

Draft Community Engagement Strategy Pre-exhibition Consultation Report

CONTENTS

1. BACKGROUND	2
2. CONSULTATION SUMMARY	2
2.1 Community Survey Results	2
Question 1: How do you access information regarding Council, including opportunities to have your say?	3
Question 2: How else would you like to access information regarding Council?	4
Question 3: What types of Council decisions and processes would you consider participating in?	7
Question 4: What can we do to improve the way we involve the community in our decision making?	11
Question 5: How would you like to participate in Council's decision making?	16
Question 6: How likely are you to participate in the following engagement methods?	17
Question 7: What is your interest in this survey? Please select all that apply	19
Question 8: What suburb do you live in?	20
Question 9: What is your gender?	20
Question 10: What is your age?	21
Question 11: Are you of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin?	21
Question 12: Do you need help in your day to day life due to disability?	22
Question 13: Do you speak a language other than English at home??	22
2.2 Youth Poll Results	23
Question: Do you want a say on	23
2.3 Staff Survey Results	24
Question: What would help you to engage with our community?	24

1. BACKGROUND

We're developing a Community Engagement Strategy and Action Plan to ensure our community can contribute to our decision making processes.

The Strategy will outline Council's commitment and approach to community engagement, set a strategic direction and provide increased opportunities for genuine involvement in our decision making.

It will support our staff in undertaking effective community engagement so we can deliver strategies, services, projects and programs that help to build a community we are proud of.

Community and staff consultation was undertaken in April and May 2020 during the development of the draft Strategy to ensure it responds to their needs and expectations.

2. CONSULTATION SUMMARY

The engagement process included an online survey, discussion panels, a Facebook poll, Instagram stories, and one-on-one conversations. Due to COVID-19 and the social distancing requirements, no face to face engagement activities could be undertaken.

The engagement process was promoted via Council's website, social media, emails, phone calls and a media release. We also asked our staff what support they needed to improve engagement with our community.

Over 200 people participated in the engagement activities. We heard that improving our community engagement is really important. Our community wants us to:

- engage early, before decisions are made
- be honest and transparent with information
- actively listen and engage in dialogue
- be responsive to the community's views and allow these views to influence decisions.

Our youth have shown they want to be involved in Council matters, but we need to adapt our approach and methods of engaging with them.

Our staff recognise the need to improve the way Council engages with thour community and are seeking support to do so.

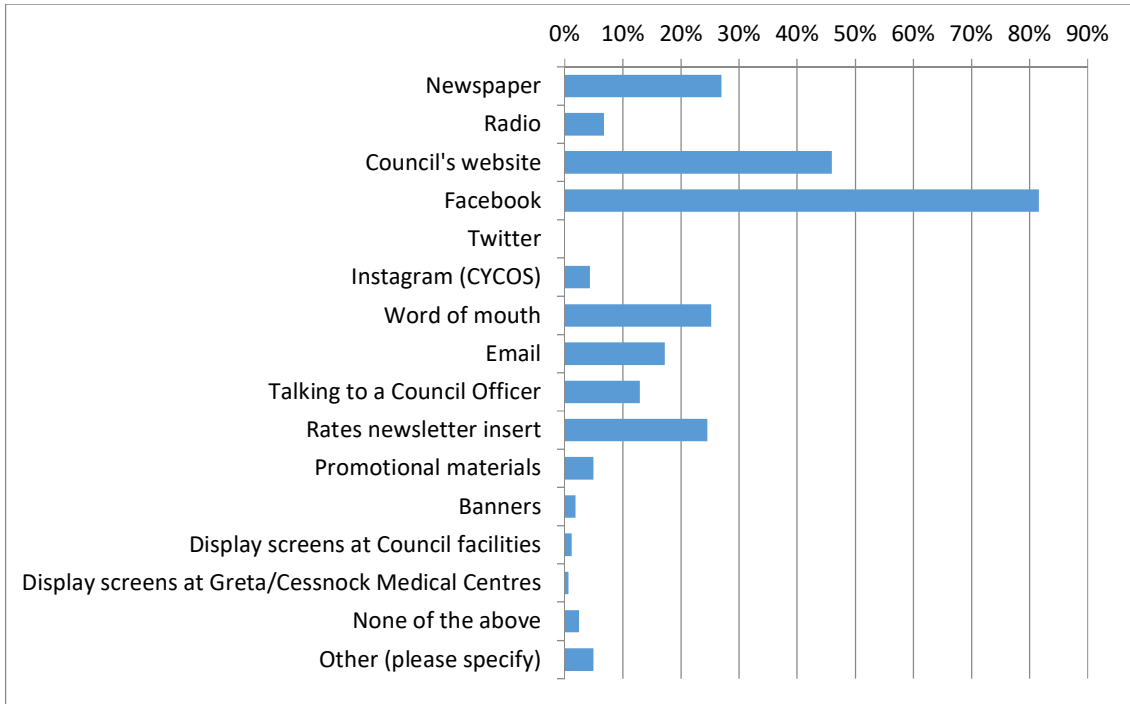
2.1 COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

We asked our community:

1. How to best reach our community with information
2. What issues our community want to be involved in
3. How we can improve the way we engage
4. How our community wants to participate

163 responses to the survey were received.

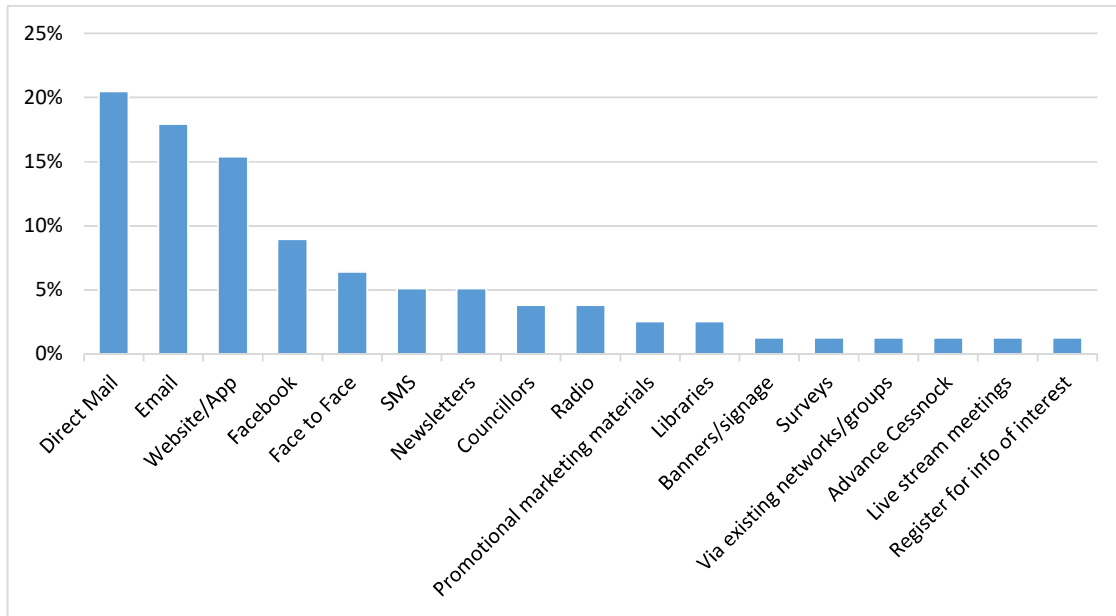
Question 1: How do you access information regarding Council, including opportunities to have your say?



