Valentine Sustainable Neighbourhood Community Attitudes Survey

December 2010

A report on the attitudes of the Valentine community, prepared by Lake Macquarie City Council as part of the Sustainable Neighbourhoods Program, December 2010.

Background

Council's Sustainable Neighbourhoods Program provides support to communities to plan and make changes that will reduce their ecological footprint at a neighbourhood scale.

In August 2010, the Lions Club of Valentine joined forces with Council to support the growth of a Valentine Sustainable Neighbourhood Group and develop a local Neighbourhood Action Plan. The group embarked on a range of activities to engage neighbours, deepen their understanding of Valentine, and discover what residents are passionate about.

This report outlines the results of the Community Attitudes Survey, undertaken in Valentine in December 2010. The aim of the survey was to gauge community attitudes to the natural environment, sustainable living, and climate change in order to inform the development of a Sustainable Neighbourhood Action Plan for Valentine.

The survey forms part of a broader community development program, with engagement activities to collect input from the widest possible range of Valentine residents. Public workshops and information stalls have also been used to gain input from residents. The survey captures the values, attitudes, and concerns of residents who may not participate in other engagement activities, and gives a broader perspective to guide local projects.

Methodology

In December 2010, the survey was posted to approximately 1300 households in Valentine utilising mailing addresses in Council's ratepayer database. The survey was a self-return format, with a prize draw promoted on the front cover as an incentive for residents to complete it.

Instructions on the front of the survey asked for respondents who:

- have lived in Lake Macquarie City for more than six months
- were over 18 years old; and
- are one of the key decision makers in your household.

In total, 245 surveys were returned: a return rate of 18%



Key findings

Local Environmental Issues in Valentine

Respondents are most concerned about:

- · Protecting bushland
- Protecting the Lake
- Infrastructure: stormwater, drainage and footpaths
- · Waste management: reducing waste, green waste and litter
- Energy, water and greenhouse emissions: reducing water and energy use and climate change

Climate Change over the next 20 years

61% of respondents 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that climate change will directly impact their life over the next 20 years, with the main impacts being:

- More extreme weather events
- Rising sea levels
- Increased temperatures

58% 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that the actions of the average person have a large impact on slowing climate change.

Your Sustainability Choices

At home

Most respondents (>70%) report to having the following on their property:

- Water efficient appliances and fittings (95%)
- Insulation (95%)
- Energy efficient appliances (72%)

Native gardens (56%) and vegetable gardens (39%) are also relatively common in Valentine and over 35% of households have a working compost for food scraps.

Over 90% of households use their recycling bin 'always' (88%) or 'often' (9%).

GreenPower

11% of respondents purchase GreenPower
The main reasons given for not purchasing GreenPower were:

- Cost
- A lack of understanding about what it is and how it works.

Public Transport

Most respondents (86%) indicated they 'seldom' or 'never' use public transport. The most common reasons included:

- Inadequate timetable/route
- Prefer to use the car.

Motivation

Respondents ranked 'a personal responsibility to do the right thing for the environment' as the most important motivators to improve their environmental behaviour. This was closely followed by 'saving money' and 'rebates and incentives'.

Sustainability actions in your neighbourhood

Participation in environmental activities

Activities respondents indicated they are most likely to participate in include:

- Neighbourhood clean-up
- · Home audit of backyard, energy, waste, and water use
- Education events about the local natural environment
- Information workshops
- · Growing native gardens

The Sustainable Neighbourhoods Program

Seventy-seven respondents (31%) have either heard of, or participated in the Sustainable Neighbourhoods Program, with flyers, media (newspaper), leaflets and flyers the primary point of contact.

One hundred and forty-nine respondents (over 60%) indicated that they are, or might be interested, in participating in the program.

About Valentine

Respondents had a high level of agreement that:

- There are adequate natural environments in my neighbourhood for me to pursue leisure time activities
- I can call on a neighbour if I need help
- Natural features in my neighbourhood should be protected and improved by residents
- I can take measures to reduce my household's ecological footprint.

The most popular responses by residents when asked what they liked about living in Valentine were:

- Proximity to lakes/oceans/beaches/bushland/mountains
- · Peaceful and quiet
- Close to amenities, facilities, medical centre and shops
- Natural beauty
- Friendly community

Your Ideas

Respondents contributed over 200 ideas and suggestions on how local residents, groups and businesses, could improve the Valentine environment and community (see Appendix).

We found that many ideas were common amongst respondents, these include:

- Improve footpaths (19)
- Community hall (18)
- Community events / activities (18)
- Education (sustainable living and environment) (12)
- Improve visual appearance of Valentine shops (11)
- Get involved in community organisations (9)
- Community involvement in looking after the environment (Landcare etc) (8)
- Manage graffiti (8)

Implications for the Valentine Sustainable Neighbourhood Project

The results of this survey highlight some important points relevant to the development of a Sustainable Neighbourhood Action Plan for the Valentine neighbourhood.

