

COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT
OUTCOMES



MID-WESTERN REGIONAL COUNCIL
MID-WESTERN REGIONAL COUNCIL
INTEGRATED PLANNING AND REPORTING

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN PREPARED BY MID-WESTERN REGIONAL COUNCIL.

ANY QUESTIONS IN RELATION TO THE CONTENT OF THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO:
COUNCIL@MIDWESTERN.NSW.GOV.AU OR (02) 6378 2850

DATE OF PUBLICATION: MARCH 2025

Table of Contents

- 1. Executive Summary 4
- 2. Background 6
 - 2.1 Local Government Act 1993 6
 - 2.2 Towards 2040: Mid-Western Region Community Plan 6
- 3. Key Messages..... 8
- 4. Community Engagement Process 9
 - 4.1 Summary of Engagement Tools and Timing 9
 - 4.2 Description of Community Engagement Tools 9
 - 4.3 Promotion of Engagement Activities 11
- 5. Stakeholders and Outcomes 12
 - Community engagement participation engagement method..... 12
 - Community engagement participation by age group..... 13
 - Community engagement participation by gender..... 13
 - 5.1 Community Satisfaction Survey 15
 - 5.2 Community and Interest Group Comments..... 20
 - 5.3 Community Roadshows 22
 - 5.4 School Postcards 26
 - 5.5 Strategic Priorities for the Future 31
 - 5.6 Online Surveys 48
- 6. APPENDICIES 56
 - 6.1 Appendix 1 - Outcomes from Youth engagement activities by Town/Village 56
 - 6.2 Appendix 2 - Outcomes from Youth engagement activities by Gender 68
 - 6.3 Appendix 3 - Outcomes from Youth engagement activities by Age 72

1. Executive Summary

The Mid-Western Regional Council's Community Engagement Outcomes Report (March 2025) presents the findings of an extensive community consultation process aimed at shaping the Towards 2040: Mid-Western Region Community Plan. This engagement initiative, conducted in alignment with the Local Government Act 1993, ensures that the community's priorities inform Council's strategic decision-making.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

From May 2024 to March 2025, over 4,300 residents participated in engagement activities, including:

- A community satisfaction survey conducted via telephone.
- Community roadshows across Mudgee, Gulgong, Kandos, and Rylstone.
- Targeted consultations with business and interest groups.
- School-based postcard exercises for young residents.
- Online surveys and direct mail responses to capture broader community feedback.

This inclusive approach provided valuable insights into the immediate, medium-term, and long-term priorities of residents across towns and villages.

KEY COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

The consultation process identified the community's top priorities for development across four-year, ten-year, and fifteen-year planning horizons:

1. Short-Term (Next 4 Years)

- Infrastructure and Transport: Road maintenance, and footpath expansion.
- Healthcare and Education: Attracting doctors, teachers, and medical specialists.
- Recreation & Community Facilities: Developing an indoor swimming pool, youth activity centres, and sports infrastructure.
- Housing & Affordability: More affordable housing options, particularly for key workers.
- Liveability Enhancements: Expansion of green spaces, better waste management, and improved town amenities.

2. Medium-Term (Next 10 Years)

- Sustainable Development: A transition strategy for post-mining economic stability.
- Public Transport: Advocacy for passenger rail services and/or regional connectivity.
- Economic Diversification: Expanding industries beyond tourism and mining.
- Education & Workforce Growth: Partnerships with universities and TAFE to align training with regional job needs.
- Community Wellbeing: Increased investment or advocacy in aged care, mental health services, and youth engagement programs.

3. Long-Term (Next 15 Years)

- Major Infrastructure Upgrades: Expansion of healthcare facilities, regional transport networks, and digital connectivity.
- Environmental Sustainability: Water security planning, renewable energy adoption, and enhanced conservation efforts.
- Economic Transition: Building industries beyond mining, fostering high-tech and green jobs.
- Liveability & Futureproofing: Planning for population growth, improved town planning, and social infrastructure investments.

REGIONAL VARIATIONS & COMMON THEMES

The consultation highlighted both shared priorities and unique town-specific concerns:

- Mudgee: Strong focus on economic growth, tourism, and infrastructure investment.
- Gulgong: Priorities included heritage preservation, road upgrades, and youth recreation.
- Rylstone & Kandos: Emphasized healthcare access, community services, and environmental sustainability.
- Villages & Small Towns: Infrastructure improvements, local business support, and access to essential services were major concerns.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE PLANNING

The engagement findings will directly inform the revision of the Towards 2040: Mid-Western Region Community Plan. Council is committed to:

- Aligning policy and investment with community priorities.
- Advocating for funding and partnerships to address critical infrastructure, housing, and service needs.
- Ensuring a sustainable and economically resilient future for the region.

This report underscores Council's dedication to transparent, community-driven planning, ensuring that Mid-Western Regional Council remains a thriving, well-connected, and sustainable place to live.

2. Background

2.1 Local Government Act 1993

Council has a legislative requirement under the *Local Government Act 1993* to ensure that community input is part of the decision-making process.

The Act requires Council to establish and implement a strategy (its Community Engagement Strategy), based on social justice principles, for engagement with the local community when developing the Community Strategic Plan.

Council's Community Engagement Strategy recognises the important role that community engagement plays in the ongoing review and development of the Community Strategic Plan and Council's associated documents. The information obtained during community engagement helps to inform Council in setting their key strategies and actions over the next 4 to 15 years.

The *Towards 2040: Mid-Western Region Community Plan* is formulated following a range of consultation activities with the community.

2.2 Towards 2040: Mid-Western Region Community Plan

Towards 2040: Mid-Western Region Community Plan is Council's highest level strategic plan and addresses four key questions for the community:

1. Where are we now?
2. Where do we want to be in 2040?
3. How will we get there?
4. How will we know when we have arrived?

The plan was developed following an extensive consultation exercise in which over 4,000 residents participated in varying forms.

It is a future vision developed collaboratively between the community and Council. The plan represents the aspirations of the people who live and work within the Mid-Western Region and strategies for achieving these goals.

Integrated Planning and Reporting framework is completed with the Resourcing Strategy including Long Term Financial Plan, Workforce Strategy and Asset Management Planning together with a Delivery Program, Operation Plan and Annual Report.

The current Community Strategic Plan is framed by five key themes, each of which has several goals:

- **THEME 1: LOOKING AFTER OUR COMMUNITY**
 - A safe and healthy community
 - Vibrant towns and villages
 - Effective and efficient delivery of infrastructure
 - Meet the diverse needs of the community and create a sense of belonging
- **THEME 2: PROTECTING OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT**
 - Protect and enhance our natural environment
 - Provide total water cycle management
 - Live in a clean and environmentally sustainable way
- **THEME 3: BUILDING A STRONG LOCAL ECONOMY**
 - A prosperous and diversified economy
 - An attractive business and economic environment
 - A range of rewarding and fulfilling career opportunities to attract and retain residents
- **THEME 4: CONNECTING OUR REGION**
 - High quality road network that is safe and efficient
 - Efficient connection of the region to major towns and cities
 - An active travel network within the region
- **THEME 5: GOOD GOVERNMENT**
 - Strong civic leadership
 - Good communications and engagement
 - An effective and efficient organisation

This document summarises the community's ideas, concerns and priorities. These outcomes will be considered and incorporated into the revision and drafting of the *Towards 2040: Mid-Western Region Community Plan*.

3. Key Messages

The Community Engagement Strategy includes activities which educate the community about the review process, and request feedback from the community which reflects its main priorities.

This dual-objective approach ensures information collected is both valuable and relevant in informing the review of the Community Strategic Plan.

OBJECTIVE: EDUCATION

- This is the current Towards 2040: Mid-Western Region Community Plan
- These are the current themes, goals and strategies that Council is working to achieve

OBJECTIVE: ENGAGEMENT

- Are the themes identified in the current Towards 2024: Mid-Western Region Community Plan still relevant?
- What are the community's priorities?
- What is missing from the current Towards 2040: Mid-Western Region Community Plan that can be updated for the new Towards 2040: Mid-Western Region Community Plan?
- What are the key issues for Council to consider into the future, over the next 4 years, 10 years and 15 years?

4. Community Engagement Process

The process of community engagement plays a critical role in the ongoing review and development of the Community Strategic Plan and Council's associated Integrated Planning and Reporting documents. The information obtained during community engagement will help inform the newly elected Council in setting their key strategies and actions over the next 4 years.

4.1 Summary of Engagement Tools and Timing

The following table provides a summary of the community engagement process and identifies the tools used to inform the review of the Community Strategic Plan and associated Integrated Planning and Reporting documents by 30 June 2025.

TABLE 2: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TOOLS AND TIMING

PHASE	TOOLS	TIMING
Preliminary Engagement	Community Wide Satisfaction Survey	May 2024
Community Engagement for Newly Elected Council	Interest Group Focus Sessions Postcards Direct Mail Out Online Engagement	Nov 2024 - Mar 2025
Analysis of Community Engagement	Post Engagement Report to Council	Mar 2025
Public Feedback on Draft IP&R Documents	Public Exhibition for 28 Days Post Exhibition Report to Council	Apr - May 2025
Adopt Revised IP&R Documents	Report to Council	June 2025

4.2 Description of Community Engagement Tools

Provided below is a brief description of the engagement tools that were used to conduct community engagement between May 2024 and March 2025.

COMMUNITY WIDE SURVEY

As part of the preliminary engagement phase, a community wide telephone survey was conducted by Taverner Research Group on behalf of Council in May 2024.

The survey aimed to assess community attitudes and perceptions regarding Council's service delivery, identify priority areas for improvement, and evaluate customer service and communications. Designed to engage all sectors of the community, the survey captured data that offers a statistically significant representation of public sentiment.

COMMUNITY AND INTEREST GROUP FOCUS SESSIONS

Key stakeholders participated in a series of focus sessions to evaluate the relevance of the five key themes in the CSP and determine whether updates were needed. These sessions focused on assessing the objectives and strategies of the CSP by identifying current issues and exploring potential solutions.

COMMUNITY AND INTEREST GROUP FEEDBACK FORM

Key stakeholders invited to the focus sessions could also provide written feedback, either as a supplement to or instead of attending in person. The Community Group Feedback Form enabled community groups to document any additional feedback or issues they felt had not been addressed or were relevant for Council's consideration. This form was available both in print and online via Council's website.

COMMUNITY ROADSHOW – NOVEMBER – DECEMBER 2024

The Community Roadshow which was held across the region during the month of November 2024. The Community Roadshow involved a portable display being assembled in each of the main towns of Mudgee, Gulgong, Kandos and Rylstone in a prominent position to capture pedestrian traffic. The portable display was used to engage the community increasing general awareness of the CSP whilst providing information and feedback to Council. There were a range of participatory activities which the community were able to use to reveal their key priorities and engage with Council staff. These included:

BEAD EXERCISE

This exercise involved the community utilising a handful of coloured beads representing Council funds and allocating them between different themes reflected in the Community Plan (as represented by 5 glass jars).

MY TOP 5 EXERCISE

The My Top 5 Exercise provided an opportunity for the community to indicate their "wish list" for Council to invest in new major projects. These major projects included infrastructure, services and advocacy and were typically of a large dollar value.

The exercise featured visual display boards with several examples of major projects for the community to choose from. The community were asked to pick their Top 5. These choices were then recorded so Council could derive a list of the community's top priorities if funding opportunities arise in the future.

POSTCARD EXERCISE – SCHOOL SPECIFIC

The school specific postcard exercise included targeted questions to prompt school-aged children grades K-12 across the region in their responses about what they like most about living in the region and what they would like to improve about living in the region.