Verbatim responses to 'Other (please specify)':

Library for details after notice in Cessnock Advertiser
Used to be The Advertiser when that used to be our local paper. - sadly not any more.
A phone app
People outside of cessnock
Councillors Facebook pages
subscribe to planning alerts from alternate sources .
Advance Cessnock City business updates
Councillor Olsen's Facebook page

Question 2: How else would you like to access information regarding Council?



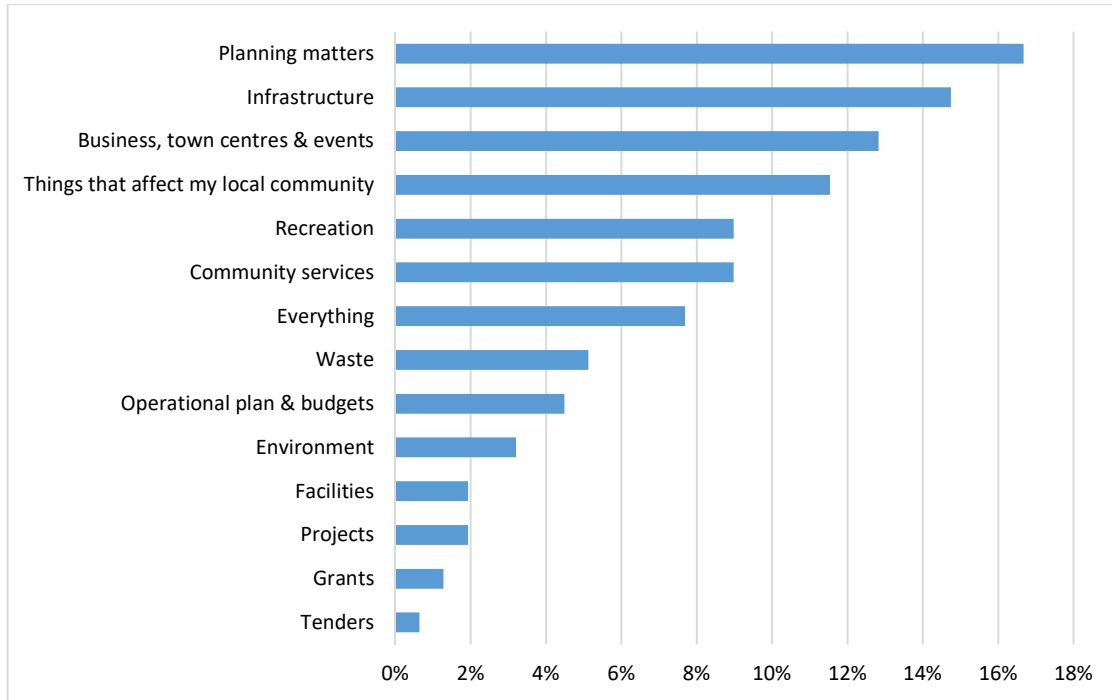
Verbatim responses:

I would like to be able to register to be notified of developments in my geographical area and also in my areas of interest eg waste and resource recovery, illegal dumping etc.
Letterbox drop
I'll check out FB, it hasn't occurred to me before.
email newsletter
NOTICES at LIBRARY as well as access to drafts and outcomes
A council website where concerns are addressed.
more announcements on radio
Regular newsletters received in the mail
Local paper. Advertiser is not delivered into new estate at Kitchener.
By email
E mail text Messages
Newsletters a little more regularly.
Online or in person
Phone app
Council to place info in Mangrove Mtn Community News
Live stream meetings like what's been done during Covid closures, this was fantastic! And should have been offered a lot earlier. I'd even go as far as saying a live Q&A on Facebook. CCC also need to update their outdated website - it's not mobile friendly, and is very difficult to navigate even on a PC. It's archaic! In comparison to other councils designs .. Gosford Central Coast for instance - take a lead from that.

I seem to access enough using the above, especially Facebook and Council Website
Email, postal
Monthly mailout
Letter box delivery
None, I find your info that comes through Facebook very informative. That's my favorite way to keep up to date with everything going on.
Email
more accessible website
A website which was easier to negotiate than the one you have now
Face to face one on one meetings with councillors to make them more accessible and accountable
PR through local organizations eg. Rotary, VIEW, etc
More surveys with options via facebook
Text messages on current issues with links to website for more information
Direct mail or email
Need more banners and signs for community events. I often do not know something is on till I hear the fireworks or someone outside of cessnock tells me. Signs as you drive through Kearsley would be good! Or on the bend into cessnock after the railway crossing
Email and contact via our elected councillors. That's what they were elected for, to represent us.
Emails
Facebook
Unsure
when rates notices are distributed or for eg letters re weed management - placing important training events /workshops being held locally would be useful - cordinating with LLS even .
Email
A letter sent via mail, due to my disability, this is the best way to communicate with me.
No Newspapers (Local) anymore..Flyers in Letterbox Monthly
Councils should be able to tell the community what is going on
N/A
x
Mail
Email.
Flyers

Regular community meetings with councillors
Website
Mail
Don't know
Letter drop
At the library
Though the advance Cessnock business updates. Facebook and direct to my inbox. They are great. Keep me in the loop.
A community News letter
Information should be emailed out
Would like DA applications added to Facebook.
The Grape Vine
Everybody in Cessnock knows what's going on at any given time
.
Website
Dunno
Text and email
SMS
Email
Regular mail outs
Your website needs to be better
Not sure
Direct mail
Forums. But CCC need to listen not just conduct them as a token gesture the community is not stupid.
There needs to be more communication. These methods are fine but I see more communication from city councillors than I do from council.
Letters email radio news
I think you've covered it
Radio. On person.
Reader friendly, easy to navigate website.
NA

Question 3: What types of Council decisions and processes would you consider participating in?



Verbatim responses:

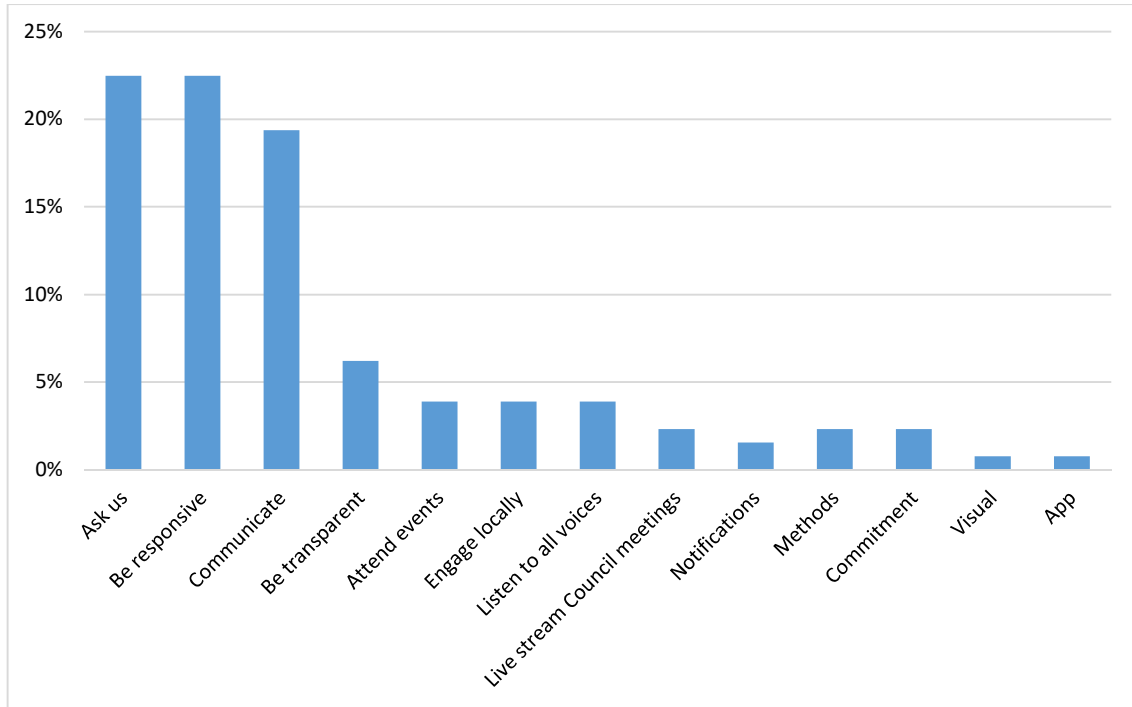
Developing plans and strategies ie implenting longer term improvements. Also major developments/rezoning in my geographical area.
Expenditure and planning decisions on community facilities
Homeless services
Development, renewables planning, conservation/ natural asset management
Rstes, waste management, fund spending priorities
Development
Bike paths and trails. Dumping. Public spaces
Environmental and cultural development. Healthy family strategies.
Environmental, social and development proposals public and private
Having access to risk assessments and other documents regarding ludicrous decision making that is currently occurring. E.G. The cooper street fiasco. The filling of water filled potholes after rain. The decision to close the waste management faculty due to social distancing was an absolute farce.
Community, young people, shared spaces
housing, roads, rubbish & recycling
Important ones
Being part of a main street activation program

Any
most things to do with services / access for our community
Estate planning. I live in Huntlee and it is a great community however your council has allowed too many dual occupancies and some have one garage and the properties often have three to four cars causing problems on the streets. I have photos if you would like to discuss this issue
Anything.
Planning
Events
Tourism
Improving Kurri and Weston areas
Planning and community issues
-ways that service clubs can be more involved in helping the community without getting caught up in all the red tape & bureaucracy that usually goes with projects involving government .
Infrastructure I.e. roads, community engagement and access for people with disabilities
DAs, Business decisions
All decisions
Opinions regarding developments in public areas
Environment and local services
Those that directly affect me.
Planning, spending money, council ideas on the city centre
All of them
Planning and infrastructure
Beautification
Community engagement / events
Town planninh
CBD infrastructure and building of public facilities
Everything
Anything that I feel connected to. Such as suitability.
Anything I can do advocate for greater funding to complete local projects, particularly upgrading local parks and footpaths/cycle ways.
Infrastructure, services and expenditure
All
Community wellbeing events

Any that effect our community.
Prioritising works/impacts to the community, ability to speedily report local issues as well
Changes to roadscape, park development, parking locations, recycling and waste centre
Land use changes, development, public works, community services, economic development
Events, decisions about funding more grants. Projects over 5million
You never listen to the community, you appear to have your own agenda and do these surveys to make it look as if you are listening.
Ones that effects us
Council decisions based on local sporting facilities and playgrounds.
Community facilities
Tenders for major works
Sporting and recreation facilities - parks, pool, playgrounds, sporting fields. Services that affect ratepayers - waste collection, dump.
Telling them to continuously stop spending on excessively priced strategic plans and then telling community they don't have funds to engage and or complete projects that are essential for improving the state of our community and in turn residents wellbeing
Planning . Community Services. Parks & Sporting areas , Library services & events, Environmental awareness, Recycling & Rubbish , Promotion of our unique flora & fauna - esp threatened species , Disseminating info on topics to wider networks. Protecting our water catchment & increasing education on its intrinsic value & aquatic species .
Local community facilities
Parks gardens and street scapes
Access and road works
Civil Works & Recreation Information before you Act
Parks and pool
N/A
Development applications, decisions about community spaces and events. Would have been good to have a tick box with options here as most people wouldn't know what is available to be involved in.
The use of The Performing Arts Centre.As a trained pianist and AMEB in Musicianship I'd like to be involved in using the centre to hold daily workshops for all musical artists.
Rate payments,road improvements.
Planning
Roads, beautification of our city, facilities for kids in villages
Activities/ events & projects for positive engagement with young people.
Footpaths, parks - community upgrades.
None

Town improvement; social and community support
Allocation of where road works are carried out.
Stuff impacting businesses. I think businesses are often overlooked.
Road upgrades, community grants, council waste facilities
example: the tar rolled gutters in my street blocked the house drain pipes?
Where funds are allocated. Infrastructure needs of the community and new subdivision applications.
Not interested
Council is just grandstanding
They'll do what they want
Roads, parks, residential developments
All to do with our community
Road infrastructure - discussion on rangers duties
Local area development, local roads and policies
Suburb planning matters
Pretty much any of them. Specifically I think the community should have more involvement in which projects are undertaken each year.
Any decisions and processes that are likely to affect my community
One that affect the community
Ideas on making the place better
Any really.
Items that are in the best interest of the community.
Children & youth services
Education
Aboriginal affairs.
Youth
I should be involved in any decision that affects me... ie, you should have contacted me before closing the tip
Roads, safety, shops
Silly question
Budget. Public planning.
All
mostly anything
any on offer

Question 4: What can we do to improve the way we involve the community in our decision making?



Verbatim responses:

Council could post about opportunities to get involved on local community noticeboards, which thousands of local people see. They could ask people/groups to register to be kept informed on certain areas or topics.
Tell us what is happening
Inform well in advance of upcoming meetings/ agendas, provide clear accessible feedback
Quarterly community meetings in regional areas
Set up stalls in the main shopping cbd areas - information booths with technology and people there to chat, refer, and advise.
Information to community groups, local newspaper/s, Information through community groups, utilizing the Cessnock Library for information sessions advertised at the Cessnock Library with information sessions there and advertised there. More public forums advertised where ever possible including Library. Not everyone has, or likes computer communication, especially older members of the Cessnock who need person to person communication. Public notice boards.
Realise that's it not an engineer or a committee's money they are playing with it is the rate payers, and to research projects with that in mind.
More innovative ways to engage
more information on road closures
Actually listen to the community. And show that you are by doing what the community wants.

