



Community Vision Framework 2041: Consultation Outcomes

Report for Southern Grampians Shire Council
March 2021



Southern Grampians
SHIRE COUNCIL

Contents

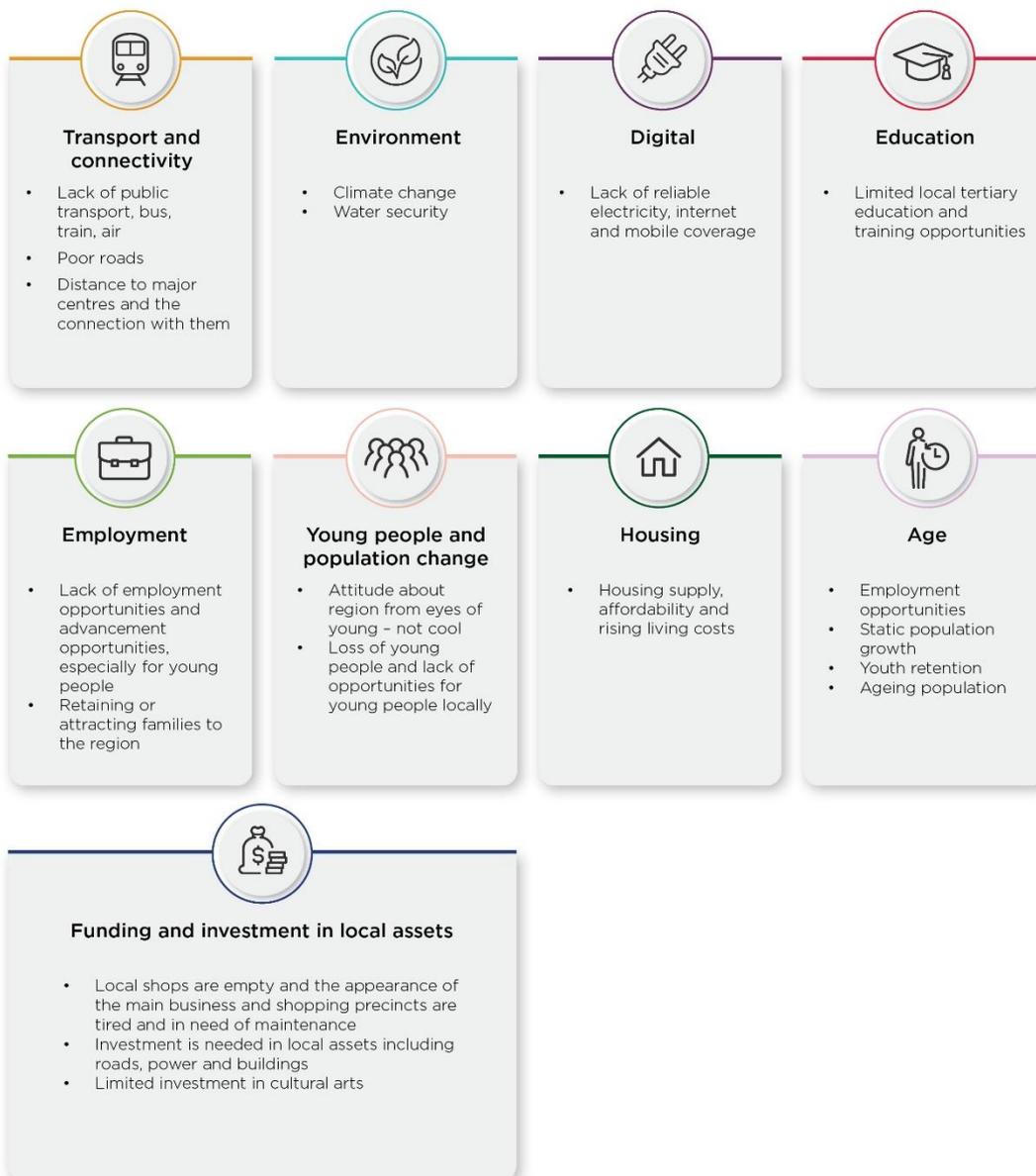
Contents	2
01: Engagement overview	4
02: Introduction	6
2.1 Background	6
2.2 Consultation and engagement program	7
03: Feedback and outcomes – survey and workshops	12
3.1 Current services and facilities	12
3.2 Challenges and opportunities for the Southern Grampians Shire	13
3.2.1 Priority challenges and opportunities	13
3.2.2 Challenges for the Southern Grampians	15
3.2.3 Assets and Opportunities for the Southern Grampians Shire	19
3.3 The Southern Grampians in 2041	21
3.3.1 What will the Southern Grampians be known for?	21
3.3.2 Key values	22
3.3.3 What will be the character of our community?	22
3.3.4 What will be the character of our business sector?	23
3.3.5 What are the threats for the Southern Grampians?	23
3.3.6 School students' vision for the Southern Grampians in 2041	24
04: Feedback – stakeholder interviews	25
4.1 Community	25
4.1.1 Population size	25
4.1.2 Youth	25
4.1.3 Health and social services	26
4.1.4 Housing	28
4.1.5 Indigenous community	30
4.2 Education	31
4.2.1 Secondary schools and VCAL	31
4.2.2 Tertiary education and training	33
4.2.3 Lifelong learning	35
4.2.4 Education hub	35
4.3 Economy and Industry	35
4.3.1 Employment	35
4.3.2 New industries and skills	36
4.3.3 Agriculture	37
4.3.4 Mining	37
4.3.5 Forestry	38
4.4 Transport	40

4.4.1 Public transport and connectivity	40
4.4.2 Freight	40
4.5 Environment	41
4.5.1 Water	41
4.6 Tourism	43
4.6.1 Accommodation	43
4.6.2 Visitor Information Centres	43
4.6.3 Opportunities	44
4.7 Council	45
4.7.1 Management and reputation	45
4.7.2 Partnerships	45
4.7.3 Services and assets	46
4.7.4 Rubbish, waste and the circular economy	46
4.7.5 Arts	47
4.8 Emergency Services	47
4.8.1 State Emergency Services	47
4.8.2 Ambulance Victoria	47
4.8.3 Victoria Police	48
4.8.4 Country Fire Association	48
05: Feedback – stakeholder workshops October 2019	51
5.1 Opportunities and constraints	51
5.1.1 Hamilton Workshop – Identified opportunities	51
5.1.2 Hamilton Workshop – Identified constraints	53
5.2.1 Melbourne Workshop – identified opportunities	55
5.2.2 Melbourne Workshop – identified constraints	56
06: Next steps	58
Appendix 1: Results from student workshops	59
Appendix 2: List of stakeholders interviewed	65

01: Engagement overview



Challenges:



Opportunities:

 <p>Culture / Tourism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognise and acknowledge indigenous history Cultural tourism – creating connected / welcoming community structures Natural heritage and eco-tourism Lifestyle – Grampians National Park, Heritage, community connectedness 	 <p>Transport and connectivity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better public transport links Regular rail services to Melbourne Investment in roads and transport 	 <p>Youth pathways / engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More support for young emerging leaders Youth employment strategy More activities and entertainment locally for young people 	 <p>Education / arts / digital</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create great educational opportunities locally Expanded library, cinema, community gallery, CBD Arts, culture, music, vibrant community Regional study hubs to complete further education in the region Digital economy
 <p>Liveability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create more employment opportunities and services to support and encourage professionals and young families to work, live and play in the region Bolster and promote the location, lifestyle and connected community as an attractor to the region 	 <p>Aging</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The aging population is growing and needs more services, including social, health and aged care services 	 <p>Sustainability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clean green and agriculture sector Proactive approach to addressing climate change Consider opportunities to support and encourage new and emerging skilled industries including renewables and innovative high tech companies 	

<p>In 2041 we will be known for:</p>  <p>Being a dynamic, diverse, inclusive, innovative and caring community</p>  <p>Liveability</p>	<p>Key values:</p>  <p>Social, economic and environmental sustainability</p>	<p>The biggest threats for the future are:</p>  <p>Climate change and its impact on our environment</p>  <p>Losing youth and young families or being unable to attract them to the region</p>
--	--	--

<p>By 2041, our communities will feel:</p>  <p>connected, valued and respected</p>	<p>By 2041, our businesses will be:</p>  <p>Caring, inclusive, socially aware and respectful</p>  <p>Lead and be progressive</p>  <p>Invest in the community and its people</p>
--	---

02: Introduction

2.1 Background

Southern Grampians Shire Council is leading the development of a Community Vision Framework 2041 (CVF2041) that creates excitement and optimism about the future of its community. CVF2041 seeks to encourage innovation by industry and the delivery of community led initiatives that reinforce the unique attributes of Shire's towns and communities with a focus on dynamic partnerships with others.

CVF2041 also forms a key element of Council's hierarchy of land use strategies as outlined below.

Figure 1: Hierarchy of land use strategies for Southern Grampians Shire Council¹



¹ RLUS – Rural Land Use Strategy

To inform the development of the CVF2041, a 115 page [Discussion Paper](#) and eight page [Summary](#) document were developed in May 2020 that outlined the profile of the Shire and its network of towns and the overarching opportunities and constraints for the region. A subsequent program of community consultation was undertaken to test the questions posed by the Discussion Paper and emerging themes with the broader community. The outcomes from this community consultation will help inform the development of the ultimate CVF2041 Strategy.

2.2 Consultation and engagement program

In February 2021, Southern Grampians Shire Council adopted their new Community Engagement Policy in response to the requirements of the *Local Government Act 2020*. The Policy requires deliberative engagement principles to be applied to Community Vision activities. Deliberative engagement has been defined as:

Allowing a random and representative sample of participants to consider relevant facts from multiple points of view, talking with others to think critically about options before them and enlarging their perspectives, opinions and understandings.

The program of engagement for the Community Vision Framework 2041 was designed to attract input from a random and representative sample of the community and key stakeholders with an interest in the development of the Community Vision. The program originally included a Citizen’s Jury to develop a draft Community Vision on behalf of the Southern Grampians Community. Due to COVID-19, the engagement approach was revised to deliver a program of COVID-safe engagement activities, which included online interactive workshops to test themes, build awareness and elicit valuable input, online survey, intercept surveying, interviews. The activities were supported by web content on the Southern Grampians Shire Council website, media release and eight posts to Council’s Facebook page to generate participation and awareness.

Council received feedback and input from 488 people, which is 112 people more people than were required to achieved a representative sample size of the population of 376 people, with a confidence level of 95%.

The following table demonstrates the representative nature of the engagement process.

Table 1: Engagement Summary

	Southern Grampians Population		CVF2041 Participants	
Gender	51% Female	49% Male	54% Female	45% Male
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population	1.5%		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Briefing: Winda Mara Aboriginal Corporation ✓ Interview: Gunditjmirring senior elder ✓ Briefing to Gunditjmirring Board ✓ Interview: Eastern Marr representative 	
Top Industries:	Accommodation and Food		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Interview: Southern Stay Accommodation ✓ Interview: Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism ✓ Interview: Tourism industry experts² ✓ Interview: Dunkeld Caravan Park 	

² Ex Royal Mail staff, formerly at Grampians Tourism.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Interview: Limestone Coast Tourism ✓ Interview: Grampians Tourism
	Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Interview: Green Triangle Forest Industries Hub ✓ Interview: Food and Fibre Council³ ✓ Interview: Australian Blue Gum Plantations ✓ Interview: National Centre for Farmers Health ✓ Interview: Vickery Bros Agribusiness
	Construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Interview: Tapper Builders
	Retail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Workshop: Hamilton Regional Business Association
	Health Care and Social Assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Workshop: Western District Health Service ✓ Interview: Workshop: Western District Health Service ✓ Staff survey (38 responses): Western District Health Service ✓ Interview: Retired clergy⁴ ✓ Interview: Anglicare ✓ Interview: St Vincent De Paul ✓ Interview: SW Primary Care Partnership ✓ Interview: Salvo Connect ✓ Interview: Red Cross ✓ Interview: Ambulance VIC ✓ Workshop
	Education and Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Interview: Rural Industries Skills Training (RIST) ✓ Interview: Baimbridge College interview and workshop ✓ Workshop: Baimbridge College ✓ Interview: Southern Grampians Adult Education ✓ Workshop: Local Learning Employment Network ✓ Workshop: SW TAFE ✓ Interview: SW TAFE
	Public Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Interview: Southern Grampians Shire Council staff ✓ Staff survey (49 responses): Southern Grampians Shire Council

³ Interviewed twice.

⁴ Former role at Uniting Church

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Interview: Horsham Rural City⁵ ✓ Interview: Glenelg Shire Council⁶ ✓ Interview: DELWP ✓ Workshop: DELWP ✓ Interview: SES ✓ Workshop: SES ✓ Interview: VIC Police ✓ Interview: DHHS ✓ Interview: Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management ✓ Interview: Regional Development VIC ✓ Workshop: Regional Development VIC ✓ Interview: CFA⁷ ✓ Interview: Department of Transport ✓ Interview: Parks VIC ✓ Interview: Barwon SW Waste and Recovery Group ✓ Interview: Wannon Water ✓ Interview: Southern Rural Water ✓ Interview: Ambulance VIC ✓ Workshop: Ambulance VIC ✓ Interview: EPA ✓ Workshop: V Line Corporation ✓ Workshop: Sustainability VIC ✓ Workshop: Victorian Planning Authority
Other	Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Interview: Professionals Real Estate ✓ Interview: Groves Real Estate ✓ Interview: Tapper Builders ✓ Interview: Elders Real Estate ✓ Workshop: Victorian Planning Authority
	Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Interview: WDEA ✓ Workshop: Local Learning Employment Network
	Arts and culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Interview: RAV ✓ Workshop: Friends of Hamilton Gallery
	Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Interview: Nature Glenelg Trust ✓ Workshop: Sustainability VIC ✓ Interview: Parks VIC

⁵ The interview was primarily concerned with indigenous partnership arrangements.

⁶ The interview was primarily concerned with indigenous partnership arrangements.

⁷ CFA interviews x 2 – Manager Community Safety and Chief Fire Officer District 5 respectively.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Interview: Barwon SW Waste and Recovery Group
	Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Interview: Rail Freight Action Group ✓ Workshop: Allens Freight ✓ Workshop: V Line Corporation
	Mining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Interview: Minerals Development VIC ✓ Interview: Iluka Mine ✓ Interview: Stavely Resources
Disability Services		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Interview: Southern Stay ✓ Interview: Western District Health Services Community Transport
Aging population		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Interview: Western District Health Services Community Transport
Youth		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Interview: Southern Grampians Glenelg Primary Care Partnership ✓ Interview: SW TAFE ✓ Workshop: SW TAFE ✓ Interview: Baimbridge College ✓ Workshop: Baimbridge College ✓ Workshop: Uni SA ✓ Interview: SGSC staff ✓ Workshop: Tarrington Lutheran School ✓ Workshop: St Mary's Primary School ✓ Workshop: Monivae College
Southern Grampians townships and regional representation	Hamilton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Community workshop
	Glenthompson and Dunkeld	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Community workshop
	Balmoral, Cavendish and Coleraine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Community workshop
	Tarrington and Penshurst	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Community workshop
	Byaduk and Branxholme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Community workshop

The program of community consultation was undertaken between October 2019 and February 2021. Activities included a mix of in-person (pre-COVID) and online workshops with key stakeholders including schools, COVID-safe on-street intercept surveys, an online survey for Council staff, and 75 stakeholder interviews conducted via digital conferencing. Poll Everywhere, an interactive engagement tool, was used during the online workshops to collect responses and feedback from attendees.

Table 2: Consultation Calendar

Date	Engagement type and stakeholder group	Attendees / respondents
16 Oct 2019	Workshop: Stakeholders, Hamilton	12
18 Oct 2019	Workshop: Government Agencies, Melbourne	11
13 Oct 2020	Workshop: Coleraine Cavendish and Balmoral residents	14
14 Oct 2020	Workshop: Tarrington and Penshurst residents	15
15 Oct 2020	Workshop: Glenthompson and Dunkeld residents	18
20 Oct 2020	Workshop: Byaduk and Branxholme residents	8
21 Oct 2020	Workshop: Hamilton and other townships residents	14
27 Oct 2020	Workshop: Hamilton Regional Business Association	9
30 Oct 2020	Briefing: Gunditjmirring Traditional Owners	10
9 Nov 2020	Briefing: Winda Mara Chairperson	1
12 Nov 2020	Student workshop: St Mary's Primary School	8
13 Nov 2020	Student workshop: Monivae College	35
18 Nov 2020	Student workshop: Baimbridge College	40
19 Nov 2020	Workshop: Friends of the Hamilton gallery	15
30 Nov 2020	Staff survey: Southern Grampians Shire Council	49
26 Nov 2020	Student workshop: Tarrington Lutheran School	31
4 Dec 202	Workshop: Cultural Arts and Library	5
7 Dec 2020	Workshop: Dunkeld Progress Association	15
12 Dec 2020	Intercept survey: Hamilton	28
19 Dec 2020	Intercept survey: Dunkeld	38
February 2021	Online survey: Western District Health Services	37
Nov 2020 – Mar 2021	Stakeholder interviews	75
Total		488

03: Feedback and outcomes – survey and workshops

3.1 Current services and facilities

During the school workshops, students were asked a series of questions about the current services and facilities they use, their importance and what was missing. A strong commonality in the responses to all three questions was the existing use and need for **entertainment and leisure facilities and options**. This ranged from concerts and gaming arcades, through to sporting facilities. The other major categories were **retail and food outlets**. The resounding message from the data is that **this group are looking for more things to do and places to go**. The results from each question, gathered using interactive technology Poll Everywhere, are shown below.

Figure 2: Most important current services and facilities

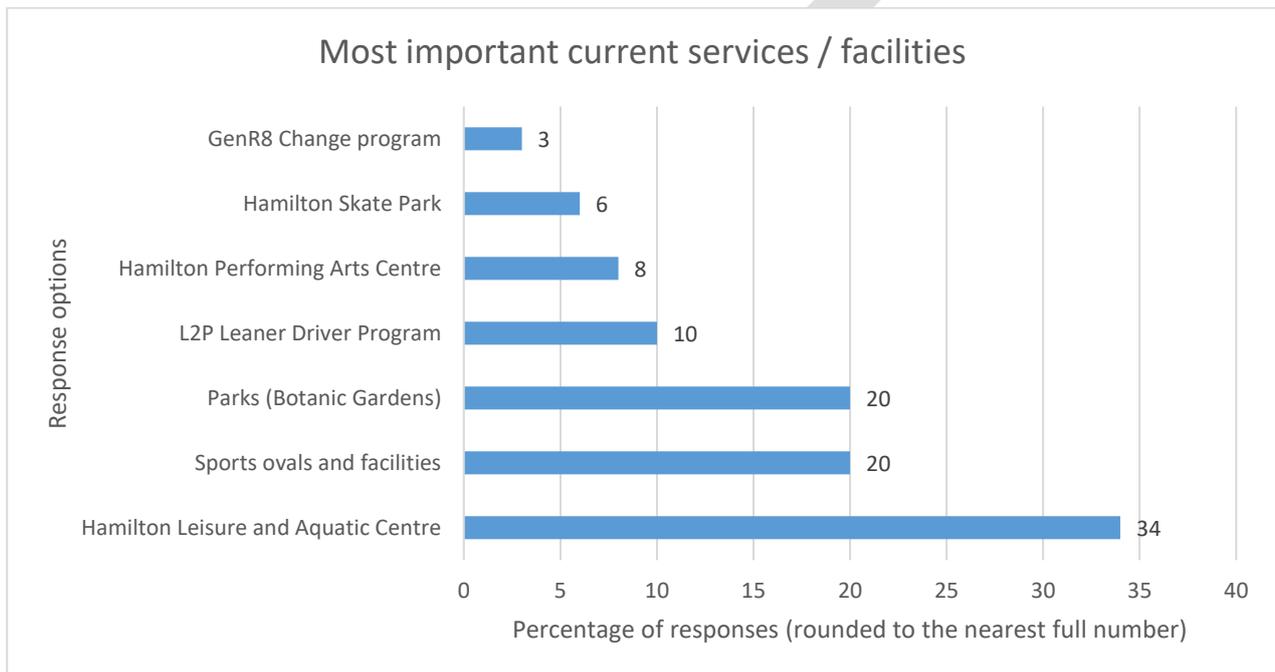


Figure 3: Current services and infrastructure used

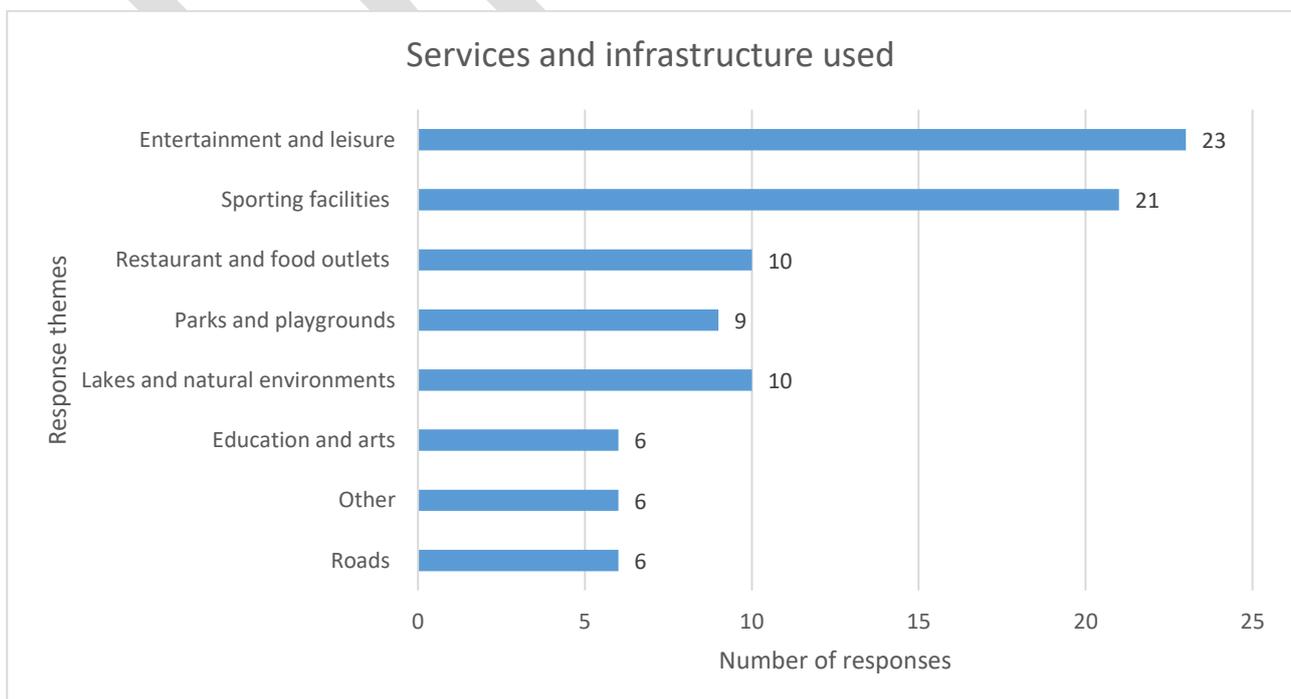
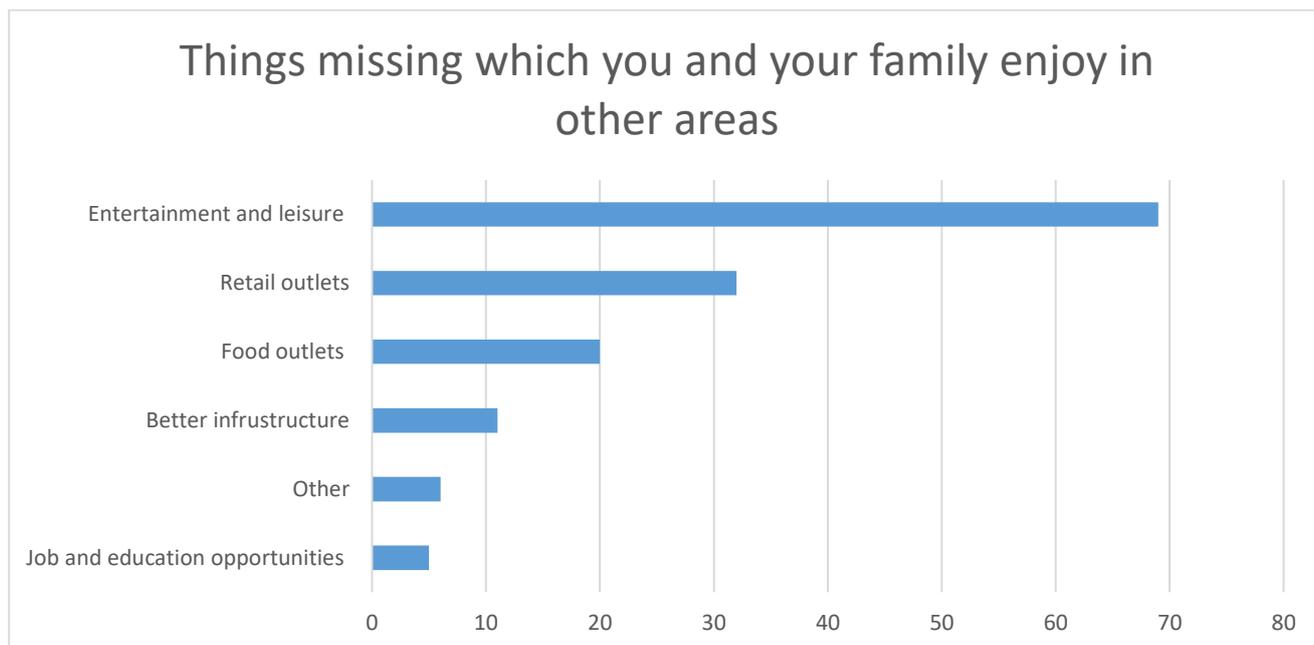