POSTCARD EXERCISE – STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The postcard exercise, featured in permanent displays across Council facilities, was designed for easy participation. It invited residents to share what they love about the region and to identify Council's priorities for the next 4, 10, and 15 years.

DIRECT MAIL OUT FORM – STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The direct mail out was included in Community News December edition. The mail out asked what residents liked about the region, and what our priorities should be over the next 4 years, 10 years and 15 years. They could then either scan the QR code to complete the form online, post, email or return their handwritten response to Council offices.

ONLINE SURVEYS

Online surveys were utilised to reinforce the information that the mail-out exercises were designed to capture. Providing access to online activities allowed members of the community who do not come into Council offices or buildings or missed the mail out form. The online surveys focused on asking the community for their priorities for the region into the future.

PUBLIC EXHIBITION

All the draft IP&R documents will be placed on public exhibition for a period of 28 days prior to being formally adopted by Council by 30 June 2025. The public exhibition period will allow residents to review the draft documents and make public submissions.

4.3 Promotion of Engagement Activities

The opportunity for the community to actively participate in the review of the Community Strategic Plan were widely promoted. The main avenues for promotion included:

- **Local Media** – promotion through local media encouraged participation and educate the community about the process of reviewing and developing the Community Strategic Plan.
- **Website** – Council's website provides an important information outlet with links to online activities.
- **Community News** – Community News featured updates about the engagement activities being undertaken. Community News was also used as a direct mail tool to encourage participation in and completion of activities.
- **Social media** – Council's Facebook page helped reinforce educational messages and encouraging participation in the review of the Community Strategic Plan. It highlighted key dates for activities and provide links to online engagement activities.
- **Displays** – Physical displays in Council offices, libraries and pools included visible posters and ballot boxes to collect postcards.

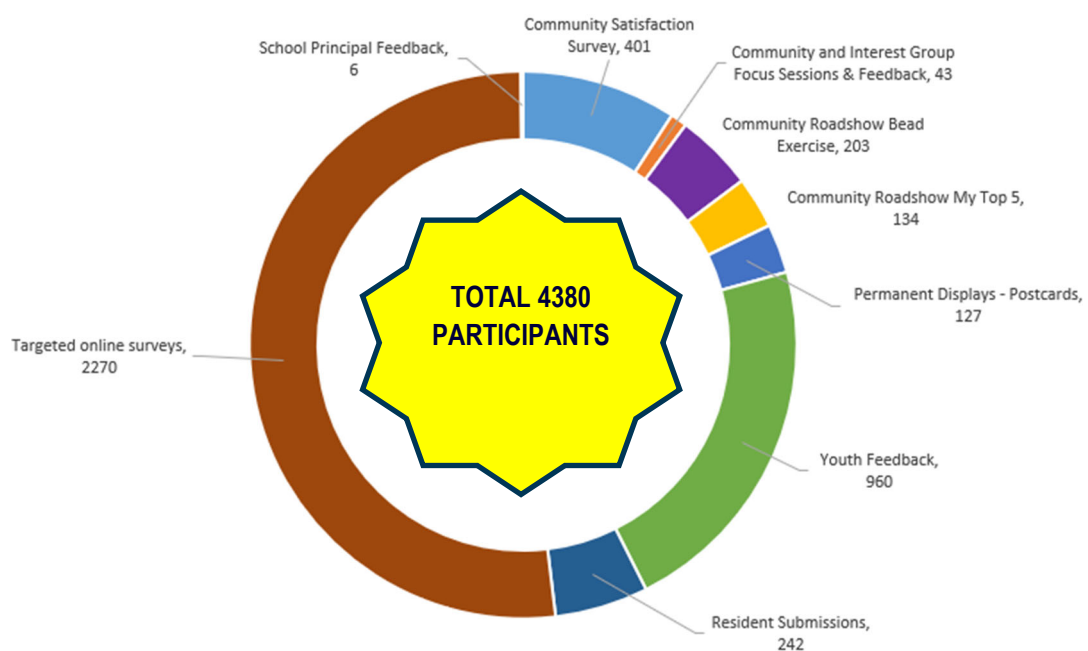
The online engagement for the Community Strategic Plan reached 139,827 people through events, social media posts, and online surveys on Facebook and Instagram. This included an organic reach of 79,105 and a paid reach of 60,722. In addition, 12,708 community news mail-outs were distributed to residents across the region, accompanied by paper feedback forms to ensure broader participation.

5. Stakeholders and Outcomes

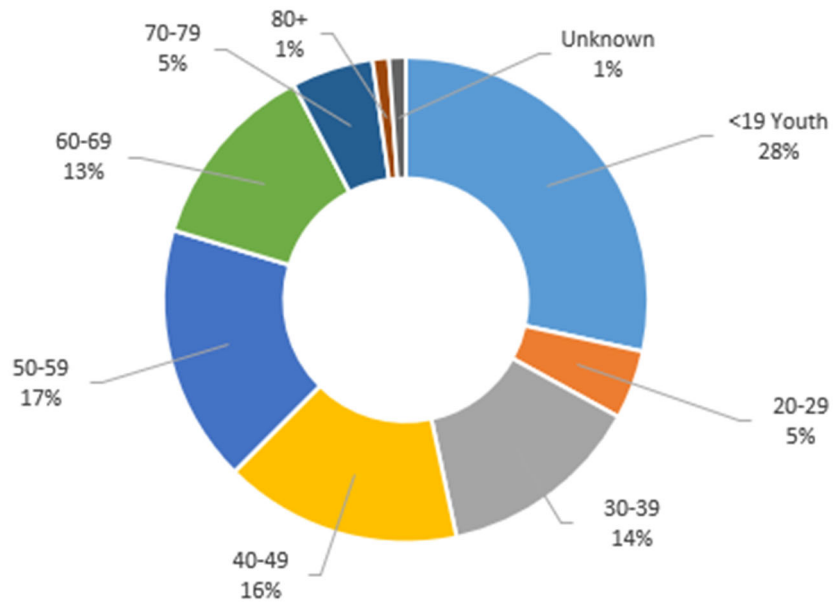
The Office of Local Government’s Integrated Planning and Reporting Manual requires Council to identify relevant stakeholder groups and the method that will be used to engage each group. The following table lists the range of stakeholder groups and identifies the activities that were used to engage each group.

	TELEPHONE SURVEY	COMMUNITY AND INTEREST GROUP FOCUS SESSIONS	COMMUNITY ROADSHOW	DIRECT MAIL OUT	PERMANENT DISPLAYS	ONLINE ENGAGEMENT
Ratepayers / Residents	x	x	x	x	x	x
Youth	x	x	x	x	x	x
Cultural, sporting and community groups		x			x	x
Government agencies		x			x	x
Remote geographical communities		x	x	x	x	x
Business and industry groups		x			x	x
Elderly	x	x	x	x	x	x
Schools		x		x	x	x
People with disabilities	x	x	x	x	x	x
Councillors	x	x	x	x	x	x

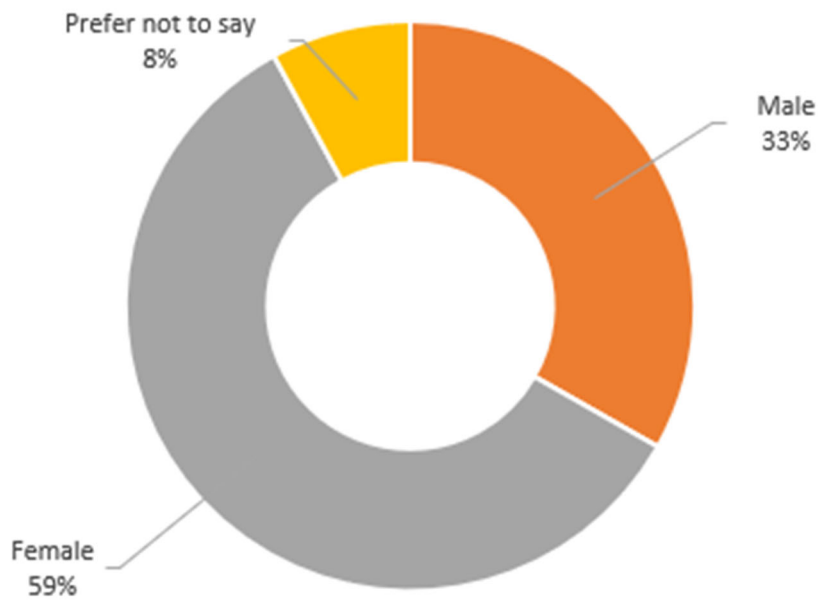
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PARTICIPATION ENGAGEMENT METHOD



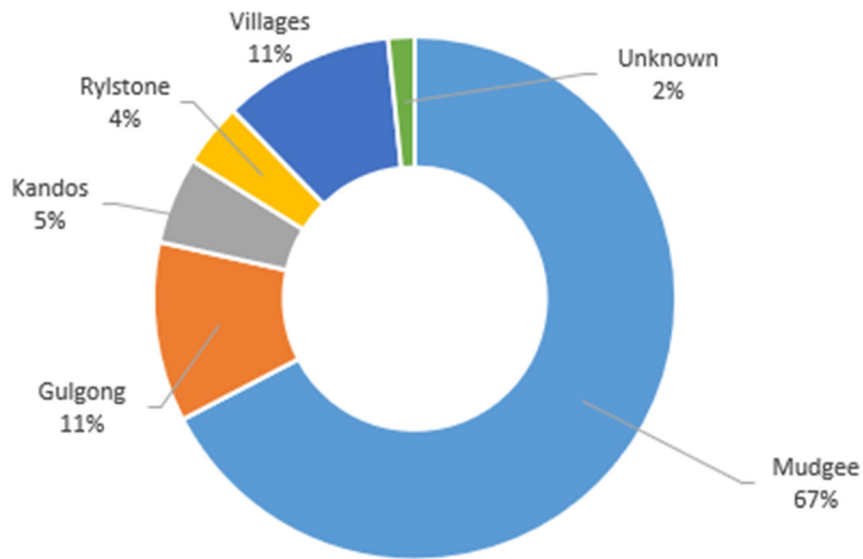
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PARTICIPATION BY AGE GROUP



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PARTICIPATION BY GENDER



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PARTICIPATION BY RESIDENTAL LOCATION
NOVEMBER 2024 TO FEBRUARY 2025:



Note: Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021 Census indicated a population mix of

- Mudgee 49%
- Gulgong 10.5%
- Kandos 5%
- Rylstone 3.5%
- Non-Urban Areas 32%

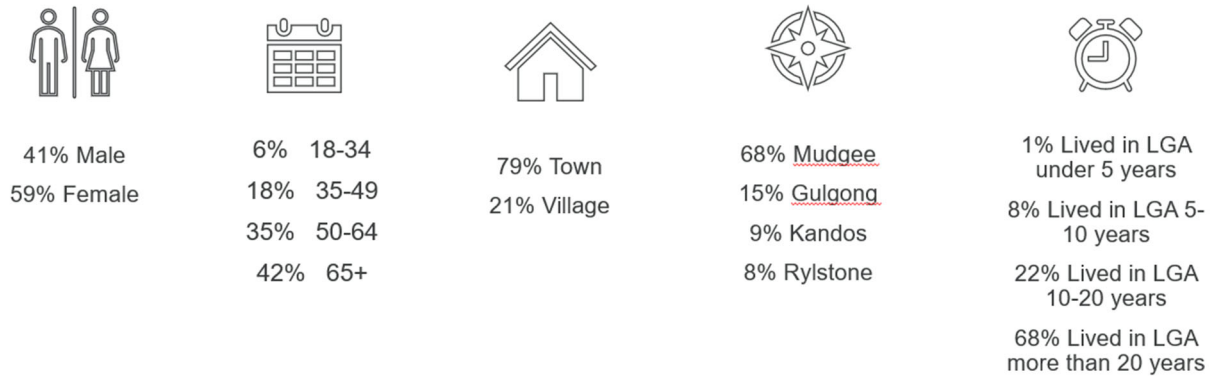
This suggests that the mix of responses generally reflects the population distribution of the region. Notably, responses from Mudgee exceed the expected 49%, while those from the Villages fall below the anticipated 32%. However, this variance may be attributed to respondents from rural areas selecting their nearest town.