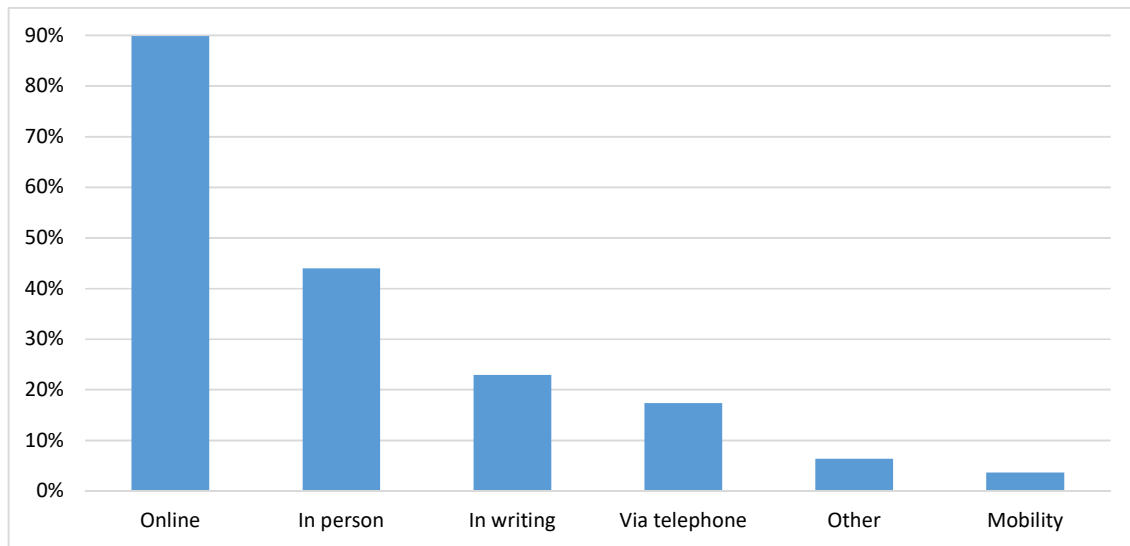
I think you already do a great job consulting with the community. I guess listen to the quiet voices as well as the loud ones is always a good thing...give quieter people more of a voice somehow.We have an overbearing leader in our community who does not necessarily reflect the views of the people in our main street.
Have a good cross section of the community participating in the decision making process
get more info out there, which in itself is the difficult thing as no one method will get to everyone and people need to see hear things a few times before they act or react to it
Send out information sheets before works are approved to gain the community's opinion.
Online or local paper.
Listening to the community and making them part of the decisions taken
Be more open to everyone
Roadshows, public displays
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - provide assistance with grant application preparation. - better explanation of why seemingly lower priority works get done while more obviously higher priority jobs fall off the table. - better explanation of the implementation restrictions faced by Council due to higher level "rules & standards" which often frustrate common-sense solutions (eg not being able to have a pedestrian-friendly zone in Cooper St simply because it happens to be a bus route)
Doing surveys is a great way. Polls.. regular emails
Get into the community personally. Take part in community events, be visible and approachable
Polls and surveys.
Speak to me directly.
Live streaming of council meetings allowing questions from the general public
Giving them an easy way to view upcoming council events Via an app, live streaming of meetings, interactive surveys
Bucketty is totally out of Councils radar and we receive no services. When we have approached we get little response
Hold local briefings so people can be informed and give you feedback; allow for submissions from the community. You do some of this now.
Make sure everyone is informed that pay rates
Ask the community to participate in a poll before making any decisions. Give the public every opportunity to agree/disagree before major works are carried out. Ask them for their input.
Have a majority of rate payers who agree on the best outcome , rather than spend thousands on Infrastructure that is inadequate and not needed.
Anything - I don't think there is any community engagement?

Surveys like this 1
Listen to our concerns not the \$\$
Use quick easy to use surveys such as this one
Let us know what we can do to help
Be transparent and freely exchange information. Maybe via local social media pages
Actually do something rather than just keep asking for opinions that nothing happens with.... concert traffic is one simple thing, the disgusting state of local roads.... should pay for residents tyres or suspension repairs
All council staff need to be seen to be committed to the welfare and well being of the Cessnock community
Listen to all sides, and be flexible to other options. Not coming to the table with preconceived ideas that dont reflect the communities view point.
Increased transparency into the decision-making process, success measures, timeframes, funding, and a view of what's happening now/next
Listen to them
Advertise. More virtual walk through or diagraphs
Actually listen to us. Perhaps start with potholes and remembering that the LGA exists outside of Cessnock itself
Listen to the community first and then we would not be condemning the second rate work being performed and wasting money.
Putting a link to the council agenda on Facebook when it is released, so residents can be informed of what's to be discussed at the following meeting.
Seek more community feedback. What does the community really need or want?
I think the way the council communicated the Cooper Street project was excellent however the execution and final product is an absolute disgrace and I believe it has made the traffic situation even worse than before and the time it took the project to be completed was unsatisfactory especially to the business owners on Cooper Street. The Bridges Hill Park in Cessnock project is another example of unsatisfactory time to complete a project, whilst this project the result is much better than the Cooper Street project its planning is questionable as the park has not facilities I understand an amenities building is in the next stage, it is ashame that it was not considered important enough to be included in stage one.
surveys such as these
Looking forward to eServices with linked account to be able to register matters would like notification on.
Actually put their points and requests into action instead of collating information and stashing them away with all your unactioned strategic plans!
Return phone calls & follow through on promises to respond. Apparently I am not alone with this experience when dealing with Council . Having said that Id just like to add - every female reception & admin staffer Ive dealt with has followed up promptly & professionally . The practice of staff responsible for important projects taking holidays or leave during

critical stakeholder input periods -making it impossible to discuss during vital time frames - is terrible practice.
Education on budgets and how money is distributed and allocated
Insure that all rate payers and community have been notified. Public meeting may be a good way.
Make Plans known early before Commencing...
You can listen to them
Listen to their concerns and if it is not feasible to create a result they are happy with, provide the reasons why. Be transparent in Council decision making.
Notify them of opportunities to be involved and let them know what types of things they could be involved in.
I've had a personal arrangement in past years with CPAC managers? that's allowed me to use thier piano.Ive requested contact previously but been unsuccessful.Im not sure how this could be improved
Make better discussions.Talk to the rate payer.Dont waste our rate money.Fix our roads.
Ask the people want they want for the town
Asking each community that make up the Cessnock LGA what is needed in their communities. This could be achieved through flyers, community meetings-possibly at their local hall or school, social media
Mail our information, post links on Facebook, make information easily accessible.
Ensuring if councillors are reporting incorrectly or their narrative is all about them like clr [EDIT: removed for privacy reasons] that he tells the full story and truth not his truth
Get schools involved.
actually listen to them ALL
Stop doing deals with developers before getting residents feed back and take notice of their opinions
Survey links and anonymous questionnaires.
More advertisement and surveys for local residents to complete
Consider the community needs instead of a few minority groups and the financial gain of council members.
online surveys - Need to reach into the younger gernerations 20 to 40 yr old especially
There doesn't seem to be any involvement except these surveys and we never see a result or any improvement.
Get decent councilors
Get rid of the Labor Councilors
Listen to the home owners and residents over the developers
Be more honest

Ask us for more input
Engagement
Not fob anything off when rate payers bring up a concern, have staff understand the policies, hire more staff, the area is growing
More online surveys and make attending meetings and speaking easier.
less reliance on tech to communicate to brand community. Mail outs and traditional media
Increased consultations
listen to what we want and need
Actually listen and act on what the.
Community are saying or asking for, not just doing what you think we want
Listen to the community I mean really listen and not have a decision made before the forum because that is the political line.
Actually communicate with the community.
The cooper st debacle was horrifying. No-one knew what was happening, changed happened overnight with no notification and it was possibly the most impractical/wasted opportunity project undertaken in this LGA for a very long time.
Talk to the young disadvantaged young people in your lga
Asking people, rather than giving less than 24 hours notice that the tip was being closed
Listening to when we have a say
Already answered
Take note of people's comments on social media and actually take their thoughts on board
The problem council has is you guys dont communicate with the community on Facebook when you make posts. You also dont do what people ask and want.... Listen to the rate payers needs
actually care about your community and take on board their opinions this will make more people want to be involved
Continue to live stream council meetings