Values

These values were consistent amongst survey respondents, and participants from other activities.

- Sense of community / village atmosphere
- Natural beauty including bushland, wildlife, the lake and open space
- Proximity to the lake and Green Point
- Local shopping centre and facilities
- Peace and quiet

Issues

In general, the range of issues raised in the survey were consistent with existing input from the community. The survey results confirm the importance of a number of sustainability issues in the community:

- The health of the lake and local bushland (Green Point, Allambie Reserve), in particular weeds
- Footpaths and road safety
- Reducing energy and water use
- Having a community hall
- Having more community events and activities
- Increased community involvement / social responsibility
- Increasing education and awareness about sustainable living and the environment.
- Improving the streetscape at Valentine shops

Actions

The survey results highlight a number of potential neighbourhood actions and give an indication of activities likely to gain popular support from the Valentine community.

These activities include:

- Neighbourhood clean-up
- Home audit of backyard, energy, waste, and water use
- Community events and activities
- Increased involvement in community groups
- Workshops and activities about sustainability and the local environment. Eg: native gardening, waste management, energy use reduction and GreenPower

Appendix:

Detailed results

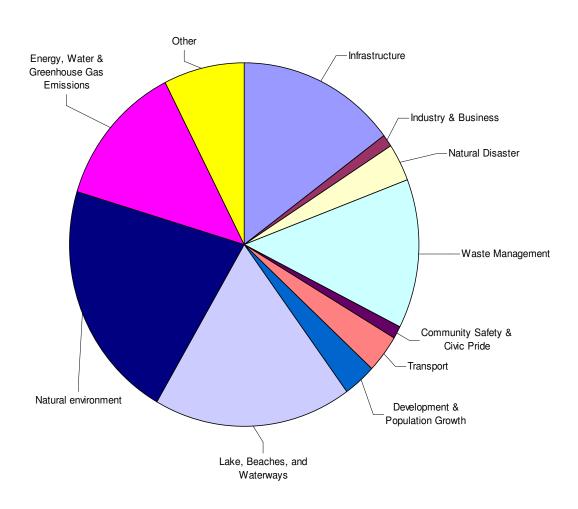
1. Local sustainability issues.

Q1a. What are the three most important environmental issues in your neighbourhood today? (list no more than three)

Respondents were asked to list the three most important environmental issues in the neighbourhood.

In the analysis responses were grouped into eleven categories: Infrastructure, Industry and Business, Natural Disaster, Waste Management, Community Safety and Civic Pride, Transport, Development and Population Growth, Lakes, Beaches and Waterways, Natural Environment, Energy, Water and Greenhouse Gas Emissions, and Other.

Three Most important Environmental Issues in Valentine (by category)

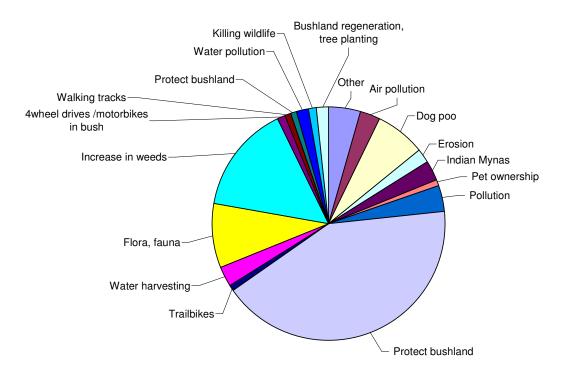


1. Local sustainability Issues. (con't)

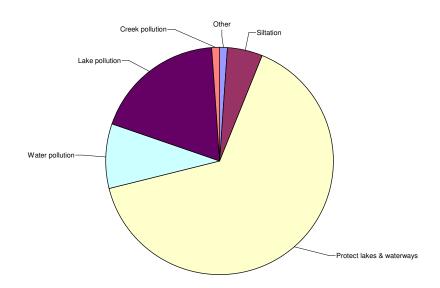
Q1. What are the three most important environmental issues in your neighbourhood today?

The top four categories were: natural environment; lake, beach and waterways; waste management; and energy, water and greenhouse gas emissions.