5.1 Community Satisfaction Survey

Mid-Western Regional Council (MWRC) commissioned Taverner Research Group to conduct the 2024 Community Satisfaction Survey. The survey aimed to assess resident satisfaction with council services and facilities, benchmark performance over time, and identify priority areas for improvement.

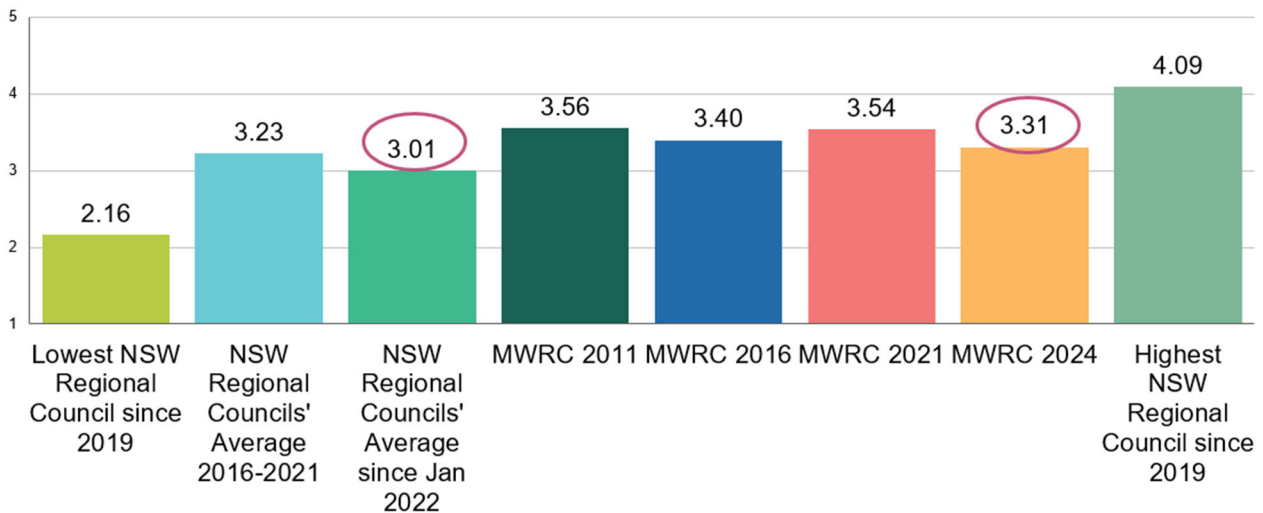
A total of 401 responses were collected via a telephone survey conducted between 1 May and 25 May 2024. The survey has a margin of error of $\pm 4.9\%$, ensuring statistically reliable results.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE



OVERALL SATISFACTION BENCHMARKS

Mid-Western Regional Council's overall satisfaction was 10% above the average of all Councils since 2022.

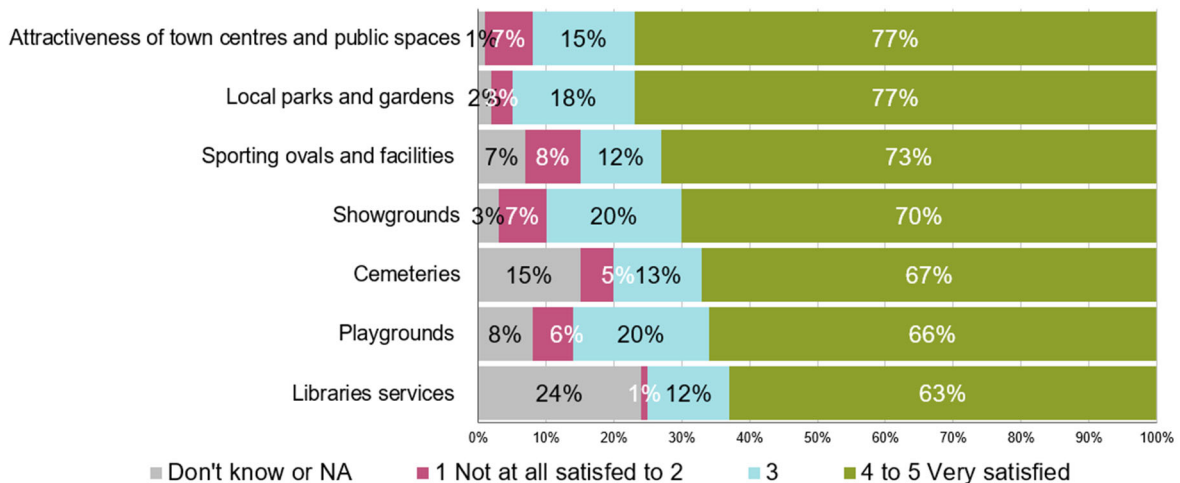


Key findings from the Community Survey were:

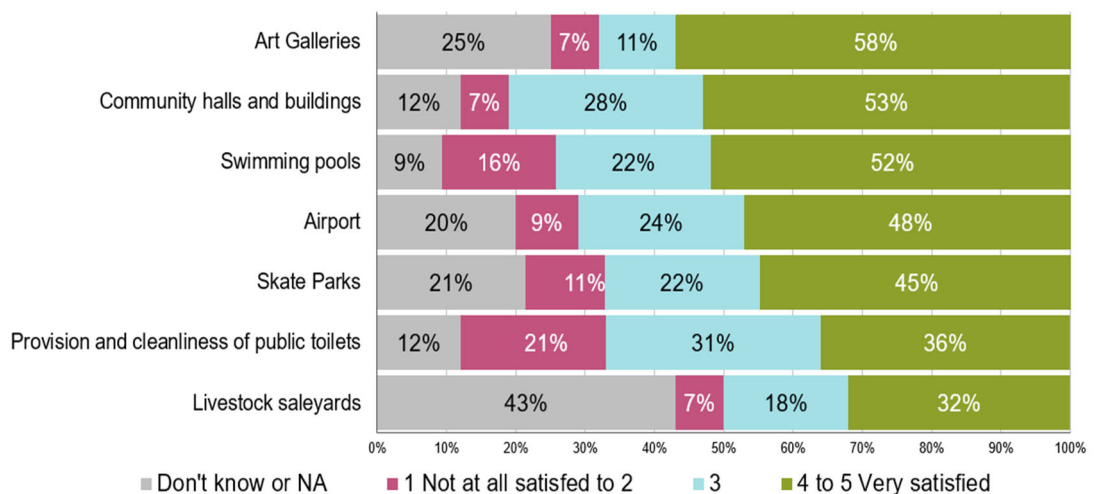
- **89%** of Mid-Western residents rate their quality of life living in the region from good to excellent
- **76%** of Mid-Western residents are at least somewhat satisfied with the performance of council over the last 12 months
- **75%** of Mid-Western residents who contacted council within the last 12 months were at least somewhat satisfied with the way their contact was handled

Survey participants were asked to rate their satisfaction with Council facilities and services on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 indicated "not satisfied at all" and 5 represented "very satisfied." If a participant was unsure, they had the option to select "don't know," which is shown in grey in the graphs below.

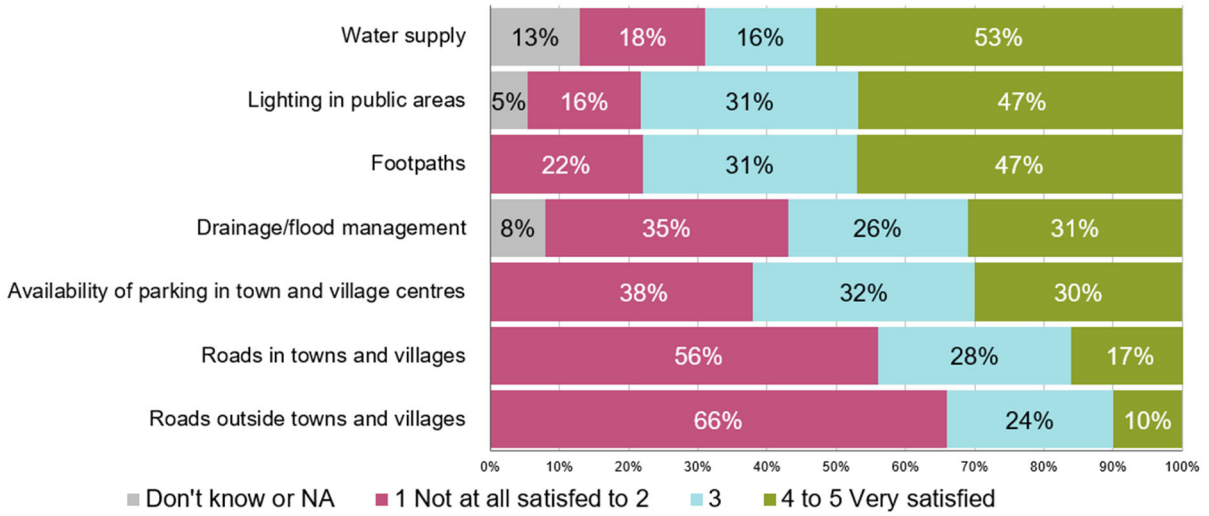
SATISFACTION – COMMUNITY SERVICES AND FACILITIES



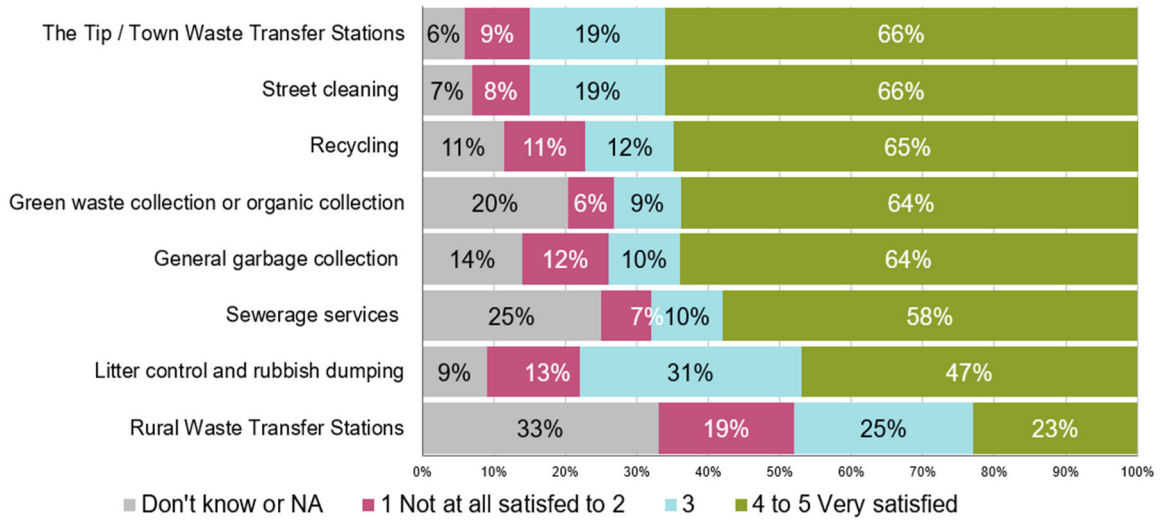
SATISFACTION – COMMUNITY SERVICES AND FACILITIES (CONTINUED)