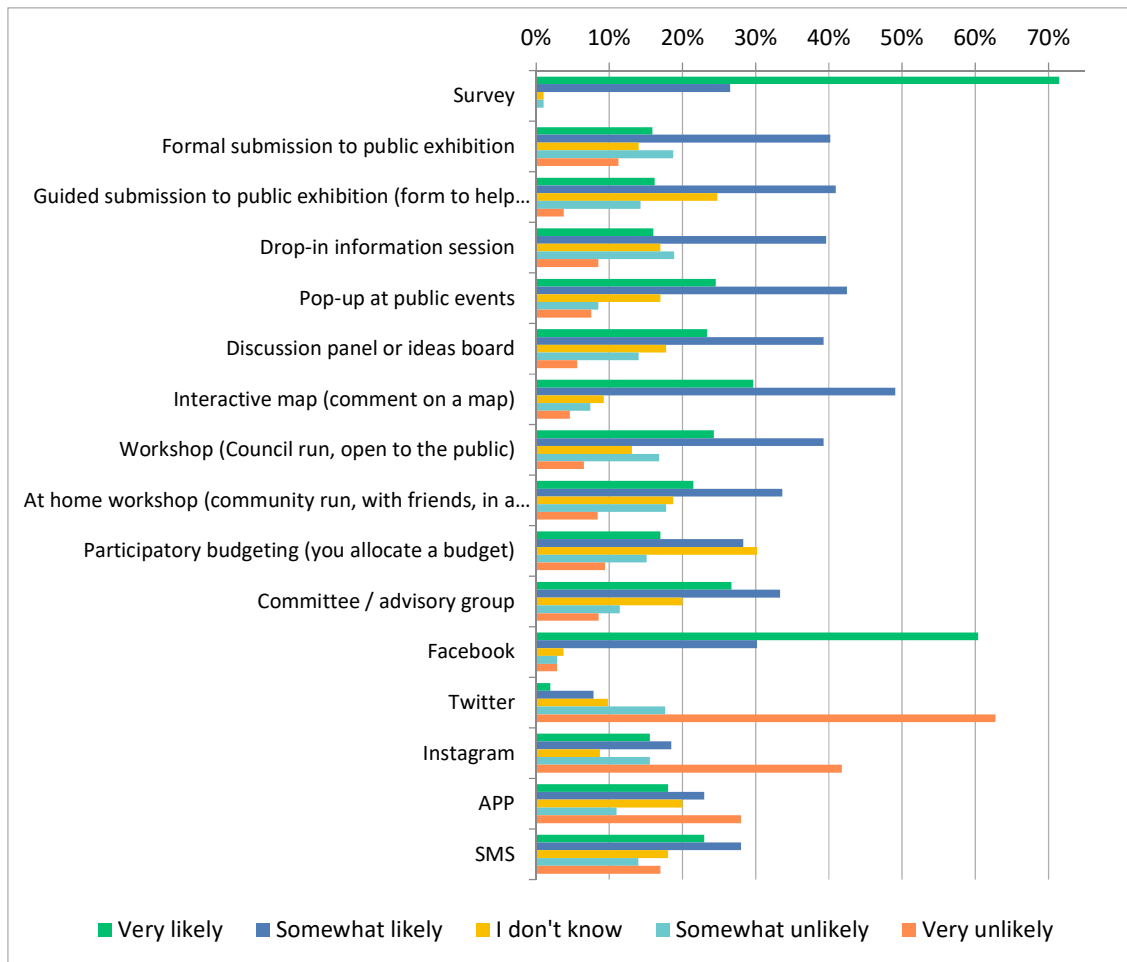
Question 5: How would you like to participate in Council's decision making?



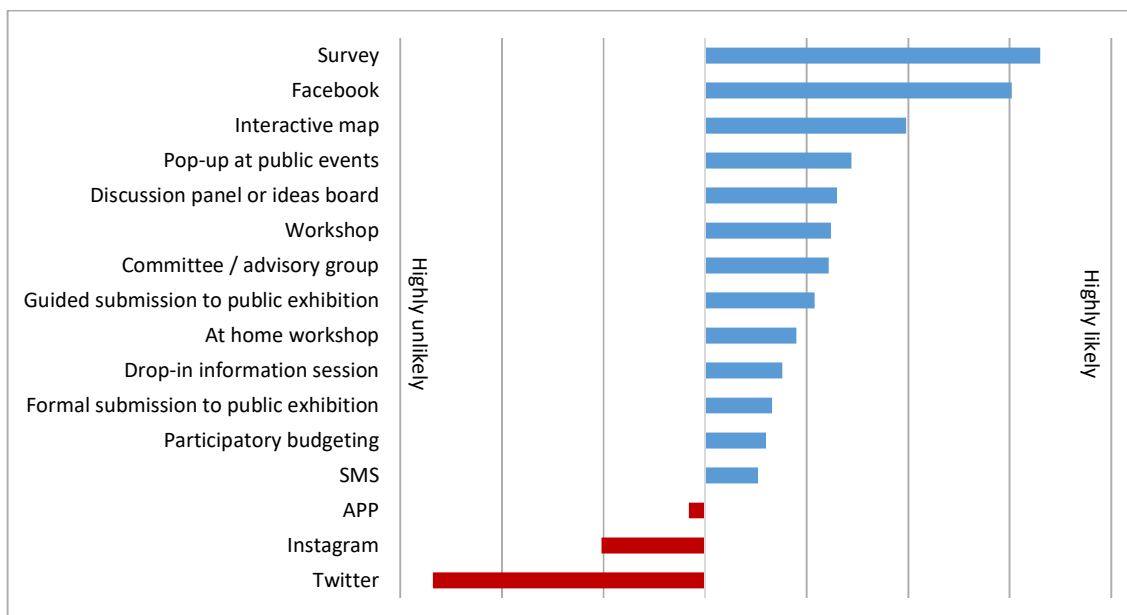
Verbatim responses to 'Other (please specify)':

any way that doesn't involve a computer
Phone app
Survey/voting for the community
contribute photographs on subjects where applicable,. Create & Promote small gatherings or groups to network- meeting online even in social media groups combining interests input & ideas contributing & having recorded area specific input . (ps what does the 'mobility' category entail .
It would depend on the level of involvement. Dumb question
By drone
Facebook, if you actually respond

Question 6: How likely are you to participate in the following engagement methods?



Using a weighted average makes it clearer which methods our community are most likely to participate in.