Figure 4: Services and infrastructure missing from the region and enjoyed in other areas



3.2 Challenges and opportunities for the Southern Grampians Shire

3.2.1 Priority challenges and opportunities

Survey and workshop participants were provided with a list of challenges and opportunities identified by Council and were asked to select the top four that should be of priority for the next four years. The top two results were:

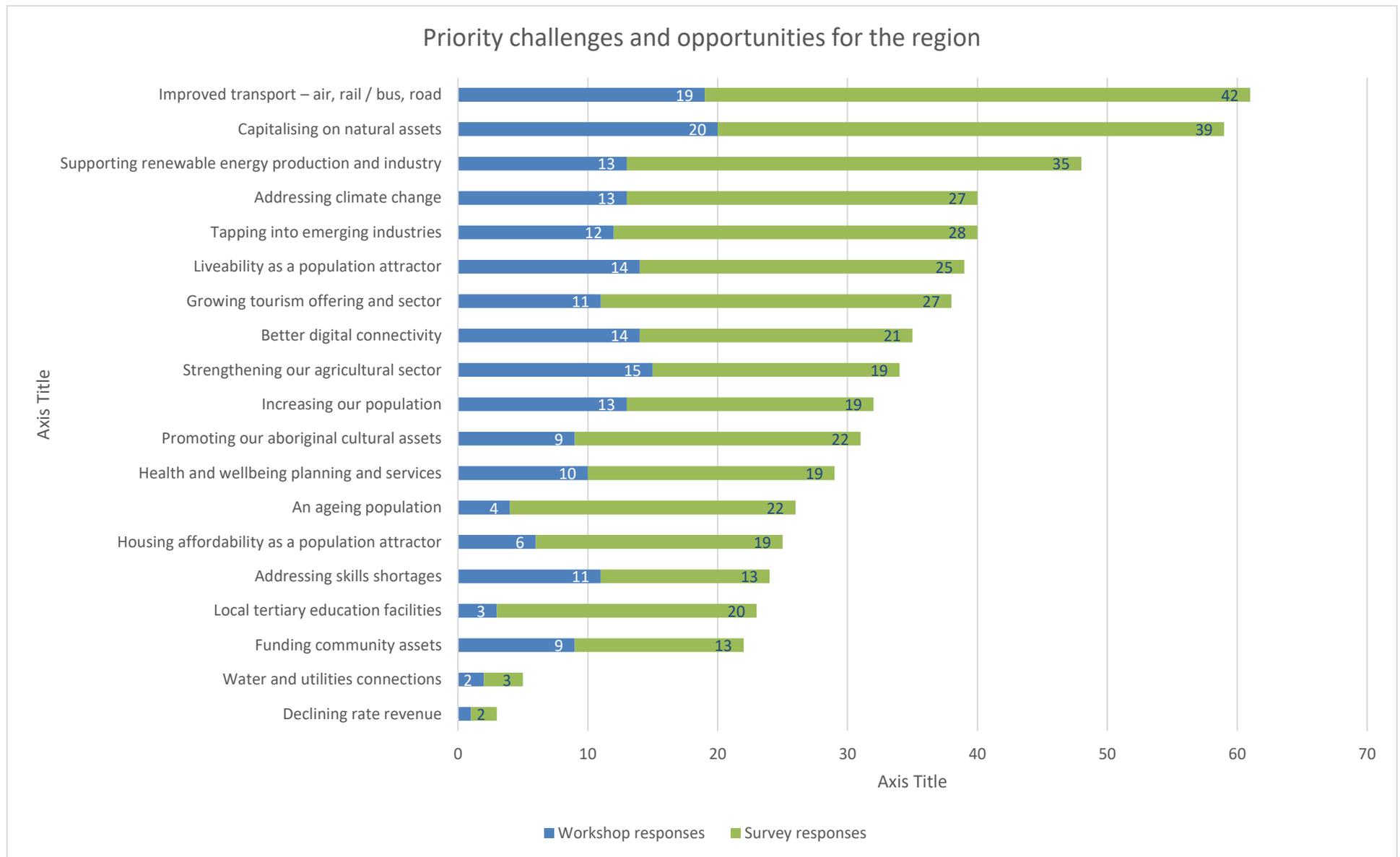
- **Improved transport** – air, rail / bus, and road;
- **Capitalising on natural assets.**

Other options that rated highly included:

- Supporting **renewable energy** production and industry;
- Addressing **climate change**;
- Tapping into **emerging industries**;
- **Liveability** as a population attractor;
- Growing **tourism** offering and sector;
- Better **digital connectivity**;
- Strengthening our **agricultural sector**;
- Increasing our **population**; and
- Promoting our **aboriginal cultural assets.**

The results are shown at figure 4. This question was not asked in the student workshops.

Figure 5: Survey and workshop responses: Council has identified a range of challenges and opportunities, select the top four that Council should focus on in the next twenty years through to 2041.



3.2.2 Challenges for the Southern Grampians

Workshop participants and survey respondents were asked to nominate the biggest challenges they believed the Southern Grampians faced, both now and in the coming twenty years. Responses were provided as free text and have been themed. Note this was not asked of the students attending a school workshop.

Across all three sets of responses, there were common themes that ranked highly and relatively consistent with the responses at section 3.2. They were:

- **The population demographic**, with respondents noting the aging population (and need for services to support these), the loss of younger people and the need to attract more youth and young families to the area (noting that services needed to support an increased population too).
- **The need for improved public transport and increased availability**, both locally and to quickly connect the region to other major towns and cities. All forms of transport were referenced, including road, rail and air.
- **More opportunities for employment, and diversity of employment**, was highly referenced. This included more job opportunities for young people, more opportunities for women (including 50+ age bracket), and more skilled roles generally rather than offering predominantly traditional employment such as agriculture.
- **The lack of educational opportunities for youth** was referenced regularly, noting the loss of students to larger centres for tertiary education, both university and other training, (as well as the lack of suitable employment for their qualifications for them to return to). There were also several references to improving the local schools, and one reference to the need for day care.
- **The need to invest and improve in local infrastructure** was referenced regularly. This included roads, power and building and asset maintenance. In the current challenges for the Southern Grampians survey question, the number of vacant shops was particularly noted with comments about the appearance of the main business and shopping precincts looking tired.
- **The local economy (financial resources) and funding** by all levels of government was noted as a challenge. This included securing funding for projects.
- Following from the theme above, several respondents referenced the need to retain existing businesses while also **needing to attract new and more diverse businesses and industries** as a challenge.
- **Housing supply, affordability and rising living costs** including Council rates was noted as a challenge.
- Effects of **climate change** and environmental challenges were considered a challenge, particularly by 2041.
- The **need for local health services** to support the needs of the community, including mental health and aged care support, was noted as a challenge.

Detailed charts of responses to all questions can be found below at Figures 6 – 8.

Figure 6: Workshop participant responses: What are the challenges faced by the Southern Grampians?

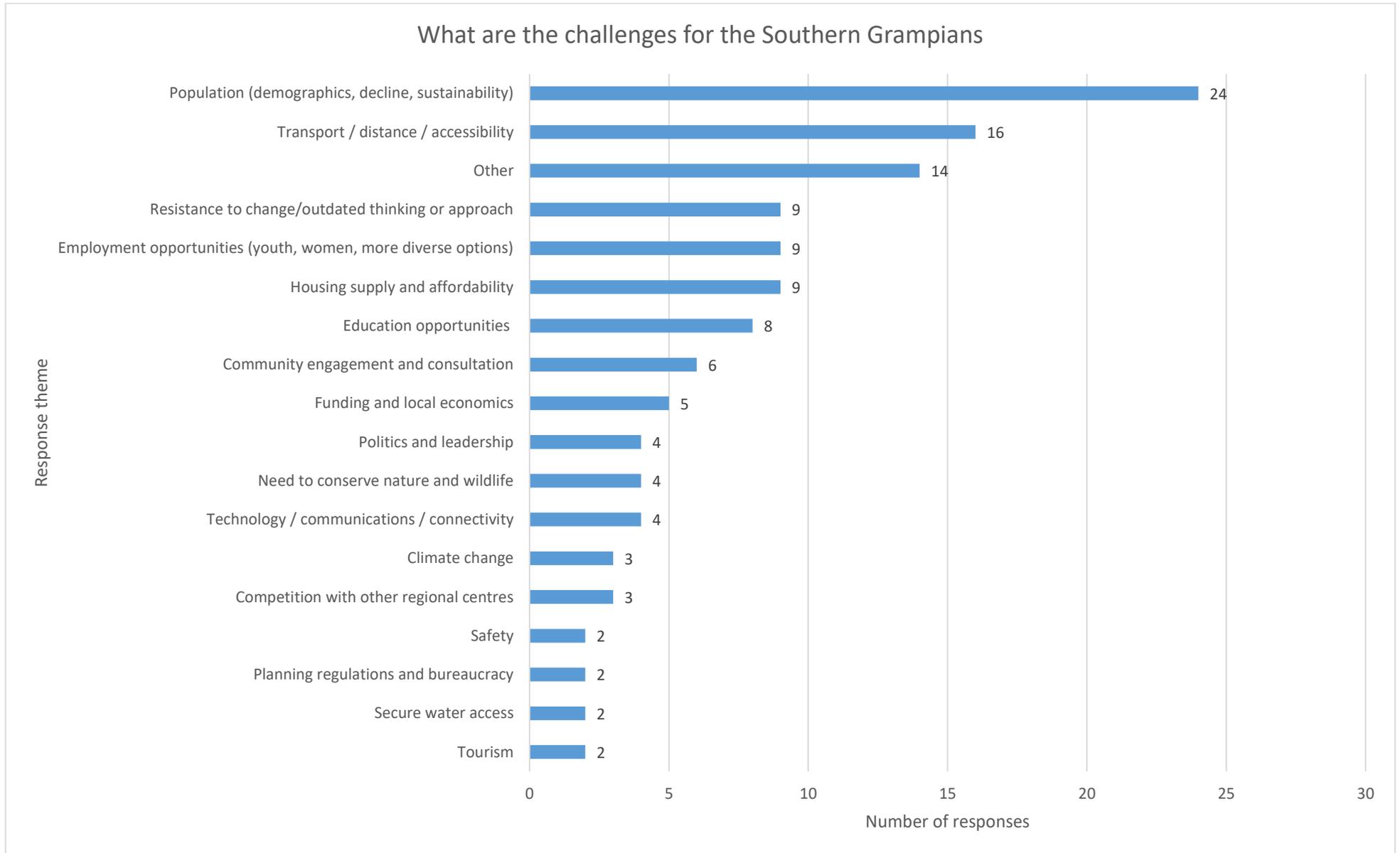


Figure 7: Survey responses: What are the challenges faced by the Southern Grampians now?

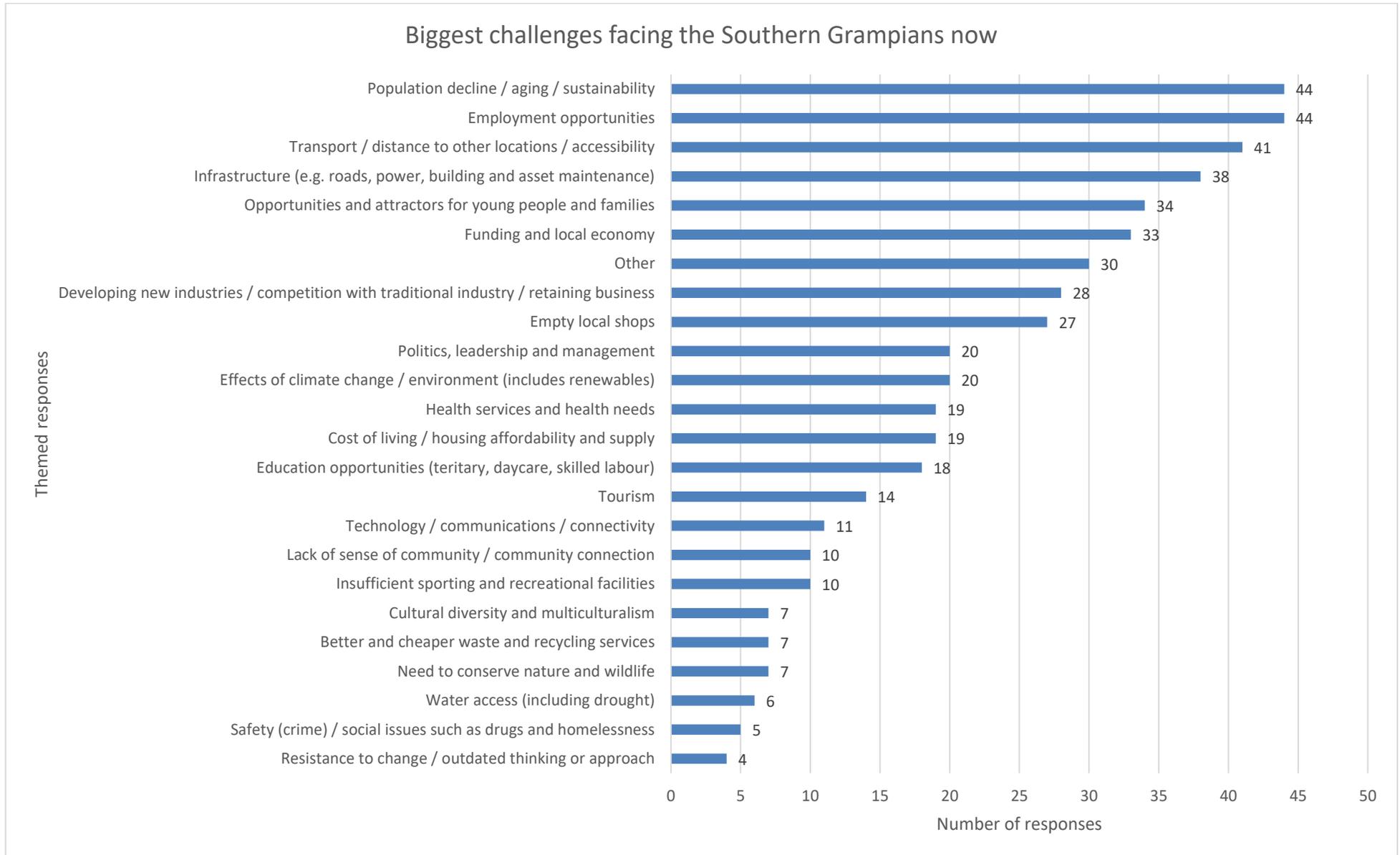
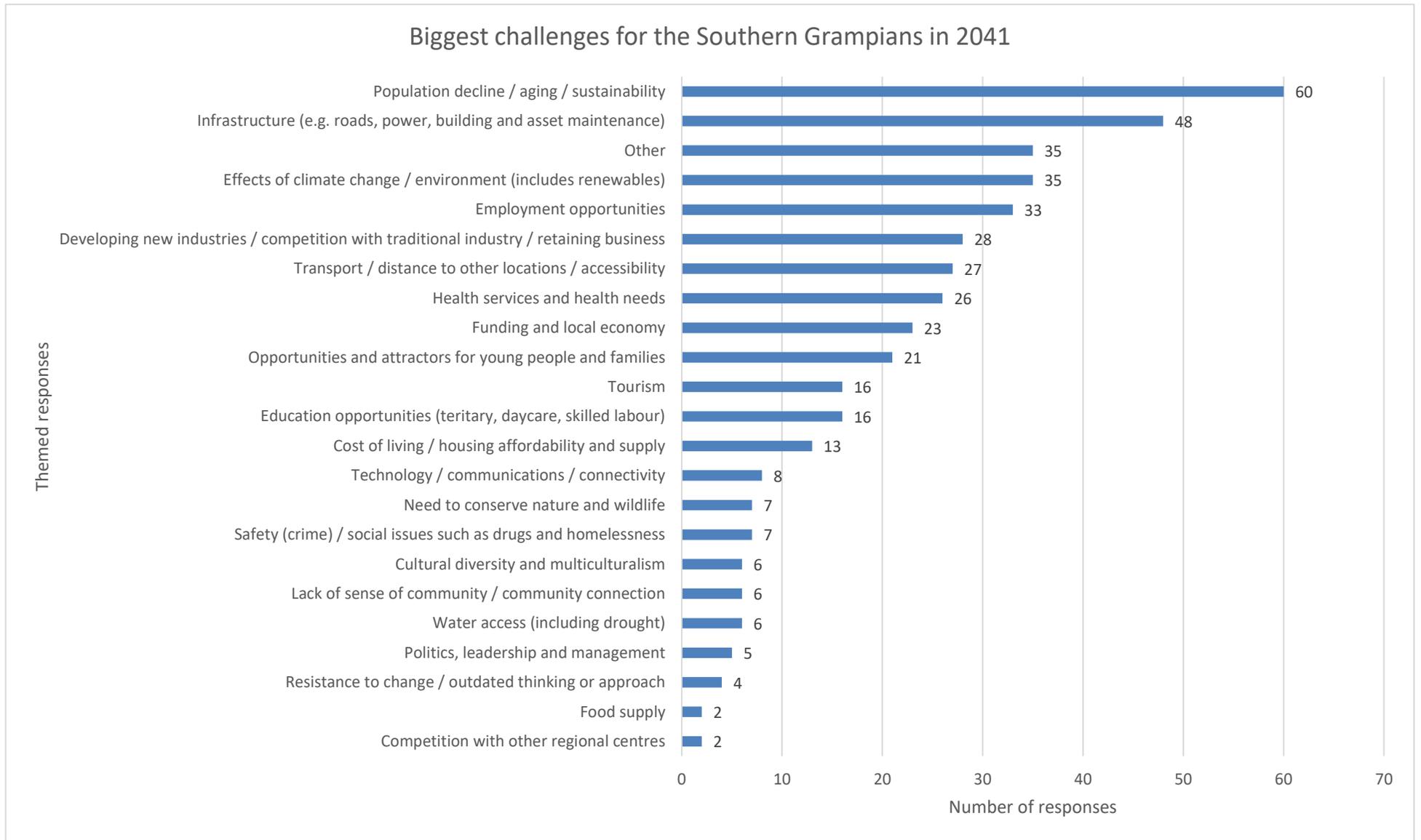


Figure 8: Survey responses: What will be the challenges faced by the Southern Grampians in 2041?



3.2.3 Assets and Opportunities for the Southern Grampians Shire

Survey and workshop participants were invited to generate multiple free text responses nominating the existing best assets and opportunities for the Southern Grampians Shire.

The top responses were:

- The **natural environment** and **wildlife**;
- **Tourism** – investing and supporting tourism, especially eco and nature tourism;
- The **location** of the Southern Grampians in relation to the coast, major regional centres, and cities and the space available (including for development and growth);
- **Agriculture** as a core industry, as well as opportunities to improve farming practices;
- The **local people** – their talents, skills, care for each other and their sense of community;
- **Education** – it was noted there are high quality schools in the area, providing early learning to Year 12 schooling, as well as the opportunity to provide tertiary education options locally. See also technical training (eg SW TAFE), adult education (SGAE) and agricultural college (RIST) training opportunities. The independent education sector is also strong across the Shire;
- **Liveability** of the region, including the climate;
- **Parks, gardens, sport facilities** and sporting opportunities, including bike/hike trails;
- **Cultural arts and local events**, noting the existing art gallery and cultural facilities as well as the opportunity to create a cultural scene as a tourist attractor; and
- The existing **hospital facilities** were noted, however this was coupled with the growing need for additional health services to cater for the community more fully.

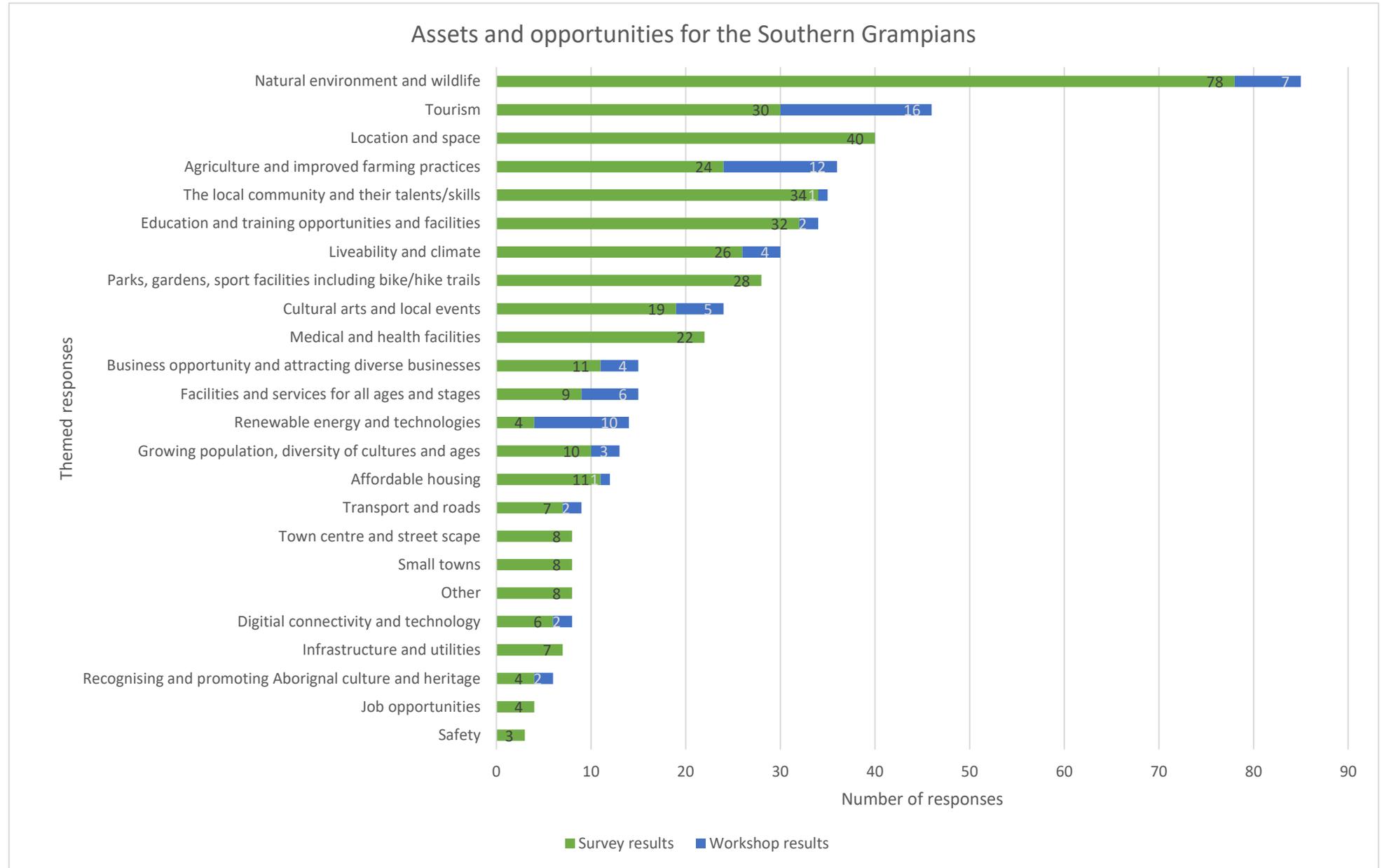
Renewable energy and technologies rated highly overall but was the third highest opportunity identified by the workshop participants.