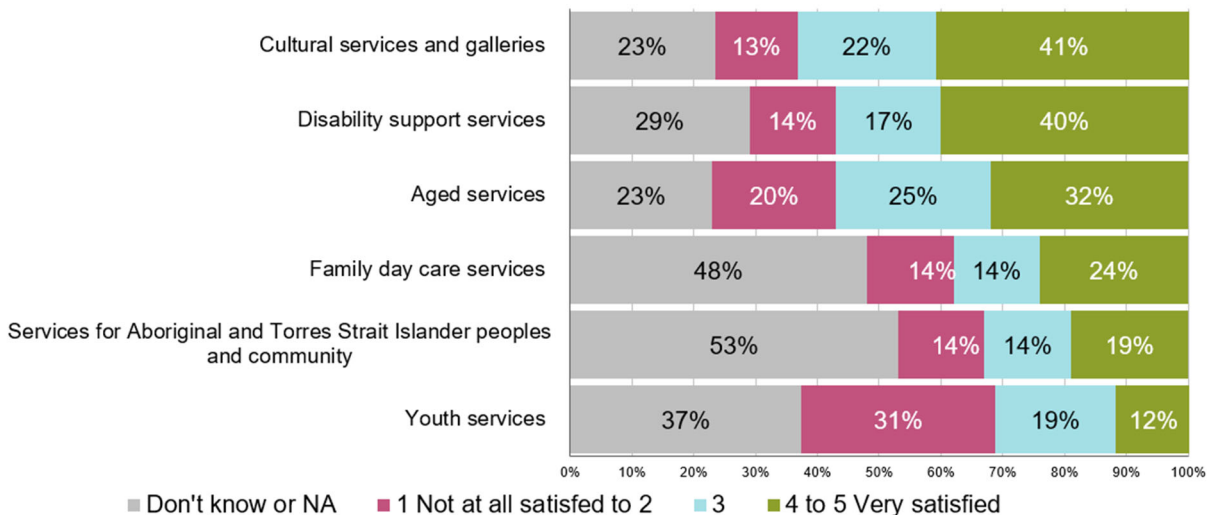
SATISFACTION – INFRASTRUCTURE



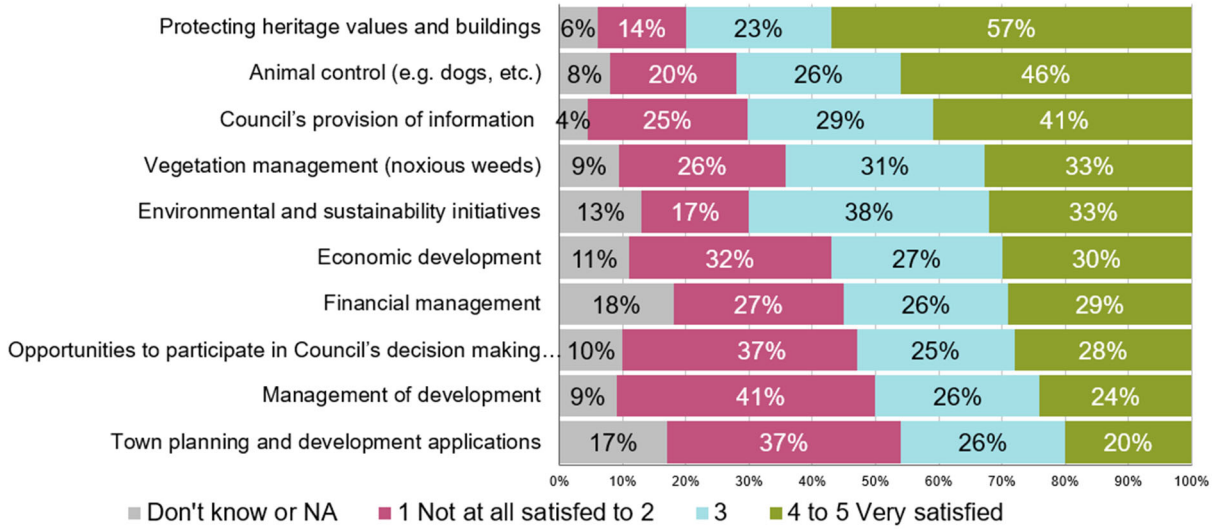
SATISFACTION – WASTE MANAGEMENT



SATISFACTION – HUMAN SERVICES



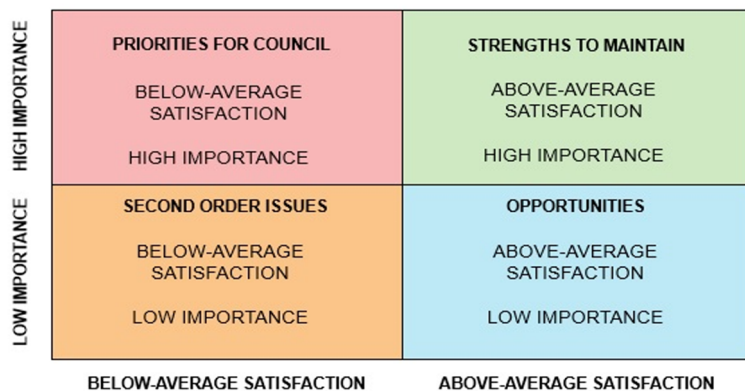
SATISFACTION – CORPORATE SERVICES AND MANAGEMENT



2024 QUADRANT ANALYSIS

Quadrant analysis examines what drives resident satisfaction by analysing how different Council services impact overall satisfaction. Quadrant analysis compares the importance of a service to how well residents think it performs, using satisfaction and importance scores. Services are then grouped into four categories: strengths to maintain (high satisfaction and importance), priorities for improvement (high importance but low satisfaction), lower priority issues (low satisfaction and importance), and opportunities (high satisfaction but lower impact on overall satisfaction).

For example, in 2024, town planning and development applications had high importance but low satisfaction, while art galleries had high satisfaction but were rated of low importance.



PRIORITIES FOR COUNCIL	STRENGTHS TO MAINTAIN
28 Family day care services	2 Sporting ovals and facilities
30 Environmental and sustainability initiatives	6 Attractiveness of town centres and public spaces
31 Council's provision of information	18 Protecting heritage values and buildings
32 Provision and cleanliness of public toilets	21 Water supply
33 Services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and community	24 Litter control and rubbish dumping
35 Vegetation management (noxious weeds)	
36 Financial management	
37 Economic development	
38 Drainage/flood management	
40 Opportunities to participate in Council's decision making process	
41 Management of development	
42 Town planning and development applications	
43 Youth services	
44 Roads in towns and villages	
45 Roads outside towns and villages	
SECOND ORDER ISSUES	OPPORTUNITIES
26 Animal control (e.g. dogs, etc.)	1 Libraries services
27 Footpaths	3 Local parks and gardens
29 Aged services	4 Green waste collection or organic collection
34 Rural Waste Transfer Stations	5 Art Galleries
39 Availability of parking in town and village centres	7 Cemeteries
	8 Sewerage services
	9 Playgrounds
	10 Street cleaning
	11 Showgrounds
	12 Recycling
	13 General garbage collection
	14 The Tip / Town Waste Transfer Stations
	15 Community halls and buildings
	16 Airport
	17 Skate Parks
	19 Livestock salesyard
	20 Swimming pools
	22 Disability support services
	23 Cultural services and galleries
	25 Lighting in public areas

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COUNCIL

- **Improve Road Infrastructure:** Roads are the lowest-rated service, and dissatisfaction is increasing. Prioritising road maintenance, especially in rural areas.
- **Enhance Community Planning & Development Services:** Dissatisfaction with development management, planning applications, and economic development suggests a need for better transparency and efficiency.
- **Address Health & Community Service Concerns:** The decline in satisfaction with healthcare access highlights a growing community concern.
- **Improve Waste & Environmental Management:**
 - Recycling received lower ratings than other waste services.
 - Addressing public litter control and illegal dumping could enhance overall satisfaction.
- **Enhance Community Engagement:** Given high dissatisfaction with opportunities to participate in Council decision-making, improving public consultation could positively impact satisfaction.
- **Continue Strengthening Customer Service:** Positive trends in customer service satisfaction should be maintained with further improvements in response times and efficiency.

CONCLUSION

The 2024 Community Satisfaction Survey highlights important strengths and areas for improvement in Mid-Western Regional Council's service delivery. While customer service and some community services remain strong, concerns around road infrastructure, planning and development, healthcare access, and waste management require attention. Addressing these key priorities will improve overall resident satisfaction and trust in Council. It should be noted that the decline in satisfaction from 2021 aligns with a broader trend across NSW following the March-May 2022 floods, largely due to concerns over road conditions.

5.2 Community and Interest Group Comments

207 community and interest groups were invited to a series of focus sessions to provide their input and comment regarding the Towards 2040: Mid-Western Region Community Plan. The community groups were also provided opportunity to provide feedback through a paper form or online via Council's website.



**TOWARDS 2040
COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN
SUBMISSION FORM
COMMUNITY GROUPS**

my community my plan | Mid-Western Regional Council

Council is currently undertaking a review of its Community Plan in order to develop future common goals and priorities with our community.

If you would like to comment, please complete this form and return it to Council by mail, email or drop off to your local Customer Service Centre by 6 January, 2025.

OR

Scan the QR code or visit midwestern.nsw.gov.au/towards2040-communitygroups to complete the survey online.



Please complete the following details about your organisation

Name of organisation

Regional area the organisation services (all of region, Mudgee, Gulgong, Rylstone, Kandos, other)

Contact person name **Contact person phone number**

1. What does Council do well to support the region?

2. What should Council's priorities be in relation to activities your organisation supports over the next:

4 YEARS	10 YEARS	15 YEARS
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>

MUDGEE 86 Market Street • GULGONG 109 Herbert Street • RYLSTONE 77 Louee Street | e council@midwestern.nsw.gov.au
midwestern.nsw.gov.au



There were 34 attendees at the five focus group sessions held in November 2024 and 9 community groups provided their detailed feedback via the feedback form. Responses were tailored specific to the interest or specific community group mission. The following recommendations were produced from these groups.

- **Current themes of the Towards 2040: Mid-Western Towards 2040 Community Plan remain relevant including:**
 - Looking after our community.
 - Protecting our natural environment.
 - Building a strong local economy
 - Connecting our region
 - Good government

- **Workforce Shortages and Employment Initiatives**
 - Pre-employment programs - Dubbo's successful model connecting locals to infrastructure projects.
 - Affordable housing - offering housing and mental health services to attract workers.
 - Upskilling programs - promoting local training for renewable energy and aged care sectors.
 - Careers expo - engaging younger residents in future job opportunities.

- **Housing and Homelessness**
 - Emergency housing – identified need for safe, gated facilities like those in Orange.
 - Funding advocacy - Push for state and federal funds for affordable housing projects.
 - Strategic development - Ensuring housing is close to schools, libraries, and healthcare facilities.

- **Youth Engagement and Community Services**
 - Youth centres - establish spaces for non-sport-related activities.
 - Recreational infrastructure - expand facilities like skate parks and cultural workshops.
 - Business partnerships - leverage private businesses for creative youth programs.
 - School support - address behavioural issues through teacher support and tailored programs.