The verbatim responses to 'Other (please specify)' are:

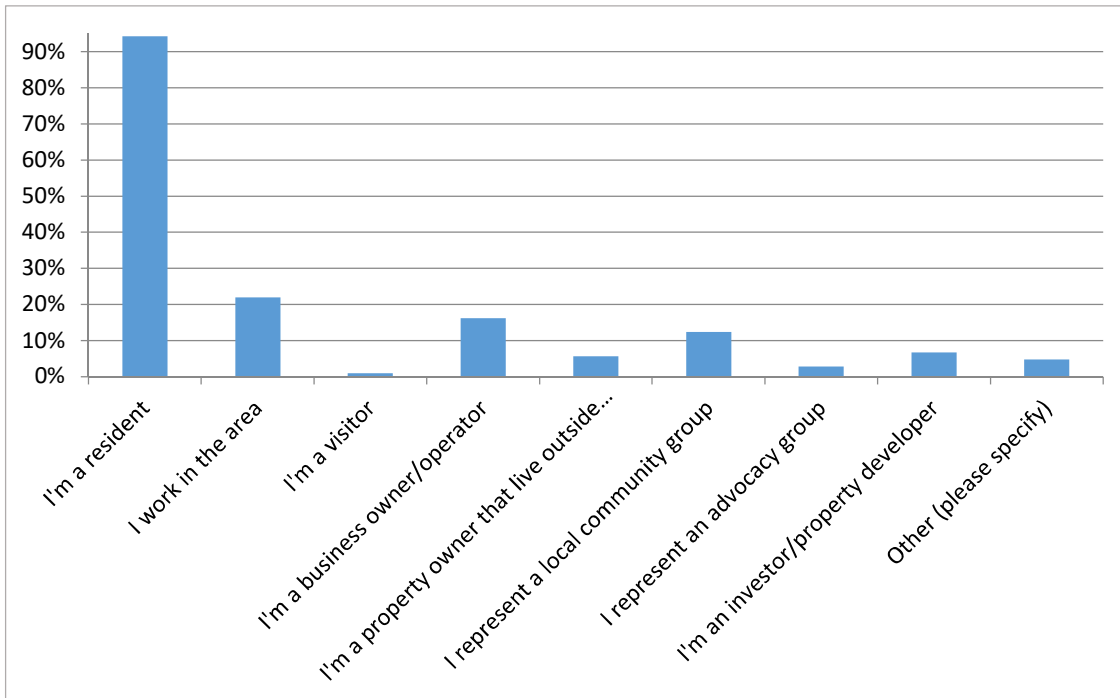
Young children make in-person participation almost impossible

Library workshops/information sessions

The issue is Bucketty is forgotten re Cessnock Council. When residents ring we get responses like ' don't go that far for holiday or that's the end of the world' or as I got 'we hardly go out there' when I raised a road issue. No wonder Council has such a negative image

I think social distancing will be here to stay in many forms -so a need to prioritise & reconfigure how this can be best adopted will be wise . Please also be mindful that in order to have true broad community input & involvement aspects like failed reliable internet and or even phone & mobile services are very real hurdles for many in rural areas . The recent experience regarding trying to access planning application documents on line - indicated how poorly this is - in fact technical issue within council re not placing important documents to be viewed compounded this issue . Disadvantaging many community members genuinely seeking to comment & participate . Additionally the standard claim that the public could visit council or library to view these documents remained in the council claims -despite the Council chambers & libraries being closed due to covid 19. Such oversights indicate to many almost a indifference or disregard to the perspective and hurdles many ratepayers & community members face when they do make genuine efforts to engage . Even providing said documents on line (for those fortunate enough to have reliable internet & just a reasonable speed . Is rather pointless when the reports maps & key information contained cannot be enlarged to view without the print becoming so distorted that its impossible to interpret what it states. I challenge the senior staff to take a perspective from community relying on these documents - particularly when unable to reach the staff person responsible . unable to view in person at c;osed council facilities , suffer from poor intermittent internet service & to make matters worse - in this recent case - documents had failed to be uploaded during the public comment phase & correspondence notifying interested parties re extension of deadline alterations were not sent to many (if any) as apparently assured. . - this was a terrible experience and inho a real failure to genuinely involve community input.

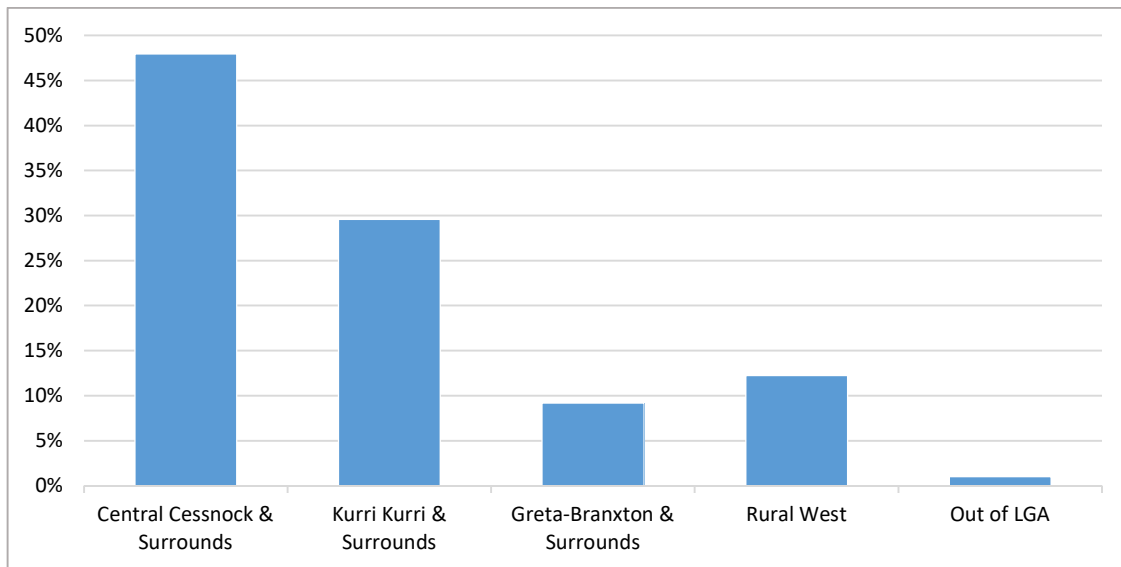
Question 7: What is your interest in this survey? Please select all that apply



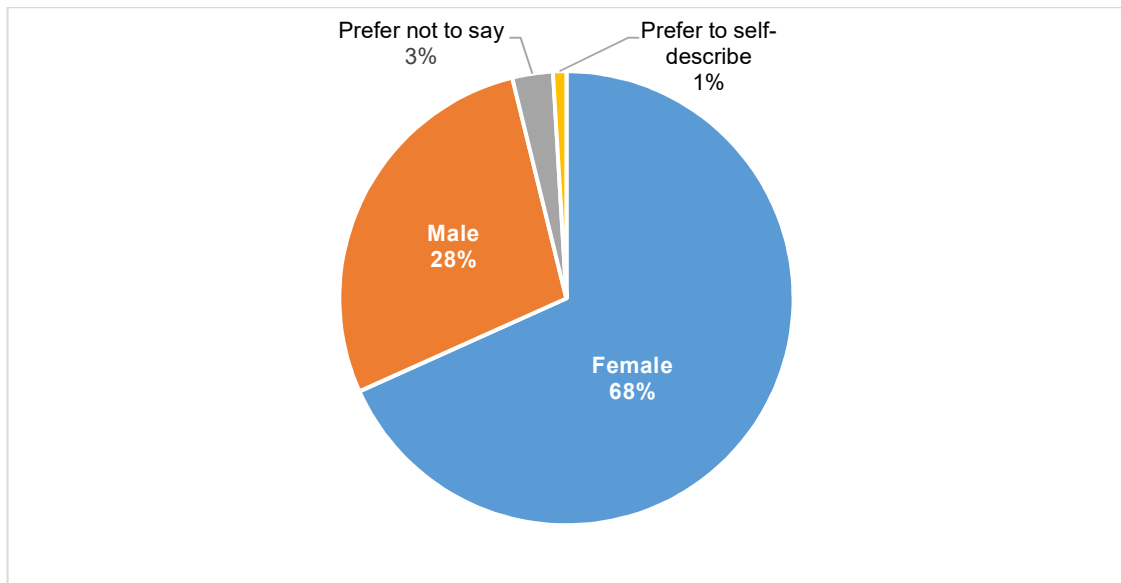
The verbatim responses to 'Other (please specify)' are:

member of Lions Club
Council employee
Expatriot
i have long standing interest in environmental attributes of the region. links to heritage & history and longstanding networks & knowledge in community development children adolescent aged & disabled .
My interest lay with having a location to facilitate musical artists, young and olds, performance interest

Question 8: What suburb do you live in?

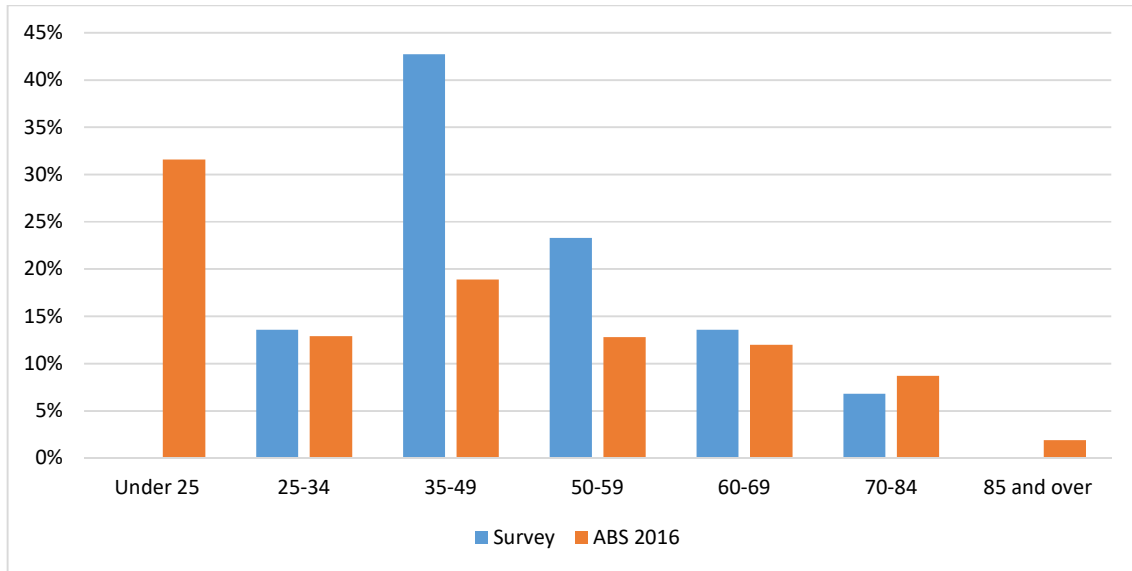


Question 9: What is your gender?

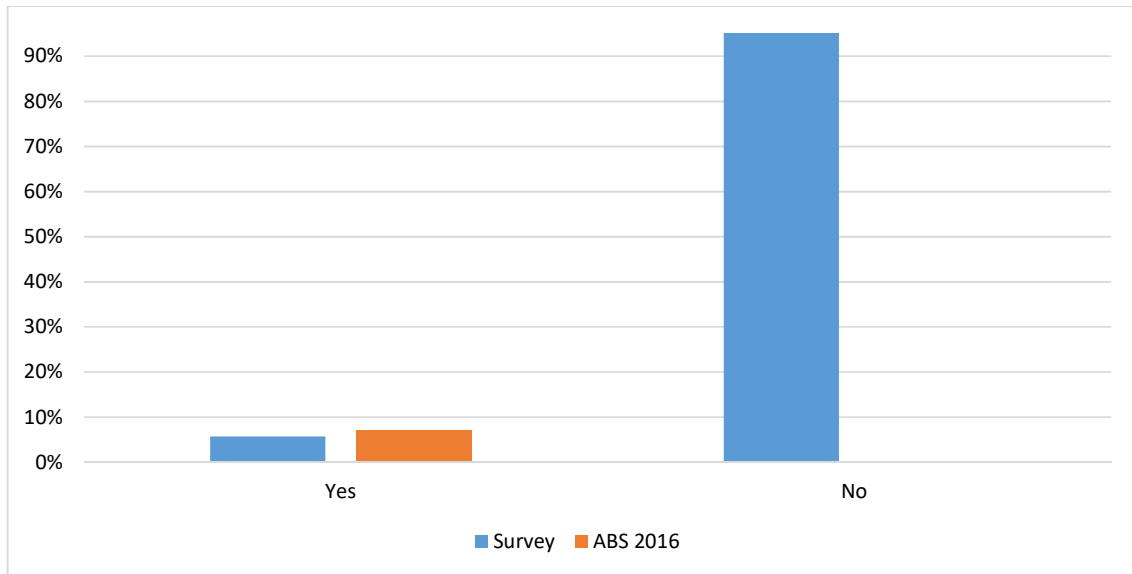


The remaining survey results include a comparison with ABS 2016 Census data.

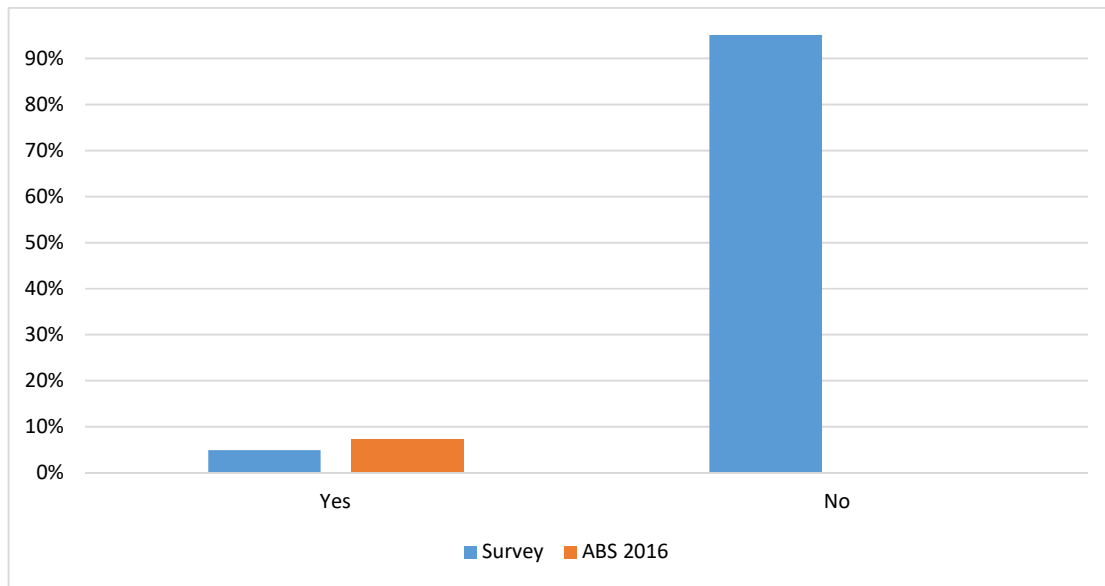
Question 10: What is your age?