While these results are generally consistent with the responses given at figure 5 depicting suggested priorities for Council, there are some differences. For example, when prompted, improved transport, addressing climate change, supporting renewables, better digital connectivity, increasing population and promoting aboriginal assets rated more highly than unprompted.

When generating their own responses, the location and space afforded by the region, the local people themselves, education, parks and sporting facilities, cultural arts and health services emerged more highly as priorities.

The detailed results by theme are shown at Figure 9. It should be noted that student workshops were not asked this question.

Figure 9: Survey and workshop responses: What are the assets and opportunities for the Southern Grampians



3.3 The Southern Grampians in 2041

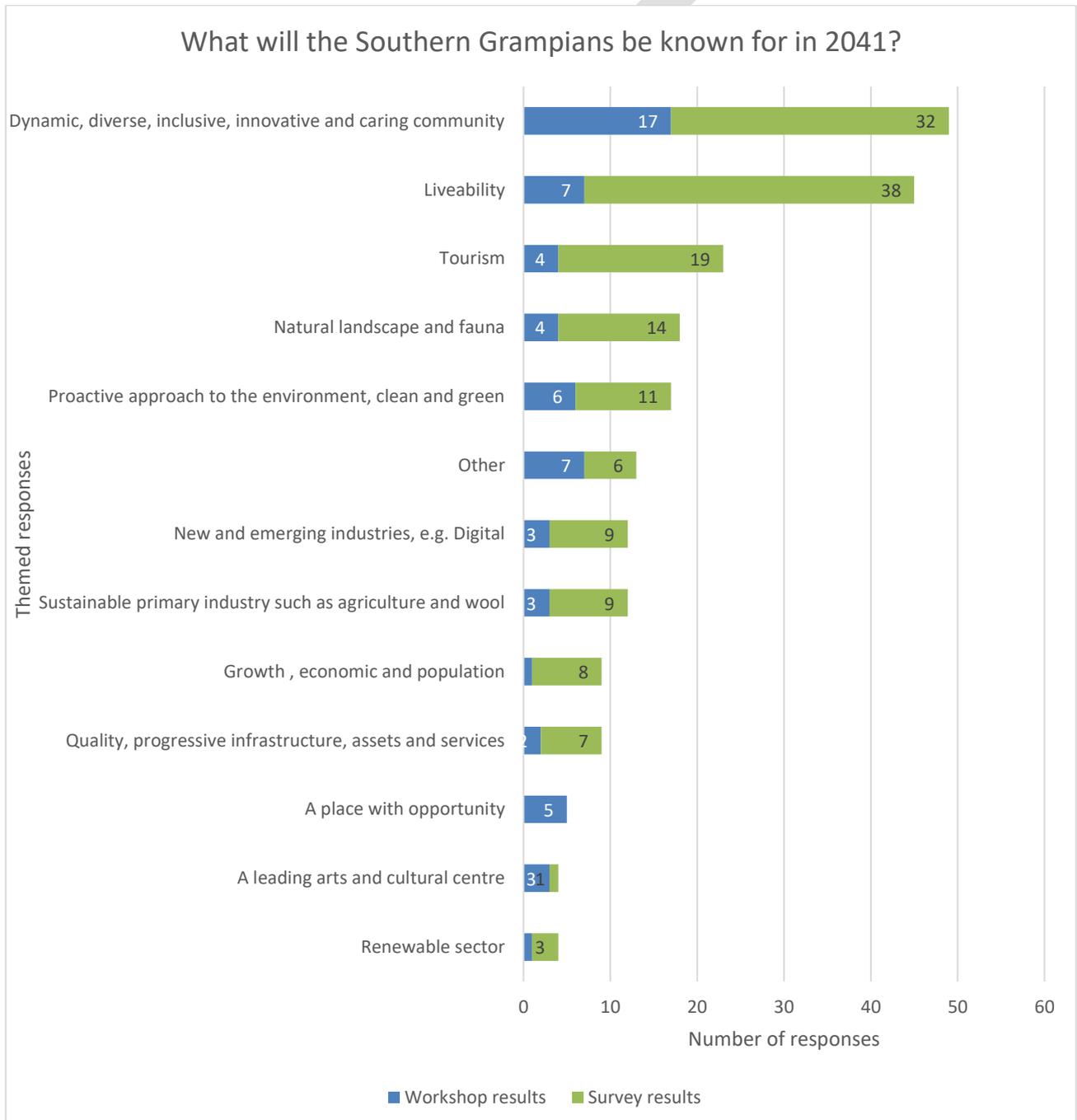
Workshop participants and survey respondents were asked to consider the Southern Grampians region in 2041 and share their aspirations, hopes and ideas. The **importance of community** came through across all questions, noting the importance of being **socially aware, inclusive and caring as well as connected**.

The questions posed during the student workshops were adjusted for the audience and have been assessed separately at section 3.3.6.

3.3.1 What will the Southern Grampians be known for?

Workshop participants and survey respondents were asked ‘What will the Southern Grampians be known for in 2041?’ Responses were given as free text and have been themed. The top responses were **a dynamic, diverse, inclusive innovative and caring community**, and **liveability**.

Figure 10: Survey and workshop responses to ‘What will the Southern Grampians be known for in 2041?’

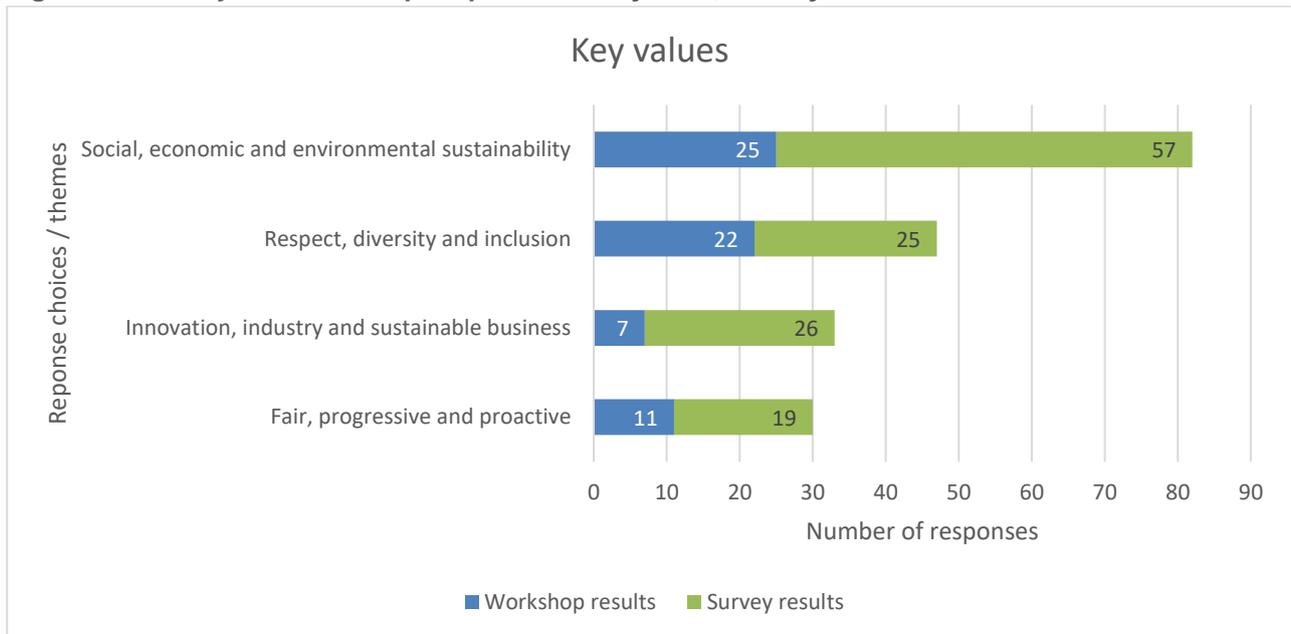


3.3.2 Key Values

Participants were asked what the key values would be for the community of the Southern Grampians in 2041. Survey respondents were given four options to select from, and ranked **‘social, economic and environmental sustainability’** as their top choice.

Workshop participants generated their own responses to this question. These responses were themed and organically fitted within the same themes provided in the survey. Overall, both survey respondents and workshop participants selected ‘social, economic and environmental sustainability’ as their top response.

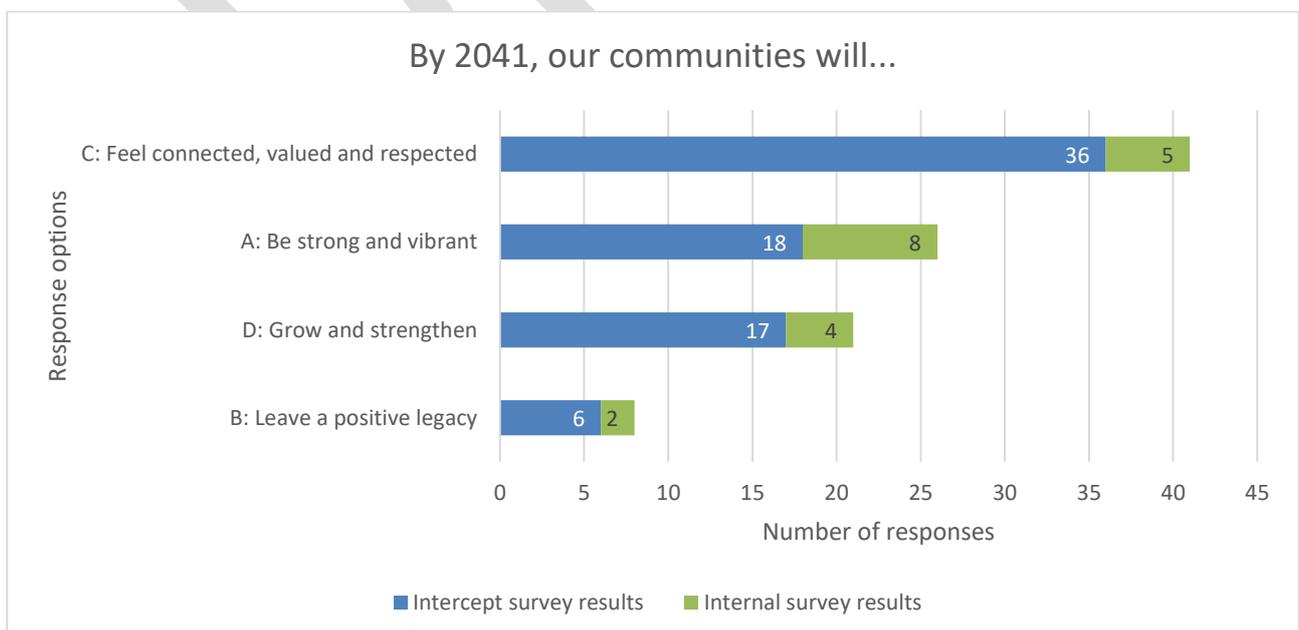
Figure 11: Survey and workshop responses to: By 2041, our key values will be...



3.3.3 What will be the character of our community?

Survey participants were asked to select their preferred choice to describe their community in 2041. **‘Feel connected, valued and respected’** was the top rating response for the intercept survey by a reasonable margin. From the internal survey results that could be assessed, **‘Be strong and vibrant’** was the top response. Note that 27 responses (22% of responses) were either left blank or did not show a clear preference for one option.

Figure 12: Survey responses to: By 2041, our communities will:



3.3.4 What will be the character of our business sector?

This question was asked of workshop participants only and responses were provided as free text. Overall there was a strong desire for the business sector to be an integral part of the community, work together, and support and invest in the local people. There was also a desire for local business to thrive, innovate, lead, and be vibrant and sustainable.

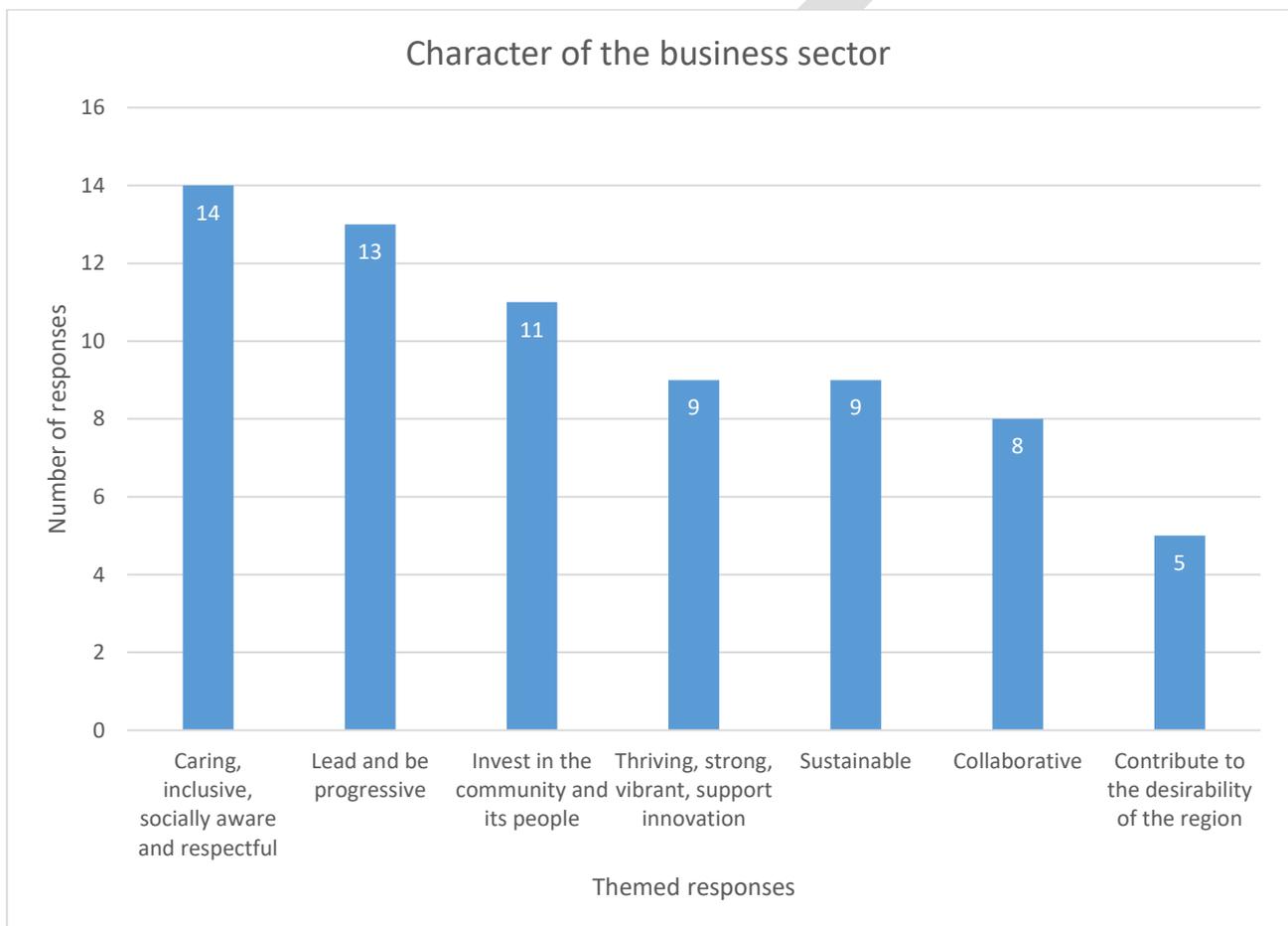
Some selected responses include:

“Work together to provide the best outcome for the community, we will look after our elderly and encourage our youth.”

“Invest in their workforce to drive innovation and growth”

“Be resilient, innovative and adaptive to change”.

Figure 13: Workshop responses to: Our business sector will...



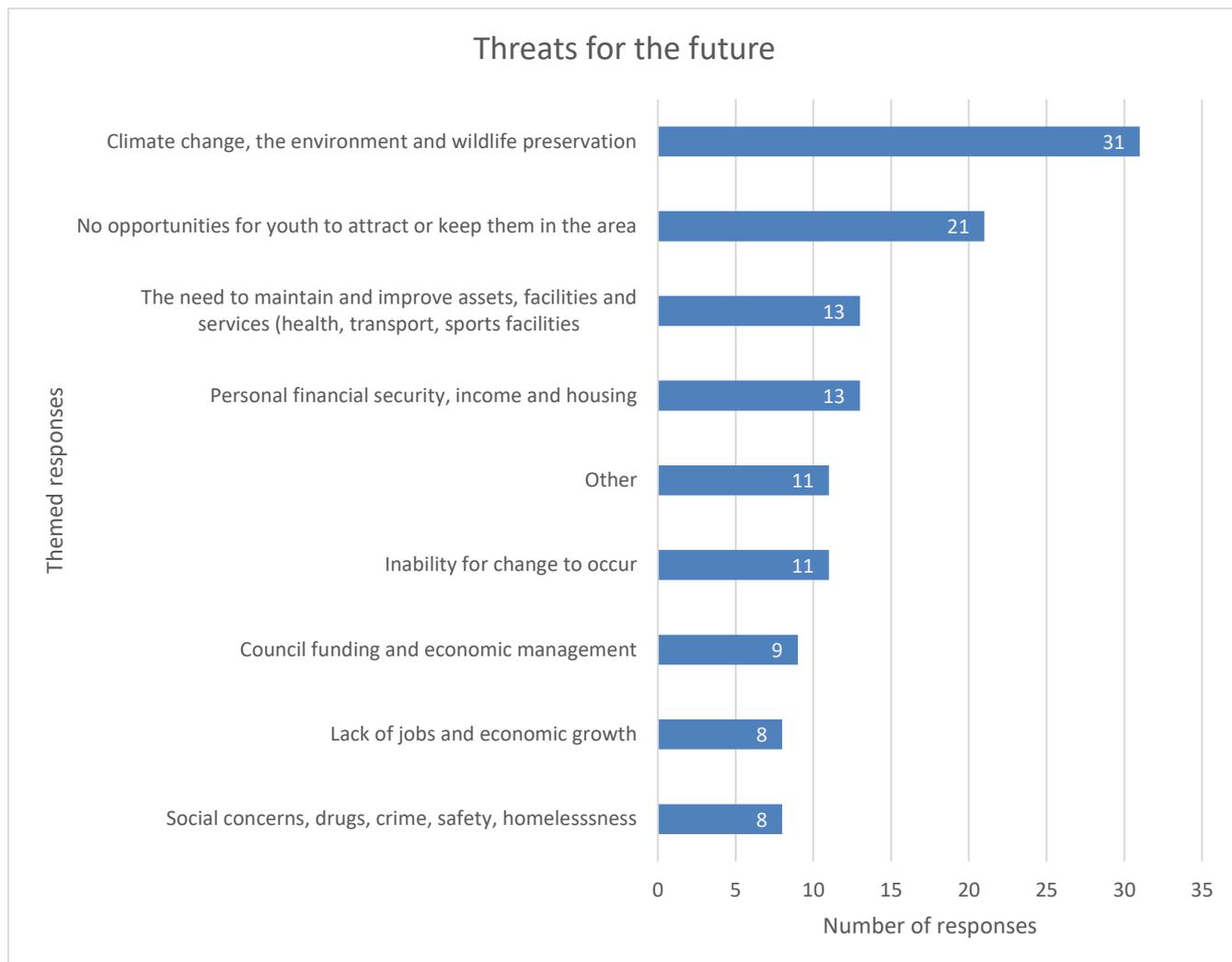
3.3.5 What are the threats for the Southern Grampians?

Survey respondents were asked ‘Is there one thing that keeps you awake, when thinking about the future? What is it?’ Responses were provided as free text and have been themed.

The top responses was concern for **climate change** and its effects on the environment and wildlife. This was followed by concerns for the **lack of opportunities for young people** to remain in the region.

While student responses are shown elsewhere (see Figure 23, Appendix 1), it is interesting to note that when asked a similar question, the majority of respondents indicated they are worried about their **personal finances** and the **professional opportunities** they will have. This included not having a job they will enjoy, not passing year 12 exams (VCE) and generally not being successful.

Figure 14: Survey responses to: Is there one thing that keeps you awake, when thinking about the future? What is it?



3.3.6 School students' vision for the Southern Grampians in 2041

One hundred and fourteen students participated in the four school workshops. During these sessions, students were asked about what they currently value in the Southern Grampians and to forecast their aspirations out to 2041 and respond to a range of questions about their expectations for the future.

The overarching sentiment was that **young people wanted more things to see and do, more opportunities for study, travel and work, and improved sporting facilities**. They expect or want to have a professional, trade or well-paid job and their future professional opportunities and financial security is of concern. A significant proportion, **80%, expect to leave the Southern Grampians by 2041**. This was due to a desire to live, work, study and travel elsewhere but also because of a perceived lack of opportunities for them locally.

There was also an interest in maintaining and having a clean natural environment with native wildlife. When asked about their expectations for future transport and food supply, there was little change expected in comparison to 2020, with cars as the most likely form of transport and the supermarket as a key source of food.

A detailed breakdown of the responses to each question can be found at Appendix 1.

04: Feedback – stakeholder interviews

Between November 2020 and February 2021 interviews were conducted with more than 75 representatives from local tourism, business and industry, education providers, Indigenous representatives, Emergency Services, providers of social support, the Victorian Government, Council staff and individuals. The purpose was to provide a deep dive into core issues and gain insights from stakeholders.

The feedback gathered has been grouped and summarised into themes and subthemes. A full list of contributors can be found at Appendix 2.



