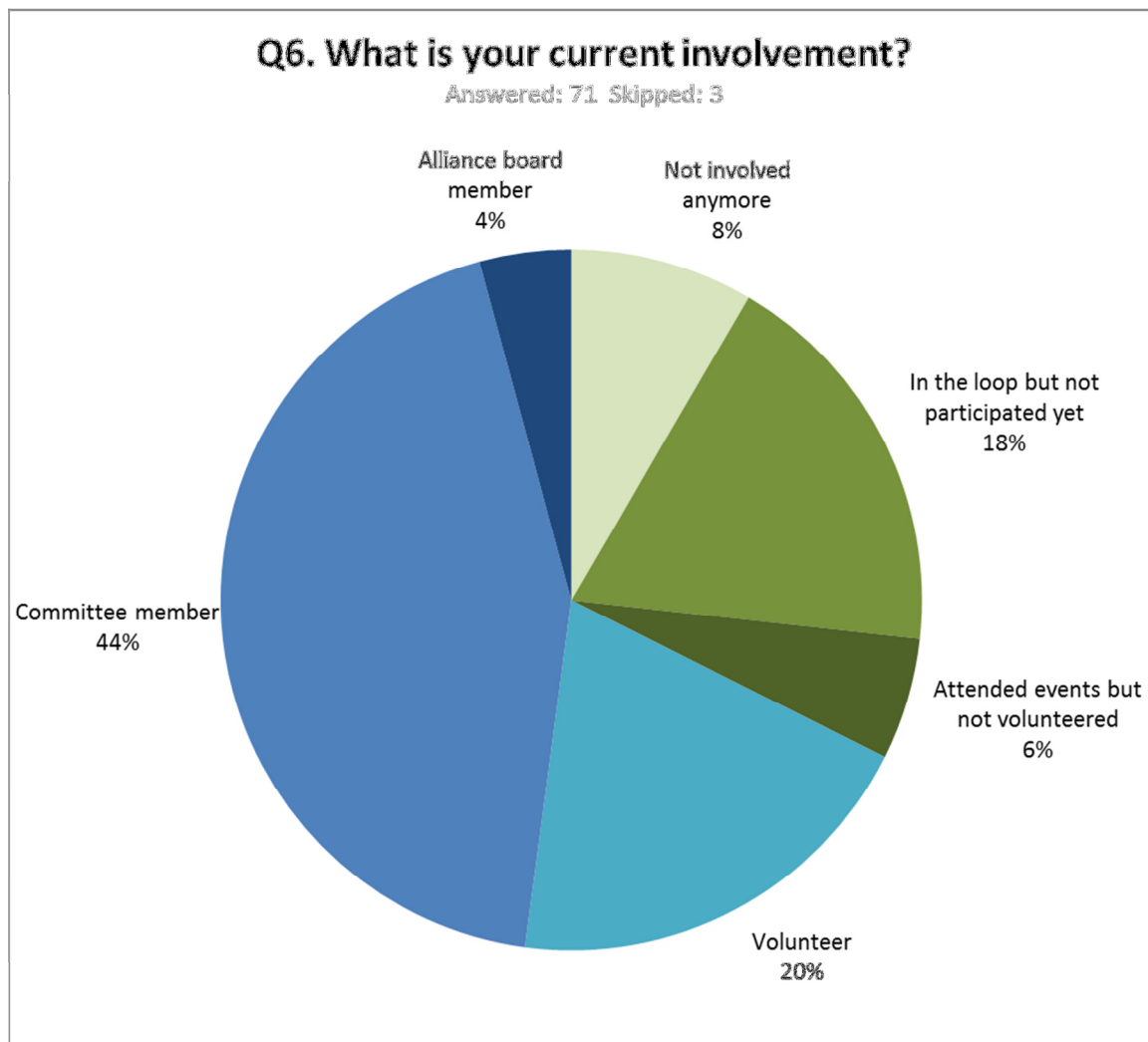


Other responses included:

- *Poster or flier on local noticeboard (2)*
- *Member since initial workshop (3)*
- *Local Sustainable Neighbourhood newsletter (hard copy) (1)*
- *Council flier (1)*

Both face-to-face interactions (shown in purple), and email newsletters (shown in green) were the most common way for people to find out about Sustainable Neighbourhoods.

Question 6. Current involvement



Five respondents also added additional comment about their current involvement, including:

- *Constrained by work hours and other commitments at the time my group meets.*
- *Am taking a break from attending meetings. 35+ years experience with environmental activity so become a tad impatient and feel like I'm reinventing the wheel at meetings/events sometimes. My batteries just need a recharge so I'm attending bush walks et al in an extended area which helps.*
- *My local group have had fewer meetings lately. I haven't attended as many meetings as I used to as I am studying.*
- *Recently absent overseas so not directly involved for some months.*
- *Not sure if there is one in my neighbourhood.*

These responses indicate the level of current involvement of respondents. 68% of respondents are considered current volunteers, and 32% are not currently volunteering. Respondents were then directed to different questions, based on their response to Question 6.

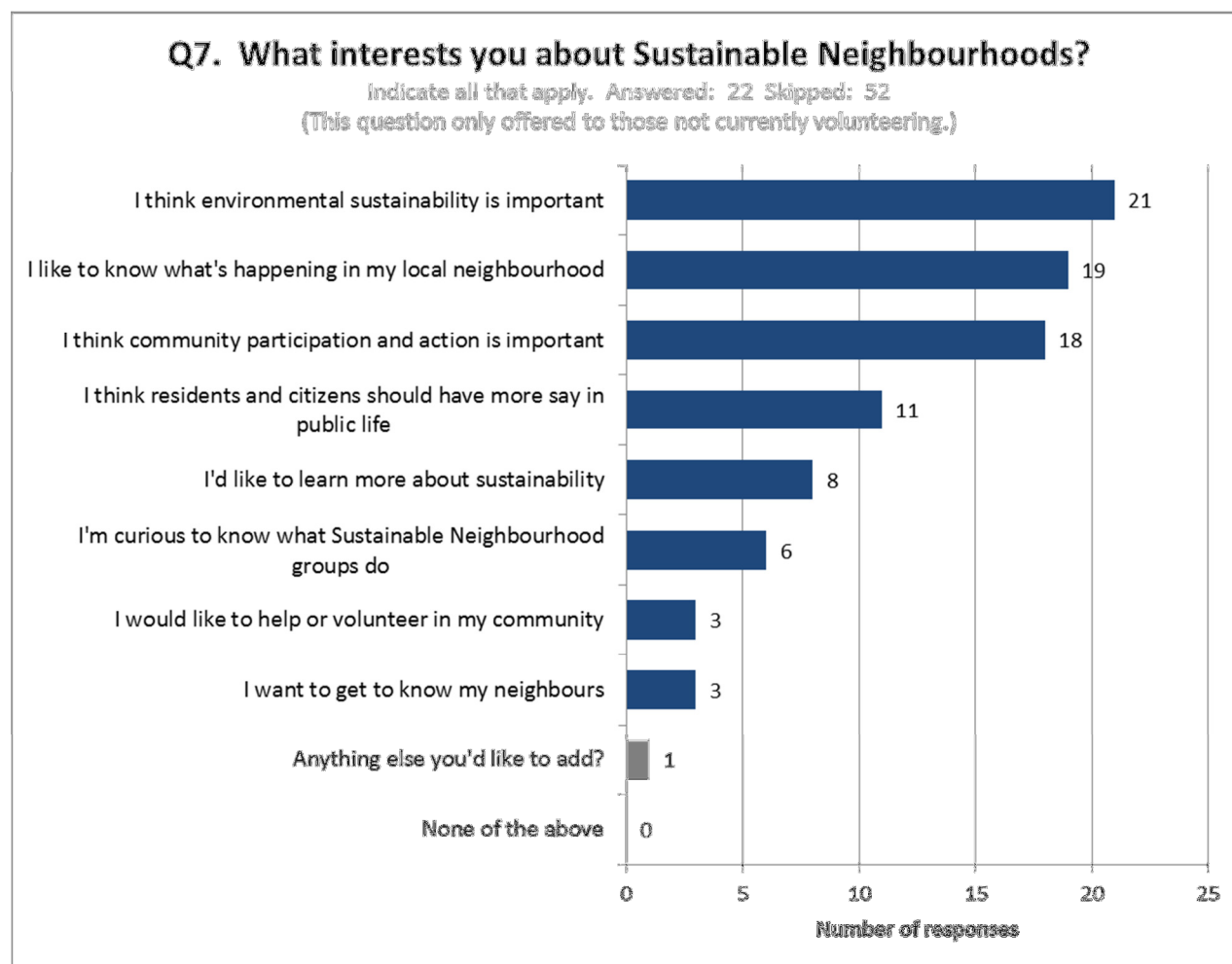
→ **Not currently volunteering** - (ie answered 'Not involved anymore', 'In the loop but not participated yet' or 'Attended events but not volunteered') were directed to answer Q7-9, and then skipped to Q 25, and continued to the end of the survey.

→ **Current volunteer** – (ie answered 'Volunteer', 'Committee member', or 'Alliance board member'), skipped questions 7-9, and were moved directly to Q10, and continued to the end of the survey.

Section C. Motivation and interest (not currently volunteering)

NOTE: Q7 – Q9 were only offered to those not currently volunteering.

Question 7. Interest in Sustainable Neighbourhoods

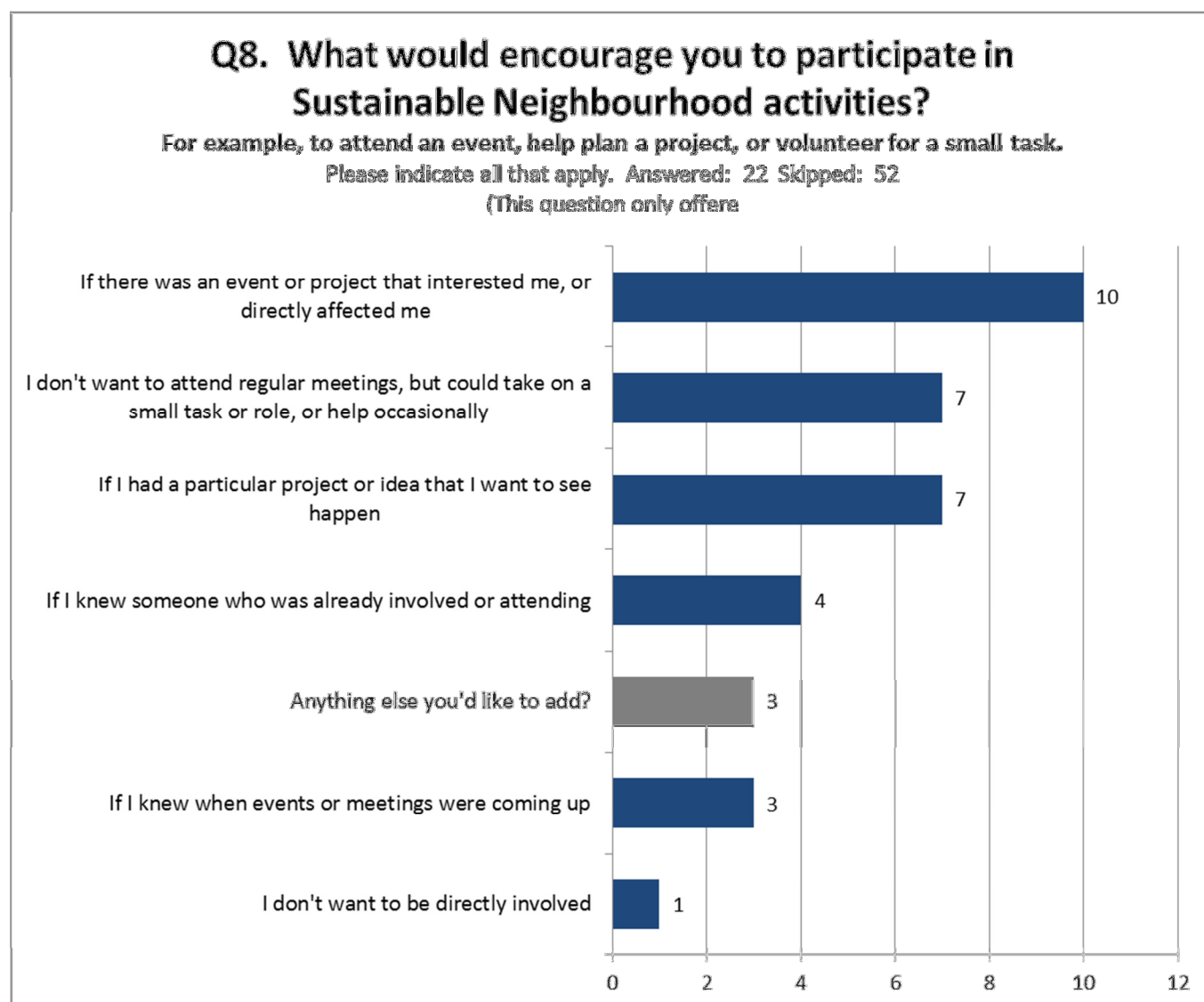


One additional response indicated a preference for activities that can be done from home. And seeking information and support for building sustainability at home.