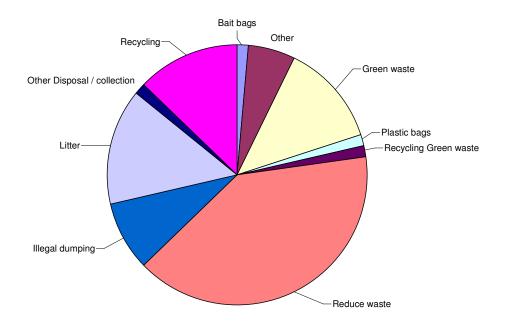
Natural environment



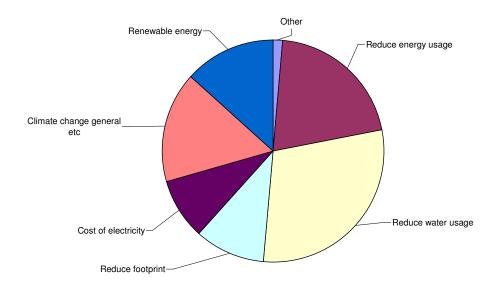
Lake, beach and waterways



Waste management

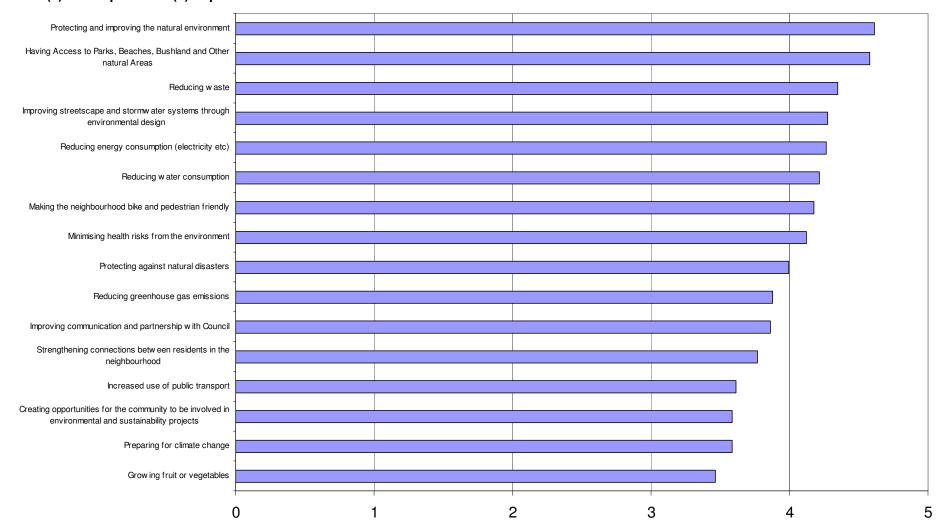


Energy, water and greenhouse gas emissions



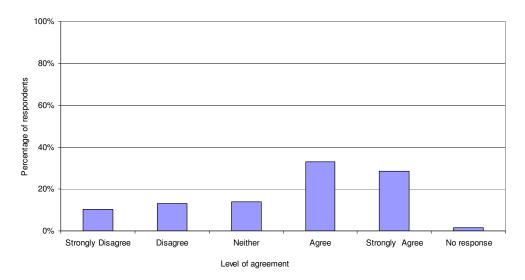
Q1.b Please rate how important the following are to your neighbourhood on a scale of 1-5.

Scale (1) Not important – (5) Important



2. Climate change over the next 20 years.

Q2a. How strongly do you agree, or disagree, that climate change will have a direct impact on your life over the next 20 years.

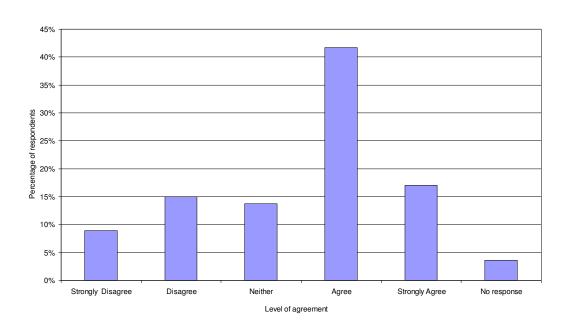


Q2b. If you agree or strongly agree, what do you think will be the MAIN impact?

Responses included:

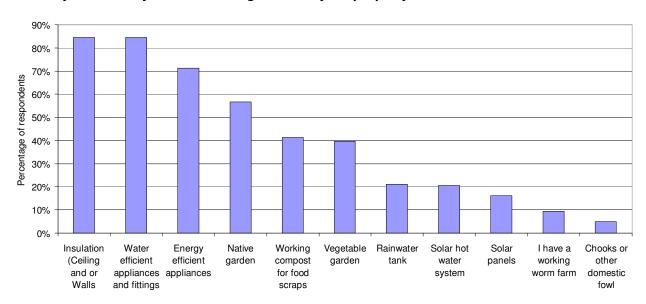
- More extreme weather events
- Rising sea levels
- Increased temperatures
- Increased costs of food and energy
- · Lack of potable water

Q2c. How strongly do you agree, or disagree, the actions of the average person have a large impact on slowing climate change?