4.1 Community

4.1.1 Population size

- Provide more opportunities and a better lifestyle in the area to make it a more attractive to potential residents, such as young couples.
- Some argued that there was no need to grow the population, just maintain it. But most wrote that more specific, targeted and deliberative approach to population attraction was required. Often respondents spoke about the limited utilisation of some facilities which would be addressed by population stability or growth (retail and service sector viability, education and training, better transport links supported by patronage growth etc).
- There are fewer volunteers available to provide additional support (due to aging, leaving the area or retraining and returning to work). Red Cross, Ambulance Victoria, CFA and many others all regularly undertake recruitment drives to replenish numbers in their ranks, with varying degrees of success.
- Loss of population has other impacts including reduction in the size and viability of many sporting clubs throughout the Shire.
- Mining, tourism and aged care support can all drive population growth. Education and health care is also vital to keeping people locally and job ready.
- Targets to grow the economy and increase the population⁸ over the next 20 years were for most a priority

4.1.2 Youth

- Funding for youth programs and services is challenging and in the next 20 years, the gap in youth services will be a big challenge. While funding generally sits with the Western District Health Service, Council has a logical place in youth work delivery and has this role in other LGAs (such as Glenelg Shire). A number questioned why the role sat with WDHS in terms of its 'natural fit', something which could be further discussed between the two agencies.
- There is a likely need for a Council funded youth officer and for youth to be considered specifically in the Council Plan via a youth strategy.⁹ The current model for youth services makes it hard to engage with youth, for example, the Recreation and Leisure Strategy Services engagement faced challenges obtaining feedback for people aged 12-25. The same problem arose with engagement with youth in cultural arts in 2018/19 – this being a group less well represented in PAC audience programming. The needs within this group also differ significantly. Traineeships could also be a focus of a youth strategy.
- The key Council assets/services for youth are the library, cinema, gallery (potentially), Performing arts centre and events delivered via the Economic Development team at Council. Youth have been saying for a long time that they are looking for things to do.

⁸ The challenge federally may be a lack of a population or settlement policy compounded at State level by a perceived investment focus on Metropolitan Melbourne that reinforces concentration of population in areas where scale of growth impacts liveability.

⁹ Council's health and Wellbeing Plan 2010 foreshadowed the need for such work to be completed.

- Schools are a key to understanding the needs of youths, whether it be in terms of housing, mental support or other support services. One interviewee specifically referred to specific students 'sleeping rough' in Hamilton, being homeless – a situation not seen before in the Shire. It is unclear whether this was due to domestic issues in the family home but feedback suggests the interconnection of issues that 'chase each other' – domestic violence, alcohol management, mental illness, household financial stress and so forth.
- Different views exist on what gaps exist in youth support services. One interviewee suggested there were no gaps, but more said that they did exist – in speech pathology and occupational therapy, with waiting periods of up to 6-12 months in regional areas.
- No alcohol or drug dependency programs are available for people under 18 in Hamilton.
- Brophy Family and Youth Services has only recently opened in the area and according to some, did not have adequate staffing until recently. A lack of easy-to-access mental health services is a challenge. The broader issue of extension services and how they operate within Hamilton is not just limited to youth services, noting State Government models typically locate key social service providers in locations such as Warrnambool which are difficult for many to access.
- There are issues on farming properties for mental health for the under-18s age cohort.
- Effective transport connections to other regional centres is a challenge for youth in accessing key facilities and services, meeting people and engaging. Bus services are limited to key regional centres including Warrnambool.
- There are programs for youths with disabilities in the area, but what about the need to develop more programs for youths without disabilities? The gaps in programs can often be amongst those who are not disengaged and are without disabilities¹⁰.
- Youth do not feel connected to the community, which becomes an issue when they are leaving school. Many say they do not belong to their town or community.

Opportunities

- Walk to school and Genr8change are key projects for youth in the region driven by the Southern Grampians Glenelg Primary Care Partnership¹¹
- Standing Tall, a youth mentoring program from Baimbridge College is being rolled out to all local schools in 2021/22.
- Youth hubs such as Youthbiz in Hamilton have historically played an important role for youth activities and there should be a renewed effort to deliver a similar facility in future.¹²
- Beyond the Bell – a program focused on education and literacy for younger people.¹³
- Opportunities through YACVIC: Youth Affairs Council Victoria.
- Council should provide a space or coordinator for young workers in town to collaborate and have spaces to use. Allowing a coordinator to work with youth and support their development with other peers while giving a safe and organised environment to work and play (e.g. scout hall).

4.1.3 Health and Social Services

- The gap is widening, needs to be a minimum standard of living.
- Young families are struggling the most.
- A liveability framework is needed that takes a system view and truly connects to the determinants of health. It should be based on clear recognition and existing data on what drives liveability. The framework should have defined focus areas with multiple links to principles, and could be used with service provision and identify who is best served to deliver each element. Strategic thinking and aligning effort is needed to achieve this.

¹⁰ In Nov 2020 \$12.99M was provided for Hamilton Special Development School, which forms part of a wider ecosystem of special needs support services in Hamilton including Mulleraterong Centre and Southern Stay.

¹¹ Refer to <https://sgqpcp.com/> for further details.

¹² Established in 1997 by Southern Grampians Community Health Services Inc, which amalgamated with HBH later that same year. YouthBiz provided a drop-in centre and a wide range of health and recreation services to the young people in the community. As sourced from WDHS, 2007 from http://wdhs.net/sites/default/files/documents/quality_of_care_report_2007.pdf. Had 4,000 attendees each year. Closed post 2010.

¹³ Refer to <https://btb.org.au/>. An entity based in Warrnambool with local representatives/contacts throughout region.

What is working well / opportunities

- Council and health care services worked well together during the height of the COVID-19 impact. Good drive through testing facilities, limited cases and none hospitalised.
- The Big Hearts program run by Western District Health in partnership with St Vincent de Paul worked well to provide for those in need during period of peak COVID-19 impact.
- Identify the role of existing technology providers in improving aged internet literacy, for example. SGAE, SW TAFE.
- Helping Hands, a WDHS program, which started due to COVID-19 restrictions, helps with groceries, pharmacy, making calls etc. This will continue post pandemic. There is no funding for the program and it is resourced by volunteers.
- Need to keep regional status of the hospital otherwise funding will decrease. State/federal investment in the emergency department and intensive care unit remain priorities, noting WDHS has a comprehensive business case justifying such funding being delivered.
- The National Centre for Farmer Health is based in Hamilton and provides support and intervention for risk factors associated with farming populations. They recognise the differences between living on a farm and living within a town and have bipartisan support. The organisation would like to improve and better align more of their partnerships.

Social issues that need more support

- Alcohol is a huge problem in the area and need support to address substance abuse.
- Mental health is an issue, need more support in the area. Headspace does not have a permanent space in Hamilton and was unsuccessful in securing funding. Nearest services are at Portland and Warrnambool, but the distances to these locations are challenging. People are falling through the cracks and there is still a lot of stigma around mental health.
- Need for more help for older people and those with disabilities, often they rely on neighbours for support.
- Need better facilities for people with disability, more public seating on the main streets, improved footpaths, easy to read signage, handrails.
- Not all people with disabilities are eligible for NDIS support, need resources for them.
- There is an increase of people with dementia in the area, community need to be educated on this and be tolerant and supportive.
- Increase funding for health services required to support needs, for example resource for occupational and speech therapy for children.
- Increase in Emergency Department presentation, the facility is not fit for purpose, as it is located in the old hospital foyer, a point acknowledged both within WDHS and by allied emergency service practitioners. Current arrangements give the impression that a person delivered by Ambulance gets priority when this is not the case. Patients brought in by VicPol through a shared space with general community not desirable either.
- Better facilities and services needed for parents of babies within Hamilton – change and feeding facilities and lactation support.
- Social isolation is one of the biggest issues, and farming is particularly isolating. Responsibility of the community to be inclusive, to address social needs.
- The gaps in specialized services such as psychology, speech therapists etc., mean that when assistance is sought, specialists treating community members have no understanding of farming.

Accessing services

- Dealing with Centrelink can be frustrating for those struggling to make ends meet, they need to be more sensitive to circumstances of people.
- Too many services for South West Victoria, particularly mental health services, are Warrnambool-centric. The mental health services in Hamilton are not consistent; every time someone attends, they need to deal with a different person.
- Community bus service (CBS) run by WDHS and volunteer transport could be enhanced, especially for those living at home with limited choices. There is a high demand for the current resource. Often volunteer cars do not have the necessary equipment to transport people with disabilities. Taxis are

not an option for some due the expense. The challenge with public buses is the difficulty walking to the bus stop.

- There is a lack of awareness of what is available in terms of transport services for people with disabilities and the elderly.

Delivering health services

- Without investment by State Government in hospital upgrades (ICU, emergency department) recruitment becomes more difficult. Prospective nurses choosing preferred work locations will be drawn to better, more modern facilities and lower nurse-patient care ratios such as in now the case in Warrnambool.
- Insufficient range and number of health professionals. But new models are being developed. WDHS are collaborating with Central Queensland University to improve the situation. Also developing clinical skills lab, a training centre for Victoria and Tasmania.
- Ways of delivering health care services will change and already are. Increased homecare, where nurses go to aged care facilities and telehealth services are delivered into patient homes is becoming more common (and will continue to be so).
- Hamilton does have some visiting services but they are not sufficient to meet needs and are only available occasionally.
- Australian Red Cross, amongst others, has found resourcing and recruiting volunteers challenging in the region. They have a team of 16 volunteers in the Shire and provide psychological first aid to patients. The type of aid provided has changed over time and having volunteers able to adapt to these changes is not always straightforward, especially if volunteers are used to previous ways of supporting first responders. Capacities in Hamilton compared to other areas also differ. In metropolitan areas, Red Cross provide support to migrants and people on temporary visas. In Portland and Warrnambool patient transport capacity to take patients to appointments is also available.

4.1.4 Housing

Social housing and homelessness

- Housing demands are determined by prioritisation on the Victorian Housing Register. This is a single list that enables people to apply for public and community housing concurrently. The register has different categories and within those are different priorities groups which is influenced by bushfire affected, family violence, homelessness, age, housing no longer fit for purpose, and income affected (lowest priority).
- Currently the largest demand for social housing is for one-bedroom properties but this is only a small portion of overall housing stock in the Shire.
- Women over 55 are a vulnerable group that experience homelessness due to limited financial security, limited job opportunities and often marriage breakdowns. More single bedroom homes will be needed to provide shelter for this group now and into the future.
- Some education providers in Hamilton in 20/21 began seeing examples of homelessness among their students. Is this a one-off? These educators questioned where the public housing is to support those affected.
- However demands are relative across regions and the Shire is not under the same pressures as other communities. Waiting lists for social housing in Portland and Hamilton are significantly shorter than those for Horsham, Warrnambool and Bendigo. This is something also reflected in the Victoria's Big Build housing, a major social housing initiative where funding will be more concentrated in Horsham and Warrnambool than Portland and Hamilton.¹⁴ Demands therefore exist for social housing but should not be over-stated, regardless of some visual examples on local streets of the homeless seeking refuge.

¹⁴ See <https://www.vic.gov.au/homes-victoria-big-housing-build>

- We can also learn from others. SalvoConnect noted there is a food centre model in Horsham that works well and could be delivered similarly in Hamilton for those in need of support¹⁵.
- Where a shortage in sheltered accommodation exists, SalvoConnect provide swags as a temporary measure. Reports suggest these work well with clients. It is also the case that some people are difficult to place in housing, especially when there is a history of vandalising property.
- Programs for social housing include:
 - Thousand homes for the homeless – to create more smaller homes on existing sites to redress the balance in property types/sizes available. Some of this is likely to occur in Southern Grampians Shire.
 - The Big Build – 25% of the funding is to be spent in regional Victoria. Purpose is to consolidate and replace old housing with new, smaller houses.
- The biggest challenge now and into the future is family violence and access to crisis accommodation. Alcohol and drug dependency, and mental illness are leading causes of homelessness and these issues are often intertwined and becoming more complex.
- Overall, encouraging social housing providers and Affordable Housing Associations to come into the market and expand their business would be beneficial, as well as localised support for drug and alcohol dependence to provide core local support.

Range and location of properties available (rent/buy)

- In 2021, the real-estate market is buoyant. Until recently there was little or no opportunity for capital gain in the housing market and this had been the situation for some 5-8 years.
- Many investors are opting to sell rather than renovate (modernise) due to the surge in prices, this has had a short-term impact on the availability of rental properties. Where the choice exists between securing capital appreciation by selling (often as is) or needing to invest substantially to improve rental stock, many landlords are choosing the former approach.
- Opinion is divided on whether buyers and renters, including downsizers are finding suitable housing. A few argue that the low cost of housing allows for people to buy low and upgrade. More suggest there is an issue of market failure but within the select area of key worker housing, manifest through feedback on recruiting specialist staff.
- Often new employees want to rent before they buy in a regional location relatively remote from Melbourne and this has been an ongoing issue for several years. This included professionals such as education providers, chefs, nursing and aged care workers, and academic staff. Some will relocate to other centres such as Warrnambool to secure accommodation and travel to Hamilton – a point observed with a number of Ambulance Victoria staff.
- Good quality rentals in Hamilton are critical for agencies such as VicPol where staff are assigned a region such as Hamilton for 2 years before options for the next assignment arise. With a turnover of 10 or more staff a year this is a measurable needs group. The same appears true of Council, WDHS and other key agencies.
- There were differing views about the impact of Airbnb on accommodation supply, with some commenting that much of the housing is listed as Airbnb while other thought short-term rentals such as Airbnb have not affected the rental market. There has been less availability of these properties since the onset of COVID-19.
- Real estate agents reported there is interest from buyers from out of the area, including Melbourne, though this is not as high as perception suggests.
- Three bedroom homes generally seem to be the minimum house size, though there is also a need for those who are downsizing.
- Professional couples are looking for more than a standard weatherboard home – executive style home. The quality of housing in Hamilton is lacking. Buyers want more than a 3 bedroom home with one bathroom.
- Housing construction has grown from around 16-20 new dwelling per annum in the Shire prior to 2018 to around 40 homes last financial year. That figure is well likely to be exceeded in 21/22.

¹⁵ Currently SalvoConnect and Uniting Church both provide food hamper support to clients. This could evolve into a one stop shop to avoid double dipping and possible inefficiencies.

- Housing needs outside Hamilton also need consideration. Major projects such as Grampians Peak Trail might bring in 30-50,000 more visitors to Dunkeld. Some will choose to live there. How many houses can be built in Dunkeld without an adverse impact on the town character? Others are buying older properties in areas such as Coleraine and upgrading for staff integral to their business (such as Vickery Bros).
- Reports suggest that families moving to the Shire under the Economic Migration Project have experienced difficulties securing accommodation due to unemployment or casualised work. Suitable housing for the size of family, typically of 5-8 people is sometimes a challenge and the inability to provide references and a language barrier make securing rentals extremely difficult in a competitive market. This highlights that any population initiative needs to be fully considered for 'wrap around services', including housing – as well as the easier services to deliver, such as language cafes.
- Undersupply of trades positions hampers upgrading houses. The training of key staff for some time by SW TAFE now has been occurring in Warrnambool, not Hamilton and businesses are struggling to access qualified staff.
- One person noted that the asbestos contractors in the area were reasonably priced, noting that asbestos lined houses are reasonably common in the Shire.

Accessible housing

- Age appropriate housing is an issue for people with disability – this needs to be a State Government focus, not the responsibility of local councils. Council does not need to drive issues beyond its remit.
- Need for greater aged care availability.
- Issues with housing can arise when those living in a property experience health changes and require more accessible living.

Planning and development

- The role of Council in the housing space is to provide the infrastructure to enable development within the town, open up land parcels, make places investment-ready and provide more assistance for housing developments. The Planning Department is working well, noting the speed of processing applications is important.
- If new housing estates are opened, blocks need to be larger, to accommodate the demand for homes with a backyard. Several stakeholders gave differing views on the property sizes needed. Overall, it is important to gauge where the market is going and to enable development to suit the different requirements and needs. Whilst the early stages of Lakes Edge have sold, most spoken to felt the future stages needed to have larger lots, better road frontages and some scope for rear yards.
- There is interest in developing large parcels of land for industrial purposes.
- Increased interest in the area since the start of the pandemic is noted. Flexible working arrangements will drive this further, but some people will be deterred from moving to the area until intercity public transport and connectivity is improved.
- Government grants for new builds and renovations have contributed to the increased interest in the area.
- Heat stress: insulation has improved and people are willing to spend more on insulation in new homes and renovations than previously. Most new houses also have reverse cycle air conditioning.
- Securing builders and construction companies may be a challenge as there is a backlog of building projects.

4.1.5 Indigenous Community

- To map a way forward between First Nationals and Council, Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs) or some other more appropriate form of partnership agreement is likely required. Other Councils have already invested in this area including Glenelg and Horsham. Southern Grampians is not a leader in this space.
- Reconciliation Australia are taking up to 18 months to approve RAPs. This needs to be faster if this is the model chosen.

- It is more complex to progress partnerships in Southern Grampians Shire due to the diversity of language and circumstances of First Nations groups (mobs). There is no single registered Aboriginal party in the Shire – there are three.¹⁶ Notwithstanding, the effort to progress partnerships remain pressing.
- The Victorian Aboriginal and Local Government Action Plan provides an over-arching framework that should enable LGAs and Aboriginal communities across Victoria to recognise, celebrate and growth good practice.
- Other LGAs note that Councillors need to be more culturally aware and partner with first nation groups. Staff now do cultural awareness training, an outcome of the RAP.
- Education of indigenous culture through schools, tours and well-managed community programs is needed. Ensure stories are shared and accurately portrayed. Where massacres have occurred, including Konong Wootong reservoir – ensure it is told correctly.
- Easier ‘wins’ exist locally. The issue with the naming of specific streets and their relation to previous conflict between colonisers and First Nations tribes needs to be discussed and resolved – see RAP’s above. White Street in Coleraine is an example in point.
- Greater cross culture collaboration and relationship building to create trust is a priority.
- First nation groups need to be active participants in discussions on climate change, water management, fire management, art and culture.
- Need to progress cultural representation initiatives such as the naming of rooms at the children’s hub. Opportunities through youth programs, arts events and performing arts.
- Any work Council delivers in developing a partnership needs to recognise two essential aspects (a) symbolic recognition – everything from flags, to street names, welcome packs for new residents to country, possibly the role of Australia Day; and (b) material change – actions that measurably improve quality of life for first nations peoples – in areas of employment, health care, housing. The outcome is about healing, acknowledging the past but just as importantly moving forward.



4.2 Education

- Education is a prime asset and is a driver for young families in relocating to a region. It is one of the Shire’s strengths and competitive advantages.

4.2.1 Primary Schools

- The Shire has 15 public and private schools providing Prep to Year six education.

Table 3: Primary Schools operating in Shire

School	Location	Denomination status	Student No.	Staffing (teachers)
Balmoral Community College	Balmoral	Public	Total 117 59 (P-4) 43 (Yr 5-8) 15 (Yr 9-12)	24
Branxholme-Wallacedale Community School	Branxholme	Public	12	4
Cavendish Primary School	Cavendish	Public	39	5

¹⁶ Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation, Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation, Barengi Gadjin Land Council Aboriginal Corporation – source: <https://www.aboriginalheritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/victorias-current-registered-aboriginal-parties>

Coleraine Primary School	Coleraine	Public	45	5
Dunkeld Consolidated School	Dunkeld	Public	115	8
George Street Primary School	Hamilton	Public	80	16
Good Shepherd College	Hamilton	Independent	Total 177 76 (up to Yr 6) 101 (in high school)	25
Gray Street Primary School	Hamilton	Public	243	17
Hamilton North Primary School	Hamilton	Public	251	12
Penshurst Primary School	Penshurst	Public	9	3
St Mary's Primary School	Hamilton	Catholic	227	18
St Joseph's Primary School	Coleraine	Catholic	35	4
St Joseph's Primary School	Penshurst	Catholic	26	7
Tarrington Lutheran Primary School	Tarrington	Independent	141	13
The Hamilton & Alexandra College	Hamilton	Independent	Total 471 127 (up to Yr 6) 344 (in High school)	79

4.2.2 Secondary Schools and VCAL¹⁷

- Baimbridge College is the only public secondary school in the Shire.
- The schools in many cases provide a wide range of facilities including performing arts centres, indoor pools, music facilities, regional level cricket facilities (Monivae) and many other student support services.

¹⁷ The Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL - a practical option for students in Years 11 and 12. It is designed to prepare students for further education, training or employment by providing them with work-related experience, literacy and numeracy skills and an opportunity to develop personal skills. Source: <https://www.goodschools.com.au/start-here/at-school-and-beyond/understanding-the-school-curriculum-in-victoria/vcal>

Table 4: Secondary level Schools operating in Shire

School	Location	Denomination status	Student No.	Staffing (teachers)
Baimbridge College	Hamilton	Public	450	45
Monivae College*	Hamilton	Catholic	529	51
Hamilton and Alexandra College*	Hamilton	Independent	Total 471 127 (up to Yr 6) 344 (in High school)	79
Good Shepherd College (prep-yr 12)	Hamilton	Lutheran	Total 177 76 (up to Yr 6) 101 (in high school)	25
Tarrington Lutheran School (foundation to yr 6)	Tarrington	Lutheran	141	13
Balmoral K-12 Community College	Balmoral	Independent	Total 117 59 (P-4) 43 (Yr 5-8) 15 (Yr 9-12)	24
OneSchool Global 18 (yr2-12)	Hamilton	Plymouth Bretheren Christian	Total 42 10 (Primary) 32 (Yr 5-8) 15 (Yr 9-12)	NS

*Boarding offered. NS Not Specified

- The school infrastructure/condition of Baimbridge until recently reflected a lack of State Government investment and was split across Mt Baimbridge Road.
- The business case for comprehensive redevelopment of Baimbridge College was for some \$25M in multiple stages. \$9M funding has enabled demolition of older buildings on eastern side of Mt Baimbridge Road and some new buildings on consolidated western side of Mt Baimbridge Road. New building increasing interest/enquiries for prospective students.
- Some students attend RIST (around 3-4 year) for skills training in agriculture related fields.
- Opportunity exists for Council to work closely with Baimbridge College and advocate for State funding for completion of the Baimbridge College masterplan works.
- VCAL
 - Not all students entering year 11 and 12 seek to attend University. Some will seek hands-on skills, attend SW TAFE, RIST or other training entities.
 - Collaboration between schools is required to deliver VCAL. This was previously driven by the now redundant Hamilton District Skills Centre (HDSC), which substantively closed in 2020/21¹⁹.
 - SW TAFE has increased VCAL students intake from 8 in 2019 to 28 in 2020. VCAL student numbers were affected by the move of SW TAFE but this seems to be stabilising. Enrolments in Hamilton are expected to increase over time.
 - The VCAL student pool is not however large and only one provider is now likely needed. SGAE has finalised a memorandum of understanding with SW TAFE to see VCAL delivery solely via SW TAFE from 2021 into the future.

4.2.3 Tertiary education and training

- *South West TAFE (SW TAFE):*

¹⁸ Formerly known as Glenvale School – 90 Hamilton Chatsworth Road Hamilton.

¹⁹ The HDSC facility is now absorbed into the Baimbridge College school offering.