- **Health and Social Services**
 - Attract professionals - offer incentives and flexible housing options for healthcare workers.
 - Extended hours - increase operating hours of healthcare facilities to reduce emergency service strain.
 - Community centres - create support spaces for domestic violence victims and vulnerable groups.

- **Infrastructure and Transportation**
 - Regular bus services
 - Rail trails
 - Increased parking
 - Improved cycling paths
 - Better road conditions
 - Innovative transport solutions

- **Environmental Sustainability**
 - Native planting - prioritise native species over deciduous trees to enhance local biodiversity
 - Water security - reuse wastewater and plan for climate-resilient agriculture.
 - Renewable energy - leverage renewable energy zones to attract green industries and train workers.

■ **Community Safety and Economic Growth**

- Safety measures - improve lighting and surveillance to address late-night incidents.
- Emergency preparedness - enhance coordination between services and centralize emergency communication.
- Tourism development - promote unique projects like rail trails and eco-tourism opportunities.

■ **Community Engagement & Collaboration**

- Interagency meetings - expand post-COVID collaborations to address shared goals.
- Diverse engagement - use surveys, roadshows, and targeted outreach to vulnerable populations.
- Evidence-based planning - develop community plans to strengthen funding applications.

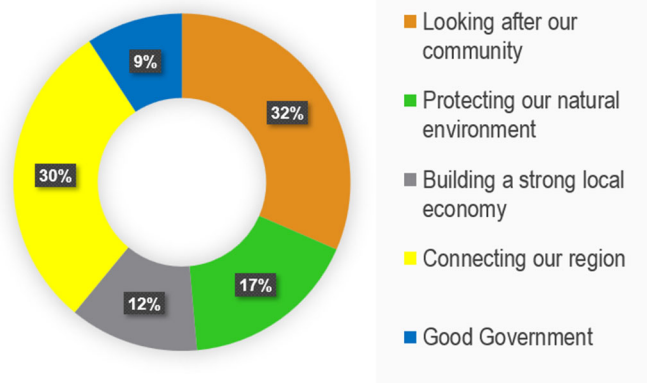
5.3 Community Roadshows

Seven community roadshows were held in November 2024 where Council staff including Directors and Managers engaged community members on the streets of Mudgee, Gulgong, Kandos and Rylstone. Throughout these roadshows 201 community members were engaged and invited to give their feedback on how Council should spend their funds and what their top 5 projects would be for Council to complete.

WHAT SHOULD COUNCIL SPEND FUNDS ON?



Themes for funding



The bead exercise asked the community to allocate council funds through the allocation of beads. Each community member was provided 5 beads and was asked to allocate these to the theme/s in which they wanted council funds spent.

The results of the bead exercise confirmed that the existing themes remain relevant, with funding distributed across all areas. Participants placed the greatest emphasis on "Looking After Our Community", allocating 32% of funding to this theme, followed by "Connecting Our Region" at 30%.

The bead allocation exercise highlights the priorities of different towns regarding community planning. Below is a comparative analysis of the similarities and differences in how Mudgee, Gulgong, Rylstone, and Kandos distributed their focus across key themes.

Key Similarities Across Towns:

- Strong Focus on "Looking After Our Community":
 - All towns allocated a significant portion of their beads to *Looking After Our Community*, indicating a shared emphasis on community well-being, local services, and social cohesion.
 - Mudgee (33.0%) and Gulgong (34.1%) showed the highest prioritisation of this theme.
 - In Rylstone (24.4%) and Kandos (22.2%), this remained a leading concern, though at slightly lower levels.
- "Connecting Our Region" as a Priority:
 - Mudgee (24.9%) and Gulgong (37.4%) both allocated a large percentage of their beads to *Connecting Our Region*, suggesting a strong desire for improved transportation, infrastructure, and regional integration.
 - While Rylstone (40.0%) also placed a high emphasis on this theme, its smaller total bead count makes the absolute number less significant compared to Mudgee and Gulgong.
 - Kandos (28.1%) also valued connectivity but allocated more evenly across themes.
- Less Emphasis on "Good Government" Across All Towns:
 - The least prioritised category in all towns was *Good Government*, suggesting that governance-related concerns were not as pressing as community, economy, and infrastructure.
 - The percentage allocations were low across the board: Mudgee (10.8%), Gulgong (6.9%), Rylstone (8.9%), and Kandos (8.9%).

Key Differences Between Towns:

- Mudgee & Gulgong vs. Rylstone & Kandos in Economic Focus:
 - *Building a Strong Local Economy* was a higher priority for **Kandos (26.7%)**, possibly due to economic development needs in the area.

- Mudgee (12.5%) and Gulgong (6.2%) allocated much less to this category, perhaps reflecting a more established economy.
- Rylstone (11.1%) showed the least focus on economic development.
- Rylstone's Emphasis on Connectivity Over Other Themes:
 - A striking difference is Rylstone's highest allocation (40.0%) to *Connecting Our Region*, the largest proportion of any town in any category.
 - This suggests that connectivity issues (e.g., transport, road quality, and infrastructure) are of particular concern in Rylstone.
- Kandos' Balanced Distribution Across Themes:
 - Unlike other towns where *Looking After Our Community* and *Connecting Our Region* were clear leaders, Kandos had a more evenly distributed allocation.
 - *Building a Strong Local Economy* (26.7%) and *Connecting Our Region* (28.1%) received nearly equal emphasis, indicating that economic and connectivity concerns are equally important in this town.
- Environmental Priorities Vary Significantly:
 - Mudgee (18.9%) and Gulgong (15.4%) allocated a fair portion to *Protecting Our Natural Environment*, suggesting moderate concern for sustainability and environmental issues.
 - Rylstone (15.6%) was slightly lower but still comparable.
 - Kandos (14.1%) allocated the least, showing that environmental concerns may not be as urgent compared to other needs in this town.

Summary of Findings:

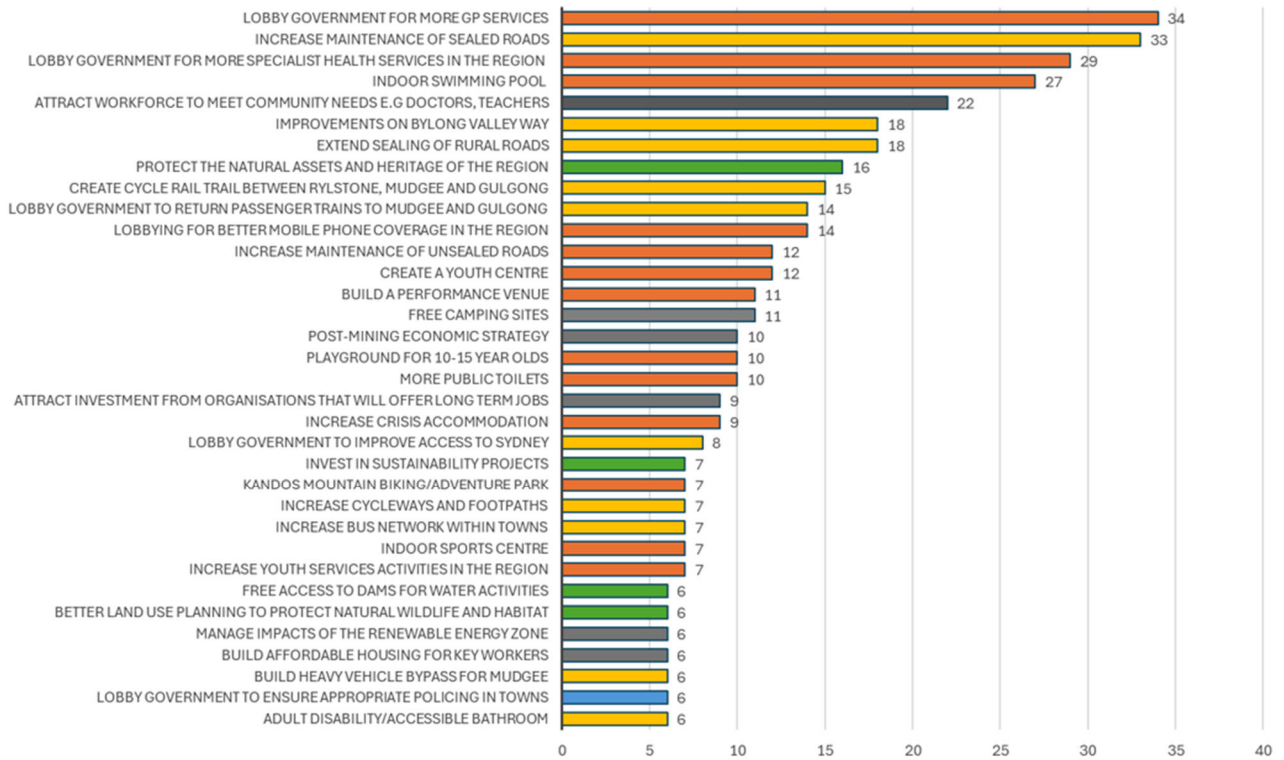
- **Mudgee & Gulgong** share a similar profile, with strong emphasis on *Looking After Our Community* and *Connecting Our Region*, while economic concerns are lower.
- **Rylstone** is distinctly focused on *Connecting Our Region*, likely due to a greater need for transport and infrastructure.
- **Kandos** has a more evenly spread allocation, with a higher focus on *Building a Strong Local Economy* compared to the other towns.
- *Good Government* was the lowest priority across all locations.

This analysis suggests that while some community needs are universal (e.g., community well-being and connectivity), the economic and environmental priorities differ across towns based on their unique circumstances.

TOP 5 PROJECTS - RESPONSES



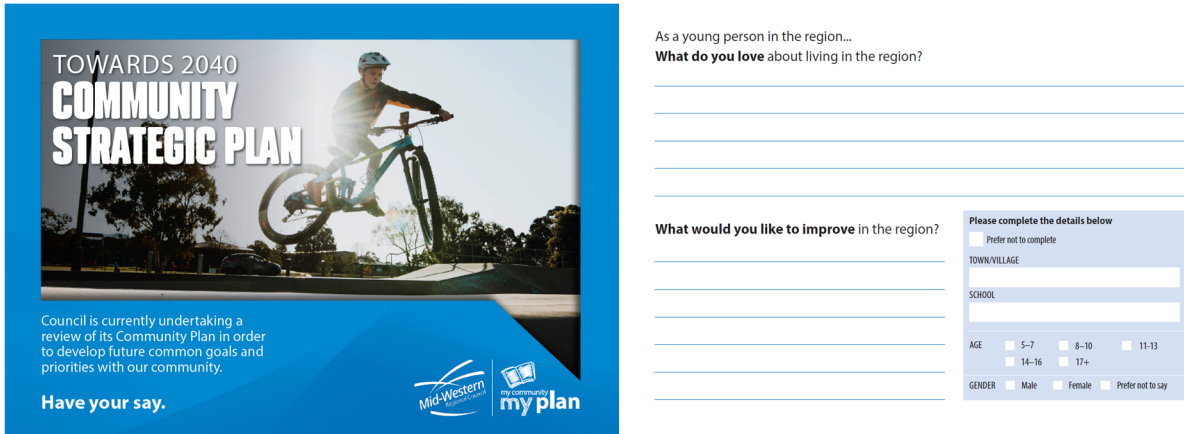
Top 34 Priorities- Face to Face Engagements



The Top 5 Projects exercise revealed that three of the five highest-ranked projects focused on medical services and attracting doctors to the region, highlighting healthcare as the top priority for residents. This was followed by increased maintenance of sealed roads and the construction of an indoor swimming pool, a long-standing community priority since 2016.