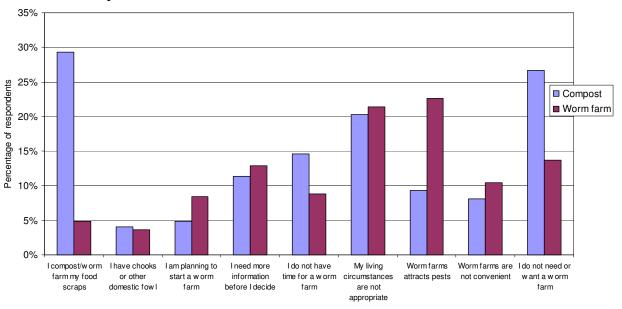


3. Your sustainability choices.

Q3a. Do you have any of the following items on your property?

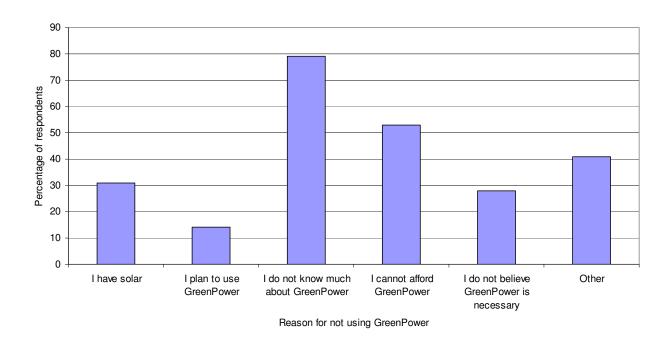


Q3b and 3c. If you do not have a working worm farm/compost food scraps, please indicate why.



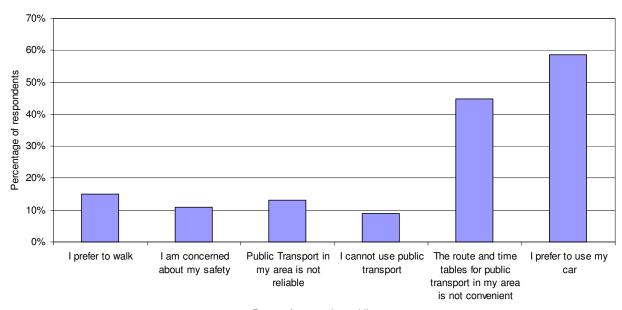
Q3e. If you do not use GreenPower, please indicate why?

Only 11% of respondents use GreenPower (Q 3d)



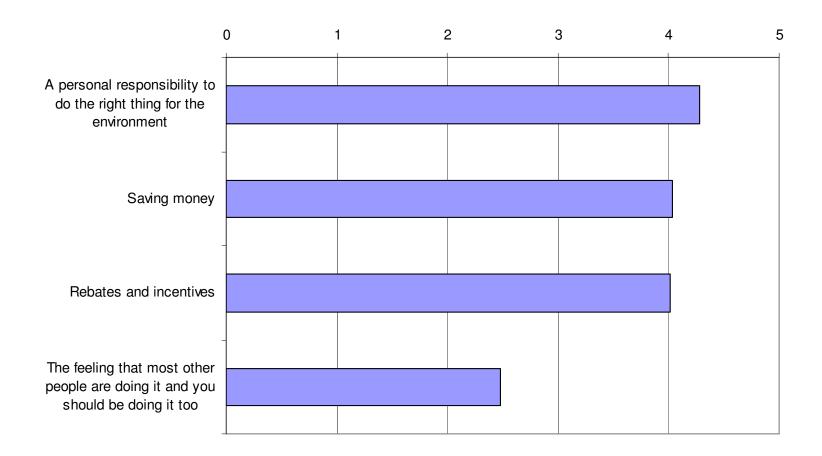
Q3g. If your household never or seldom uses public transport please indicate why?

86% of respondents seldom or never use public transport (Q 3f)



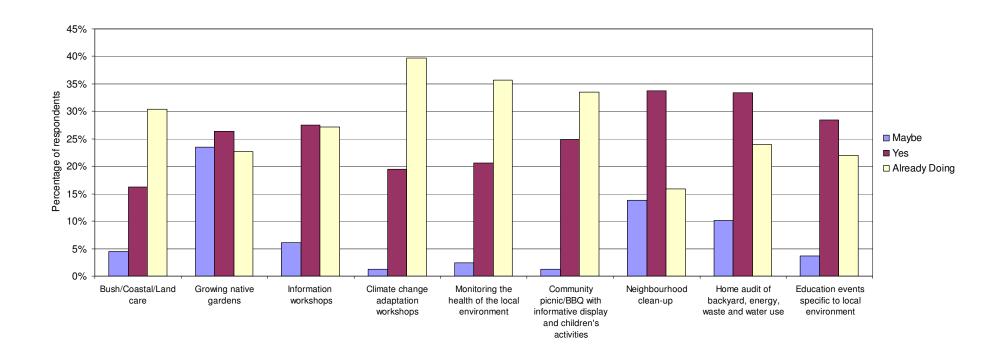
Q3h. What motivates you to improve your environmental behaviour?