- Currently SW TAFE at Hamilton has 220 students. Numbers have declined over the last 15 years but have been stable for the last three. The Hamilton campus has potential but investment has been slow and lacking for some time.
- There are 30 fee free courses in Victoria, including the Diploma of Nursing (normally \$15,000 for a two-year course), Horticulture, Early Childhood Care, Accounting and Book Keeping.
- Education pathways from TAFE: all students who complete a diploma of nursing can enter the 2nd year of a Bachelor of Nursing at Deakin or CQU. This is the same for many other courses and there are a lot of pathways via Deakin University.
- There is guaranteed work for Cert 3 Individual Support Aged Care, Cert 4 Disability, and a Diploma of Nursing, with nearly one hundred percent employment at the end of the course. These are staples for SW TAFE to offer. However, the nursing studies facilities will require upgrading by 2024. They have already moved from the Hammond Street site (now SGAE site) to Ballarat Road because the facilities were inadequate.
- The renewables sector is already impacting SW TAFE. Service preparation for staff is provided at Keppel Prince. Courses are driven by industry and funding, with funding needed to set up the course with small numbers as a starting point to build from.
- The Victorian Government needs to improve how they work with local communities to enable people to be job-ready, particularly in new and emerging industries.
- SW TAFE has tourism courses on their radar, but tourism is primarily driven by owner-operated businesses. Really need qualifications in hospitality. They are not considering courses in mining, but they could offer short courses where skills are bundled together. Micro-credentials is a new way forward and on the horizon.
- *Hamilton District Skills Centre (HDSC):*
 - When first started HDSC had 4 students. This increased to over 200, doing certificate courses – hospitality, hairdressing, automotive, construction. Took students from as far south as Portland.
 - Not funded by State Government. Substantially funded by extension services delivered to Aboriginal communities in Northern Territory by the HDSC key staff led by Tony McGillivray.
 - HDSC will become a training facility at Baimbridge College in 2021. The drop in centre at Brown Street will also close.
 - A challenge at HDSCS was getting kids to commit for up to 12 months, especially if they are offered paid work during this period.
 - The key role of HDSC was to be a stepping stone between school and the workforce.
 - The loss of the Skill Centre will have a large impact on providing pathways and roles for young adults.
- *Rural Industries Skill Training (RIST):*
 - Deals with 28 schools in the region and offers educational and trainee pathways for all ages over 15, as well as short courses such as Beef Check and the Lifetime Ewe Management Program.
 - RIST has approximately 245 students at the Hamilton campus and another 40 at the Terang campus, with capacity for additional enrolment. They also have a virtual campus via Oculus Quest 2 which enables students to access the programs from anywhere and experience an immersive education via VR. With this online learning facility, RIST engages over 1000 students across Australia.
 - RIST have a number of industry partnerships including with Australian Wool Innovations, Meat and Livestock Australia, South West TAFE, Central Queensland University and links with the Great South Coast Food and Fibre Council.
 - Opportunity to utilise RIST in the future as a partnership with Council and the education hub to drive people to the region and provide desirable education and lifestyle opportunities.
 - The work being delivered by RIST strongly reinforces the pivotal role of technology, digital connectivity, the increasing focus for farmers on data analytics and smart farming practices.

4.2.4 Lifelong learning

- Southern Grampians Adult Education (SGAE) has approximately 50 enrolments at Hamilton and has been in Hamilton for over 20 years. Their aim is to help those who are disadvantaged.
- Outgrew Hamilton CBD site.
- SGAE noted that there will always be a need for adult education and teaching basic skills. A hub set-up as proposed in Hamilton CBD is not going to suit all learners, one size does not fit all.
- Advocacy for adult education could be stronger, and not all funding should be channeled into TAFE. The Victorian Government wants SGAEs to be a feeder to TAFE. However, SGAE's cannot make a loss on classes, need to be strategic in what they offer.
- SGAE is reworking their courses on digital skills, with areas of interest being digital skills for work, digital skills for study and basic digital skills. Opportunities exist in forestry but the career path is up and down. Hospitality is in the scope of SGAE but they don't have the facility.
- Many of the students at TAFE are older people coming back into education, though nursing has some younger students.
- A challenge for SGAE has been securing staff into key roles such as registered training organisation (RTO) reporting, a now particularly onerous task.
- Whilst SGAE could deliver training in other areas such as emergency management entities such as CFA, SES and Ambulance Victoria are also registered training providers and deliver their own in-house.

4.2.5 Education hub

- Education can and will need to harness technology to overcome distance in the learning space. To this end, a vibrant education/digital hub enabling post year 12 education in a community environment is likely needed in Hamilton in the next 20 years. This should include face-to-face tutor support, IT support, and a mix of students²⁰.
- The transfer of the RMIT site to SW TAFE is due imminently. Strategic master planning is expected for February/March 2021. The focus will be education hub options and community needs but a more central site within the CBD is likely needed to maximise accessibility for students.
- Future relies on training locals; need to go into schools to explain the pathways available.



4.3 Economy and Industry

- Government investment is required to boost economic growth. Relative to other parts of regional Victoria there is a strong perception that SW Victoria and especially Southern Grampians is 'missing out' on State Government support.
- Digital connectivity whilst it has improved, remains an issue and is a barrier for businesses in the area.
- The contribution of the region to the state economy is significant but undervalued.

4.3.1 Employment

- Need to have jobs created first, create the need for specific skills and then identify candidates.
- There are employment opportunities in hospitality in the region, especially as businesses are re-opening following the shutdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- There are several trades that need more qualified local staff including plumbers, builders, carpenters and cabinet makers.
- Farmers should be encouraged to give younger students an opportunity for farm hand experience.
- Tourism will grow in the area, particularly at Dunkeld, and filling key roles will be a challenge.
- There are still jobs in forestry.

²⁰ Deakin University and University of SA have both expressed interest in this opportunity, along with SW TAFE.

- Following the change to the HDSC, the closest building/construction training will be at Warrnambool. Most studying for their building qualifications could get work locally. Sourcing building staff for local businesses is challenging if needing to look outside the area.
- Local industry has found it difficult to recruit agricultural machinery operators, mechanics and welders locally.

4.3.2 New industries and skills

- Need to look at new industries, not old industries, as technology is the way of the future.
- Little industries are developing all the time and there is growth in some sectors. Examples given include Hamilton Diesel Repairs and Services which has increased from 20 staff to 45 in the last few years, and Platinum Products (stone benchtops) which employs 15 people and has demand which would allow significantly more staff – if available.
- Need for a strategy to bring in greater investment and more major employers. But the idea that a third larger employer is needed in Hamilton after WDHS and Council is not necessarily evident – significant employment exists in various businesses and agencies whether it be VicPol (50 staff, CFA District 5 office (>30 staff), Baimbridge College (45 support staff) Hamilton and Alexandra College, 46 support staff, Monivae College (89 support staff²¹) or medium sized private industry – Vickery Bros, Hamilton Diesel.
- Renewable energy represents a massive industry opportunity in SW Victoria, given the available wind resources and State Government announcements on renewables zones in late 2020. Southern Grampians could leverage this by providing worker accommodation and encouraging people who will stay and live. It can do more if State Government can be lobbied to support training and education programmes via SW TAFE or other providers in the key sectors needed to drive this investment, whether in manufacture, construction or maintenance.
- New skills are being needed regularly in the region now. Work completed on the Grampians Peak Trail involved bringing skilled workers in, but they should be available locally.
- The key stakeholders in the renewables sector are:
 - the Energy Unit at DELWP – deal with assessment component
 - Policy unit at DELWP – deal with amps and directions for delivering on targets
 - Local Government – monitoring plans, construction, conditions of approval
- VRET²² requires and specifically VREAS²³ projects deliver a strong community focus and require community benefits sharing programmes or community fund/grants. The biggest issue is engagement and ongoing communication with the community and stakeholders. This is the best mechanism for mitigating issues – keep affected people informed with construction updates, maintain a shopfront, hold a community reference group.
- There are two solar farms in South West Victoria, but there are some restrictions on output from some solar farms and a lot cannot connect until grid upgrades occur. The grid upgrades are the backbone of the new investment. No solar farms exist in Southern Grampians Shire. There are two wind farms located in the SE of the Shire presently – Oaklands near Glenthompson and Mortons Lane near Woodhouse, with another larger farm proposed near Bushy Creek.
- Wind farms, not solar farms are likely the main area of interest in South West Victoria. The technology has changed a lot with wind farms. The new turbines can generate four times the energy of the older turbines, which means fewer turbines are needed.
- Batteries are important with the challenges in the current grid but the Government is still working out how they will apply the zones in Victoria.
- Powerlines: above and below ground powerlines have their benefits in terms of servicing, visual impact, impact to birdlife such as Brogas etc. Infrastructure to support renewable technology is now part of the planning process and has become part of the conversation.

²¹ All school data sourced from <https://www.goodschools.com.au/compare-schools/in-Hamilton-3300>

²² Victorian Renewable Energy Target projects

²³ Victorian Renewable Energy Auction Scheme –Successful proposals will be awarded a 'Support Agreement' with the State of Victoria, which will establish a Hybrid payment mechanism between the proponent and the State, to ensure revenue certainty for renewable energy projects. Source: https://www.energy.vic.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0014/80510/VRET-fact-sheet-Auction.pdf

- Emerging issues will be the delivery of clear engagement with communities limited in experience with wind farms in their landscape, training for employees that could benefit from the new projects and education delivered.

4.3.3 Agriculture

- Growing seasons are changing, with less rainfall in spring and winter and more in summer (not the growing season). Storm events are also predicted in the climate models, which results in less rain overall but it falls heavily in localised areas and cause flooding.
- There has been a lot of work done on farms to adapt rather than mitigate for the effects of climate change.
- There are opportunities to diversify farming and agriculture and to grow more efficient crops that require less water. The more risky the climate becomes the more indoor farming will rise (vertically integrated e.g. hydroponics). Suggested crops included tomatoes and mushroom factories, as well as garlic, cannabis and premium meat.
- Digitisation is an area to be capitalised on, with Council needed to assist in funding to create pipeline systems for the future. The Digital Innovation and Smart Agriculture festival (DISA) and promoting technology should be a key area for Council to support. In this area Council is a leader in the region.
- Agriculture is one of the most technologically advanced industries. For example, some stock yards are controlled by remote control, vaccination gun talks to the scales for dosage, and drones count the water supply and completes stock counts. Previously farms would have 5 staff at all times to assist with the work, now they only get consults when necessary and began working as 'sub-contractors'.
- RIST encourages agriculture to incorporate AI²⁴, making Hamilton innovative and on the front foot with education across the district. However, it was noted that some farmers still prefer traditional methods and work the farm the same way as previous generations.
- Agriculture is not promoted well, with the perception in the media that it is dirty work and farmers are always waiting for rain. Need to get people to realise that agriculture has many opportunities. Only 25% of sector is on farm, the rest (the majority) of the jobs are in other fields such as transport logistics, contractor roles, and IT.
- Some comments that the meat industry is very inefficient, from a beast running around a paddock to protein on a plate. The process is excessive and is should be extensively reconsidered to ensure sustainability on a long term scale.
- Another stakeholder noted that while dairy may become more challenging in time due to climate change, in the next 10-20 years dairy farmers in the north are more likely to come south towards the region. Research will be one way to keep ahead of some climate change impacts, such as breeding more heat tolerant cattle.
- Establish community benefits when farmer's house wind farms and allow a system to use their land and get renewable energies to grow in the district.
- Farms are getting larger and buying smaller farms to achieve economies of scale.
- There is a higher standard of safety generally on corporate farming enterprises.
- How will forestry and agriculture co-exist into the future based on their impact? Which will contract, which will grow and be successful for consumers?

4.3.4 Mining

- Geological Survey of Victoria is about to develop its nine-year strategy. Their tag line is growing resources and powering regional economies.
- There has been no modelling of the economic value of resources such as Stavely Arc for the Southern Grampians Shire. Areas have been identified as prospective by Minerals Development Victoria, with field analysis completed by individual companies on a case-by-case basis.
- Much of the Shire is under a mining license of one form or another. A company on a retention licence or applying for a mining licence needs to demonstrate the resource is economically viable via economic modelling. They cannot simply sit on the license.

²⁴ Artificial intelligence.

- New technology has improved and refined the processes for geological assessment, e.g. devices that allows for views through rock to map prospectively and flyovers for electromagnetic variation.
- The Mining Licences near me site shows who holds different mining licences in the area.
- There is a significant interest in copper and lithium now, with particular reference to growing needs for copper in the manufacture of electric cars. Glenthompson holds the potential for copper mining.
- The Hamilton Mineral Separation Plant (owned by Iluka) is currently under maintenance with seven people working on site. They generally work on other projects in the region. There are no immediate plans for alternate use or demolition of the MSP facility and there is still an opportunity for a re-start. Northern Murray Basin deposit and other resources will determine this. However there have been preliminary investigations for how the site could be used differently, such as horticulture options or a freight logistics hub. There are also other mining tenements in the area including around Branxholme. These operations may require processing or support that Iluka could provide.
- Iluka Resources have a number of projects in the pipeline for Victoria, including a site just north of Lake Toolondo. A project in Wimmera has a lot rare earth opportunity, which are associated with electric vehicles and wind turbines. The bulk of rare earth elements are mined and processed in China but the goal now is to be more independent and process in Australia. There is research and development investment into rare earths and its uses, e.g. for military applications.
- Transport: There will be a need for a form of transport for Wimmera and the Northern Murray Basin projects to move the concentrates via Hamilton to Port (or Portland?). Iluka has experience at transporting concentrate via truck and rail. A-double trucks cannot travel through Cavendish so products are taken a further 80km to meet road licensing rules. Freight assets need to fit the business model. In the case of rail, it is critical that industry finds the network usable (some country roads can be poor).
- Employment: Iluka commented that when there is multiple large projects happening at the same time there is a burden on skills sets and poaching of staff happens for other projects located elsewhere (e.g. Melbourne Tunnel project). Attracting professionals to Hamilton is a challenge, though rental wasn't a particular issue.
- Gaining social licence (political support) was not an issue in Hamilton as it has been in other locations.
- Technology is changing the way mining occurs, with surveying of land via drones as standard practice, monitoring of agriculture and cropping, more robotics in processing and even the way landholders are engaged. Automation and instrumentation has halved the number of staff needed at MSP now compared to when Hamilton opened.
- The mine at Stavely could be a big opportunity for the area and a combination of towns will benefit directly.
- Supporting Mining Engineering Technology Services industry (METS) is needed to create a mini-METS²⁵ industry hub to service a place like Stavely.
- More housing, education, and support services will be required if there is mining growth in the area.
- It is a long process between identifying a potential site and turning a plot of earth. Mining licences need to be issued, planning approval via the Minister, work permits need to be issued, etc, the process can take up to 10-12 years.
- Earth Resources and LGAs need to build better relationships to attract investment and partnerships.

4.3.5 Plantation Forestry

- There is a perception that communities were wiped out by speculative forestry plantations (via the Managed Investment Scheme²⁶) but it is not true according to the forestry industry. 18,000 people are employed in the region in forestry across the value chain. More jobs are investment is coming.

²⁵ METS – mining, equipment, technology and services.

²⁶ According to the Commonwealth Dept of Agriculture, the Forestry MIS have been the predominant source of new investment in plantations since the mid 1990s⁴, and funded around 75 per cent of all new plantation establishment between 2000 and 2009. Forestry MIS mainly operated in Western Australia, the Green Triangle region of South Australia and Victoria, and Tasmania MIS companies mainly focussed on short rotation eucalypt species with forest management regimes suitable for the production of woodchips for the Asian pulp and paper market. This approach had the potential to deliver a quick return for investors, in addition to the tax benefits presented by MIS (source: Submission 135 into the Forestry Managed Investment Schemes, 2014). There are many others, however who have criticised many aspects of how MIS was rolled out.

MIS helped also fund farmers who wished to leave the land and could not sell. Industry wants to encourage a more efficient MIS model to be rolled out by the Federal Government in the future.

- Public sentiment about koala management is another challenge – the recent incident in Bridgewater in late 2020 by a landowner clearing koala habitat and killing koalas (which was photographed) creating negative headlines internationally.
- Forestry industry is looking at marginal land on productive farms due to cost of acquiring land in SW Victoria. It is observed that between 15-20% of farming production land is under-utilised due to fence buffers, the way centre pivot irrigation operates and other internal farm arrangements. Can we get trees on these areas, including as shelter belts?
- Tree-breeding Australia is looking at tree species that need less water. Biggest issue is the distance to market - 150km-200km is the critical factor. Areas north of Hamilton remain of interest for forestry, even in a world of climate change.
- There is interest in reopening rail for timber freight as it is a cheaper option and enables the timber to be transported longer distances (i.e. more than 150 kilometres). However it will require Government funding. Road freight is the likely reality for now and the foreseeable future.
- The use of larger vehicles to move timber, A doubles²⁷ (or a prime mover coupled to two semi-trailers), was referenced as a way to more efficiently move loads via the road network (heavier trucks, less of them). The challenges for the industry relate to efficient routes that reduce excessive transport costs, noting the mix of State and Local roads used.
- There is a change to the farming demographic with children returning to the farm to help out and bring a green lens to the discussion. They recognise the science including regenerative farming.
- All hardwood – 5 million tonnes per year – is going offshore. If 30% could be kept here it would be a win as Australia is currently a net importer of wood. One tenth of this supply would support a viable mill²⁸. Unclear where it would be built in SW Victoria but likely near the timber source.
- Waste-to-energy options: considering a pellet factory in Mt Gambier. It uses all the wastewood from forest floor post-harvest and can also add hay to it. Sell to Asia to burn for fuel. Would a pellet factory work in the Southern Grampians?
- A regional scale for biomass units, across council boundaries, would have more scope for state government funding than keeping it based within one shire.
- The first in-forest wind farm in Victoria is currently being delivered in the La Trobe Valley – Delburn Wind Farm. Another now exists in SW Victoria, in Glenelg Shire at Kentbruck on the Portland Nelson Road.
- There is a lot of investment in technology. Currently using AI and robotics technology now, mills have also invested in automation.
- 30-40% of forestry staff are sourced from overseas as there is not a big appetite for local people to go into the industry. Gippsland has the best recognised training facility in Australia. Skills needed include data analysis, technical people to use and fix the technology.
- Forestry plantations are all owned by international investment companies with smaller operators being forced out or acquired. They would like to employ locals but don't sell themselves well via public relations and don't have strong relations with the Victorian Government.
- Opportunities for the next 20 years:
 - Wood encouragement policy – look to use green triangle timber on any local project (see procurement). Use timber before other materials.
 - Trees on farms – needs a policy with State Government to facilitate this.
 - Carbon capture and carbon policy at State and Fed level.
 - Bioenergy opportunities.
 - Unlock projects and reduce red tape.

²⁷ A road train measuring 36.5m in length comprising a truck and two trailers with GVM of 79-83 tonnes (source: <https://www.truck.net.au/sites/default/files/TAPs%20-%20description%20of%20truck%20configuration%20September%202016.pdf>)

²⁸ Subject to approvals and permits being obtained.



4.4 Transport

4.4.1 Public transport and connectivity

- There is a strong need for better public transport that caters to the needs of a diverse community and reduces unnecessary car travel.
- The distances between towns and locations in regional areas are challenging and often misunderstood by people living and working outside the area, particularly in metropolitan areas.
- Public transport and airports are keys to increasing the desirability of the region.
- Access to Warrnambool is critical.
- To progress any case for passenger rail, forecasting data is needed to demonstrate that patronage for rail will grow and revenue from ticketing will support the service provision. This is currently missing.
- A sustainable model of transport is needed with the right solution for each town and community. In Corangamite the Department of Transport has co-funded a review of community transport facilities to identify what gaps exist and how the Department can support improvements.

4.4.2 Freight

- Most freight trips start on the local road network. Councils can choose for specific roads to be avoided by industries such as forestry.
- Trips involving forestry freight tasking under 200km are difficult to make work on rail networks.
- Council should consider the best location for the intermodal hub and link it with the freight bypass of Hamilton. An intermodal hub at the train station in the middle of Hamilton is not ideal. Hamilton is currently very walkable which is important for retail activation.
- The Mode Shift Incentive Scheme, a subsidy scheme for incentivizing rail freight, should be investigated for opportunities for the region, but it should not be the basis for a business model. Viable rail freight has less effect in South West Victoria due to the nature of local industries and supply chains.
- More broadly, rail needs more investment in Victoria. This includes rail standardisation to enable better passenger access to Ballarat and Melbourne as well as better access to the national freight network. This will require Federal funding and will cross several state borders.
- A transport plan is needed for the State of Victoria. Further suggestions were provided via the submission from the Rail Freight Alliance on Victoria's 30 year Infrastructure Strategy.
- The carbon impacts of road and rail should be modelled and considered when projects are costed. Not clear they are at the moment when rail projects are being assessed.
- Managing the movement of A Double heavy vehicles in locations like Hamilton will be critical. There is a desire by the industry for more A-Doubles and plans to open corridors for these vehicles but the roads aren't built for those loadings.
- Climate change is likely to cause change to agriculture and cropping, which may shift the demand on freight needs.
- For transport requirements of concentrates for mining industry, see 4.3.4 – Mining.
- Continued investment in roads and key freight roads is important.
- Council should focus on an Alternative Heavy Vehicle Route in the next 20 years, as well as gateways into each of the towns.



4.5 Environment

- Environments such as Lake Hamilton need to be better maintained by Council but more positively, the park at Lake Hamilton (all abilities playground) is a great facility particularly for young families.
- Redgums were referenced by a number of interviewees. This community generally need a landscape overlay as redgums are under pressure.
- The Forest Practices Code talks about not planting blugums in the wetlands. As ephemeral wetlands there are times of dry and wet. Planting in the dry undermines the wetland eg Walkers Swamp. Wetlands should be saved as an ecosystem, not used as forestry plantations.
- Redgums didn't develop in a forest setting. They had little competition and were not hemmed in. They are a floodplain, soggy ground species. Bluegums will out compete them. The bluegum expansion was driven by speculative investment, and since they have been removed from Walkers Swamp the Redgums have re-established.
- While there is no harm in overlays in the planning scheme, systems need to be in place to back it up.
- The typical figure for landscapes to be environmentally viable is 30-40% retained. South West Victoria is well below that threshold and the planning system doesn't recognize what was lost.
- Windfarms consider the landscape as it is. If they install infrastructure on a location they won't want to restore a wetland as well that brings back the brolgas. But changes in land use don't need to be locked in, and Walkers Swamp demonstrates this. Incentives will probably be needed to bring land back to its original habitat value.
- Green Swamp is a project with a private landowner that straddled two council areas. A boundary realignment resolved issues for the project and the site is now permanently protected. The culture of the staff, collaboration and transparency is important in successful projects.
- Council's need to provide resources to manage their environmental outcomes. Partnerships are also important. For example, voluntarily Ararat contributed \$10,000 for road upgrades as part of the rehabilitation of Walkers Swamp and it made a significant difference.
- Working with CFA to put firebreaks at fencelines. Ploughed fire breaks should be near fencelines rather than creeping into the grassland on road reserves, which are easier to manage. Big difference with fires in grasslands eg kangaroo grass and phalaris. Fuel in native grasslands is much less (CFA say 3-5m flame height, not 20-30m as in phalaris). Phalaris can be a nightmare with fires.
- Droving is a challenge, especially in the south. Other nearby LGAs have struggled for political reasons. SGSC is a leader in management and protecting grasslands.
- The next 20 years ... in the past Council has focused on pools and infrastructure, yet you can go to Grange Burn and see platypus. Or go to Parklands and see Eastern Barred Bandicoot. Council doesn't recognise these adequately as major assets. These are points of difference.
- With redgums we are looking at a landscape of really old trees. Not much regeneration, except in roads. Like a community of a retirement village and cemetery. No recruitment. Need to address this. Storms of 2020 impacted Vasey and Balmoral, impacting redgums specifically. Not formally documented. These same trees are being impacted by Lurps, a sap sucking bug which is killing off trees via defoliation. Due to lack of understorey.

4.5.1 Water

- The politics of water will become louder, more contested.
- The role for government is to invest in the science behind water management and look at how groundwater aquifers are working. The primary vehicle for the region is the next sustainable water strategy.
- People now see groundwater as more reliable and better quality than surface water. This has been driven not just by climate change but competitive advantage from access to groundwater. Others however see these as inextricably connected – less surface water equals less groundwater.