The most common interests are:

- Environmental sustainability is important
- Like to know what's happening in my local neighbourhood
- Community participation and action is important

Question 8. Motivation to participate



Additional responses included:

- *I would attend meetings if they were on a different night*
- *I was frustrated at every turn by Council regulations*
- *I work part time and as a carer, and am limited to what I can do at home. I know others in the same situation. Could use information and support for building sustainability at home.*

The biggest encouragement indicated was “If there was an event or project that interested me, or directly affected me.”, and if they had a particular project.

A number of people indicated that they could take on a small task, but don’t want to attend regular meetings.

Question 9. Achieving program objectives

Q 9. Do you have any suggestions on how Sustainable Neighbourhoods could be more effective at achieving our objectives?

Objectives were listed. Open ended responses. Answered: 10 Skipped: 64

(This question was only offered to those not currently volunteering.)

Responses included:

- *Have a more varied program.*
- *Plan after hours talks or events during the week for the summer months when there is more light.*
- *Perhaps a Lakeside BBQ after a work project, advertised with a sign near the roundabout declaring the day and time. All welcome. Involve local Lions, Rotary, View clubs.*
- *First rule of getting anything done is to have concrete goals. Second is to ensure those likely to be involved know and understand the goals and means of achieving them. How can you achieve something you cannot or do not measure? These objectives are fine in theory but too nebulous in practice. A list of projects that demonstrate points one and two is necessary. Point three can be measured and information on how to for individuals can be communicated. Point four needs much more clarity. Are the threats sudden or steadily developing threats? Projects to prepare and respond will be quite different. Point five is a nice objective. This like the others needs to have definite actions that people can do and that can be measured. Point six is similar and again requires information for members of the community to use to encourage themselves and others to participate as envisaged. You may have the action plans below these objectives but I have not seen them. Maybe later in this survey?*
- *As I'm working part time and as a carer, my opportunities are limited to what I can do at home. My circumstances are not unique as I know quite a few people in exactly the same situation. We want information and support for building sustainability at home.*
- *Have get togethers for people in the local community which does not require a working bee.*
- *More council support.*
- *Have more interaction publicity.*
- *All the above*
- *No*

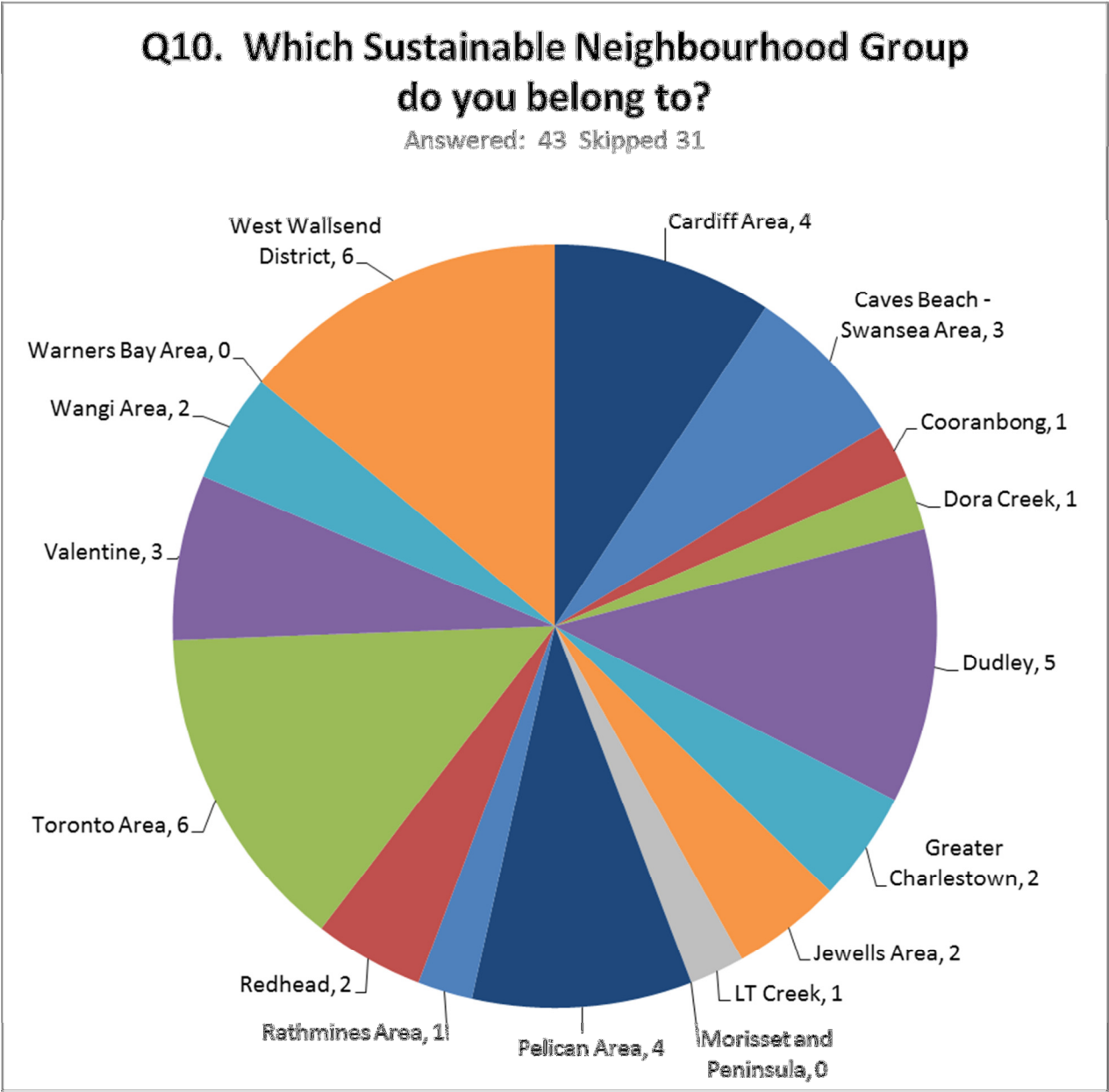
These responses indicate a number of opportunities and suggestions for more diverse gatherings and interactions with those who are not currently involved.

NOTE: Respondents who are not currently volunteering were then directed to Q24.

Section D. Experience with local Sustainable Neighbourhood group

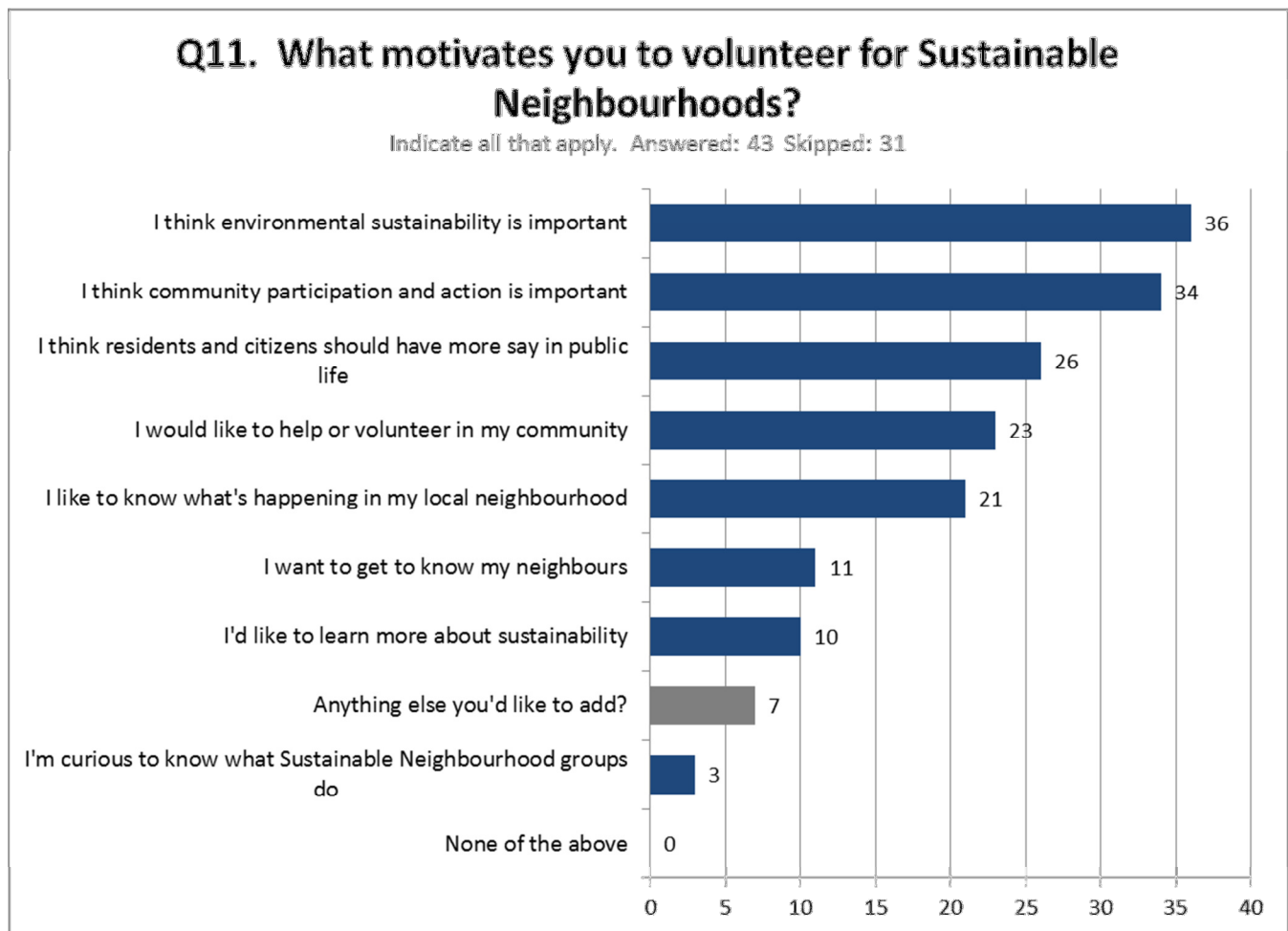
NOTE: Q10 – Q23 were only offered to those who are currently volunteering.

Question 10. Local Sustainable Neighbourhood Group



Almost all active Sustainable Neighbourhood Groups were represented among the survey respondents.

Question 11. Motivation to volunteer



Additional responses included:

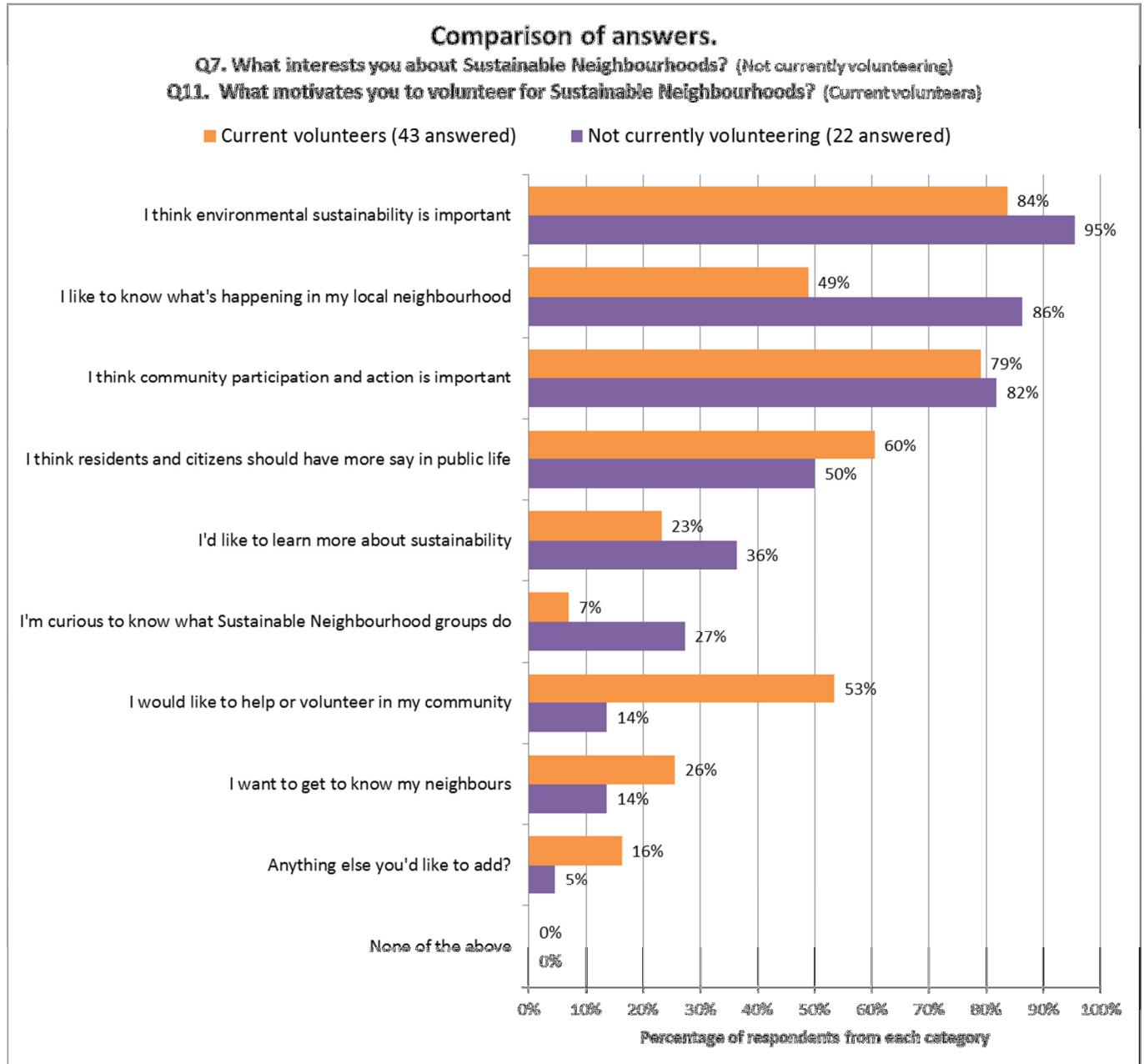
- *Promote restriction of plastic in the marine and land environments*
- *Initially I wanted to meet and get to know fellow community members to form a group, ideas and actions to have fun and spread the message of caring for our patch in a sustainable way. I was well impressed by the support from LMCC staff. Meeting times are difficult for me.*
- *Being part of a worthy cause, and is a worthwhile organisation to be a part of.*
- *I'd like to think we can have Community Spirit in our neighbourhoods, that we all see that diversity in the community is as important as biodiversity in nature.*
- *It is good to have a structured group that:*
 - *acts as a conduit with government,*
 - *has more potential to carry out projects, win grants*
 - *provides a community forum*
- *I'd like the community to be aware of what is already in their area. Often we hear about an activity after the event.*
- *I volunteer in many organisations and its surprising how little others know about their own area."*
- *I believe strongly in community participation and in caring for the environment - both locally and globally. I have served on several LMCC committees over the past years including those relating to the environment, in particular the management committee for Green Point park and the committee which was involved in producing a Vision for Lake Macquarie. Working with Council to improve our local environment has always been satisfying and productive and I believe I have worthwhile experience to contribute to improving our neighbourhood.*

The most common motivations are:

- Environmental sustainability is important
- Community participation and action is important

Comparison of interests and motivations

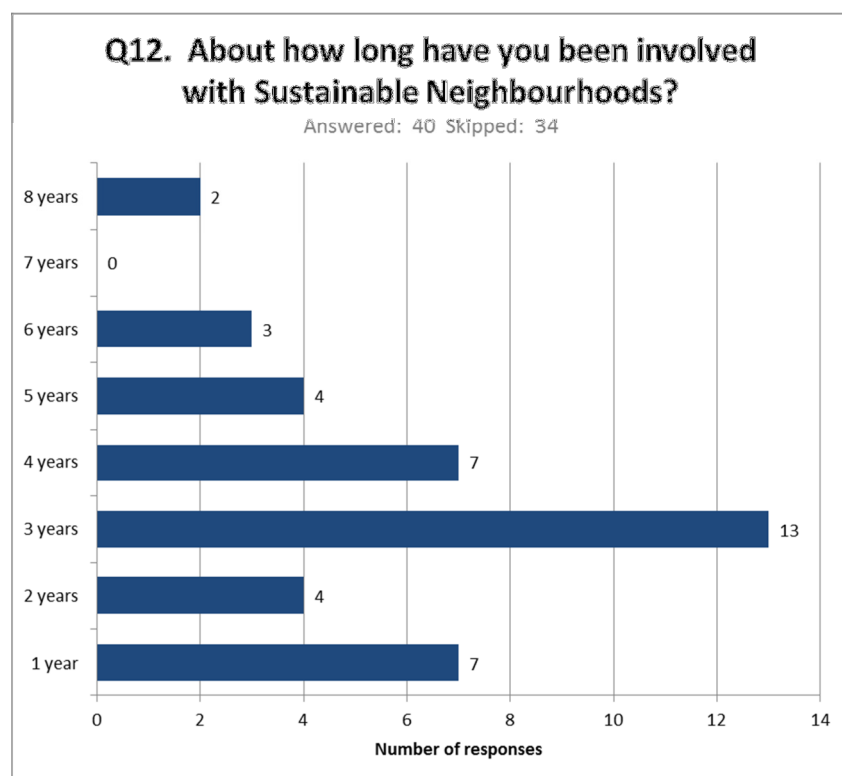
The responses from Q7 and Q11 are shown in the chart below, to provide some comparison between those who are currently volunteering, and those who are not. Note that the questions were worded differently, but the answer options were the same.



The most apparent differences in responses related to the following.

- Current volunteers appear more motivated by “help or volunteer in my community” than those who do not currently volunteer.
- Those not currently volunteering are more interested in “knowing what’s happening in my local neighbourhood”, “curious to know what Sustainable Neighbourhood groups do”, and want to “learn more about sustainability” than current volunteers.

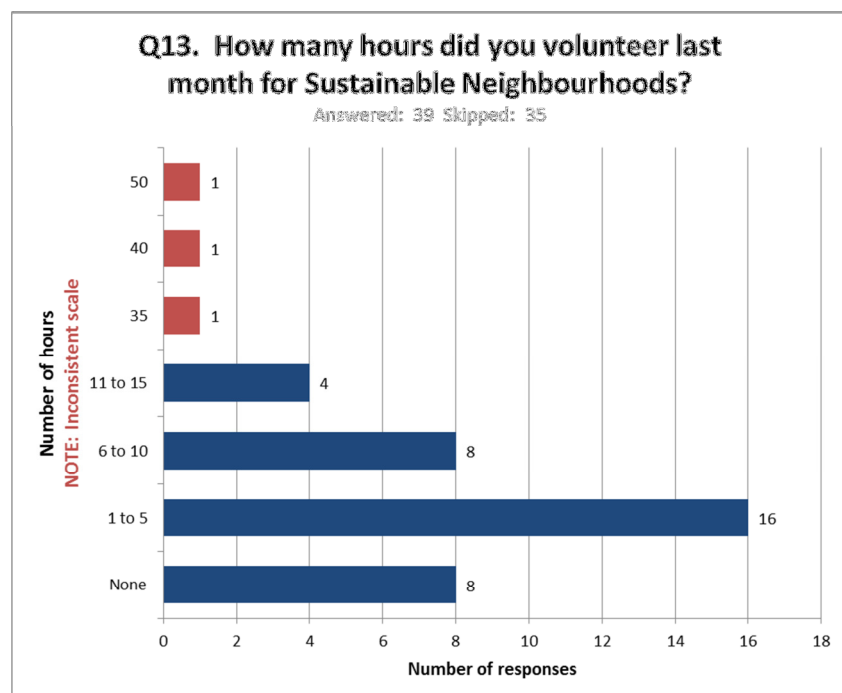
Question 12. Length of involvement



| | |
|---------|-----------|
| Average | 3.4 years |
| Median | 3 years |
| Maximum | 8 years |
| Minimum | 1 year |

Some volunteers have been involved with Sustainable Neighbourhoods since the program's inception, while others are relatively newer to the program. Most people have been involved for about 3 years.

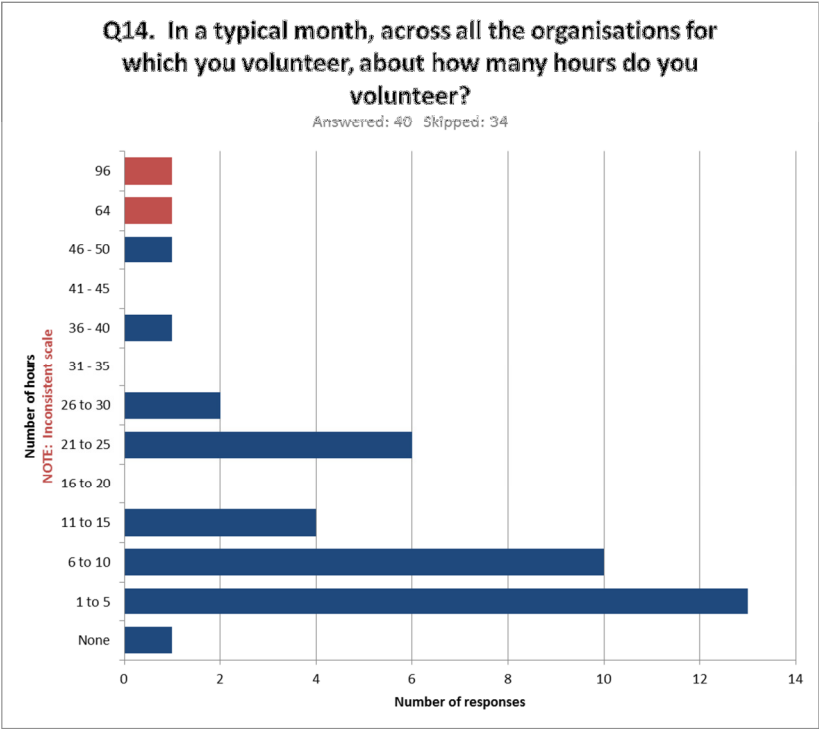
Question 13. Volunteer hours per month



| | |
|---------|-----------|
| Average | 7.5 hours |
| Median | 4 hours |
| Maximum | 50 hours |
| Minimum | 0 hours |

The median number of hours spent is 4 in the last month. However, some volunteers reported much higher number of hours. The highest reported was 50 hours, which is equivalent to about 12.4 hours per week.

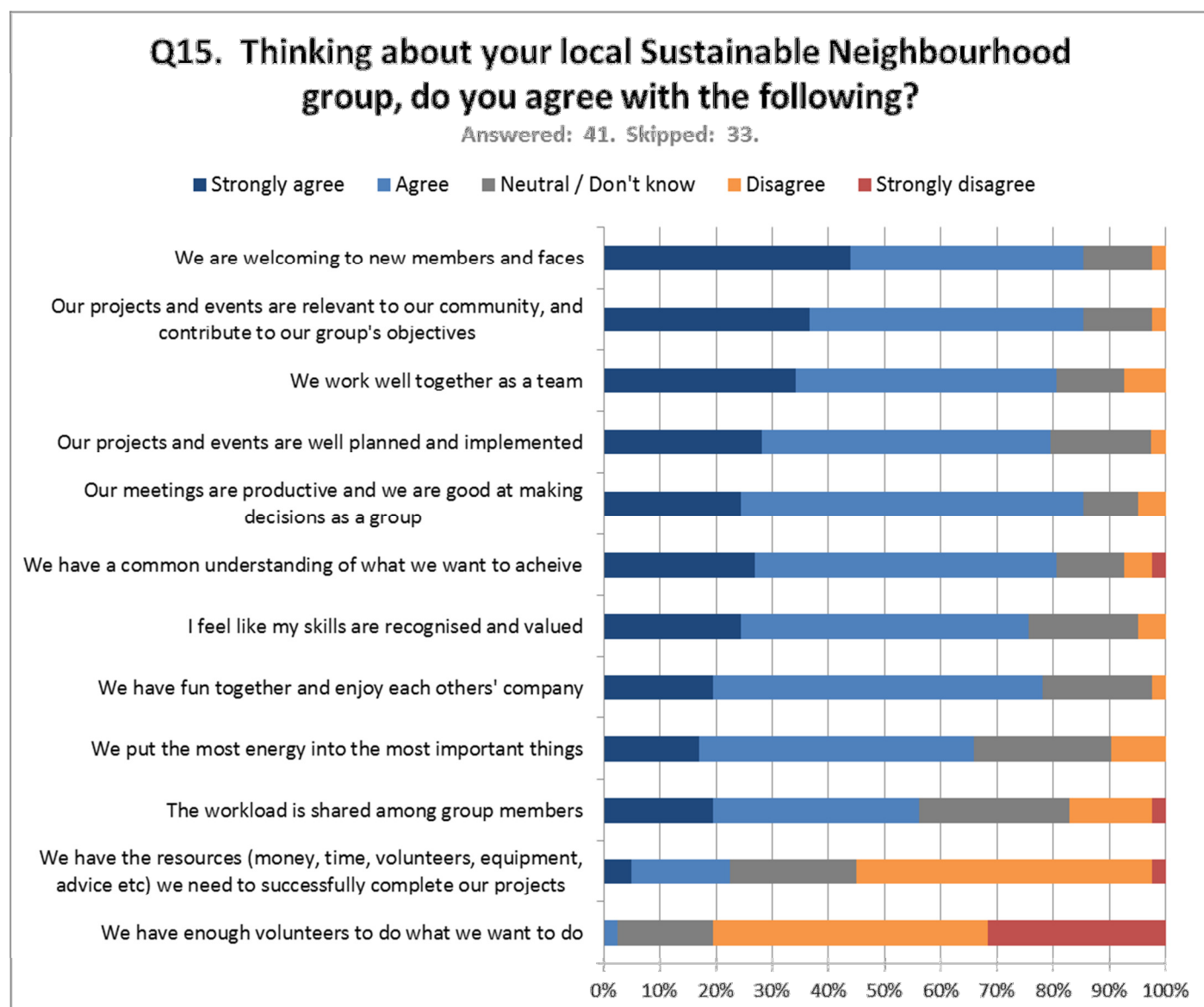
Question 14. Hours volunteering in total



| | |
|---------|------------|
| Average | 15.4 hours |
| Median | 10 hours |
| Maximum | 96 hours |
| Minimum | 0 hours |

These results indicate that many volunteers also spend time volunteering for other community groups. The median number of hours per month reported was 10 hours.