Scale (1) Not at all important – (5) important



4. Sustainability actions in Valentine neighbourhood.

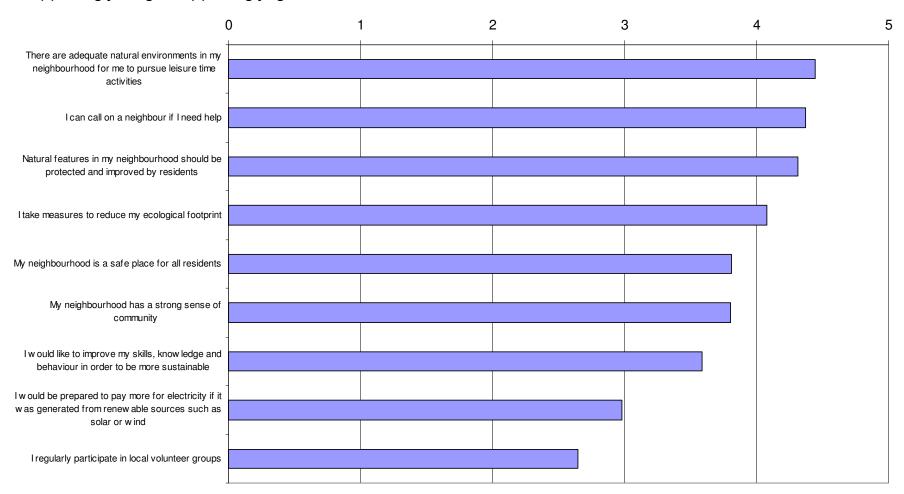
Q4a. Which of the following activities/events would you consider participating in?



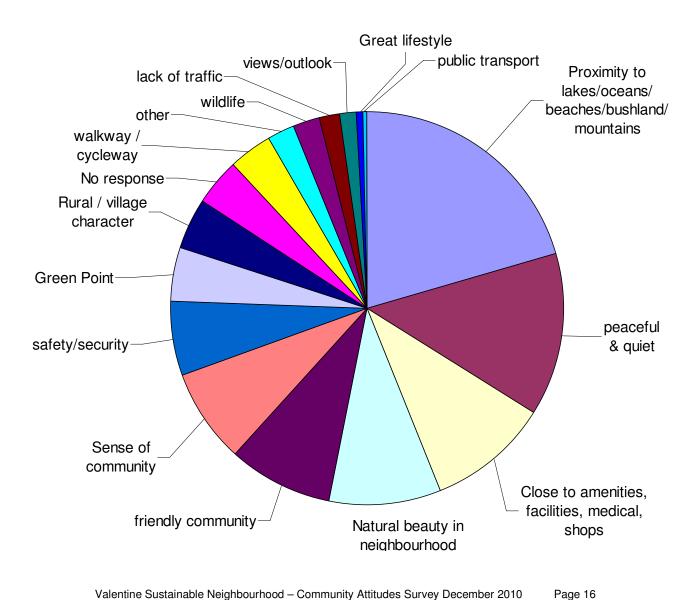
5. About Valentine neighbourhood

Q5a. Please rate your level of agreement with each of the following statements

Scale (1) strongly disagree – (5) strongly agree



Q5b. What do you like most about living in Valentine neighbourhood?



Respondents Suggestions: Your ideas

Q6. Suggestions and ideas by respondents, for how individuals, the people in Valentine neighbourhood and / or business could improve the Valentine environment or community.

Connected and active community

Key ideas:

- Community events / activities (18)
- Community hall (18)
- Get involved in community organisations (9)