- The Food and Fibre Council are keen for Southern Regional Water to update the groundwater hub (last updated 2015).
- Agriculture occurring in the Southern Grampians Shire currently is not water intensive, being mostly dryland farming, but this is likely to change over time. Dilwyn aquifer is deep which means significant infrastructure is needed for feasible access to this groundwater.
- The Water Act 1989 is the key legislation, and Local Management Plans are a key driver of water regulation. Groundwater aquifers are capped just like surface water. Aquifers need to be managed as a whole to free up the movement of water.
- Currently legislation does not allow new licences to be issued to access surface waters, but they can be issued for limestone aquifers.
- Environmental flows are being better managed today than previously, impacting the health of water systems and enhancing fish migration. There is sufficient water falling on land to seep through to sub surface aquifers.
- Issues are not being found with pressure or depth of water in limestone but issues are being found with basalt. Southern Rural Water will be increasing and promoting groundwater access, especially in the Limestone area.
- Land prices are influenced by water access, and impacts the land value in Hamilton.
- There is more scope with integrated water management, recycling water fit-for-purpose and using pipelines.
- There will always be a need for localised modelling, and changes in how modelling is done have made it more user-friendly. The sharing of data from localised hydrological assessments by proponents is not something presently published (due to copyright) but has been raised as an opportunity.
- DELWP undertake long term water assessments every 4-5 yrs as well as looking back over the last 10-20 yrs. These long term water assessments are critical and identify opportunities.
- Under climate change a 20-28% reduction is expected with streamflows. If forestry increases this may increase further. Plantation forestry is a big user of water (though there are differences of opinion with industry on the extent of demand). South Australia has introduced regulations and a water allocation plan which dictates how much water is used by a plantation based on crop type. The SA policy is pushing forestry into Victoria due to access to aquifers, good climate, and good access to market with export potential via Portland. But this makes land expensive for forestry.
- First Nations: Over time, it is likely to see more acceptance of cultural flows, such as First Nation access to water for eel traps around Lake Condah. Hopefully First Nations will be able to access water through other legislation in the future, such as Native Title, however currently the Water Act provides more security. At the Mitchell River local indigenous groups have first right to the water and the same will occur at Budj Bim. This is a significant shift and will be a game changer.
- Within the next 12 months, a number of water licences are likely to be issued for projects linked to Deakin University, such as value added cropping and intensive cropping. A push to open up agriculture will rise.
- Great South Coast Food and Fibre Group is now advocating strongly to the Minister and they have established a committee called *Realising our Water Opportunities*.
- Council should have a focus on water security and the benefits of the area relative to other parts of Victoria.
- Wannon Water have evolved their perspective over the last five years to focus on the bigger picture to consider how the region can succeed and the role they can play in that. In the next 20 years integrated water management will be important, with a greater need for water infrastructure to secure water resources for stock and domestic use. The Southern region may need to look at the practices to the north.
- Financial sustainability of the water industry will be a significant challenge. There are aging assets, a drying climate and increasing customer and regulatory expectations around water and sewage without increasing prices. Infrastructure is key and all challenges are solvable but require money. Regions don't have the same density of customers as metro areas, and a different approach will be required.

- The Jacobs report noted that \$54 million per annum of extra value to the region could be achieved through a 10% increase in productive water use. Rather than every farmer investing in a bore, a small increase in the cost for the water licence could be used for an annual or biennial survey by Southern Regional Water.
- Pilot projects seem to be a way to drive more innovative solutions with water.
- If the different stakeholders and organisations work with a single voice in the region there is more chance for favourable decisions at State and Federal levels.
- There are quick improvements that can be made through better discussions about regulations, groundwater, reputation in the community and advocacy. We don't want to diminish environmental outcomes, even with opening up and simplifying the regulatory system.



4.6 Tourism

- The core demand for tourism comes from the domestic market and the full potential in the sector has not yet been realised.
- Ensure community collaboration is part of the tourism growth journey. There are examples where communities were left out of the process and created hurdles for councils.
- We need to focus on the visitor experience, the places they go, what they see when they get there. The entire package, not just the 'hero' landscape shots.

4.6.1 Accommodation

- Visitors have been enjoying longer stays recently when compared to average stays prior to the COVID pandemic.
- Limited accommodation options restrict tourism potential.
- A large hotel would provide jobs and vocational training opportunities.
- Accommodation needs to cater for people with disabilities.
- There appears to be a lack of self-contained accommodation in the region.

Caravan Parks

- The caravan park at Kingston SA was provided as a good model – owned by Council with a board that manages it. Caravan parks can provide accommodation for tourists as well as short-term housing e.g. for seasonal workers.
- Council role in caravan parks – should they be in this space or not? Depends on individual circumstances. Where market failure exists Council may want to be involved. Key might be to make it happen then sell it off. Free camping is not a good idea. Look at who is travelling – families with kids will want to be near assets like high quality playgrounds, communal cooking kitchens etc. The Dunkeld example is the model which has worked best in the Shire.
- Dunkeld Caravan Park is popular with visitors and chosen over Halls Gap for amenity reasons. The existing caravan park will be outgrown and future opportunities were suggested near Recreation Road. Any future investment in a caravan park needs to be consistent with the character of the area, not a Big 4 style format.
- The Dunkeld Caravan Park noted the opportunity to double the camping site over the next 20 years. Nonetheless, in time, the site will not be sufficient and a second caravan park in Dunkeld would be worth further exploring.
- There were differing views about the need for free camping options and whether offering free camping is a good idea.
- Coleraine Caravan Park needs to be relocated and is not large enough to sustain a private operator.

4.6.2 Visitor Information Centres

- Visitor Information Centres may require streamlining and better data collection. They may also have the capacity for the general public to pay Council rates ie expand current role.

- Visitor Information Centres talk to those with more discretionary time and tailor advice accordingly to each customer / visitor in ways digital tools do not. How do we commercialise this more? Tours? Leverage off existing investment. Digital resources such as websites can provide the key information and be kept up to date daily.
- How to do things differently – not less. Visitor centres can become business centres.
- Need better promotion and on-selling of activities for tourists, get away from brochures and use screens. Get people to look and build itineraries based on the interests expressed.
- Augmented Reality is expensive for what it delivers and doesn't bring enduring engagement. Prefer to invest in really good video, commentary and other content.
- Training for tourism operators to improve digital expertise may be needed.

4.6.3 Opportunities

Regional strategy and identity

- A new tourism strategy is being developed by Regional Development Victoria with a focus on natural tourism. RDV is assessing what can be done to help support and boost regional towns and ensure a balance between attracting visitors to natural assets without undermining their value by more visitors than they can handle.
- Need a long term plan/narrative for the region's tourism story/identity. The 20 year strategy should be in 5 phases of 4 years. Measuring yourself against things you cannot control can be a double edged sword, e.g. linked to visitor numbers. Wrong measure generates the wrong behaviour – where is the strategic alignment best fitting?
- The identity for the region should not be coastal, but rivergum floodplains and the Grampians National Park.
- Experiences need to be immersive and compelling. It is important to understand what the consumer of tomorrow wants and evolve the product to align with their interests. But you cannot be everything to everyone. Be clear on what your product is and supporting businesses will follow.
- It is important to link the individual tourism groups to the bigger picture, creating targeted stories about the region and educating itinerary planners about the wider offer, e.g. via trade shows.
- Opportunity to collaborate with neighbouring LGAs to develop programming and promotion regionally – refer to the Limestone Coast Local Government Association model. Funded by LGAs via subscription, State Government and some funding through Federal Government.
- Opportunity exists for a formal framework or MoU with Limestone Coast, who currently have these with Wimmera and Glenelg Shire. There should be project based common initiatives such as signage and marketing.
- Promote the area to coastal populations.
- The Great South Coast Touring Route is an opportunity to get people to Hamilton where there is more accommodation than at Dunkeld.
- There are commercial opportunities for guided tours of the region.
- Food based tourism will be a major opportunity and has been identified in the RDV Tourism Strategy.
- It would be good to connect with schools and get the kids involved and connecting with visitors, e.g. local fishing spots, places with visiting etc. Busiest time of the year is school holidays.
- Parks Victoria is a key stakeholder. Is tourism in their remit? It needs to be supported for them to pursue.

Attractions

- A vibrant Hamilton is required for the other towns to be vibrant (ref Coleraine). There needs to be investment in something to attract people to Hamilton.
- The amazing natural attractions need more curation. What does the consumer want as part of their experience? Accessible parking, signage, interpretation. Decide on a hierarchy of natural attractions, be clear on what each needs and use this to drive the advocacy and resourcing. The goal is to be a compelling overnight or multiple night stay. People want to connect to people, to authentic experiences.

- Big hero attractions are great, but you need other things to wrap it around – food, accommodation etc. It is all about the product. What is the core product in Hamilton and does it align with the audience that goes to the Grampians? Halls Gap is the key centre for nature based interests.
- Need a product that relates to the strength of the area – not rail trails and bike trails everywhere. You want quirky (character of the place). Dunkeld has the gourmet experience as their brand. Hamilton has the old and stuffy feel – use the tradition to become a strength.
- The Arboretum is a great attraction but nobody knows about it and it is under-utilised. A masterplan for the site as both an environmental and recreational asset was suggested. Possible additions for the site included a bike track and a children’s playground.
- Peshurst will have tourism opportunities with volcanic assets.
- Balmoral has opportunities linked to camping and Rocklands Reservoir.
- Budj Bim is a significant opportunity.

Upgrades and improvements to infrastructure

- Better access and signage into the national park.
- Lighting on walking trails.
- It is important to invest in regional infrastructure such as a website, tour planner, blogs etc.
- Reframe the question – e.g. Peshurst sewer is not just about contamination but about tourism. (Note from Wannon Water – there is a wastewater project for Peshurst and possible plans to sewer)
- Main street upgrades are critical for tourism, and key attractions need to be located on main streets, e.g. art gallery.



4.7 Council

4.7.1 Management and reputation

- Perceptions of Council from stakeholders noted an improvement in customer service approach. One commented that progress is still needed, and another commented that Council is highly regarded as they listen to the community and deliver.
- The Executive Leadership Team are more hands on, giving a more detailed and greater understanding of items. Work is still needed on responsibilities and accountabilities being at the appropriate level.
- Assess if efficiencies could be gained on common functions, which all Councils provide, by sharing services. For example, back office services, IT and finance.
- Building services records data should be managed by a private sector specialist.
- Debate around the role Council plays in emergency management. Should be involved in preparation and recovery, need clear role descriptions on planning.

4.7.2 Partnerships

- There is a need for greater collaboration and partnerships between Council and health services, schools, agriculture and not-for profits to identify gaps in community needs.
- Relationships and collaboration between different sectors of the community is important in driving successful outcomes.
- Regional partnerships do not work. Poor collaboration and service by state agencies. Value of the relationship with state agencies is low but we can’t afford not to be in it.
- Local councils work well together.
- Great South Coast regional partnerships are strong but more could be done collectively around strategic planning, which would be aided by work being done by the Victorian Government to get some consistency.
- DELWP is considering how to best consult on regional hubs and partnerships, and what are the best mechanisms to work collaboratively.

- DELWP has funding to assist local councils with strategic backlog. In the Planning Group there is \$1.5 million per annum for Statutory and Strategic Planning to support local government. The focus will be on creating good jobs and social value for these communities and leaving a long legacy. Partnerships with councils and mapping of Council priorities and plans will be important (Regional Economic Development Plans vs Regional Growth Plans).
- DEWLP is working on a reform agenda to simplify planning schemes. Minimise costs and facilitate development with referral to Advisory Committees to respond better to local priorities and local character issues. Need to also protect towns from inappropriate development, protect the high street and ensure new housing responds to the character of the landscape and neighbourhood.

4.7.3 Services and assets

- There are 'good bones' in the Shire but there hasn't been investment in key assets (Hamilton Police Station, WDHS base hospital, gallery etc). There has been a lack of vision and strategy and funding is limited.
- Base services should be provided in each town but the concentration should be in Hamilton – service centre for the region.
- Reviews of Council services have had various degrees of success. Need a different model as what we are doing is not working. Are there any services that could be provided by another source, e.g. Meals on Wheels could be provide by a health service.
- Council need to leverage off the strengths of the area, for example, Geelong invested into waterfronts and CBDs to make it more attractive.
- If tourism increases to the region with the opening of the Grampians Peaks Trail, upgrades to basic amenities such as toilers, showers, bins and parking will be needed.
- A bike strategy and infrastructure, such as cycling trails, are needed. Council could drive the ideas of what the bicycle route network could be.
- Electric car infrastructure is needed.
- Cricket hub as a new asset for the shire.
- Dunkeld needs a supermarket – location, zoning and forward planning to identify sites needed. Site behind the service station was suggested. The supermarket at Coleraine needs upgrade.
- Transport infrastructure is good, community bus works well.
- Issues with road drainage and lack of underground power on some streets around the Dunkeld Caravan Park.
- Internet and mobile coverage is poor and needs upgrading. Connectivity (both transport and digital) is a high priority
- The structure plan is becoming outdated and does not take into account new development such as the Peaks Trail.
- Wannon Water needs to extend the sewer as it currently doesn't service enough properties and creeks and waterways are impacted by failing domestic septic systems.
- Parking on the main street of Dunkeld is limited and locals are missing out. Large vehicles parallel park and take up multiple spaces. Consider traffic mitigation measures in Dunkeld, such as reducing the speed limit through town to 40km/hr.

4.7.4 Rubbish, waste and the circular economy

- Removal costs have increased with fewer services and smaller capacity. For commercial operators, such as the Dunkeld Caravan Park, this requires additional trips to the tip during peak visitation. Dunkeld needs more bins and for them to be cleaned more regularly.
- A policy was released 12 months ago called *Recycling Victoria* with a purpose to give direction to sure up the sector and give community confidence. There will be some costs arising from the changes and increased services, as well as education and data reporting obligations for councils. Need to advocate for South West Victoria, tell our own story, and recognise the challenge of distance in this region.
- Part of the State Government position is to head towards a waste authority. Trying to develop a waste act and commitment from Government by the end of 2021.
- Infrastructure Victoria's 30 year strategy has a section on waste.

- Federal Government bans on material exports means more processing needs to happen onshore before it is exported. Better quality materials will assist with secondary processing to avoid contamination. Pulling out glass and the separation of metals early will be key. This will provide opportunities for regional areas such as low tech employment opportunities. Keeping materials in the region is key for a circular economy.
- Organic waste is a challenge due to bio-security restrictions.
- Procurement opportunities for councils, e.g. glass into roads.
- There will be more investment available in regional areas for recycling, which is an opportunity for Council.
- Education and consistency across councils in waste practices would be beneficial.
- Opportunities to promote options to avoid and reduce creating rubbish within the community.
- Infrastructure Victoria have produced a plan for the optimal infrastructure model for the region and will be releasing this to councils for comment soon.

4.7.5 Arts

- Partnerships are critical in cultural arts at all levels, including with schools and youth. When communities outside Council deliver activities this often works well with youth. Smaller and simpler is the way ahead.
- The Creative Industries Strategy examined the strengths and weaknesses of each LGA. It has 7 objectives which provide a platform for local strategies. The challenge is to make people use it.
- The new gallery in Hamilton will be a game changer for SW Victoria and the State of Victoria. A top level arts precinct that attracts people from outside the region.
- There is a barrier in terms of how artists engage with Council. Council should support ideas not run them. People don't want money, they want support for ideas.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has forced Councils to look differently on presenting performing arts and re-think how they are delivered.
- Engaging with indigenous communities is a real challenge. But we don't seem to have permission from them to engage.
- The things Council should do over next 20 years:
 - New gallery in Hamilton.
 - Role in Council which is a community liaison, pathways to support in cultural arts.
 - Great for PAC to change its model. More community development/partnership model e.g. regular programming.



4.8 Emergency Services

4.8.1 State Emergency Services

- The SES has three units in the Southern Grampians – Hamilton (25 members), Balmoral (15 members) and Dunkeld (approximately 25 members). There is still an interest in volunteering, and targeted recruitment campaigns have been successful. Often in smaller communities people are involved in several volunteer organisations.
- SES like CFA is divided into volunteer components and admin functions which are distinctly separate locations.
- SES resources: Balmoral and Hamilton have boats as part of their physical resources due to their proximity to large bodies of water.
- Current and relevant information is critical for emergency planning. Storage and the dam wall in Hamilton are considered a risk by the SES and more information is needed on these issues.

4.8.2 Ambulance Victoria

- The Ambulance service catchment is approximately 80-100km radius similar to the hospital catchment.

- Ambulance staffing: there are 25 staff and recruitment is via the head office in Melbourne, though few recruits come from metropolitan areas. Most of the paramedics servicing the area live in Warrnambool and there is a high staff turnover of around 4-5 per year (equates to 20%). The local office recruits volunteers.
- Ambulance facilities and services: the current facility was built in the last ten years during a period of expansion for Ambulance Victoria. The Flying Doctors are a non-emergency patient transport contracted by Ambulance Victoria.
- Challenges for Ambulance service:
 - Response times cannot always be met for some locations. This is further challenged when relying on volunteers
 - Recruiting volunteers in the smaller towns such as Coleraine and Glenthompson is difficult
 - The Emergency Department at the hospital is poor and dangerous. There is no private setting and ambulance patients are walked through the waiting room which can be dangerous with aggressive patients and feeds a perception that if you arrive by ambulance you are fast-tracked through Emergency.
- Opportunities for Ambulance service:
 - A funded higher clinical resource in Hamilton that can undertake more responsibilities such as prescribing more medications, intubate patients.
 - In an ideal world, a second night shift to improve performance and respond to multiple call outs.

4.8.3 Victoria Police

- Staffing:
 - The Police Station at Hamilton operates 24 hours, is well staffed and supports smaller stations where required.
 - Got 9 extra senior constable positions under staff allocation model. Not related to crime stats.
 - Balmoral, Cavendish, Dunkeld and Peshurst are single member stations, Coleraine has four staff. Staffing model not expected to change.
 - A lack of supply in quality housing is a challenge to securing higher level professional staff.
- Facilities:
 - The Police Station at Hamilton was built in 1958 and has never had a major upgrade. Had renovations works done to custody area.
 - Reality is station is still old, doesn't meet needs of modern police. More investment is needed.
 - Emergency management facilities upgrade should be a priority in the next 20 years.
- Services: Emergency Management takes up more resources in regional Victoria than metropolitan counterparts and uses more resourcing.
- Family violence is a significant issue in the district.
- Alcohol and drugs drive mental health and suicide rates.
- Use Emma House for housing support in emergencies - refuges. Family violence is a big issue in this area and district. Quick to take out orders to resolve issues, intervention orders. We are not too badly set up as a community. Don't hear stories of people missing out on emergency accommodation. Property crime is alcohol related here. Typically damaged fences, signs, post boxes.

4.8.4 Country Fire Association (CFA)

- District 5 covers Balmoral to Peterborough and includes 96 brigades, 4500 volunteers, 11 groups and 4 catchment teams.
- Main office on corner of Coleraine Road and Mt Baimbridge Road is not fit for purpose. Houses over 30 staff but role of CFA has changed in the community support space, meaning storage capacity is limited.
- Bushfire risks (and climate change):
 - The fire risk changes every year, and the length of the season and intensity is also changing. There is a lot of fuel across the district.

- 2 risks in Southern Grampians – grassland and forest fire.
- Extremes will impact the bushfire risk/forest fires. Have seen this in last 20 yrs with way Grampians has burnt. 90% of bush has burnt between 2000 and now. 100 yrs before it was 60-65%. Frequency and reburn has increased. Higher extreme on rainfall leads to regrowth, contrasted with lower years of rainfall and hazard increasing.
- Grass fire. Its been a wet year but Bureau is forecasting return to normal rainfall by March and then drier than normal. 3-4 days of heat and grass becomes an available fuel. Really big challenge in next 20 yrs.
- With less people in community to identify the fire at early stages fires that might have got picked up early may be identified when it becomes larger and more challenging.
- Climate change, changes in population density and faster running grassland fires is the concern.
- One of the biggest assets we have is the high conservation roadside reserves which allow agencies to manage the risk better. Native grasslands much easier to manage.
- Richard Bourke speaks in asset terms. James Hatley sees roads as critical regardless of whether near towns or not. Flame heights in phalaris are upto 20m high. We cannot fight these fires. In native grassland it is 3-3.5m in height. Much more manageable.
- The way we respond to risk is changing. 20 yrs ago control lines along roadsides were done by volunteers who owned graders. But now this is rare to see this capacity. These days it is more VicRoads, CFA, Council and other land management agencies looking at undertaking these works. Spent \$200,000 on contractors to do control line preparation on Shire and VicRoads roads. Not a good investment because that \$200,000 could do a lot more if it wasn't a contractor. If you are paying staff to be supervising a contractor because of regulations and environmental values why not have staff do the actual fire break work.
- Firefighting capacity, infrastructure and agency collaboration:
 - The airport is pivotal to the district. Long term there are considerations to integrate aviation firefighting into the vehicle fleet.
 - There have been discussions to consolidate various EM agencies into a hub. However each agency has core requirements that are in conflict. The most logical would be to combine CFA and SES.
 - ICC at RIST and Warrnambool are inadequate and should be located at CFA and SES.
 - The Southern Grampian Shire Council is not well placed for emergency preparedness. The last simulation was around 6 years ago. The EM role at SGSC has not been static for several years but it is a critical role that needs to be static. The Council has a key role in relief and recovery – this needs to be dealt with.
 - It is important to actively pursue exercises and partnerships with other agencies.
 - Would like to meet with MRM in conjunction with the Shire and review recovery centres. A review of strategic fire breaks with Council is also critical.
 - There is a need to engage with the Council on what can be done to support the CFA hitting fires hard and fast (change in response policy to hit hard and fast around 6 years ago).
 - Air base: investigations are needed into the ability to service large air tankers from the current air base. The existing pavement thickness does not allow for it presently. There may be state and federal grants or funding opportunities to make the airport suitable for large air tankers. The preference would be for 4 fixed wing bombers.
 - There is potential for Hamilton to have a training facility for state-wide training programs for pilots. A combined ICC, CFA and SES training facility in Hamilton would be the preference.
- Volunteers:
 - The next 10-15 years will be telling. Currently the trajectory is as larger corporations purchase family farms people relocate and the volunteers are lost.
 - SES, CFA, the trend data – consistent decline in volunteering from newer generations. Those under 30 are highest rate of volunteering of any generation in last 100 yrs. But they volunteer esp in environmental and health organisations is short term in and out 10 week activities.
 - The volunteers however are mostly older because the young leave.

- Corporatisation of farming has changed volunteering has changed pool of volunteers. Reducing capacity. Off the land farmers, who operate remotely don't volunteer in the way owners on the ground would have. See this mostly in Southern Grampians, Glenelg and Moyne, esp Moyne.
- Staffing (paid roles).
 - Key roles within CFA in the region are difficult to fill and it is hard to attract potential recruits to Hamilton. Part of this is due to the CFA structure that means by the time employees have sufficient experience their families are reluctant to move from the community they live in.
 - Education based positions have been relatively easy to fill. The more fire fighting specific roles in veg management are much harder to fill.
 - 10 yrs ago it was easier with access to forestry people. That has changed. This was a natural pool of recruits.
 - Hamilton has a good education hub which assists. But fire safety roles are highly technical and very hard to get people from local area.
 - Housing has been a challenge in the past, but so too has employment for partners.
 - Availability of amenities such as Big W, KMART, home stores etc that people expect to have access to, also has impact. Lifestyle retail are lacking. Had candidate who applied for community education role, was from Metro Melbourne. Came out here, wife said no.
- Changing approaches and technology:
 - Hit it hard hit it early is not new. But technology, the logistics enable a better understanding of where fire is than say 20 yrs ago.
 - Aircraft availability – 116 aircraft in firefighting now (TBC). In 2003 it might have been 32. Four fold increase. Now have pre-determined dispatch with planes assigned to fire fronts before the fire takes off.
 - On ground requirement changes. Aircraft cannot do blacking out which is what leads to fires breaking control lines eg logs, roots etc smouldering. Aircraft are good at attacking the head of the fire. Always need manual labour along with the aircraft.
 - Aircraft allow better protection of assets, as they often use fire retardant. Game changer.
 - In next 5-10 yrs night time flying of aircraft will occur. At moment post dusk and before dawn are no fly. This will increase 8 hrs of aircraft availability.
 - Remote sensing to identify when fires start. At moment use fire towers to identify smoke. New technology being used elsewhere in the world with infrared detection. That will come here.
 - Started using satellites to monitor fuel loads in grasslands, curing etc. At moment curing measurements are done manually with people going into the field to examine curing rates. In 10 yrs this will likely not be the case.
 - Predictive mapping of fire behaviour.