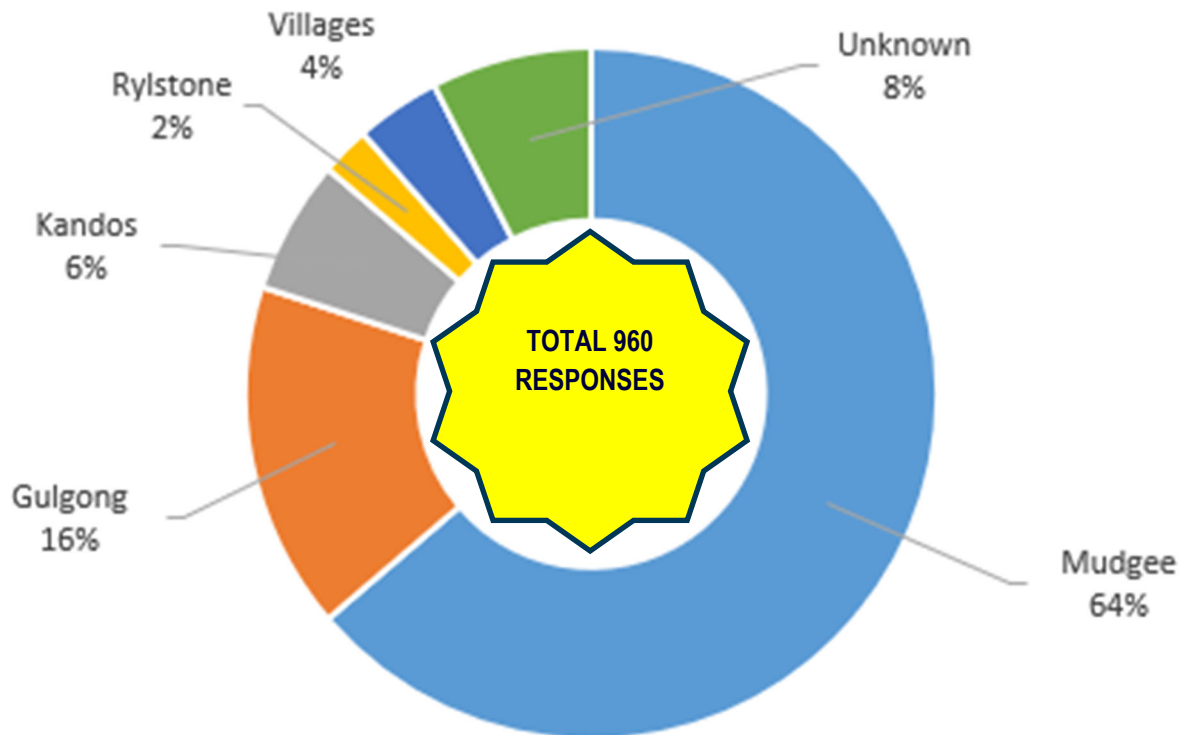
5.4 School Postcards

The Postcard Exercise was distributed to all schools in the region. 960 school-aged children (5-18 years) participated in this exercise. The postcard asked students to identify what they liked most about living in the region and what they would like to improve in the region.



Data was collated and results expressed in the below word-clouds. These word-clouds highlight frequent phrases and words utilised in the free-text feedback. The larger the text, the more frequent the response.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT PARTICIPATION BY RESIDENTIAL LOCATION



value the local shops, restaurants, and markets, particularly enjoying events such as Flavours of Mudgee and the festive Christmas lights in town centres.

For many, the convenience of a small town is a major advantage. Youth enjoy being able to walk or ride their bikes around town without worrying about traffic, and they appreciate the accessibility of schools, shops, and public spaces. The presence of libraries, community centres, and entertainment options adds to the region's appeal.

Among 5-13-year-olds, the top five liked aspects of the region were the pool, Glen Willow Sporting Complex, parks and playgrounds, skate parks and the pump track, and the quietness and safety of the towns.

The 14-17-year-old group also valued Glen Willow Sporting Complex and sporting facilities in general but placed greater emphasis on friendships and close community connections. They also highlighted their appreciation for the peacefulness of the region, as well as the local food, cafés, and outdoor scenery.

Each town has something unique that its youth enjoy. Mudgee youth are drawn to high-quality sports facilities, great food spots, and open spaces for recreation. Gulgong youth value the town's rich history and adventure park. Kandos youth appreciate their school life and local food places. Rylstone youth love fishing at Windamere and the Cudgegong River. In the villages, youth enjoy hunting, fishing, and bushwalking, along with the excitement of local sports events.

- See Appendix 1 for more information by town
- See Appendix 2 for more information by gender
- See Appendix 3 for more information by age

suggested the addition of water parks and splash pads, especially in Gulgong, Kandos, and Mudgee, to provide more summer activities.

Another recurring theme was a desire for more retail and dining options. Many youth expressed frustration with the lack of diverse shops, clothing stores, and fast-food outlets, requesting businesses such as Hungry Jack's, Taco Bell, Guzman y Gomez, and larger shopping centres.

Finally, some young people mentioned the need for more educational and career opportunities, including university or TAFE campuses, improved high school resources, and more job pathways for youth. They would also like more funding for creative industries, such as music festivals, theatre programs, and art workshops.

- See Appendix 1 for more information by town
- See Appendix 2 for more information by gender
- See Appendix 3 for more information by age

WHAT DID THE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS SAY?

- **What Council does well to support the region**
 - Excellent provision of sporting facilities.
 - Development of recreational infrastructure, such as the new bike track at Glen Willow.
 - Maintaining Mudgee as a thriving tourist hub.
 - Beautiful parks and well-maintained main streets.
- **What should Council's priorities be for the next 4 years**
 - Improved swimming facilities, including an indoor pool.
 - Development of a water park.
 - Support for immigrants moving to the region.
 - Affordable housing for essential workers.
- **What should Council's priorities be for the next 10 years**
 - Development of indoor sports facilities.
 - Improved parking infrastructure.
- **What should Council's priorities be for the next 15 years**
 - Theatre and performance facilities.

5.5 Strategic Priorities for the Future

A key focus of community engagement was to identify the community’s key priorities for the future. Through a range of tools, adults were asked what they liked about the region and then they were asked to identify priorities for the next 4 years, 10 years and 15 years. Opportunities to provide feedback were designed to engage a broad range of community members, utilising different techniques to draw relevant and usable data.

These activities included:

1. Permanent displays at Council facilities such as Customer Service centres, Libraries and Pools
2. Mail out to residents along with the Community News newsletter in December 2024
3. Online survey on Council’s website and social media

FIGURE 1: DISPLAYS AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL FACILITIES



What do you like about the region?

What should our priorities be over the next:

4 years _____

10 years _____

15 years _____

AFFIX
STAMP
HERE

Mid-Western Regional Council
PO Box 156
Mudgee NSW 2850

TOWN/VILLAGE	POSTCODE
AGE	<input type="checkbox"/> <19 <input type="checkbox"/> 20-29 <input type="checkbox"/> 30-39 <input type="checkbox"/> 40-49 <input type="checkbox"/> 50-59 <input type="checkbox"/> 60-69 <input type="checkbox"/> 70-79 <input type="checkbox"/> 80+
GENDER	<input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> F <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say



FIGURE 2: ONLINE ENGAGEMENT WITH RESIDENTS

Towards 2040 Community Plan

Council is seeking your input and feedback as it reviews and updates the long-term plan for our region. The local community plays a significant role in the development and review of the Mid-Western Region Towards 2040 Community Plan.



Towards 2040 sets out the community's vision for the future – where we are, where we want to be and how we will get there.

Council is embarking on a range of engagement activities to gain input and feedback from as many community members as possible.

Timeline

- Community engagement begins November 2024
- Community engagement concludes February 2025
- Towards 2040 Community Plan published April 2025

FIGURE 3: MAILOUT TO RESIDENTS

Council is currently undertaking a review of its Community Plan in order to develop future common goals and priorities with our community.

If you would like to comment, please complete this form and return it to Council by mail, email or drop off to your local Customer Service Centre by 6 January, 2025.

OR

Scan the QR code or visit midwestern.nsw.gov.au/towards2040 to complete the survey online.

Please complete the following details about yourself (optional)

Prefer not to complete personal details

Town / village name

Postcode

Age

5-9 10-14 15-19 20-29 30-39
 40-49 50-59 60-69 70-79 80+

Gender

Male Prefer not to say
 Female

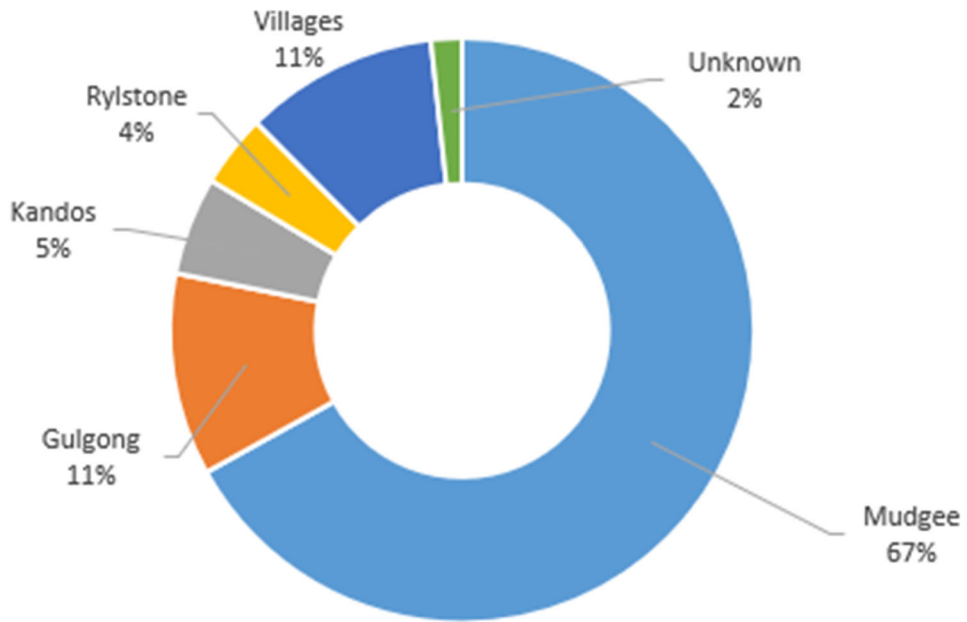
1. What do you like about the region?