Question 15. Local group dynamics



Additional comments included:

- Our biggest problem is the lack of active participants, especially since some of our most active members left the district. We have a large mailing list, but are having difficulty attracting members to meetings, perhaps because of the lack of a suitable meeting venue. We have also had a falling-off a numbers of volunteers for projects.
- Council, especially Rachelle, give excellent advice and support, but some projects have stalled because of changes/absences of the Council personnel responsible.
- Our group runs remotely, coming together when required.
- Short on volunteers.
- Unfortunately most of our members have lost their enthusiasm for our meetings at the moment. Mostly this is due to our coordinators being time-poor.
- We have a real problem getting the community involved in our group and activities. There is a shortage of volunteers.
- If there's not a common understanding of what's wanted to achieve it's hard to know if there's the wherewithal to achieve. It's not all negative as possibly indicated above. Sometimes some people work well together, are welcoming and plan an event well.
- Seems impossible to get volunteers in this district. All the work is done by committee members.
- Lack of time is the biggest issue.

- *In my group, I have felt that I am not listened to when I put forward an idea or comment. I feel that sometimes our chairperson does all the talking and doesn't allow time for others to do the talking. At times meetings can be rushed through and can get a little stern, when I'm being spoken to. I have walked away from the meetings feeling upset and many times frustrated.*
- *I think that the way our chairperson runs the meeting needs some training on how to run meetings so she can learn to be more inclusive of everyone. I don't get any emails of agenda before meetings, something needs to be done here.*
- *We struggle to get community connection and participation in offering, presenting and completing our activities. Local residents have a large apathy to new community events.*
- *We have a strong core committee but we need new blood. Most of the committee have been together for several years. We try hard to showcase our successes and communicate our objectives but have some difficulty in attracting new members. We are working on more publicity opportunities.*
- *We are a new group trying to get things going with some very dedicated and energetic members.*
- *We have taken a long time to establish our group. We had 50+ at the initial meeting which mapped out what those members saw as important. The next meeting only had a few people and then it was down to 4-5.*
- *Our area already have active groups doing good things in the community. It is members of those groups which then put their hands up for another group. The few who 'stayed on' didn't want any official positions- it was either take a position or 2 ..or fold!*
- *My understanding of what other SN groups have achieved is that a specific task is initiated (scarecrows, native garden, street sale, mural etc) and then another event is suggested. An enthusiastic leader is a 'must'.*
- *Most community minded people are already fuller committed- others don't give back at all.*
- *Should be more inclusive of divergent views. Purist 'green' views tend to shut out more moderate people from joining or becoming more active.*
- *Extremely difficult to attract new members*
- *We need more active members and we need to widen the interest area to encourage others to join. Our group is currently driven by the "green" aspect and I know that there are more concerns in the area that are not being addressed.*
- *I see a problem with the setting up of each group. We took a year to finalise our constitution and by then we only had 4-5 people at the meeting. We had excellent guidance from a Council officer.*
- *We have not been very active lately but started enthusiastically and achieved several of our goals. We have become rather quiet of late - possibly because some aspects of our action plan are more difficult to achieve and require more people, time and resources.*

The results and comments clearly indicate strong levels of disagreement with:

- “We have enough volunteers to do what we want to do”
- “We have the resources (money, time, volunteers, equipment, advice etc) we need to successfully complete our projects”

Additional areas for improvement include:

- Sharing the workload among group members
- Putting the most energy into the most important things.

Question 16. Best achievements

Q16. What do you consider your group's best achievement so far?

Open ended responses. Answered: 40 Skipped: 34

(This question was only offered to those not currently volunteering.)

Results summarised in word cloud below. Word size represents frequency of responses.



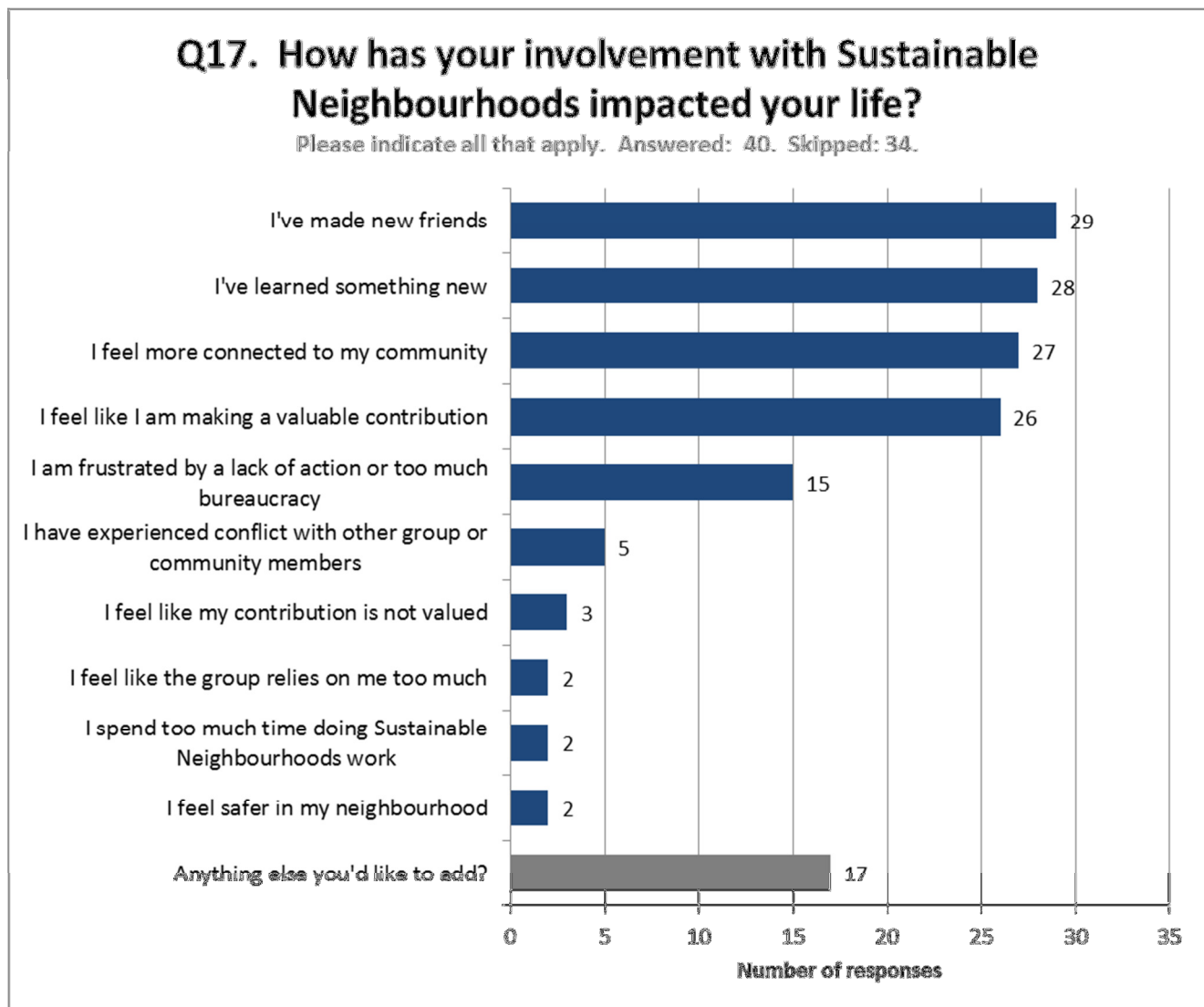
Detailed responses are below:

- OWNA Competition
- I haven't been with the group for very long, but there was a rubbish pick up which was quite successful.
- publicity of groups aims
- OWNA Competition (won 2015 LMCC Australia Day Award for Community Event of the Year)
- Cat Care brochure and the push for Awaba Conservation Area
- Old Waste New Art competition.
- The Dudley Mural, Neighbourhood Super street sale, Nature Play, Community Garden.
- RID initiative and Old Waste New Art competition.
- Motivating Council and State Govt to upgrade Grannies pools area
- the launch in October 2015 in Wilkinson Park
- Land Care site at Elizabeth st Holmesville. The OWNA competition last October. (This year, we can't seem to get the community engaged - almost no entries so far)
- Each project has been valuable in different ways and to different members of the community. The mural project has had most public awareness and relevance to most community members but nature play, community garden, history nights and other smaller projects may have had more significant environmental education and community capital building/ownership associated with them.
- Restoring Grannies Pool for use and the enjoyment for everyone in the community
- Working as a group
- Dudley Mural

- *Nature Play project - held one session, and are continuing casual sessions monthly*
- *Multiple grants and completed projects*
- *Anti-litter campaigns and fire-retardant garden*
- *Our emergency ready workshops and our award we won for the most resilient community and our awesome film that was produced.*
- *Scarecrow Competition*
- *Old Waste, New Art Exhibition 2015*
- *Establishing a firm contact with LMCC and recognition within the community*
- *Clean up and planting on National Tree Day.*
- *Lobbying for local facilities*
- *plastic shopping bag campaign*
- *Co-funded projects on managing litter and increasing recycling including getting private enterprise on board, establishment of a fire-retardant garden, lobbying for and getting more footpath and cycling infrastructure and making submissions related to DAs and Council initiatives.*
- *Scarecrow Competition 2014*
- *Joining with other interested parties to get Grannies Pool and surrounds rehabilitated*
- *National tree day*
- *Implementing replanting in Pit Pony Park and creating a template for such activities*
- *Educating the public re sustainability.*
- *Establishing a working group*
- *Grannie's pool, Blacksmiths breakwater wall*
- *We're about to have an awareness morning with brochures etc at the local shopping centre.*
- *Dudley mural*
- *Completed one year*
- *Liaison point with Council*
- *Keeping our small group to exist*
- *Tossers can be Binnars campaign*
- *Improvements to footpaths and establishment of a school speed zone, facilitation of clean -up activities, assisting with promotion and siting of new toilet block for Allambie Park at Valentine shopping centre, working with Fire and Rescue on the bushfire plan, contributing to the LMCC cycling strategy and lobbying for better links from Valentine to both Belmont and Warners Bay ie Fernleigh track and the 'Round the Lake' cycleway .*
- *Flashing school zone signs*
- *Reduced speed limit for school times*
- *Footpaths around the school - hopefully to be extended to local shops.*
- *Involvement with council activities such as new public toilets*
- *Bush fire hazard reduction in Green Point*

Responses highlight the range of successful projects completed by Sustainable Neighbourhood Groups.