05: Feedback – stakeholder workshops October 2019

In October 2019, two workshops were held with key stakeholders to provide their input into the development of the CVF 2041 and Discussion Paper. The first workshop was held locally in Hamilton and the second workshop was in Melbourne

Participants provided their input in the workshop by:

- Determining the current priorities and future vision for their particular agency, department or organisation;
- Identifying current and future projects that may influence, or be impacted, by the Community Vision Framework 2041
- Identify other key challenges and opportunities in the Shire

Attendees were able to provide their views on the constraints facing the Shire and the opportunities for consideration in the CVF 2041.

Participants were invited from key government departments and agencies and non-government organisations that have an interest or influence in the Western Victoria regions or Southern Grampians Shire.

Hamilton: There were 17 participants who attended the workshop.

Melbourne: There were 11 participants who attended the workshop.

The workshops were structured with three main sessions:

- Visioning and narratives – Capturing the aspirational stories about how each agency, department or organisation will influence the Shire and region by 2041.
- Current and future projects – identifying current and future projects or proposals that may influence the Shire into the future.
- Challenges & Opportunities – exploring these within the context of the Shire and the scope of the CVF 2041

The design of the workshop focused on eliciting ideas, comments and contributions from participants on each of these sessions, generating input to the consultation process. This report is structured as per these workshop sessions.

Each workshop ran for 2 hours, from 12.30pm – 2.30pm on Wednesday 16th October 2019 at the Hamilton Performing Art Centre, and Friday 18th October 2019 at the Municipal Association of Victoria offices in Melbourne.

5.1 Opportunities and constraints

Participants were asked to individually brainstorm the challenges and opportunities that they foresee on the journey to 2041, writing them on separate post-it notes. They then posted their ideas and collectively grouped them into themes. The notes below contain the themes as grouped by the participants. The bullet points represent the actual comments written on the post-it notes.

5.1.1 Hamilton Workshop – Identified opportunities

Culture / Tourism

- Recognise and acknowledge negative indigenous history
- Cultural tourism – creating connected / welcoming community structures
- Adventure and event tourism
- Indigenous cultural tourism
- Natural heritage
- Culture
- Branded product – internet, social media promoting primary produce

- Tourism
- Investment in tourism assets to build products that will attract visitation locally, nationally and internationally
- Arts & culture, attract people
- Cultural heritage
- Lifestyle – Grampians National Park, Heritage, community connectedness
- Market idea of tree change
- Market tourism and benefit from new business

Transport and connectivity

- Better public transport links
- Regular rail services to Melbourne
- Location – central
- Proximity to larger centres – Mt Gambier, Warrnambool
- Investment in roads and transport
- Tech shrinking distance
- Mobile service
- Cost
- Rail activation
- Live close to work – short commute
- Great Grampians Railway Ride

Youth pathways / engagement

- More support for young emerging leaders
- Youth services and support officer
- Future leaders of industry (industry mentoring program for young people) focusing on our industry opportunities
- Industry immersion program
- Youth employment strategy

Education / arts / digital

- Great education
- Education pathways – need to get message that great options exist already
- Art gallery / restaurant by Lake Hamilton
- Well educated 20s and 30s that could come back if new opportunities in Shire
- Expanded library, cinema, community gallery, CBD
- Art, culture, music, vibrant community
- Digital economy
- Education opening
- Good health, education and aged care services / Affordable housing / Vibrant ag sector / liveability
- Partnerships with education providers i.e. Uni SA, South West TAFE
- Regional study hubs to complete further education in the region
- Digital economy

Aging

- Aging population need services
- Aged care growth
- Focus on population attraction, social integration & retention
- Aged care hub

Climate change

- Clean green agriculture sector
- Climate change

- Renewable energy

Outliers not captured in themes

- New models of service delivery
- Ideas
- Proposals
- Consultation
- Mining
- Affordability
- Can see the stars
- Lots of space (land)
- Safe and secure
- Infrastructure capacity
- Active airport
- Investment in digital infrastructure to align regional with metro quality
- Low cost housing
- Private and public partnerships
- Investment in infrastructure

5.1.2 Hamilton Workshop – Identified constraints

Transport and connectivity

- Transport, i.e. train services
- Lack of public transport, bus, train, air
- Lack of road, rail and air services, poor road system, lack of reliable internet services
- Terrible roads
- Transport challenges

Location

- Distance to major centres (connections)
- Distance from Melbourne
- Geographical isolation
- Local service provision
- Senior bureaucrats not situated in region
- Decision-makers won't travel to region
- Perception of ourselves as an isolated community
- Distance from major centres

Politics

- Political landscape – “no swinging seats”
- Little / no notice of change in plans by Council
- Conservative committee outlook
- Local budget capacity
- Rate capping
- Government boundaries i.e. agencies
- Focus on the are from State and Federal government
- Failure to leverage off climate / soils for diverse agriculture
- Lack of imagination, tradition and culture – people don't like change
- Not local, too big in upper house
- Western Region vs Western Province
- Too safe a seat both Federally and State
- Not marginal electorate
- 3-4 year political vision

- Safe seat, limited State and Fed investment
- Geelong and Warrnambool hog the regional funding for facilities
- Safe electorate
- Limited government investment
- Agencies not collaborating (holding on to information)

Environment

- Climate change – floods / bushfire
- Environmental overlap
- Climate change impacts
- Water security

Culture and heritage

- Recognition of Indigenous heritage
- Agreement on indigenous history and stories
- Limited investment in cultural arts

Digital

- Lack of reliable electricity
- Lack of reliable internet
- Patchy mobile coverage
- Poor digital connectivity
- Lack of reliable landline

Education

- Limited local tertiary education opportunities
- Educational opportunities (tertiary)
- Limited private sector investment
- Thin market for education providers
- Lack of key services
- Competition between schools

Employment

- Locally available expertise
- Lack of employment opportunities
- Fewer employment & advancement opportunities
- Careers education
- Knowledge of local careers opportunities
- Part-time employment for young people
- Retention of families
- Busy lives prevent volunteering

Young people and population change

- Leadership program for young people
- Attitude about region from eyes of young – not cool
- Loss of young people
- Dedicated Council youth worker
- Diversity
- Population too small to be viable
- Decline population in rural areas – difficult to get volunteers
- Population growth is slow / limited
- Population decline / aging population

Investment

- Portland Buck export
- Private and public funding – capital investment
- Uneconomical proposals
- Lack of value-adding industry in all sectors
- Lack of commitment / Investment to 'bold' ideas (i.e. arts and cultural strategy)

Engagement

- Plenty of consultation but lack of action / follow through
- Engaging the community

Outliers not captured in themes

- Control versus empowerment – need to spread workload
- Hamilton is full, new residents seeking housing in townships / needs rural living plan
- Mono economy – Agriculture
- Small number of volunteers drive community initiatives
- Reliance on volunteers for community sport, recreation and other service delivery

5.2.1 Melbourne Workshop – identified opportunities

Education

- Improved pathways between education providers
- Accessible education for all
- Agriculture Vic research centre
- Get university providers in a room to collaborate
- Increase in educational aspirations
- Federal funding for education
- Regional Development Victoria work

Digital

- Digital businesses (bandwidth willing)
- Southern Grampians Shire has built strong capability in digital connectivity

Environment and Heritage

- Zero net carbon homes
- Green triangle
- Large scale renewables – jobs, training, and shared benefits
- Volcanic landscapes: tourism, sense of place, indigenous, agriculture
- Indigenous heritage is untapped
- Rich philanthropists
- Built form heritage

Workforce

- Retain youth and attract youth
- Workforce and skills
- Pathways for young people to stay in SGSC
- Migrant attraction

Growth

- Leverage existing services, i.e. education, health, and natural areas e.g. environment
- Sustainable growth of western/ south-western Vic (population, jobs, education)

Industry

- Business and or government decentralisation

- Hamilton Airport air services
- Boutique, high value agriculture
- Diversification
- Value add to industries
- Eco and job growth from SME's

Tourism

- Tourism
- Develop a focus as a 'hub' destination
- Natural assets

5.2.2 Melbourne Workshop – identified constraints

Housing

- Housing supply
- Worker accommodation

Planning and investment

- Sequencing of development and infrastructure
- Investment before development
- Resources and access to investment
- Lack of integrated planning

Age

- Employment opportunities
- Static population growth
- Youth retention
- Ageing population

Attitude

- Culture of complacency
- Challenges, belief
- Shared aspirations

Climate

- Climate vulnerability – pastoral
- Climate vulnerability – demographic
- Climate vulnerability – water resources and natural tourist attractions
- Climate change

Ungrouped

- Inadequate freight/passenger transport network
- Services
- Digital infrastructure provision
- Funding if increase in coach services is put forward
- Distance to Melbourne
- Attractive location to relocate
- Rural decline
- Critical mass i.e. digital communication
- Council skills and resources to manage change and growth
- Funding to prepare plans: state and local. Developer interest?

- Negative perceptions of region to overcome; shift communities view of what Council role is to allow Council to [...] services
- Transition away from petrol economy

DRAFT

06: Next steps

The results of the community engagement conducted between October 2019 and March 2021, will be shared with Southern Grampians Shire Council at the April 2021 Ordinary meeting of Council and then subsequently shared with the community and stakeholders. Participants will be advised on how the collective feedback has shaped the development of CVF 2041 and the timing for the release of a draft Community Vision for feedback.

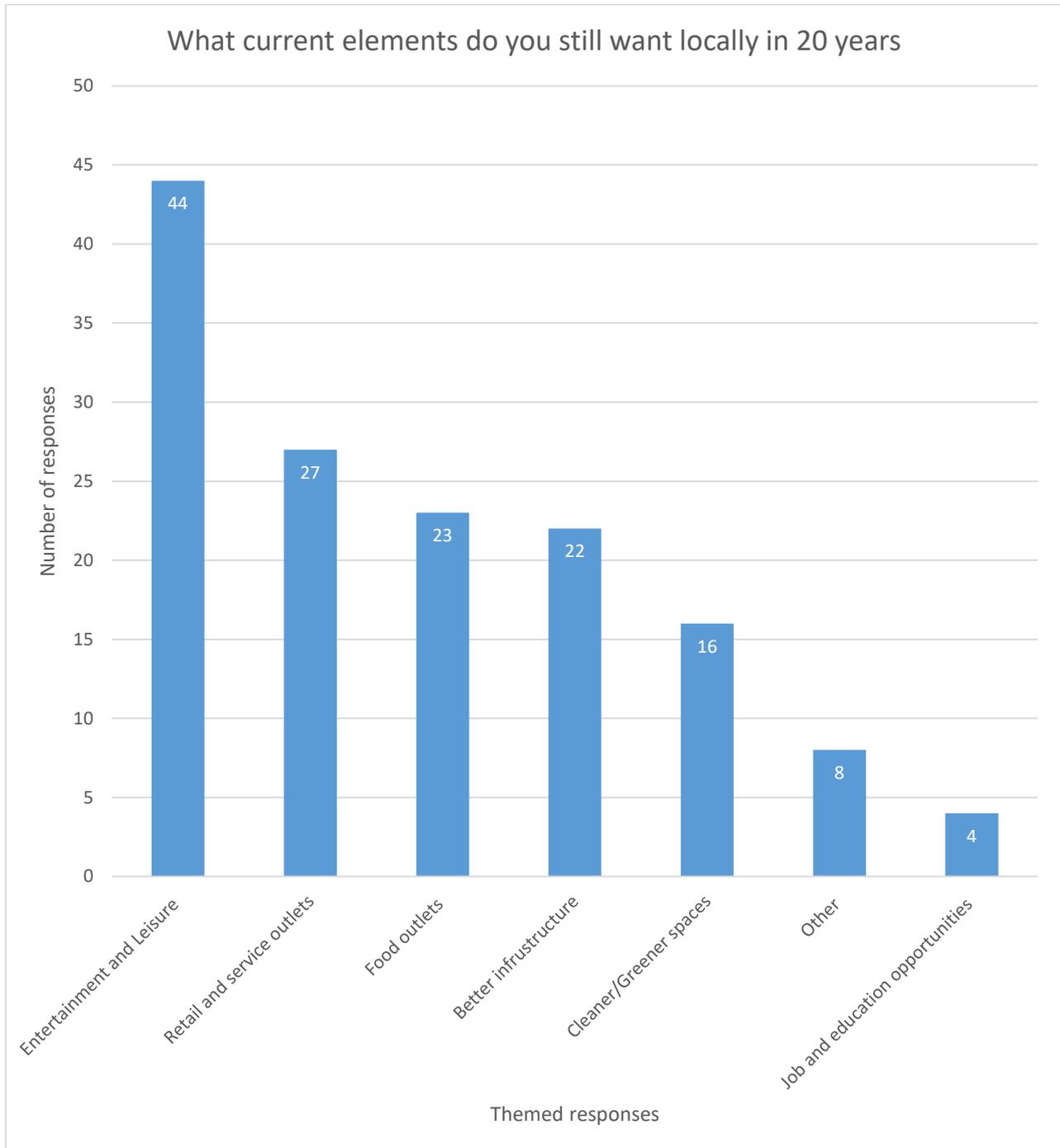
The draft Community Vision will be completed in coming months and made available for community comment before October 2021 via Council's Have Your Say page on the website.

DRAFT

Appendix 1: Results from student workshops

Please note all responses were provided as free text and have been themed.

Figure 15: Student workshop responses to: What things from today do you still want to see in your local area in 20 years' time?



Respondents particularly want entertainment and leisure facilities and services, including gyms, basketball courts, skate parks, and an aquatic centre to continue to be available in 20 years. The other strong theme was retail and service outlets, with KFC featuring heavily, unsurprising given the demographic. There was also a view that there was a need for infrastructure to be improved, especially roads.

Figure 16: Student workshop responses to: If you went to a local river or lake, what would it be like?

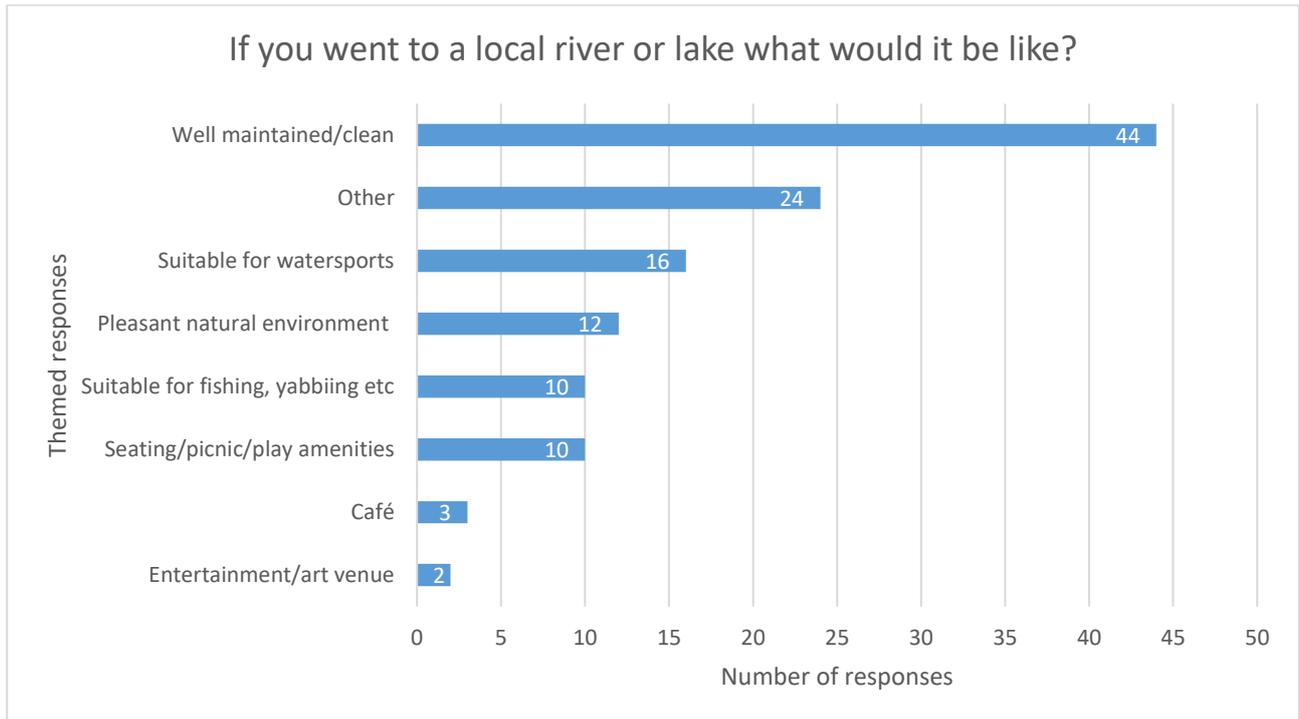
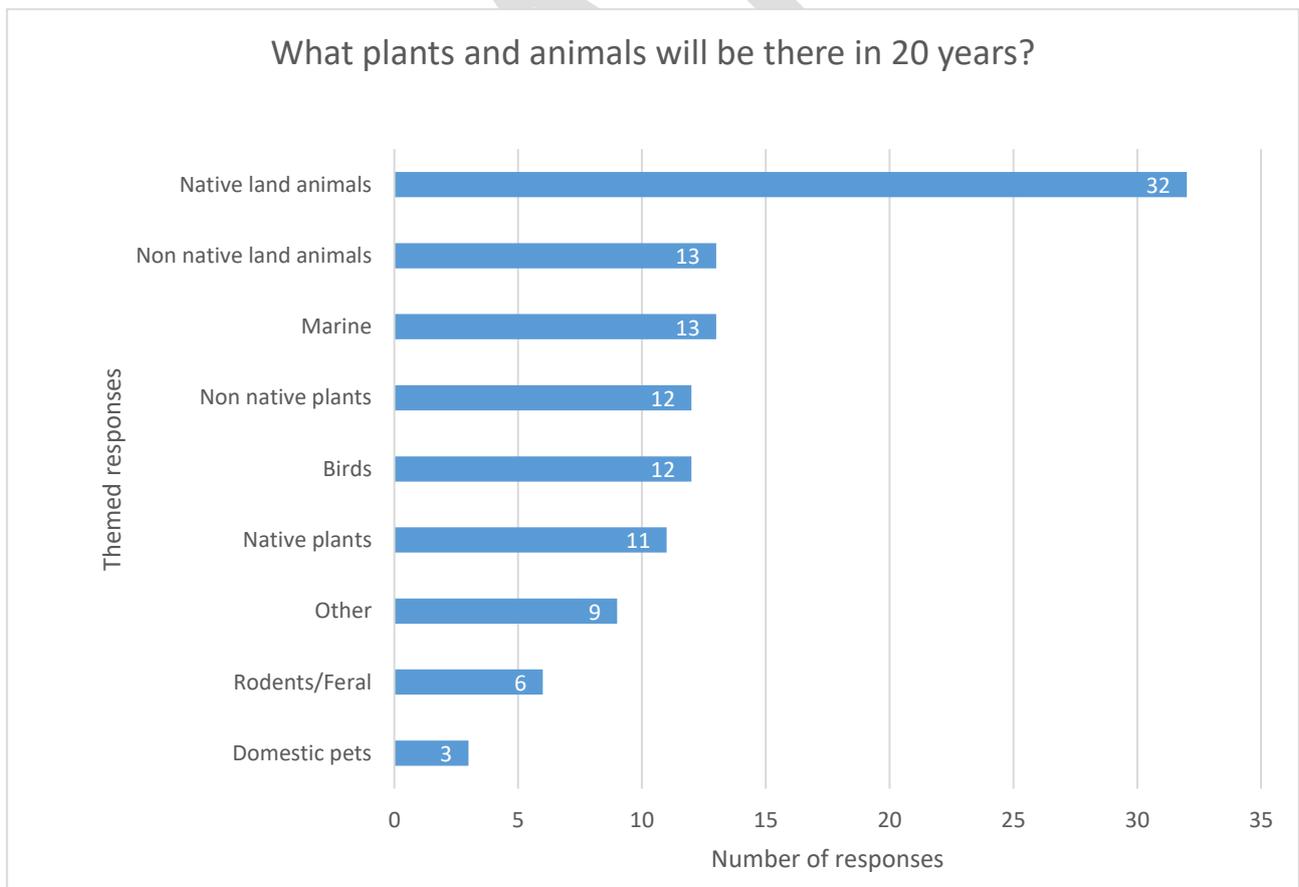
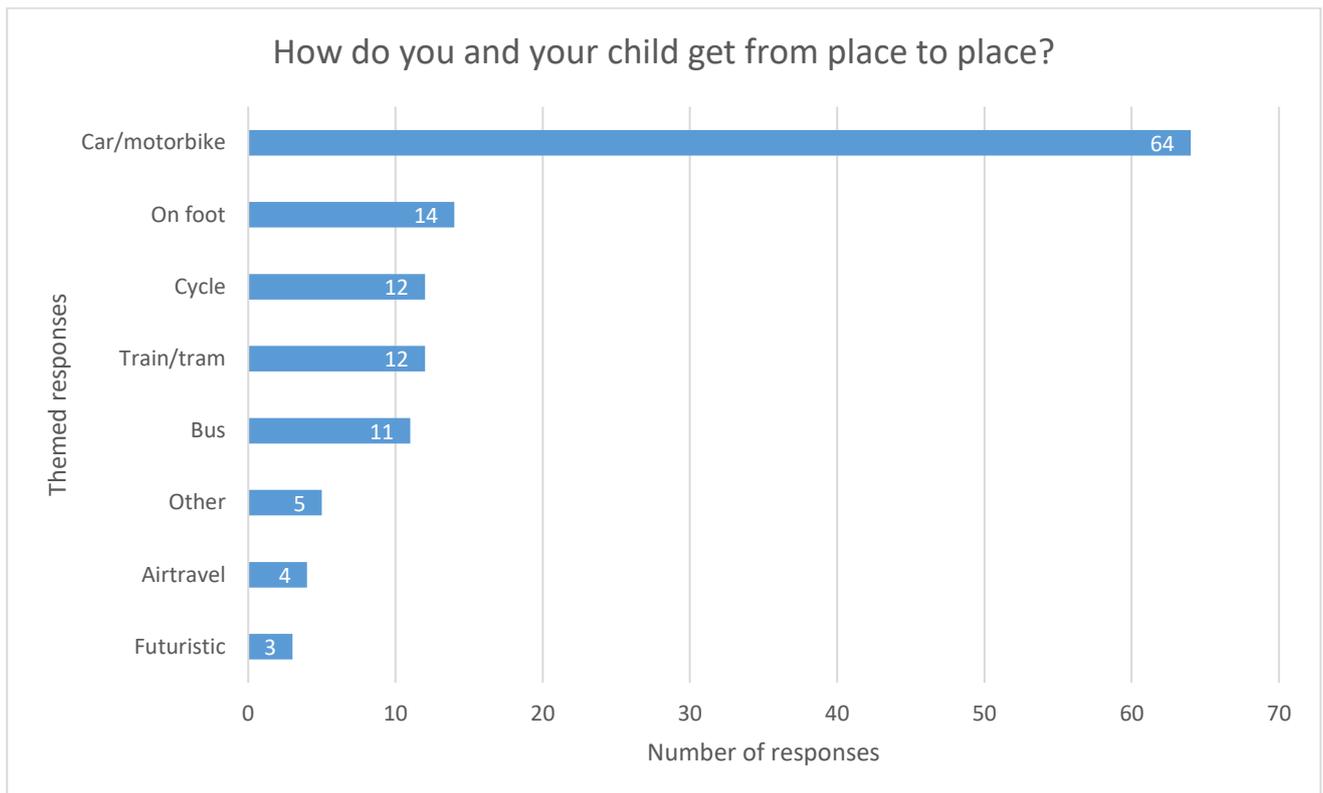


Figure 17: Student workshop responses to: What plants and animals will be there in 20 years?