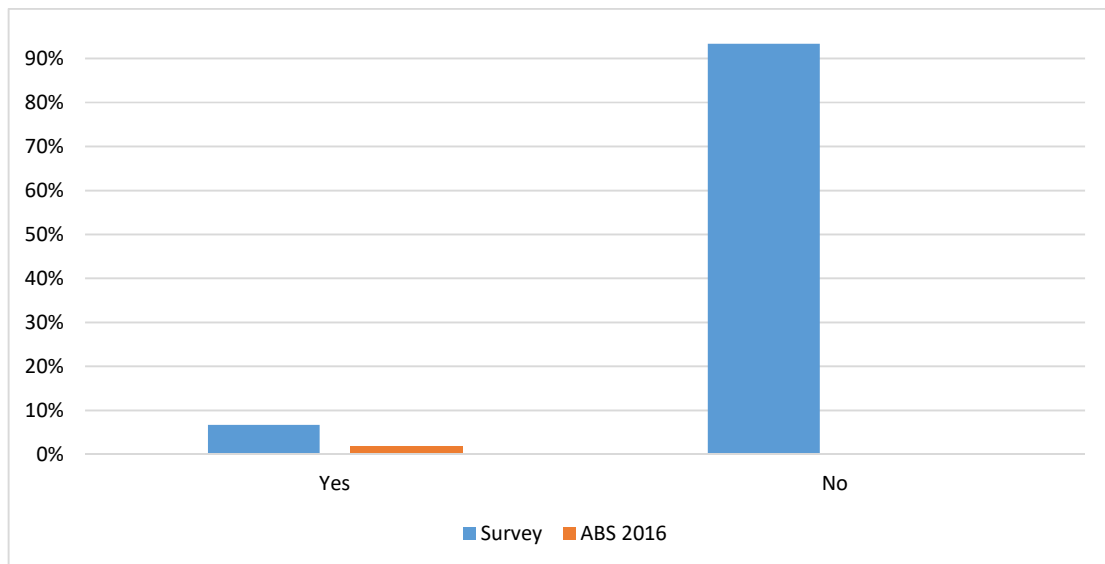
Question 11: Are you of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin?



Question 12: Do you need help in your day to day life due to disability?



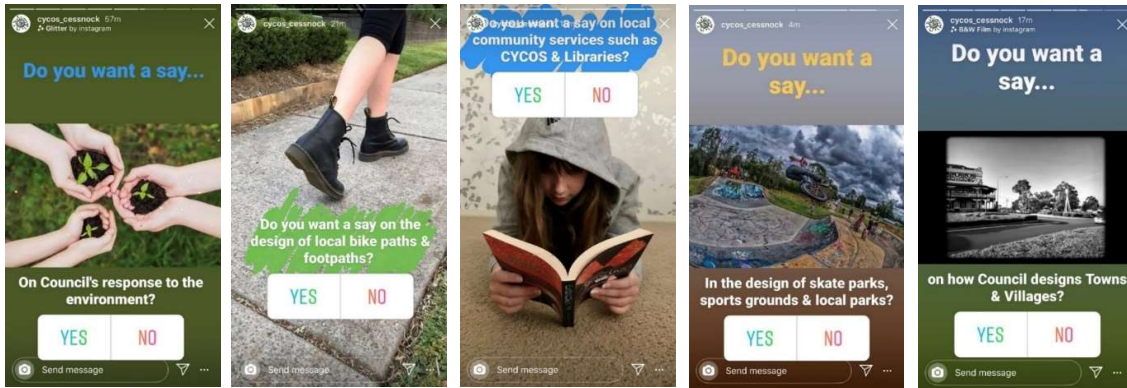
Question 13: Do you speak a language other than English at home??



2.2 YOUTH POLL RESULTS

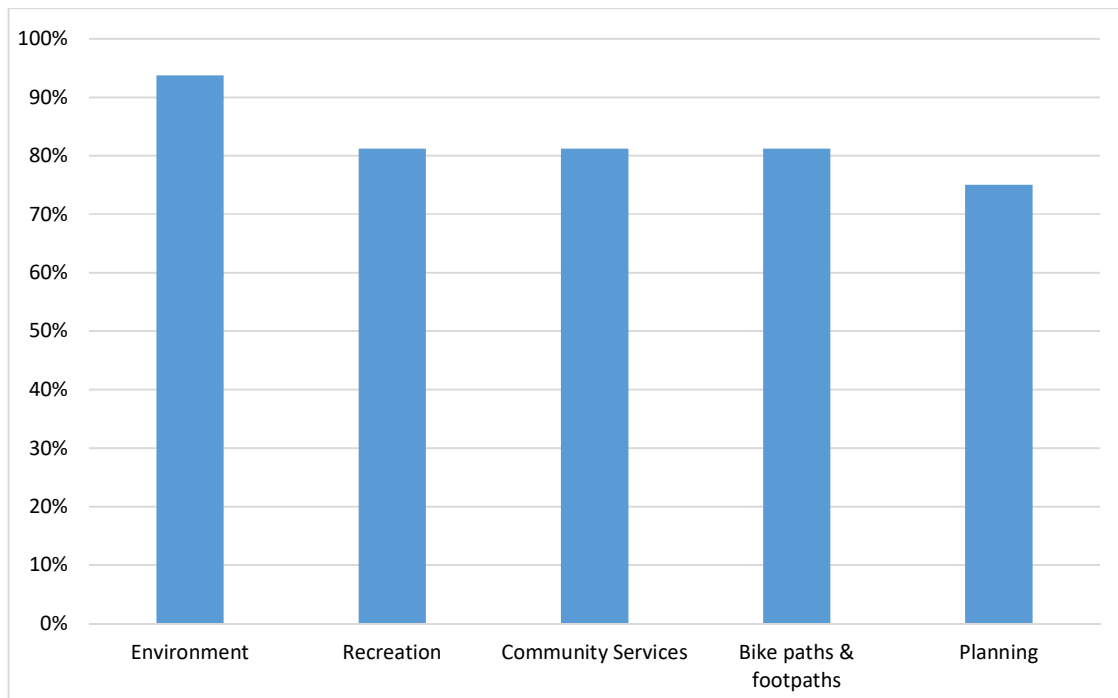
Our young people did not complete the community survey, so we adapted our engagement methods to cater to our youth.

We took the main issues residents want a say on from the community survey and asked our youth whether they wanted a say on them through Instagram stories, Facebook stories and Facebook polls. We also consulted the Youth Week Ambassadors and Young Parents Group.



The results show a high level of interest in having a say on Council matters.

Question: Do you want a say on...



2.3 STAFF SURVEY RESULTS

The staff survey received 33 responses. There was broad recognition that Council's engagement with our community could be improved.

Question: What would help you to engage with our community?