2. What should our priorities be over the next:

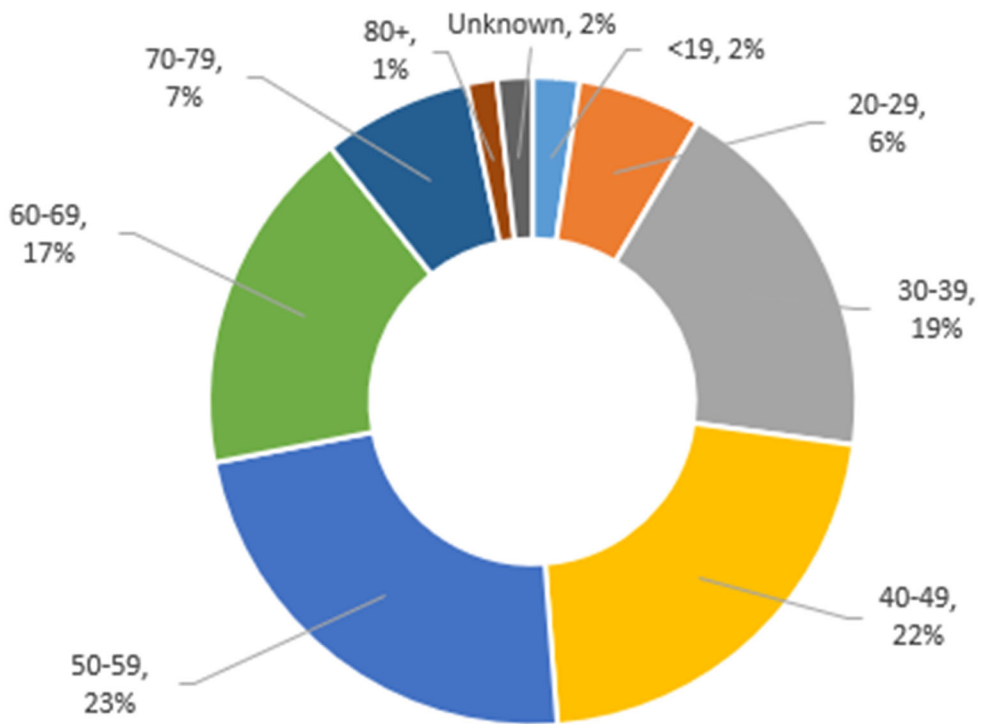
4 YEARS	10 YEARS	15 YEARS
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

MUDGE 86 Market Street • GILGONG 109 Herbert Street • RYLSTONE 77 Loue Street | e council@midwestern.nsw.gov.au
midwestern.nsw.gov.au

ENGAGEMENT PARTICIPATION BY RESIDENTIAL LOCATION



ENGAGEMENT PARTICIPATION BY AGE



The following outcomes were found from these activities.

WHAT ADULTS LIKE ABOUT THE REGION



Key themes that were highlighted of what the community like about the region included:

- **Community & Lifestyle**
 - Strong sense of community and friendly people
 - Safe, peaceful, and family-friendly environment
- **Natural Beauty & Environment**
 - Beautiful landscapes, scenic views, and open spaces
 - Clean air, well-maintained parks, and nature reserves
- **Recreation & Outdoor Activities**
 - Extensive walking tracks, cycling paths, and sporting facilities
 - Outdoor activities like hiking, fishing, and camping
- **Heritage & Culture**
 - Rich history, heritage buildings, and museums
 - Vibrant arts, cultural events, and community festivals

■ Food & Wine

- Thriving café culture, wineries, and local produce
- Farmers' markets and growing food tourism

■ Convenience & Infrastructure

- No traffic lights, minimal congestion, and easy access
- Well-maintained public spaces, roads, and community facilities

Analysis by Age Group

The breakdown by age group highlights differences in what people from different life stages value most about the region.

■ Young Adults (15-29)

- Common themes: Sports facilities, parks, social venues (cafés, restaurants, pubs), and community events.
- Young adults are more likely to mention entertainment options such as cinemas and recreational spaces.
- Some mention employment and business opportunities but at a lower frequency.

■ Middle-Aged Adults (30-49)

- Common themes: Family-friendly facilities, cleanliness, access to services, community feel.
- Respondents in this category appreciate family-oriented amenities like parks and schools.
- They emphasize safety, low crime, and the quiet nature of the region.
- Economic concerns (local businesses, job availability) appear slightly more in this category.

■ Older Adults (50+)

- Common themes: Rural beauty, peaceful environment, community values.
- Older adults frequently mention rural lifestyle and the absence of heavy traffic.
- Healthcare access and affordability appear in responses from those 60+.
- Some also highlight the lack of large commercial developments as a positive.

■ Key Differences Across Age Groups

- Younger respondents focus more on activities, entertainment, and social venues.
- Middle-aged respondents value family amenities, safety, and economic stability.
- Older respondents prioritise community values, rural beauty, and lifestyle balance.

Analysis by Gender

There are notable differences in the way males and females describe what they like about the region.

■ Female Respondents

- Common themes: Community, parks, cleanliness, family-friendly aspects.
- Women more frequently mention community aspects and social connections.
- They also mention shopping, accessibility to services, and family-friendly activities.
- Parks, green spaces, and environmental aspects appear more often in female responses.

■ Male Respondents

- Common themes: Rural lifestyle, town facilities, infrastructure.

- Men focus more on practical aspects like roads, local infrastructure, and economic opportunities.
- Sporting facilities, regional growth, and tourism are mentioned more often in male responses.
- Fewer mentions of social aspects compared to female respondents.

■ **Key Differences Across Gender**

- Women focus on community, safety, and environmental quality.
- Men emphasize practical aspects like development, infrastructure, and local economy.

Analysis by Town/Village Name

Breaking down responses by **town/village**, we see variations in priorities based on locality.

■ **Mudgee**

- Community and lifestyle: Many respondents highlight Mudgee's vibrant community, parks, and wineries.
- Tourism and economic development: Wineries and business opportunities are often mentioned.
- Traffic and infrastructure: Some mention that while Mudgee is growing, traffic and infrastructure should be maintained.

■ **Gulgong**

- Heritage and community: Respondents appreciate Gulgong's heritage feel and small-town charm.
- Parks and open spaces: Many highlight parks, walking areas, and outdoor recreation.
- Need for facilities: Some mention a need for better retail options and entertainment venues.

■ **Rylstone & Kandos**

- Peaceful lifestyle: Many responses mention the quiet and slower pace of life.
- Community engagement: Respondents in these areas value tight-knit communities.
- Infrastructure concerns: Some concerns are raised about access to healthcare and retail shops.

■ **Smaller villages (e.g., Bylong, Cooyal, Lue)**

- Rural beauty: Many responses praise the landscape, wildlife, and agricultural heritage.
- Limited services: Some mention a lack of medical services, shops, and public transport.
- Environmental concerns: Preserving natural spaces and preventing overdevelopment are mentioned.

■ **Key Differences Across Towns**

- Mudgee focuses more on economic opportunities and tourism.
- Gulgong emphasizes heritage and outdoor recreation.
- Rylstone and Kandos prioritise community engagement and rural lifestyle.
- Smaller villages highlight natural beauty but also note service limitations.

Final Observations

■ This analysis reveals several key takeaways:

1. Community and natural beauty are the most valued aspects across all groups.
2. Younger people want more entertainment, while older groups value tranquillity.
3. Women focus on social aspects, while men highlight infrastructure.

- **Health & Medical Services**
 - Attract more doctors, nurses, and specialists to the region.
 - Expand hospital facilities and medical services, including bulk-billed clinics.
- **Public Transport & Connectivity**
 - Enhance transport links between towns and major centres like Sydney and Dubbo.
- **Recreation & Community Facilities**
 - Develop an indoor swimming pool and upgrade existing pools.
 - Expand recreation options, including adventure parks, bike tracks, and youth facilities.
- **Affordable Housing & Urban Planning**
 - Increase affordable housing options, particularly for key workers and young people.
 - Implement better planning to manage population growth and infrastructure needs.
- **Environment & Sustainability**
 - Expand tree planting for shade and cooling in urban areas.
 - Protect natural wildlife, implement sustainable land management, and manage renewable energy projects responsibly.
- **Economic Growth & Local Business Support**
 - Support small businesses and attract diverse industries beyond tourism and mining.
 - Post mining strategy to be developed.
 - Encourage business development to provide more local jobs and services.
- **Safety & Community Wellbeing**
 - Improve street lighting and traffic management to enhance safety.
 - Increase community services, including mental health support and emergency preparedness.
- **Culture, Tourism & Events**
 - Develop arts, cultural spaces, and festivals to strengthen the region's identity.

Analysis by Age Category

- **Younger respondents (under 18)** emphasised more recreational facilities like trampoline parks, bike tracks, pools, and cinemas.
- **Young adults (18-35)** focused on economic growth, job creation, housing affordability, and improving entertainment venues.
- **Middle-aged respondents (36-60)** prioritised infrastructure (roads, public transport) and community services (schools, childcare, healthcare).
- **Older respondents (60+)** focused on healthcare, aged care facilities, and better roads.

Analysis by Gender Category

- **Men** were more likely to mention roads, transport, and economic development.
- **Women** prioritised healthcare, community services, and family-friendly recreational spaces.
- **Both genders** expressed strong support for improved shopping options, entertainment, and environmental protection.

Analysis by Town/Village

- **Mudgee & Gulgong** had the highest response rates, with priorities centred around economic growth, healthcare, and infrastructure.
- **Rylstone & Kandos** focused more on community well-being, better public services, and environmental protection.
- **Smaller villages** emphasized specific local needs such as footpaths, medical services, and town beautification.

WHAT PRIORITIES WERE IDENTIFIED FOR THE NEXT 10 YEARS?



Respondents were asked what the key priorities for the region were over the next 10 years. This question encouraged residents to take a longer-term view for the region.

Key themes that were highlighted included:

- Roads & Infrastructure
 - Ongoing road maintenance and sealing of gravel roads, particularly in rural areas.
- Public Transport & Connectivity
 - Restore passenger rail services and creation of rail trails.

- Develop bike-friendly and pedestrian-friendly areas with more footpaths and walking trails.
- **Health & Medical Services**
 - Attract more doctors and medical specialists.
 - Improve access to medical technology and advanced treatment options.
- **Affordable Housing & Urban Planning**
 - Increase the supply of affordable housing.
 - Develop well-planned residential and commercial spaces while preserving the region's character.
- **Economic Growth & Diversification**
 - Transition from a mining-dependent economy by attracting new industries.
 - Build shopping precinct/centre.
 - Support local businesses, tourism, and agriculture to drive economic stability.
- **Environment & Sustainability**
 - Implement a green energy strategy with renewable energy projects.
 - Protect natural spaces, enhance tree planting, and improve water quality.
- **Culture, Tourism & Events**
 - Enhance tourism offerings with a rail trail and major events.

Analysis by Age Category

- **Under 18s** - Younger respondents continue to focus on entertainment and recreational spaces, such as:
 - A water park
 - Trampoline parks
 - Skate parks
 - Bowling alleys
 - Many also mentioned better schooling facilities and more things to do in town.
 - Some also showed concern for environmental conservation, with calls for more trees and cleaner rivers.
- **Young Adults (18-35)** - This group had a strong focus on:
 - Job creation and business growth to provide better career opportunities.
 - Affordable housing to help younger families settle in the region.
 - More diverse restaurants and shopping options.
 - Liveability improvements, including public transport and better nightlife /entertainment.
 -
- **Middle-Aged Respondents (36-60)** - The focus shifted towards:
 - Long-term infrastructure improvements (roads, train services, better airports).
 - Education and healthcare access.
 - More economic diversification, ensuring local businesses thrive beyond mining.
 - Balancing tourism growth with environmental sustainability.
- **Older Respondents (60+)** - The long-term concerns of this group included:

- Healthcare and aged care improvements, such as retirement villages and more medical specialists.
- Town beautification and better community facilities.
- Safer, well-maintained roads for accessibility.

Analysis by Gender Category

- **Men** - Men tended to emphasize major infrastructure projects, such as:
 - Roads and transport links.
 - Economic growth and job creation.
 - More recreational spaces, particularly sporting fields and fishing/hunting areas.
- **Women** - Women were more likely to highlight healthcare, education, and community spaces, with priorities including:
 - Better hospitals and aged care facilities.
 - More childcare options.
 - Retail and entertainment growth.
- **Both Genders** - Both groups expressed strong interest in:
 - Town expansion and better planning.
 - Stronger environmental policies.
 - Better facilities for young people.