Keep the community hall in Valentine and run some of your workshops/information events etc from it. Get a youth centre going to use it Saturday nights (with parents help). Do activities for elderly and mothers with kids in conjunction with the café/coffee shop etc	A hall which can be used by the community. This is a vital piece of infrastructure which if upgraded would reduce the vandalism and graffiti our village currently experiences
Community workshops/events - need to save community hall to host them	Make the community hall available for community events again
Restore or replace the progress association hall	The Valentine community hall
Community hall should be maintained	New progress hall for use by the community
Identify the problems with the Valentine hall, fix it up and recommence the numerous community activities that were held there. Do no allow it to end up in the hands of a developer	Reopen and renovate Valentine community hall so it is accessible to various groups in the community to use
Give our community hall back now!	Community hall for all to use
Redo community hall	More use of village hall as a community place
More involvement in community projects, Having a village hall near the shops would assist in this	Restore the Valentine Progress Association hall as a public owned facility available to the community groups at low cost and commercial groups e.g. dance classes at market rates
Restart the 'Carols by Candlelight' that used to be in the park across from the progress hall	Reopen the village hall
Maybe the area requires a social club for young families to get together as the majority of residents are retirees	I am a single mum it would be lovely to have more community support, Xmas playgroup/party/day time activities
Have more social events at the park, outdoor movies	Fun run/bike run thru the suburb
Community events in small localities, working bees in parks etc	More community events or voluntary opportunities where small children could be present
More community events e.g. picnics and games in parks	Promoting the occasional evening barbecue get together at Allambee Park in the summer/autumn for all ages, Many are lonely and it would be a safe and handy spot to get to
Activities involving the kids (gardening, workshops, rejuvenation projects etc) Get them involved from a young age if you can get the kids parents to come too	Provide bushland that recreational activities can take place in i.e. ride motorbikes/quads etc
Christmas party at the village square	Community events
Green Point ranger walks	Identified nature walks
Bring back Neighbourhood Watch and Safety Houses	Support for Sustainable Neighbourhood project is the way to go

Connected and active community (con't)

Join Valentine Residents Association inc, Install a neighbourhood notice board in Allambee Park	Join a strong residents' association or progress association
By having more community meetings to discuss any problems	Community should work together for sustainable programs in future
Joining in community group activities	Not really - people need to be encouraged to participate and be informed
Through regular participation in well managed volunteer initiatives	
More communication via letters/circulars	Better education in schools
Community generated organic vegetable garden	Community vegetable and herb gardens involving children
More neighbourhood commitment in reporting vandalism and inappropriate behaviour	More respect and community appreciation
Actions that would promote a safe community environment	Help out or check on older neighbours

Waste Management

Key ideas:

- Green waste bins (5)
- More bins (3)

Would like to see green waste bins and food scraps if workable	How about a green waste collection area or a green waste bin for collection monthly
Green waste pickup	I think green waste bins are a great idea.
Love the idea of a 3 rd bin, Collecting recycling bin every week or collecting it weekly and the normal bin fortnightly, Special bins designed for sorting your rubbish inside the home	I want to know that my recycling is being recycled properly, We should have green waste option on alternative weeks
More portable garbage bins around Bennett Park	More garbage bins in the park at Valentine
More bin shelters in the parks e.g. skate park to stop vandals, overfilling, wind blowing rubbish, etc	Keeping at parks and playgrounds clean and free from glass and rubbish
Respect the parks more and clean up the rubbish	More responsible pet owners, less littering
Don't drop litter	Participate and pro active on council clean up days
Through handling their/our waste efficiently	E waste pick up, half not going into landfill. Deposit system on cans and bottles
Mowing of park and particularly the traffic islands which I have to cross to go to the shops and have already tripped on rubbish on these	Council accept unlimited amounts of asbestos from residents at no cost i.e. per 10m ²

Development and Population Growth

Stop the building of so many units	Need for sensible development
Keep building development to a minimum	Avoid over development, preserve current amenities

Sustainable Living Key ideas:

- Education / workshops (6)
- Incentives (4)
- Community garden (2)

Learn more about sustainable living and implement more of the ideas	Workshops, emails, drops of information on topics such as recycling, vegetable growing and worm farms etc
Council education and possible subsidies on plumbing diversions to gardens, via trickle irrigation or similar systems	Information re worm farms/composting (leaflets pros and cons) to all letterboxes would be brilliant.
GreenPower information would also be very helpful. Maintain mobile library with similar information please	More information on solar energy/hot water options and recommendations
Give away days. What is someone else's trash is another's treasure. Fete where people can give away unwanted goods	Localised financial environmental incentives, e.g. water tank assessment, promotion and installation initiative in Valentine, benchmark uptake against other decent suburbs
Encouragement to use solar electricity lightning	Free worm farms given to each family
Group solar / rainwater buying	Being conscientious of our power and water use, waste that we produce from not recycling
Community vegetable and herb gardens involving children	Community generated organic vegetable garden
All start at home with acting on Q3 and make our home friendly	Reduction of water consumption

Transport

Key ideas:

- Manage speeding (8)
- Improve public transport, cycleways and walkways (10)

Put some speed humps on the roads	Speed humps to slow down hoons
Speed humps on Andrew Road to slow hoons	Speed restriction signs to 40 kph
Drive slowly around the neighbourhood	Max speed of 40kph to local streets
Young people drive too quickly on weekend nights, need to be more community minded	Stop speeding vehicles down Dilkerra Avenue
Bike paths	Bike paths and footpaths
Complete cycleway from Warners Bay to Belmont via Eleebana and Green Point to Fernleigh Track	Better cycling access
Continue the path to connect Valentine to Eleebana/Warners Bay walking path	A safe pathway from Valentine to Eleebana would be helpful to improve fitness of residents
Improve transport for elderly and local volunteer networks	Improvement of public transport (buses) timetabling and bus routes to important centres
Improved bus service	Better public transport to the city
Improve traffic around school	Drop off and pick up times at Valentine Primary School is a disaster waiting to happen, at least have no standing on one side for passing traffic to

	get through
We need more parking near shops that is safe	More parking spaces at shopping centre