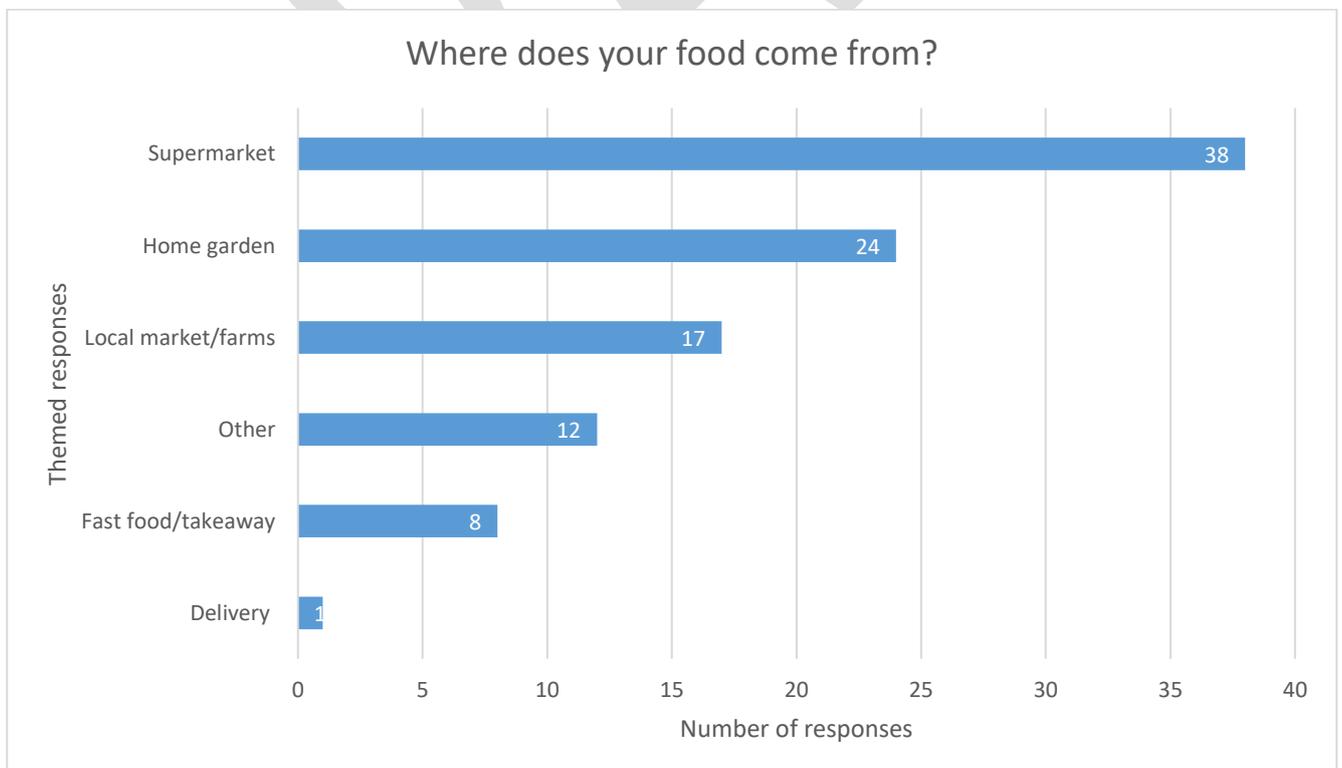
Native land animals returned the greatest share of responses to what animals would be in existence to show the next generation. One respondent answered "koalas hopefully", indicating an awareness about the diminishing numbers of this species, particularly following the 2020 bushfires. Predictably, they also expect to still see dogs and other domestic pets, more unusual was the frequent mention of rhinoceroses!

Figure 18: Student workshop responses to: How do you and your child get from place to place?



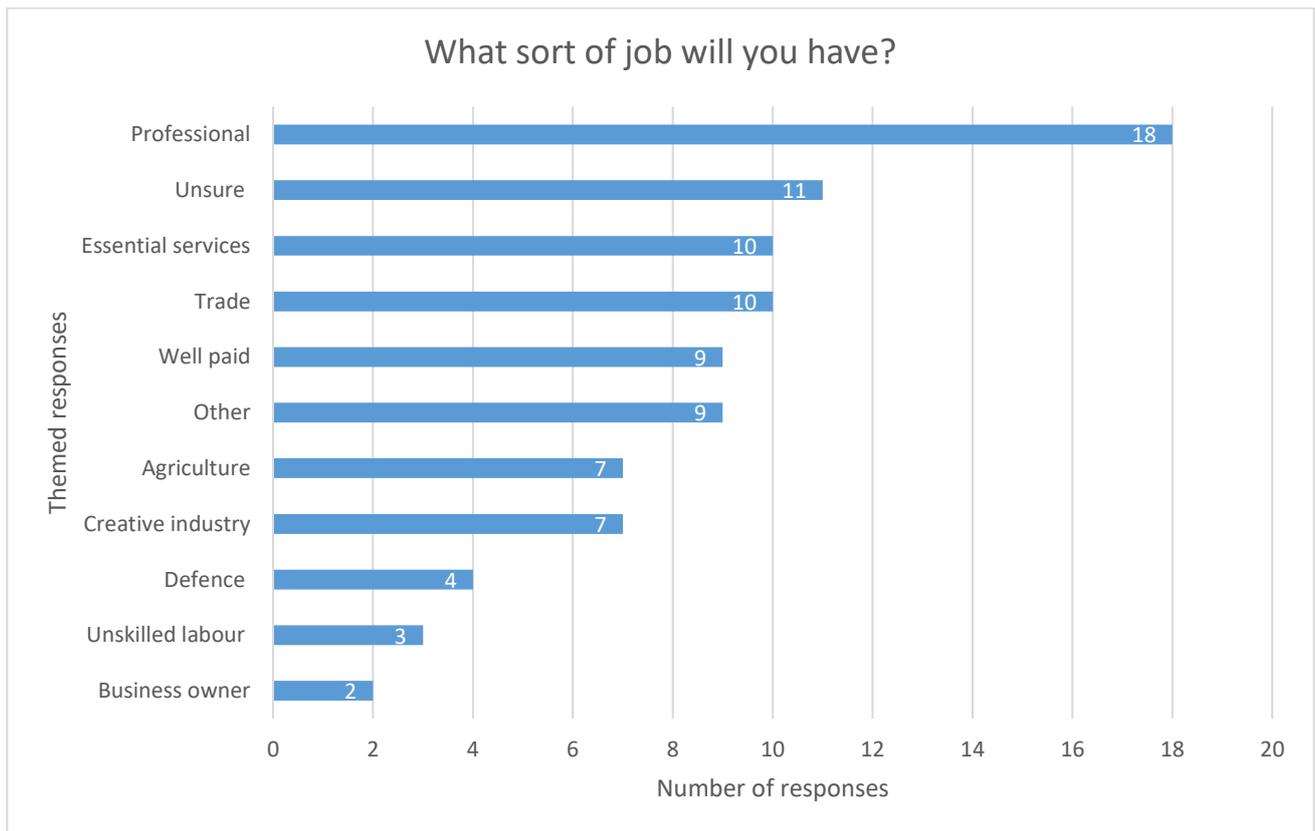
Most respondents still expected to be travelling by car or motorbike in 2041, though active transport such as cycling, walking and running also featured. Public transport was less popular. This is likely to be due to the need for improved public transport services that was already noted as a challenge for the region.

Figure 19: Student workshop responses to: Where does your food come from [in 2041]?



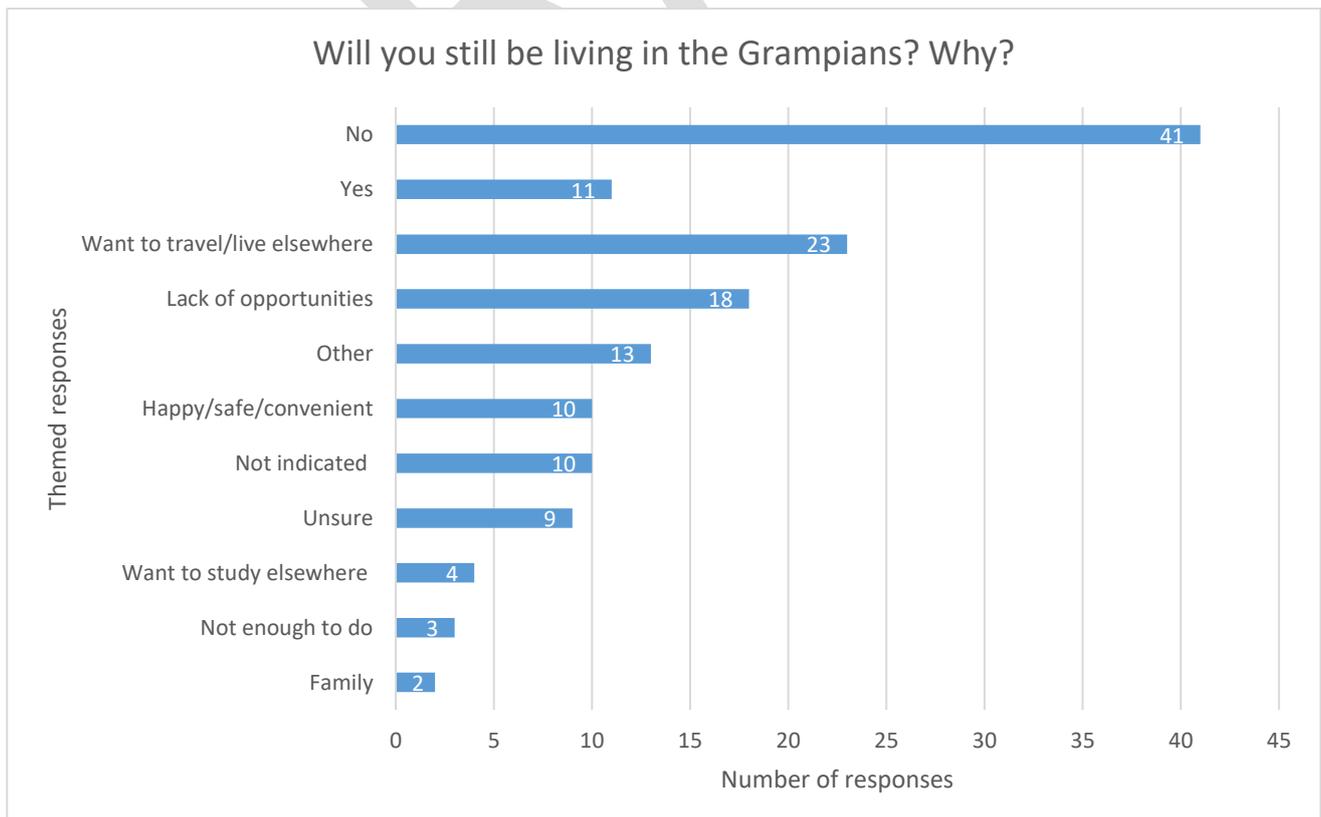
A large proportion of respondents indicated in 2041 they expected their food would be sourced from various supermarket chains. There were also a number of responses showing food was grown at home, or obtained from local markets and farmers, as would be expected given it is an important agricultural region.

Figure 20: Student workshop responses to: What sort of job will you have [in 2041]?



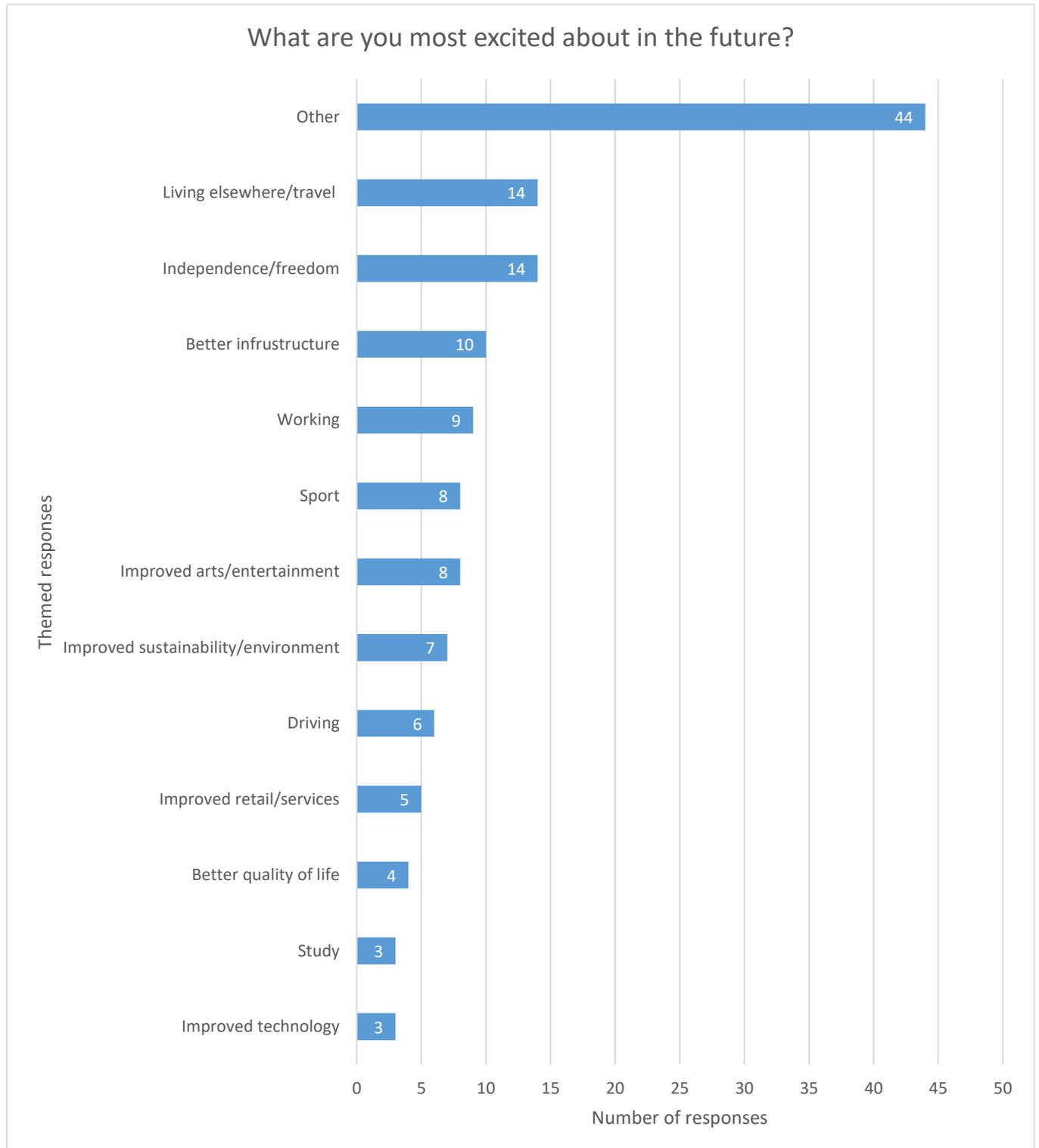
In 2041 the majority of respondents expect to work in professional, trade or well-paid occupations, indicating an interest in furthering their education. A significant proportion were unsure about which career they would choose, which given their age is to be expected.

Figure 21: Student workshop responses to: [In 2041] will you still be living in the Southern Grampians? Why?



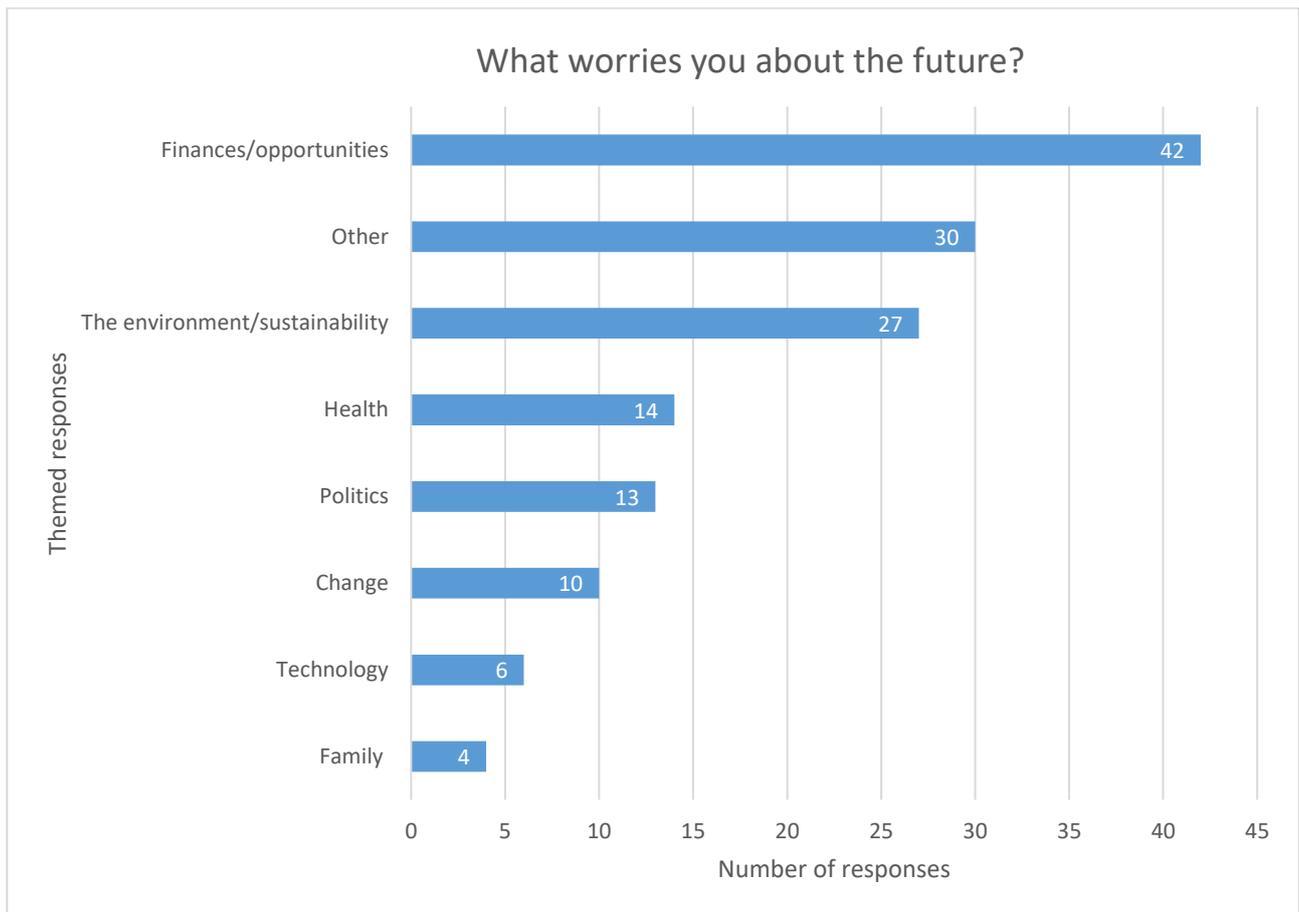
Almost 80% of respondents indicated that they would not be living in the South Grampians in the next 20 years. This was mainly due to the desire to live, work, study and travel elsewhere but also because of the lack of perceived opportunities. The motivation for remaining in the area included being close to family and the area being a safe and convenient place to reside in.

Figure 22: Student workshop responses to: What are you most excited about for the future?



Students are most excited about travelling, living elsewhere and being independent. This included visiting and studying in overseas locations as well as within Australia. They were also looking forward to better infrastructure, including improved healthcare. There were a large number of responses which were unrelated to the question, these were grouped under 'Other'.

Figure 23: Student workshop responses to: What worries you about the future?



The majority of respondents are worried about finances and what opportunities they will have. This included not having a job they will enjoy, not passing the VCE and generally not being successful. Health concerns were mainly related to the pandemic. The majority of political worries were about US leadership, though it should be noted these workshops were held during the immediate lead up to the US Presidential election. The 'other' section was made up of concerns which were in the minority such as unsafe roads, as well as answers which were not valuable in nature or inappropriate.

Appendix 2: List of stakeholders interviewed²⁹

Name	Organisation
Business and industry	
Andrew Jeffers	Wannon Water
Anna Kerr Delany	Elders Real Estate
Anthony McGillvray	Hamilton District Skills Centre (former)
Belinda Bennett and Ashley Pittard	Barwon South West Waste Recovery Group
Bill Hamill	Rural Industries Skills Training (RIST)
Charles Tapper	Tapper Builders
Damien Logan	WDEA
Darren Groves	Groves Real Estate
Dean Menzel	Iluka Resources
Donna Morgan	Minerals Development Victoria
Dunkeld Progress Association (15 stakeholders)	
Erin White	Southern Grampians Adult Education
Geoff and Erin Hinchcliffe	Dunkeld Caravan Park
Geoff Vickery	Vickery Bros
George Fitzpatrick	Southern Grampians Cottages
Katie Milne	Anglicare Victoria
Kylie Schurmann	ex Grampians Tourism (board member)
Liz McKinnon	Green Triangle Forestry Industries Hub
Liz Price	Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism
Lyall Grey	Stavely Minerals
Melissa Ferrier	Professionals Real Estate
Natalie Collard	Food and Fibre Council
Paul Lougheed	Southern Stay
Reid Mather	Rail Freight Alliance
Ursula Murphy	South West TAFE
Local Government	
Biddy Shearing	Limestone Coast Local Government Association
Carolyn Byrne	Southern Grampians Shire Council
Evelyn Arnold	Southern Grampians Shire Council
Jane Coshutt	Southern Grampians Shire Council
Jane Rudge	Glenelg Shire Council
Kevin O'Brien	Horsham Rural City Council
Lachy Patterson	Southern Grampians Shire Council

²⁹ And/or briefed. In the briefed category is Windamara Aboriginal Corporation and Gunditjmirring Traditional Owners Corporation. The balance of Appendix 2 represents interviewees.

Name	Organisation
Wendy Gallagher	Southern Grampians Shire Council
State Government	
Angus Ramsay	Southern Rural Water
Annie Farrow	Earth Resources, Minerals Development Victoria
Bess Krause	SES
Christopher Walker	Ambulance Victoria
Colleen White	Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
Gerard Kelly	Victoria Police
James Haley	Country Fire Authority
Jane Homewood	Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
Jo Grant	Regional Arts Victoria
Jozef Vass	Department of Transport
Liz Regent	Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
Peter Jackson	Department of Health and Human Services
Ralph Cotter	Agriculture Victoria
Richard Bourke	Country Fire Association
Rohan Fitzgerald	Western District Health Service
Talia Holmes	Western District Health Service
Indigenous	
Damien Bell	Gunditjmiring Traditional Owners Corporation
Jason Kanoa	Windamara Aboriginal Corporation
Johnny Lovett	Senior Gunditjmiring Elder
Jason Mifsud	Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation
Organisations and service providers	
Annie Ferguson	SalvoConnect
Dennis Hilder	Red Cross
Ebony Jenkins	Southern Grampians Glenelg Primary Care Partnership
Mark Bachmann	Nature Glenelg Trust
Mark Brennan	South West Primary Care Partnership
Reverend Peter Cook	Ex Uniting Church
Susan Brumby	National Centre for Farmer Health



an ERM Group company

Sydney office

Level 15, 309 Kent Street, Sydney, NSW 2000
Locked Bag 3012, Australia Square, NSW 1215
T 02 9955 5040

Melbourne office

Level 6, 99 King Street, Melbourne VIC 3000
PO Box 16215, Collins Street West VIC 8007
T 03 9005 2030

E info@kjassoc.com.au | www.kjassoc.com.au