Question 17. Impact on individuals



Additional responses included:

- *I feel like we could be doing more. I'm keen to get in and get things done and BE the change.*
- *Frustrated at lack of action on some things, and would like the assistance of younger and fitter volunteers with projects such as Landcare.*
- *I've learnt that the community wants a lot, but generally isn't interested in participating or willing to do anything to contribute.*
- *I've made new acquaintances, had some interesting conversations, occasionally felt frustrated at a 'picking up papers on special occasions mentally' and felt insulted when my knowledge and experience were 'put down' then felt patronised at other times. I've probably been spoiled by previous experience where not littering was a given and really meaty enviro issues were tackled and gaining publicity was important. That said, at this stage of my increasingly physically disabled life, I'm probably 'passed it' in being so involved anywhere any more.*
- *Our group has had two programs delayed by council. A request to set aside a small parcel of vacant land for a town centre park was denied by council. The historic horse trough improvement is still on hold - due to staff changes. The conversion of the Holmesville tennis courts into a community garden is taking too long and the stumbling blocks are too high.*
- *The most part it has been a very positive experience for me overall. I have learned a lot and gained new skills that I have never done before. This has been very rewarding for me.*
- *Typically, the person doing the most will cop the most flack and discontent.*
- *Several of our projects have been held up because relevant Council officer had moved to another job.*

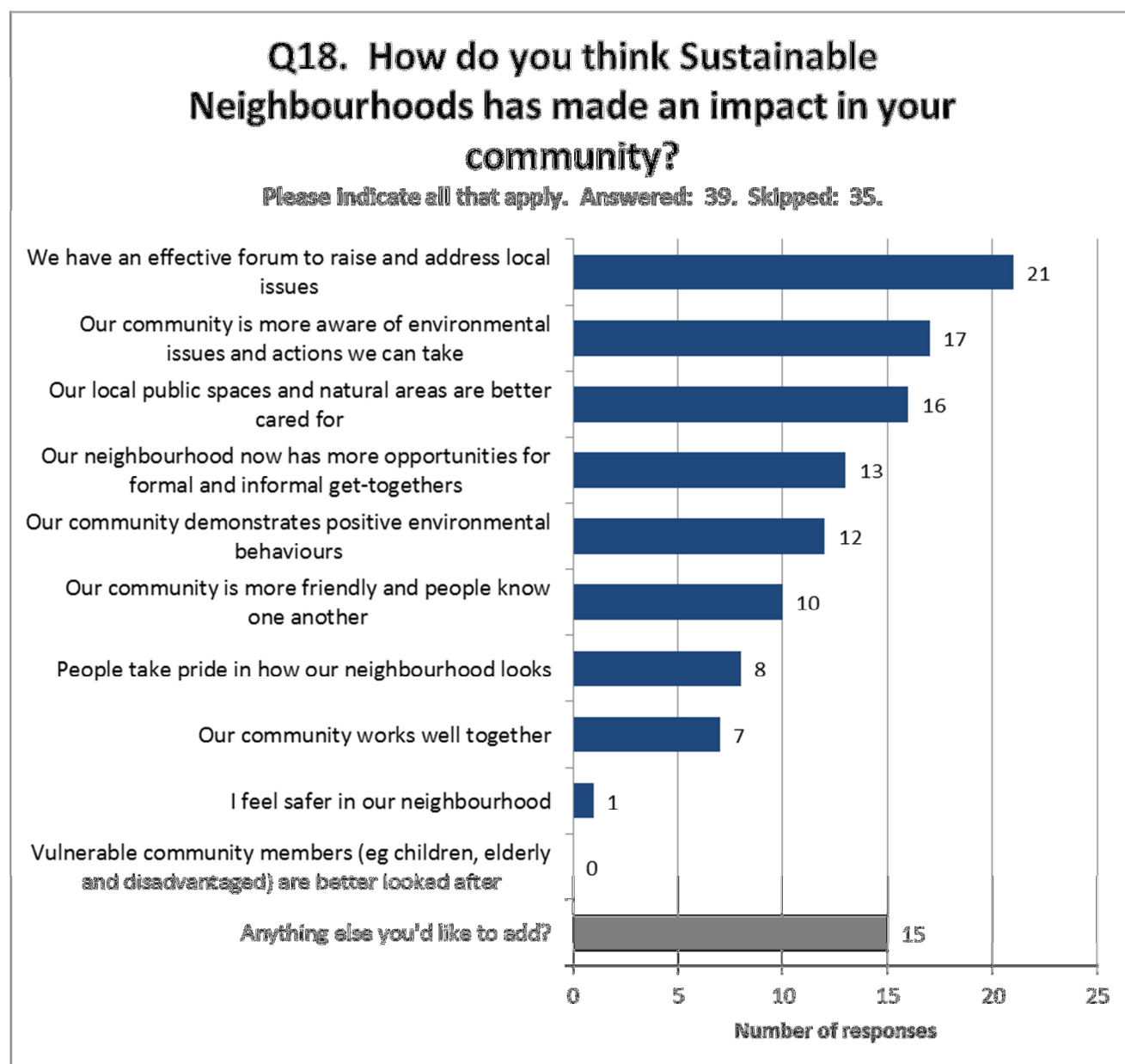
- *Since I'm chairman of our group then I should probably be more "dynamic" and "driving" but I'm not really in the group to do that, so I tend to let things slide...*
- *Overall terrific and valuable experience*
- *We only have an extremely small number of people who are active in our group, therefore everything is left to the same people to undertake. Burn out and disinterest is happening to me right now as there are not enough active members in our group.*
- *There are far too many bureaucratic hoops to jump through and forms to fill in when trying to organise an event.*
- *Turnover and drop out of volunteers is difficult to manage. Engaging new people is quite hard and seems very hit and miss.*
- *Sad so many others aren't involved?*
- *Cross section of community views not able to be put forward. Too much focus on purist environmental thinking rather than rational practical environmental thinking. For example, cannot be critical of wind turbines in terms of noise, cost to build, ongoing high maintenance costs, inconsistent output and very importantly loss of bird life as these are dismissed out of hand as it is a green renewable energy...*
- *The attendance of councils representatives has been very welcome*
- *It's difficult to stay motivated and find the time to really achieve what we would like to with a limited number of members. Lack of focus can be an issue at times but again that's mainly due to time constraints and lack of input from the wider community.*

Respondents indicated a number of positive impacts on Sustainable Neighbourhood volunteers resulting from their involvement, including:

- Making new friends
- Learning something new
- Feeling more connected
- Making a valuable contribution.

The major negative impact is “frustrated by lack of action or too much bureaucracy”. Additional responses provide more detail about the negative impacts.

Question 18. Impact on community



Additional responses included:

- I think awareness needs to be spread, targeting the youth through schools, fund raisers and local events.
- We have had an impact, but it's not as big as we'd like. We don't feel that the group is as well-known as we'd like, though we're getting more attention through Facebook. We feel the need for another "launch day" to publicise the group to the many new residents who have moved into the area. We're working on this.
- Wish I could tick many of these, especially demonstrating positive enviro behaviours but alas I think there's a long way to go. I see mega plastic bag use, trash thoughtlessly discarded, heavy use of vehicles, disregard for pedestrians.
- I don't think our wider community gives a toss about what we are trying to do. Especially the high school. Getting to talk to someone there is like getting blood out of a stone.
- None of these apply to the overall community, but some apply to a very small number of community members. Our core group of 6 members that attend meetings and plan activities are reasonably comfortable with one another, but are all getting jaded with the lack of community response to the Sustainable Neighbourhoods group initiatives. Each are stepping away from the meetings.
- I have not ticked much in this section because I have no idea how to evaluate these things.

- *I don't think that the impact has yet been on a scale where we can point to significant visible or other tangible outcomes from our projects as indicated above, i.e. that can be ascribed to us. I think the litter campaign has been the most notable and hopefully there have been some changed behaviours. I strongly believe that our work has just begun. We need to be looking at a 5-10 year horizon more from now to build on our initiatives.*
- *I do not think that we have much of an impact on the community as not enough people have taken an interest in the group.*
- *We have the foundations to have more impact in the community but just need time and more members*
- *We are too small to say we have made an impact!*
- *Nothing yet.*
- *It seems very difficult to attract younger people with families*
- *We need more community participation.*
- *The Valentine Community has worked well together over many years and has a high degree of environmental awareness. It is hard to say what impact VSNG has had over the last 4 years except in the specific projects we have taken on owing to being a small group of busy volunteers. I think we have lost a bit of 'steam' and probably need to revisit our 'Action Plan' and see what else we can do.*

The majority of respondents indicated that 'we have an effective forum to raise and address local issues'. Some comments identified that it is difficult to attribute impacts to the actions of Sustainable Neighbourhoods.

Question 19. Improve volunteer experience

Q19. If you could change anything about your experience as a Sustainable Neighbourhood volunteer, what would it be?

Open ended responses. Answered: 31. Skipped: 43.

Results summarised in word cloud below. Word size represents frequency of responses.



Detailed responses include:

- *More Volunteers*
- *I'd make more things happen as far as getting the public involved in events, spreading awareness and making a positive impact.*
- *Step back and let others commit to our organisation*
- *Still want to meet more locals. Would really like to have "a place we could call home", a base identified with us.*
- *Not sure*
- *have more people with either appropriate experience/skills or willing to accept advice to think strategically, understand concepts and have fun working together*
- *Have a proper place to meet and hold gatherings, talks, exhibitions etc.*
- *Better appreciation/utilisation of social media*
- *Good question! Find new ways in which our group could have been showcased in the community and attracted new members?*
- *Be able to volunteer more time*
- *Our group needs to be better organised, with more regular meetings, better systems for communications, and a plan*
- *better coordination with Council departments*
- *I would change the way our meetings are run, so that everyone with in the meeting can feel included in discussions and decisions. I would like to see more people join our group and be part of the change they want to see.*

- *That the setup and launch would be easier and not waste time and energy, and that council continued its support of the group to maintain and attract new members. This is not a sustainable practice, but neither is stepping away and expecting to group to stay patronised.*
- *I'd probably like there to be a "driving force" behind our group*
- *Personally, i find it difficult to come up with appropriate, meaningful "sustainability" ideas. I'm sometimes not sure of what our brief is. I understand 'sustainability', but struggle to find practical ways for our group to put things into action.*
- *That's a difficult question to answer. We need to be organising some social events and we're working on that, e.g. garage sales and get togethers.*
- *I have enjoyed doing the things I have done although I tend to volunteer to do too much and then this interferes too much with the time left over for myself and family.*
- *Break down the legal and financial barriers with other organisations eg LMCC to fast track some important actions*
- *The amount of paper work needed to put an event on is excessive.*
- *Have more volunteers to work with*
- *Donate funds for better outcomes*
- *Not sure*
- *Have a follow-up meeting, perhaps an outdoor meeting, in a public park, with a sausage sizzle, 4-6 weeks after the initial meeting.*
- *new set of knees*
- *I am an environmentalist but environment issues and actions need to deal in actual facts not statements heard that repeated three times become 'pseudo' facts. Unfortunately we are impacted by inaccurate media and hearsay reports that distort the truth and affect our thinking.*
- *Be able to attract more members*
- *to be more involved.*
- *To put in a bit more time and effort where possible.*

Section D. The Alliance and wider Sustainable Neighbourhood network

Question 20. Role of Alliance Board

Q20. What is your understanding of the role of the Lake Macquarie Sustainable Neighbourhood Alliance (the Alliance) and the Alliance Board?

Open ended responses. Answered 37. Skipped: 37.

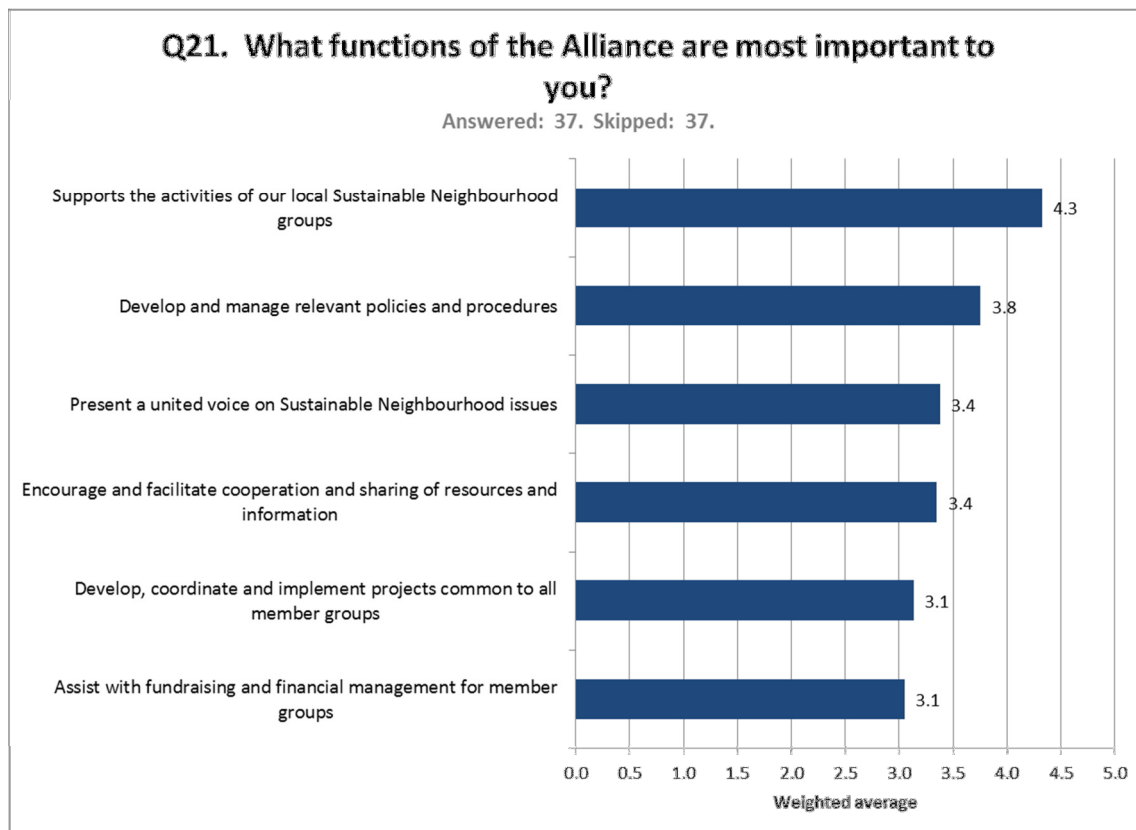
Results summarised in word cloud below. Word size represents frequency of responses.