Infrastructure Key ideas:

- Improve footpaths (19)
- Public toilets (5)
- Walking access along lake (4)

Continue improvement of pathways and walks	Repair of cracked footpaths
More paths as we have to walk on roads and improve street lighting for winter months	We desperately need a footpath in busy Dilkerra Avenue
There is no footpath to the shop and I use a walker and it is very difficult	More footpaths so walkers can get off road and some push prams strollers which is awkward on grassed footpaths
Footpaths seem very necessary	Footpaths
The council could fix the access between Howard Street, Floraville and Regal Way, Valentine to allow walking access for a pram	More footpaths around Valentine
Footpaths are a great way to encourage walking around the neighbourhood	Pavements
Most people have to walk on the road in Dilkerra Avenue due to no pavements otherwise it would suggest that this immediate area is almost perfect	A footpath from one park to the bowling club, Many older people and mums/dads with prams walk on the road and it is very dangerous
We need footpaths in my area	Footpaths
Continue the path to connect Valentine to Eleebana/Warners Bay walking path	Provide pedestrian crossing at Valentine shopping centre to allow elderly residents walking access to the shops
A path across park from units on the left side	Walking access along the Lake
More access to walking along the waterfront	Use the walking trails the council has built around the Lake
Walkways along foreshore extended,	More bush tracks accessible to the public and advertised so locals are informed
When the hall goes we shall need public toilets for Allambee Park	Fix up all the metal toilets in the council area, they are disgusting and have influenced my use of some council areas
Toilet block at Allambee Park	Upgrade toilets at Croudace Bay and more shelters
New public toilet for Valentine relocated to park	
Council needs to upgrade local skate park as lots of our youth use it but it needs a revamp	Street lighting, roadwork, stormwater
Some way of reducing the frequent vandalism of Thomas H. Halton Park	More seats and tables in the area
When will council concrete the rubble square of footpath on the corner of John Street?	In Sydney I often walked along Dee Why beach at night which was very well lit. When I came here 10 years ago I was saddened to find that the lake foreshore was not lit at night or even a portion of the night.

Industry and Business

Key ideas:

• Improve visual appearance of Valentine shops (11)

Improvement in outward appearance of some local shops (especially those serving food)
shops (especially those serving lood)
Refurbish Valentine shops for community pride
and connection
To keep the area outside the shops cleaner and the paths around the shops are very dangerous for
older people and there has been a lot of falls
Valentine shopping centre needs a good overhaul, street/landscaping shops need a facelift and
footpath improving
Improve the Valentine shopping area, as some
shops need improving. More restaurants like Graze will keep people's business local.
Bakery
Addition of fruit and veg shop in shopping centre

Community Safety and Civic Pride Key ideas:

- Manage graffiti (8)
- Manage anti-social behaviour at night (5)

Clean up graffiti	Deterrent for graffiti and vandalism needed
Don't put graffiti on fences and buildings	Dob in a graffiti artist and make them clean it up, Maintain or improve police presence in the area,
Regular removal of graffiti	Catch and punish graffiti artists who regularly vandalise fences and walls
Reduce anti social behaviour through harsher penalties (especially graffiti vandals)	Watch out for kids who graffiti - it is awful how they target the local shops, Maybe we could have people looking at shops and watching for anti social behaviour
The reserve in our area is open to vehicles. If the reserve was closed off it would deter anti social behaviour so that families would be safer in the reserve	Parents need to be more controlling of sons/daughters, not so many 4 wheel drive vehicles used to take children to school, poor methods of parking etc, alcohol consumption on streets at night resulting in vandalism
Get rid of/clamp down severely on the hoons in cars	Reducing hooligan behaviour in laneways and parks
Keep the park free of littering, drinking people	

Protecting and improving our natural environment Key ideas:

- Community involvement in looking after the environment (Landcare etc) (8)
- Education and activities (6)
- Plant more trees (4)