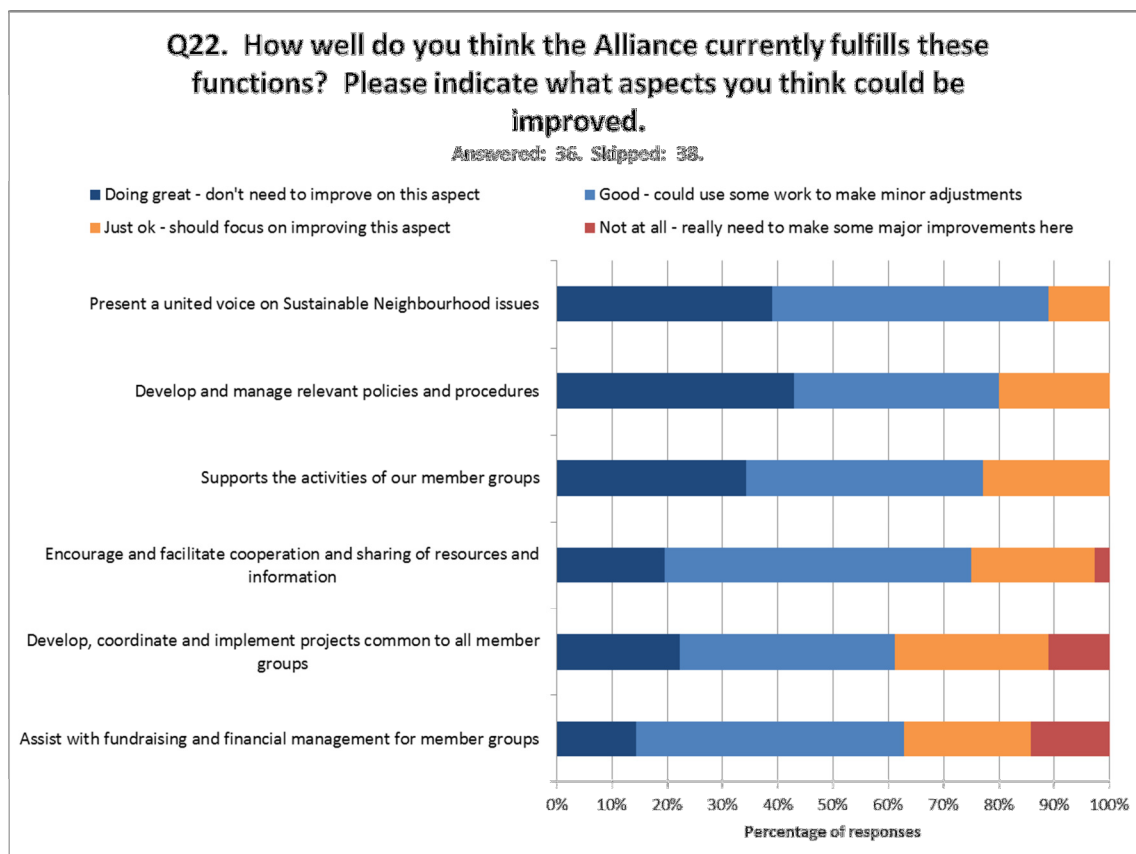
- Assist Financially - supporting group activities and projects.
- I'm not sure.
- Provides support, guidance, and insurance for events. Helps compliance with Work Safety practice.
- Is the umbrella group. Assists in grant applications and event insurance. Assist in individual groups working together.
- To assist the local groups in their endeavours.
- the Alliance and its Board is the incorporated body which oversees the various N'hood groups, is resourced by LMCC but acts independently of it.
- To oversee and support the various groups.
- overarching guidance and decision making, link between Council and SNGs, insurance, audit/QA
- Improve the local environment for the benefit of nature and the people
- It is the over-arching Board for the Sustainable Neighbourhood groups and assists with overall administration and decision making, supported by LMCC.
- Oversight of process, funding, and coordination between groups
- Oversees governance, insurance and network coordination
- coordinating and leading

- They provide Guidance and assistance to all the Sustainable Neighbourhood Groups. The alliance provide a framework from which the groups can operate, as well as training for specific activities. They also also assess group activities for insurance purposes, to ensure WHS for volunteers and help with promotion of group activities.
- To provided an 'encompassing' incorporated body acting for and with each group with regard to legal compliance, council compliance, activity logistics, business management and sustainability guidance. The Board is the 'working' facet of the Alliance and supports and advocates for each and all Sustainability Groups.
- The Alliance is the incorporated body for SNGs and provides OH&S oversight
- Providing a sector under which all SNGs can operate
- Not sure.
- They provide an organisational framework within which individual groups can operate more securely.
- "support
- guidance
- admin (insurance, grant money, etc)
- help with publicity
- network"
- The umbrella organisation with individuals 'sitting' in Council (i.e. Council staff) but 'independent' of it. Provide guidelines for and assist with establishing individual SNGs, continuing admin and professional advice as required, seeking financial support from diverse sources, championing issues (i.e. reducing reliance on plastic bags). Organises insurance and can also acts as project admin and contact point for SNGs. The Alliance is now seeking to allow SNGs to be more independent in operation. The Alliance is a crucial umbrella organisation.
- To bring communities together and for the residents to identify what they want to happen to improve their area and to look after the environment.
- Overarching governing body, provides liability cover, quality assurance, nurture new groups
- They support our activities with WHS and insurance.
- community improvement of area
- Umbrella organisation, policy, insurance, promotion, advice
- To coordinate and support the various groups. Develop baseline data, promote aims & objectives, monitor progress, analyse feedback
- An interface for the various local groups with council
- An over reaching group that pays for insurance
- To bring community members together for the greater good of their area. to promote the natural environment.
- none
- A legally recognised body which over-sees, regulates, facilitates, coordinates, and guides the various local SN Groups
- No complete understanding other than a support and coordinating role
- To support the local groups by providing information, training and management.
- ddfg
- To oversee the individual groups and activities and to ensure financial, safety, insurance and other administrative issues are effectively managed.

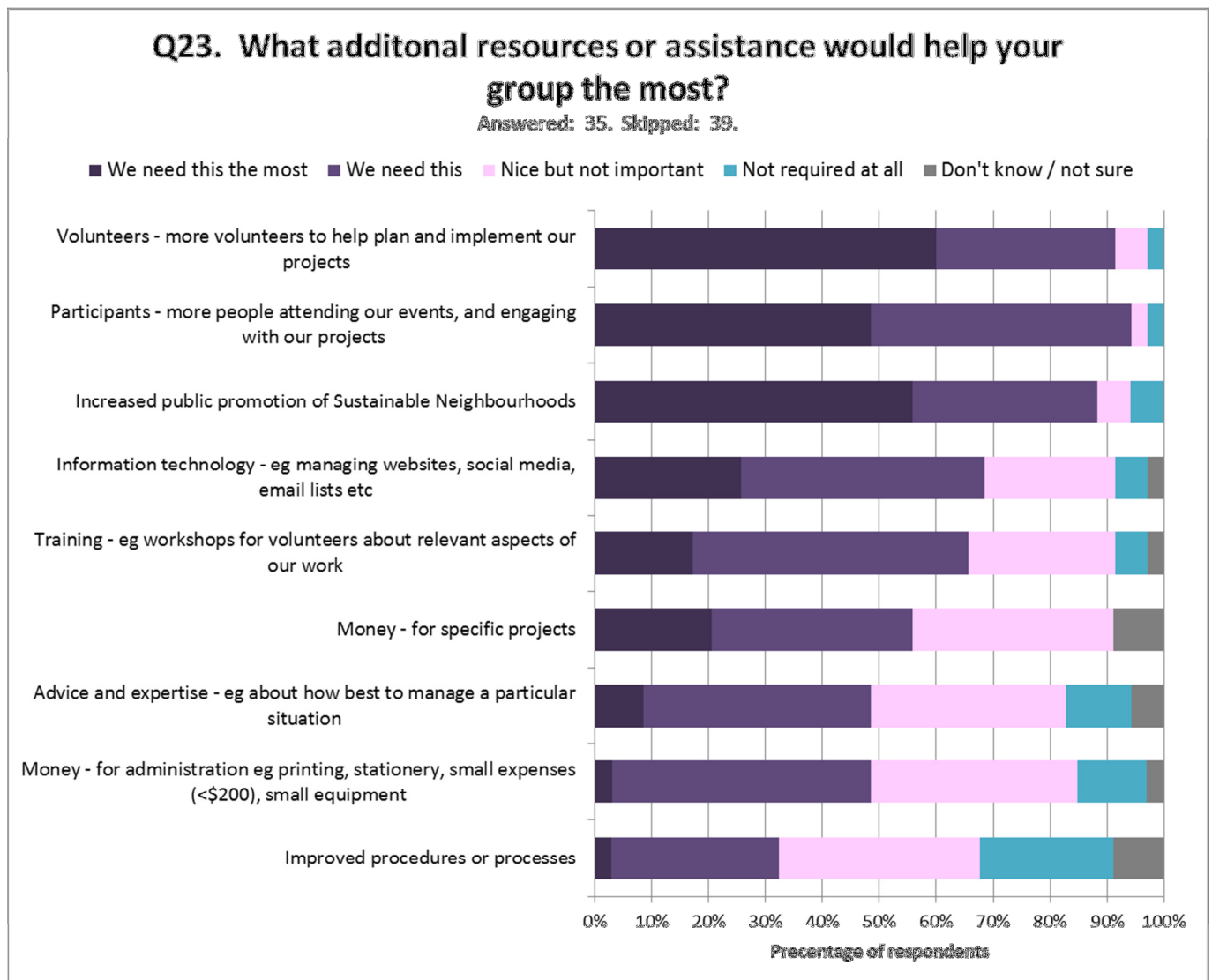
Question 21. Importance of Alliance functions



Question 22. Does Alliance fulfil functions?



Question 23. Additional resources



Additional responses include:

- Planning, timeline, promotion of events, membership drive
- I would like to see the development of a Sustainable Neighbourhood App, which could help SN volunteers to manage events, could have a wizard for filling in forms. A tool kit with updated information on people's iPads or iPhones and androids. Information can be easily shared amongst SN network. Could be a direct link to all the volunteers to the alliance. This could be discussed further.
- We have struggled most, to date, with acquiring funds for projects, and believe that The Alliance should make every possible funding list, relevant to Sustainability Groups, available to each committee, to minimise volunteer hours needed to search for funding.
- An overall Social Media Strategy - facilitate some way of groups finding each other on twitter, instagram etc.
- Easier (less paperwork) and quicker response times for acceptance of our projects by Council.
- Not that I can think of
- I am not really very knowledgeable about the Alliance as others in our group are more involved in this regard. My answers relating to the Alliance may not be very accurate and there was no 'unsure' or 'do not know' option.

Section E. The future of Sustainable Neighbourhoods

NOTE: The remaining questions were offered to all respondents.

Question 24. 5 year vision

Q24. What would you like Sustainable Neighbourhoods to be like in 5 years?

Open ended responses. Answered 39. Skipped: 35.

Results summarised in word cloud below. Word size represents frequency of responses.



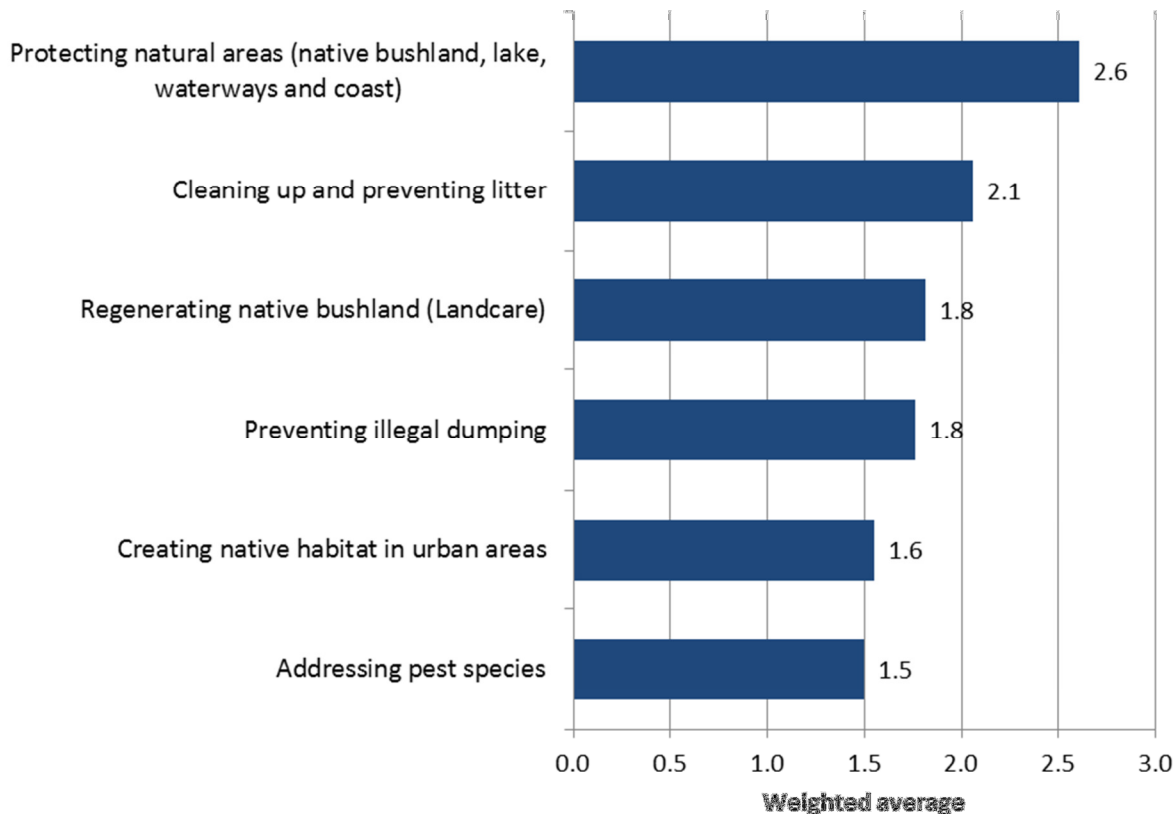
- Very successful in spreading awareness of the impact we have on the environment, more events, bringing our community to life.
- More mainstream
- Highly visible in their communities, the first choice for community members trying to get something done in the area
- More environment work
- More trees, more pedestrian and cycle than car oriented, well serviced by public transport (not the case now), less rubbish dumping,
- No further congestion of Lake Macquarie with people and vehicles, retention of and improvement of native species flora and fauna, sympathetic community infrastructure for amenity and services.
- active
- flourishingly effective
- Have a more widely known presence.

- *a large group of interested individuals from around LMCC cooperatively working on ideas from each community ie... less small individual SNGs running their own race and more of an Alliance type structure with members working cooperatively around the city on projects or common issues.*
- *Every area with a group that has a much bigger membership making a great impact on the local environment*
- *Continuing and active in local decision and involvement in local projects*
- *Rather than doing small awareness raising projects - achieving some transformational changes, and having influence in council decision-making*
- *More people actively engaged and doing things*
- *More coordinated and help provided in dealing with different council departments. Major issues across different SNGs*
- *I would like to see SN groups be more prominent with in the community. More of a presence with more media exposure encouraging people to join and be part of a worthy organisation. Talking more about our successes in the media, perhaps a spokes person for the organisation.*
- *I would like to see community members Choosing to participate in a Sustainable neighbourhood group because they believe that they can be instrumental in their area's development. Council needs to listen to the community through this resource MORE!*
- *Greater penetration and involvement by local communities*
- *Mindful of the environment in which we all live*
- *High profile, part of the daily fabric, as well known as Facebook.*
- *Actually engaged in physical projects locally*
- *valued by the community*
- *clean and green*
- *More vibrant, perhaps the names will change, more integrated with like-minded organisations, fulfilling the role of increasing the physical and social well-being of our community.*
- *Have a much larger number of residents actively involved.*
- *Have a much quicker, easier and more streamlined system of dealing with the Council.*
- *Have more emphasis on getting the community together.*
- *A strong and numerous network of groups sharing experiences*
- *Bigger, stronger with more volunteers and more capable to do bigger activities and really make a difference.*
- *Successful in putting plans into action*
- *more awareness in the community. more involvement with council*
- *More well-known & better funded.*
- *Source of information and assistance in community members being more involved*
- *More people caring about this great institution, this amazing land*
- *More populous*
- *I'm unsure.*
- *Better known as a movement and more community involvement in SN Groups*
- *Working with Council on developed management plans for all areas such as Redhead and Nine Mile Beach Management Plan*
- *diverse communities and interconnected communities caring about our environment.*
- *Active with more volunteers and a record of achievement at least with several local projects.*
- *A lot more community awareness and participation. Perhaps it would help if we had a broader charter - sustainability can be a little narrow, I'd like to see us supporting broader community needs and issues.*

Question 25. Natural environment priorities

Q25. What are the 3 most important natural environment issues for the Sustainable Neighbourhood network to prioritise in the next 5 years?

Answered: 58. Skipped: 16.

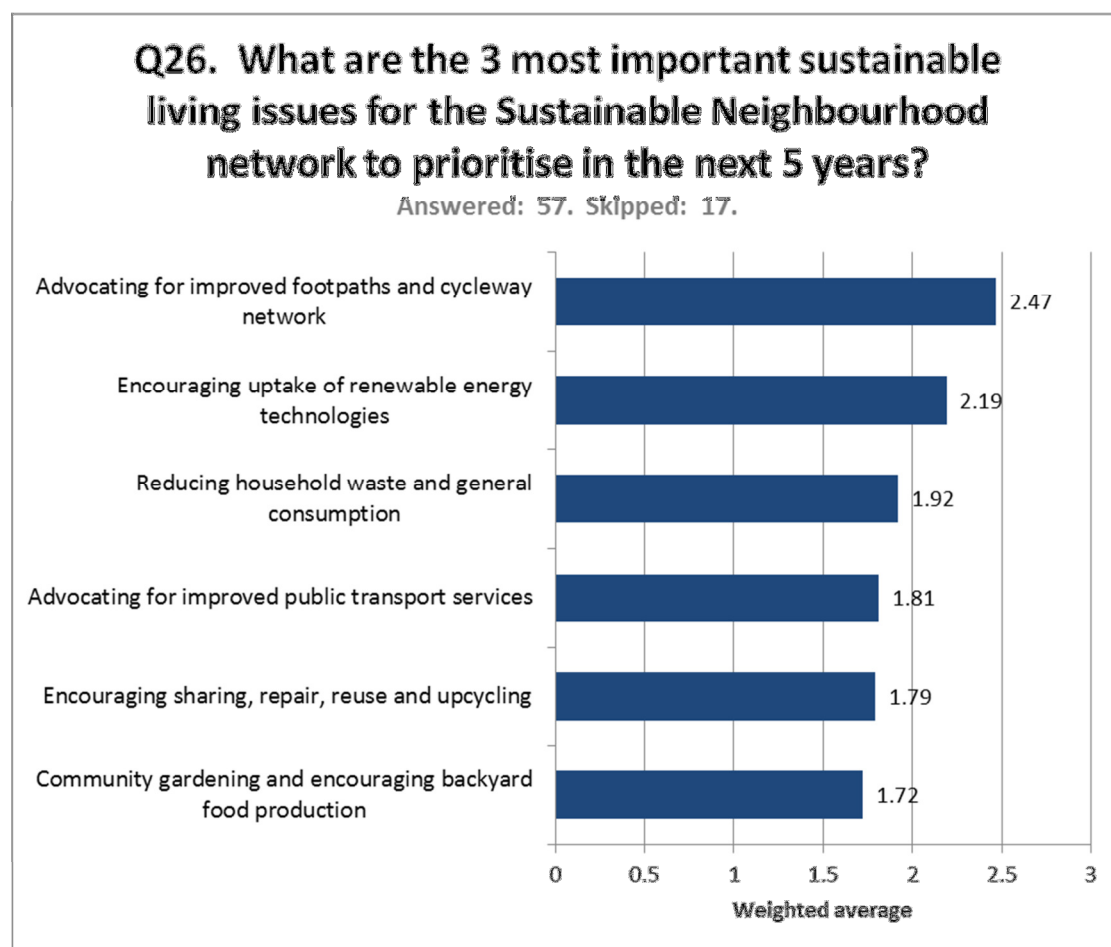


Additional comments included:

- *Tackling pollution is my passion.*
- *These are my personal choices; I think that a lot of our members would be more concerned with illegal dumping and litter, but we've already done a lot of work in those areas.*
- *All are important!!!*
- *These are all important and need to be worked on together.*
- *There ought to be a fact-based logic to the level of importance to this issue. Are these options objectives or actions? E.g. It is reasonable that by addressing pest species of flora and fauna native habitat in urban areas can be restored/created/improved. This happening throughout Lake Macquarie should lead to regenerating native bush land and protecting natural areas. We need a strong lever to use to enable nature to work with us to achieve all our goals. Littering and illegal dumping could become so obvious in our environment because we keep it in good natural condition that individuals feel much less inclined to litter and dump. Try to tie everything together so we can achieve that overworked result of "synergy" with our actions.*
- *I think council already does well in latter 2*
- *"As I'm working part time and as a carer, my opportunities are limited to what I can do AT HOME.*
- *My circumstances are not unique as I know quite a few people in exactly the same situation.*
- *We want information and support for building sustainability AT HOME (not really shouting!)"*

- *Preserving valuable existing natural areas within the urban areas and along the Lake from development is vital.*
- *NA*
- *If we attend to issues 1, 2 and 3 properly, then we will automatically be attending to the other three.*
- *Landcare, pest control and creating native habitat are also important but partially done through other groups/organisations.*
- *They're all very important*
- *At Belmont Wetlands State Park (Jewells area) ALL of the above are being addressed at once. Each one addressed enhances the others.*
- *A more natural environmental education program, more public transport less cars. reduce plastic and other dangerous things getting into Lake and waterways killing fish and mammals. Climate change awareness*
- *Hard to choose as all issues are very important.*
- *These are all important but the focus would change depending on what area you live in.*