More publicity of local volunteer groups associated with the environment and wildlife. Access to grants to support volunteer groups associated with wildlife (most grants only target environment - not the wildlife that use it)	Get involved in the Landcare / tree planting program
Bushland neighbours to look after their own little patch of bush (incentives)	If more people became involved in Landcare the bitou bush and lantana could be cleared from Green Point and Allambie Reserve more quickly
To develop a balance between access to the environment and given the community a sense of ownership and duty of care for the environment	Encourage people to plant some street trees and shade more greenery on their properties
More bush regeneration in areas infested with weeds	It would be great if more people got involved in Landcare, both in Green Point and Allambee Gardens
Educate people about recognising and removing weeds such as bitou, asparagus fern and lantana and not encouraging problem birds such as the Indian Myna	Community awareness about the impact of dumping green garden waste into adjacent native bushland
Identified nature walks	Green Point ranger walks
Greater awareness might increase community contribution to our local environment	Provide bushland that recreational activities can take place in i.e. ride motorbikes/quads etc
More trees planted in parks and streets	Plant more trees
Plant some more trees	Street tree planting program
The Federal and State Governments should agree to allow Local Government to use dole recipients of more than 6 months standing on specific beautification and environment improvement programs	Slash the undergrowth in the southern area of Valentine Public School and adjoining reserve thereby giving families the opportunity to walk to the school. Permit greater natural tree trimming to reduce risk to private property
By keeping the lake and foreshore clean, reducing silt run off into the lake. Dredge channel to allow fresh water into lake	Reduce salt and debris entering lake
Cleaning of lake front and parks	People need to think about the future of the planet as a whole not just what is good for humans but also considering the native flora and fauna

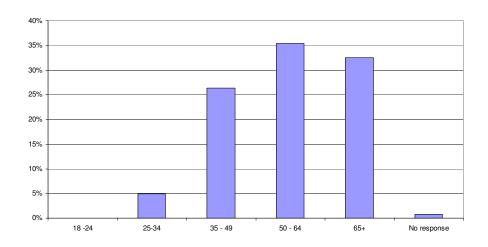
Other Key ideas:

- It's already wonderful (3)
- Responsible pet ownership (3)
- Bushfire management (3)
- Dinghy Management (3)
- Dogs in Green Point (2)

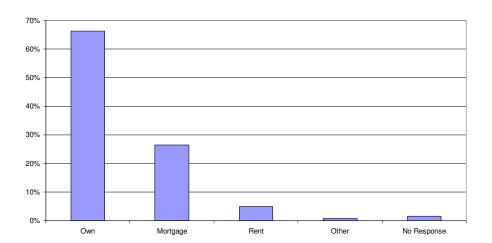
Get rid of the barking dogs and dog dung	Greater control by dog owners of their dogs
Bring back dog waste dispensers and bags for people for littering and not picking up after their dogs	Allow dogs to walk on Green Point
Valentine has a strong dog ownership and leash free times at Bennet Park would be good. Dog access through the Green Point track - many people would use this if they could walk their dog on lead, those who walk their dogs are discriminated against and are not allowed access	Bushfire mustering points for residents near reserves
Households could keep the fire trails behind their property reasonably clear and tidy	Have the fire brigade to a risk assessment around the bush reserve and how this affects houses, residents and businesses, Have an escape plan in the event of a bush fire
Don't change anything it's fine just how it is	I like it as it is
It's already wonderful. We look after each other, care about our area and if the rest of the world copied us it would be perfect	That people continue to care and share those things that make a community and that Valentine remains a domestic community not affected by big business
Take the dinghys out of our parks so that people can sit under the trees - they should be storing them at home or paying for racks in dedicated areas, not just dumping them wherever they want	Find alternative method of storage for dinghies which are currently stored around the base of trees (taking up shaded areas which could be used by picnickers) particularly at the park near Valentine Bowling Club
Boat owners should not be allowed to chain dinghies etc to trees on lakeside parks. Council should have these removed.	Although difficult for council but lane at bottom of street provides a quick and easy getaway for hoodlums and troublemakers, that try to damage letter boxes, plants and cars when they party
Most people who live in this neighbourhood earn a decent wage and are more likely to support environmental improvements financially (e.g. electricity from renewable sources) rather than hands on	I think that our neighbourhood is environmentally able and concerned e.g. taking care that run off intro drain is clear of rubbish, soil etc
Ban the relentless letterbox drops and local papers thrown onto people's property	Financial support to carers of native animals and educate people how important they are to protect
Stop using "Old Valentine" and refer to the area as Valentine Village to promote village atmosphere	Please could Council dump loads of sand (from Redhead sand hills) to shore locations around the lake to provide for safe, clean swimming areas for kids and parents

Respondent Demographics

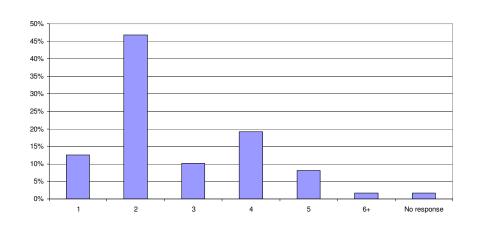
Q7a. Age Group



Q7b. Tenancy Type



Q7c. Number of people in household



Q7d. Length of time residing in Valentine neighbourhood