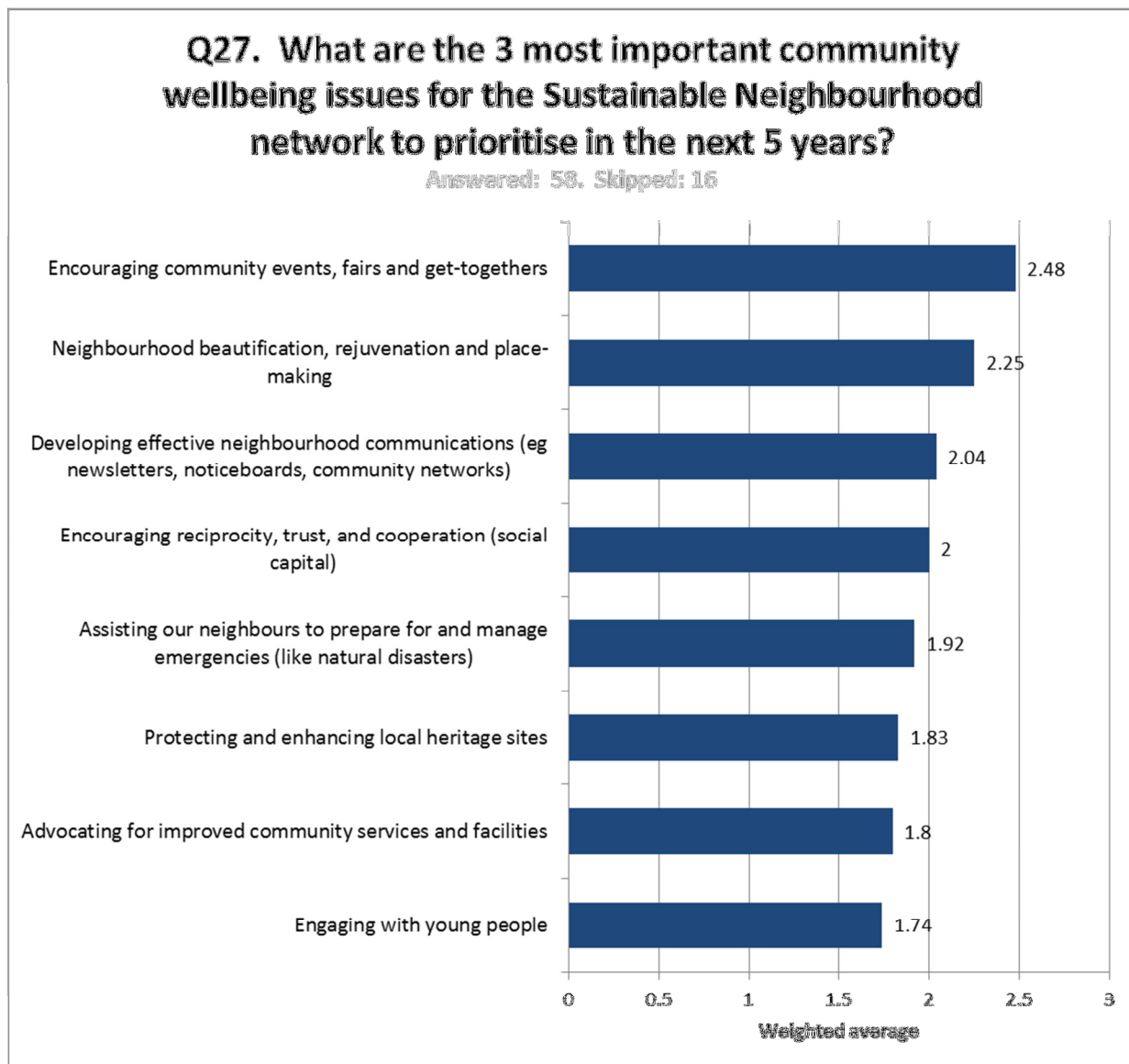
Question 26. Sustainable living priorities



Additional comments included:

- *Encouraging uptake of renewable energy technologies is also very important.*
- *The first two are achievable; public transport is dire in our area but I'm not optimistic about any improvements, since there haven't been any for 20 years.*
- *Again all important issues*
- *I haven't indicated uptake of renewable energy technologies in my top three as the cost will encourage the uptake rather than trying to encourage people generally. Information on latest technologies and cost comparisons should feature in communication with the community. More obviously doable and beneficial objectives will make a difference in the short term of 5 years. The lake walking & cycling bridge around past Cherry Rd is a great example of improvement for health and amenity.*
- *"As I'm working part time and as a carer, my opportunities are limited to what I can do AT HOME.*
- *My circumstances are not unique as I know quite a few people in exactly the same situation.*
- *We want information and support for building sustainability AT HOME (not really shouting!)"*
- *5 and 6 are very similar*
- *hard to prioritise!*
- *Of course the other issues are also important but somewhat out of the expertise range of most SNGs. Community gardens are not easy to set up and maintain and who derives the benefits needs to be clear. Council should take/is taking the lead on renewable energy.*
- *All of the above . However until government stops fossil fuel dependence, encouraging renewable energy for ordinary people(low income) is impossible, Get rid of plastic bags and bottles. Have workshops with our local Indigenous people to create community cohesion and to teach non-Indigenous people about their culture, diversity is important.*
- *Again - hard to choose - all so important.*
- *All of the above are important.*

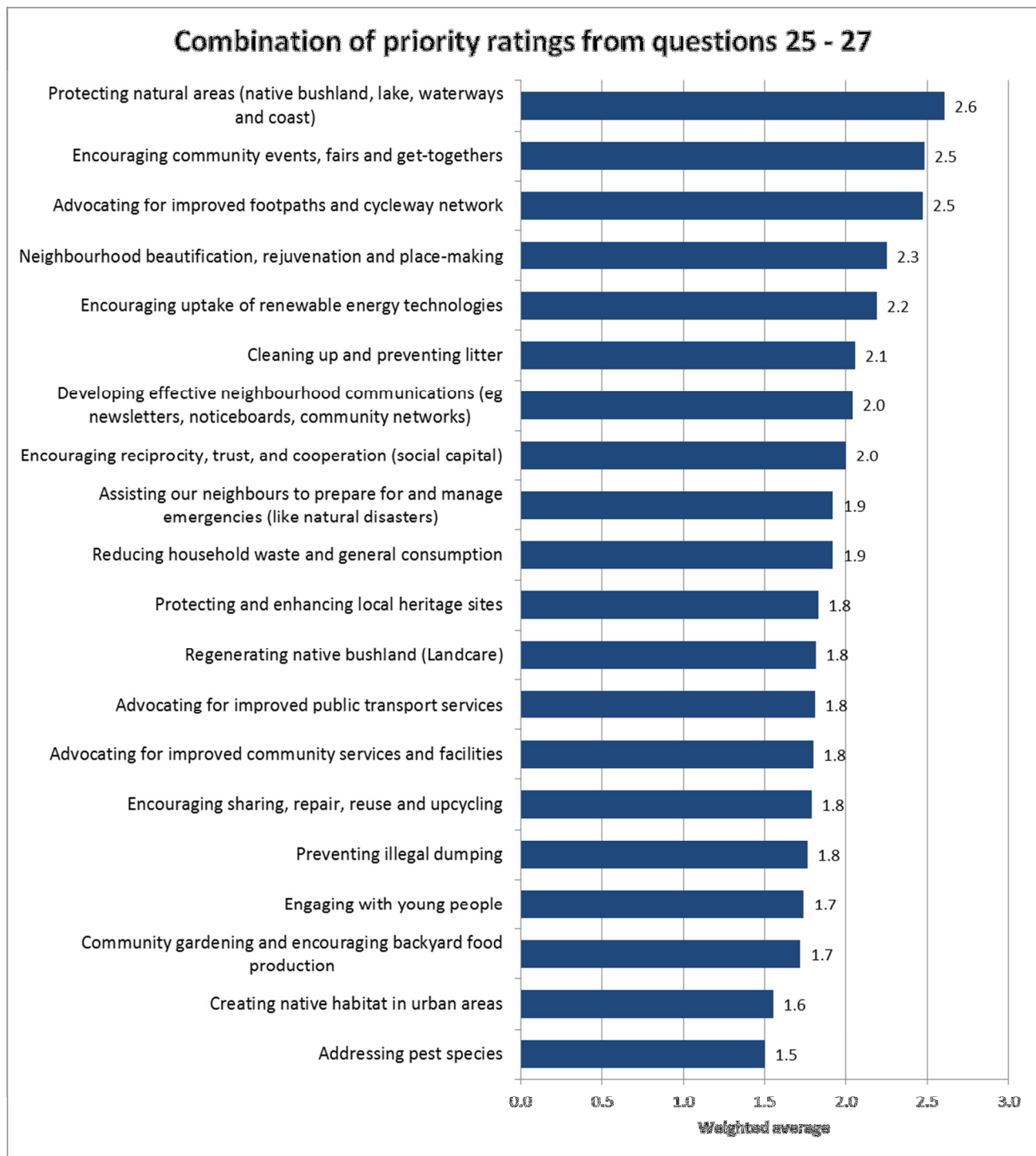
Question 27. Community wellbeing priorities



Additional comments included:

- *I think that all of the above are important; managing emergencies the least so, since there are other organisations dealing with those.*
- *Again the issues appear as unarguable matters to be involved with, but they strike me as not determined enough in some cases. Effective communications has to be number 1 nothing follows without it. Seeing the neighbourhood being cared for also strongly communicates other community spirit objectives. Engaging with young people, primary and high school children is essential. Young people at university have a lot on their plates but can be kept in the loop. If they have been engaged with at primary and high school there should be a good deposit of trust they will retain when they enter the workforce and become Lake Macquarie residents and rate payers. In five years and more they will be making decisions about our community. We must set positive examples about our environment while they are young and firming their opinions.*
- *all so important really*
- *hard to prioritise!*
- *All of the above are great things to do. And hard to rank. Engage with our local Indigenous people who could add to peoples cultural awareness . Fairs and get-togethers would be great, with acoustic music all ages should be included.*

Priority issues combined



Question 28. Additional comments

Q28. Please add any additional comments about Sustainable Neighbourhoods and how we can plan for the future.

Open ended responses. Answered: 24. Skipped: 50.

Results summarised in word cloud below. Word size represents frequency of responses.



- Target schools, make sustainability 'cool'. (or at least try)
- Get more funding
- It is really important to have strategies for bringing new residents into existing community groups - especially where new subdivisions are going in.
- Considered planning and articulate communication of achievable objectives will be able to demonstrate capability by actually seeing a difference. Try to find the one to three things that can be done and will make visible improvement in our sustainability.
- They're a really good initiative of LMCC
- Few people have time to commit but many value this - SN needs to consider a slight change of focus. Anecdotally, many feel the SN is ONLY about serving those who want to make community gardens and the like. People who are house-bound, elderly, frail, etc often say they like the idea but they feel a bit left out. Encouraging people to understand how they contribute through what they do IN THEIR HOMES would be (I sense) of enormous benefit. The 'Neighbourhood' is a place where many have lived for many years, but now find themselves increasingly isolated from. SN would do a great good by giving a VOICE to these members of the neighbourhood, along with all (such as myself) who greatly value the SN enterprise but are limited in what we can contribute.
- Educate the people particularly the young to care for the environment and to tackle the need to Reduce dumping with strong preventive measures
- Dealing with litter crisis-particularly fastfood litter and instilling pride in community
- Very happy with the Sustainable Neighbourhood Program. Develop a Sustainable Neighbourhood App for volunteers to use.

- *Our group is seriously hampered by a lack of community participation. Our neighbourhood has no commitment to local council, with Wangi being left underdeveloped for a long time in terms of Roads, footpaths, public facilities. The general consensus is 'we live on the west side of the lake, so will get nothing. Wangi residents are in 2 minds; happy to be unaltered, but unhappy to be ignored. Some 'very obvious' deficits should be corrected to ensure Wangi remains in the current century! EG disgusting lack of services for disabled and wheelchair users.*
- *I think we should strive for partnerships with local libraries to deliver events - great venues with established community connections.*
- *"1. We must not lose assets that are irretrievable*
- *2. It is important that people know what these assets are.*
- *3. Environmental education"*
- *It is important that SNGs continue to grow, be better known and integrated into their communities*
- *"Thousands of people volunteer their time, knowledge and money in our area for the good of their neighbour and others in the community.*
- *I believe there would be a lot more interested in the Sustainable Neighbourhood Programs if there was not so much 'red tape' involved with everything that needs to be done. People really get sick of paperwork and really just want to get on with the job.*
- *If Council themselves, were able to complete the paperwork required for the projects then this would make the volunteer's lives much easier and they would be able to get on with the jobs they want to achieve with a lot less stress and frustration."*
- *Community involvement in decision-making is improving but must continue to improve.*
- *I find that people want to do things in the community but are time poor and struggle to organise things. If we organise events I find people want to come and be involved. I do find the Cardiff area sustainable neighbourhood spend a lot of time on promotion of events. We have not got it right yet. Promoting our activities is our greatest challenge.*
- *Sustainable Neighbourhoods are inherently an artificial organisation, created by council and not following community demand or expressed need. As such there is a disconnect with community needs and there is difficulty engaging community members long-term. It often seems to be an identity issue, who and what is a Sustainable Neighbourhood. And the answer can be very vague, so therefore engagement can be tricky if there isn't an existing need or interest.*
- *Make SN less reliant on Council funding.*
- *I have planted dwarf citrus trees and these are producing heaps of fruit which we give to friends and neighbours. An associated veggie patch is the same. Need to tell people about the gains from such activity in a backyard*
- *Examine some successful neighbourhoods in Sustainable Neighbourhoods and steal some ideas e.g.(Moran Gamble Crystal Waters Permaculture)*
- *I think it is a great idea. perhaps we need to get together with other Sustainable Neighbourhood Groups more frequently to see how they work and to get inspiration.*
- *get more pro active*
- *I think a good way to encourage interest in sustainability would be to advocate for more entry level paid positions. Landcare is great but many need paid work and some sort of incentives to get involved.*
- *Having a broader charter that supports the community beyond just sustainability would attract more participation I feel. Also having specific events/activities to get people involved always helps as coming to meetings is not appealing to everyone.*