Analysis by Town/Village Name

- **Mudgee** - As the largest centre, Mudgee had the most responses focused on:
 - Economic diversification and more job creation.
 - Public transport upgrades, with a strong desire for train services.
 - Entertainment and recreation growth, including larger cinemas, bowling alleys, and family-friendly spaces.
- **Gulgong** - Respondents in Gulgong focused on:
 - Infrastructure (roads, footpaths, bridges).
 - More schooling options.
 - Tourism growth, with better attractions.
 - Cleaner public spaces and environmental initiatives.
- **Rylstone** - Rylstone residents prioritised:
 - Healthcare access, wanting more doctors and a hospital upgrade.
 - Heritage conservation and maintaining the town's charm.
 - Eco-tourism growth, ensuring sustainable development.
- **Kandos** - Kandos had a strong emphasis on community well-being, including:
 - Affordable housing and local economic growth.
 - Public transport improvements.
 - More medical services

WHAT PRIORITIES WERE IDENTIFIED FOR THE NEXT 15 YEARS?



Respondents were asked to identify key priorities for the region over the next 15 years, encouraging a long-term perspective on future development. While some residents provided forward-thinking insights, many left this section blank, and others reiterated their responses from the 10-year priorities.

Key themes that were highlighted as a priority for the next 15 years included:

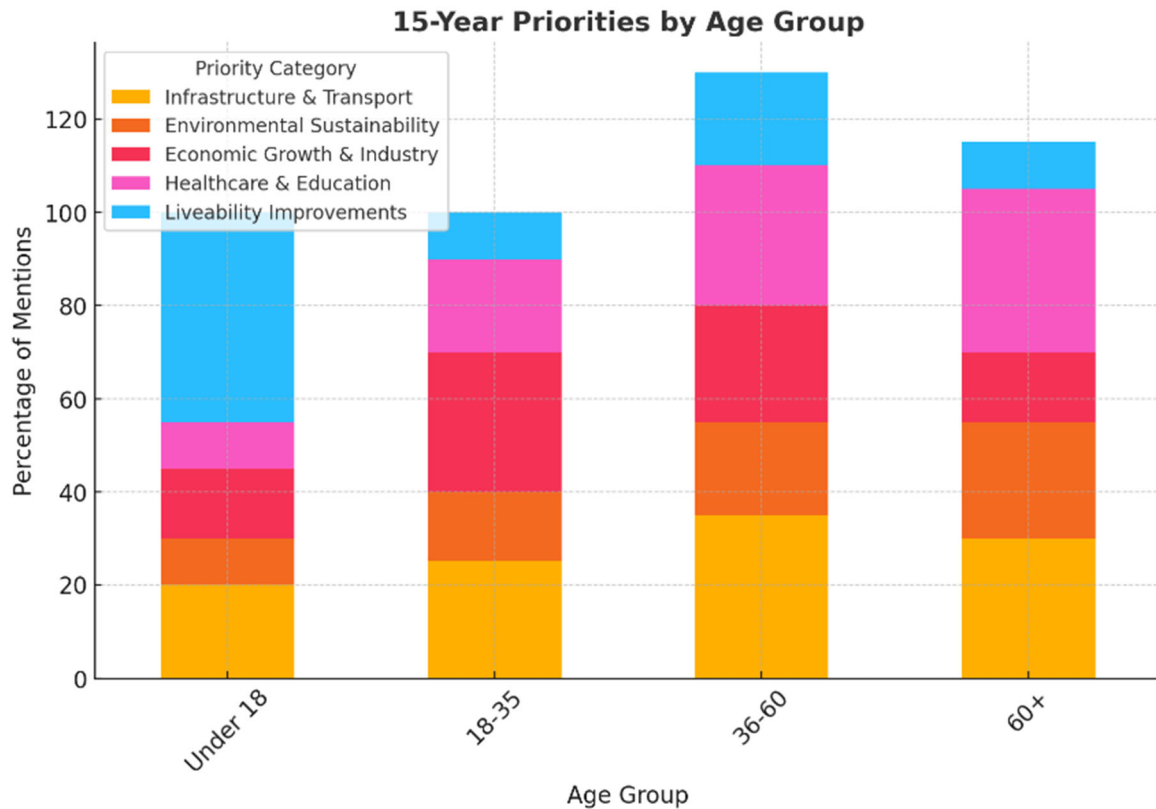
- Roads & Infrastructure
 - Continuous upgrades and maintenance of roads, including rural roads and drainage improvements.
 - Develop a heavy vehicle bypass for Mudgee and improve regional transport links.

- **Public Transport & Connectivity**
 - Restore passenger rail services and regional transport connections.
 - Expand bike paths, pedestrian walkways, and accessible public transport.
- **Health & Medical Services**
 - Expand hospital facilities, aged care, and attract more doctors and medical professionals.
 -
- **Affordable Housing & Urban Planning**
 - Increase the supply of affordable and diverse housing options for key workers.
 - Develop well-planned commercial and residential zones while preserving the region's character.
- **Economic Growth & Diversification**
 - Transition away from mining and attract new industries, including technology, renewable energy, and tourism.
 - Support local manufacturing, retail, and entrepreneurship to create long-term jobs.
- **Environment & Sustainability**
 - Implement a carbon-neutral strategy and invest in renewable energy projects.
 - Protect natural spaces, improve tree planting, and enhance water conservation efforts.
- **Safety & Community Wellbeing**
 - Expand aged care and community support programs.

Analysis by Age Category

- **Under 18s** - Younger respondents focused on entertainment, community spaces, and liveability improvements:
 - Large-scale sports stadiums, water parks, and adventure parks.
 - Expansion of public libraries, creative hubs, and youth centres.
 - Desire for high-speed internet and tech development.
- **Young Adults (18-35)**- Strong focus on economic sustainability and affordable living:
 - More job opportunities in diverse industries.
 - More affordable housing to ensure young families can settle in the region.
 - Calls for better restaurants, retail, and nightlife.
 - Public transport improvements to make travel easier.
- **Middle-Aged Respondents (36-60)** - Infrastructure and services dominated priorities:
 - Upgraded hospitals and aged care facilities.
 - Expanded public transport, particularly trains and highways.
 - Investment in renewable energy and sustainability initiatives.
 - Better local business support to ensure economic resilience.
- **Older Respondents (60+)** - Strong emphasis on healthcare, accessibility, and environmental conservation:
 - Specialist healthcare and aged care services.

- Smoother, well-maintained roads to support mobility.
- Better town planning for community spaces and easy access to services.
- Concern for heritage protection and keeping the region’s natural beauty intact.



Analysis by Gender Category

- **Men** - Men emphasized large-scale infrastructure projects, such as:
 - Expanded transport networks (highways, rail, and airports).
 - Economic diversification, focusing on manufacturing, industry, and logistics.
 - Sporting facilities and outdoor recreational areas (e.g., bike tracks, fishing zones, hunting grounds).

- **Women** - Women had a stronger focus on community services and healthcare, including:
 - More hospitals, aged care, and mental health services.
 - Childcare and educational improvements.
 - Expanded retail and entertainment hubs for better lifestyle options.

- **Both Genders**
 - Both groups showed strong interest in:
 - Sustainability and environmental protection.
 - Town beautification and accessibility.
 - Public transport and better town connectivity.

Analysis by Town/Village Name

- **Mudgee** - Mudgee, as the largest hub, had the most future-focused infrastructure suggestions:
 - Large-scale transport upgrades, including trains and a regional airport expansion.
 - Economic diversification, ensuring industries beyond tourism and mining.
 - More high-end dining, shopping, and entertainment options.

- **Gulgong** - Gulgong residents focused on:
 - Infrastructure maintenance, particularly roads and bridges.
 - Protecting heritage and town identity while allowing for economic growth.
 - More parks and open spaces.

- **Rylstone** - Respondents in Rylstone prioritised:
 - Aged care and health services, ensuring medical accessibility.
 - Stronger environmental protections.
 - Sustainable tourism that aligns with the town's heritage.

- **Kandos** - Kandos had a community-focused and economic sustainability approach:
 - Affordable housing and job opportunities.
 - Better transport connectivity.
 - Community events and tourism expansion.

- **Small Towns/Villages** - some distinct patterns and insights emerged:
 - **Infrastructure & Transport Needs Dominate**
 - Small towns prioritise road improvements, better connectivity, and transport options more than any other category.
 - Many responses mentioned better-maintained roads, bridges, and footpaths, particularly in more remote villages like Wollar, Goolma, and Bylong.
 - Some communities, like Lue and Ilford, mentioned interest in public transport access to larger towns like Mudgee or Lithgow.
 - **Limited Access to Services is a Major Concern**
 - Healthcare and Education ranked highly, with a common theme of better medical services, more doctors, and better schooling options.
 - Villages like Ilford specifically mentioned mobile health services as a need due to lack of local clinics.
 - More education opportunities, such as improved school facilities or alternative education programs, were a concern in places like Lue and Windeyer.
 - **Economic Growth & Industry is Focused on Agriculture and Local Business**
 - Unlike larger towns (e.g. Mudgee, which has a broader focus on business parks and diverse industry), smaller towns are focused on supporting agriculture, local businesses, and tourism.
 - Wollar and Bylong mentioned concerns about the impact of mining versus agricultural sustainability, with mixed views on expansion versus conservation.
 - Cooks Gap and Windeyer had comments about supporting small businesses and farmers through better access to markets and grants.
 - **Tourism Development as an Economic Driver**
 - A notable insight from small towns is their recognition of tourism as a key economic opportunity.
 - Budgee Budgee, Windeyer, and Running Stream suggested improvements like heritage tourism, better signage, and boutique accommodations.

- Wollar and Bylong saw potential in eco-tourism, farm stays, and nature-based attractions.
- Lue and Ilford suggested that better marketing of their region for historical and nature tourism could bring in visitors.
- **Environmental Sustainability and Conservation Focus**
 - Many small-town responses heavily emphasise protecting natural assets like rivers, forests, and farmland.
 - Ilford, Running Stream, and St Fillan's mentioned concerns about water management, bushfire protection, and land conservation.
 - Wollar and Bylong showed some opposition to large-scale developments (e.g., solar farms, mining expansion) in favour of preserving rural landscapes.
- **Liveability and Community Amenities for Small-Town Residents**
 - Unlike larger towns, where priorities focused on retail and entertainment, smaller towns emphasized basic amenities like:
 - Community halls and local gathering spaces (e.g., Windeyer, Cooks Gap).
 - More recreational spaces for children and families (e.g., playgrounds, picnic areas in places like Bylong and Goolma).
 - Better internet and mobile service, especially in remote areas like Wollar and Running Stream.

Key Similarities Across the Region

- Infrastructure is a shared concern, with roads, footpaths, and transport upgrades being widely mentioned.
- Healthcare improvements are important for all age groups, particularly better hospitals and specialist services.
- Economic growth and local jobs are priorities across towns, with respondents wanting a diversified economy beyond mining.
- Environmental concerns were raised across all groups, particularly in terms of protecting natural spaces and ensuring sustainable tourism.

Differences between Towns

- Larger towns like Mudgee and Gulgong have a strong focus on business development, shopping precincts, entertainment, and urban expansion, while small towns prioritise essential services, infrastructure, and tourism opportunities.
- Kandos and Rylstone act as middle ground, balancing business growth with heritage conservation and environmental sustainability.
- Villages tend to have more unique, community-focused concerns, such as protecting local heritage, maintaining agricultural viability, and ensuring access to basic amenities.

Summary

The 15-year priorities reflect a future-focused vision that blends economic prosperity, sustainability, and liveability. While each demographic has unique concerns, there is broad agreement that long-term planning must balance development with environmental and community well-being.

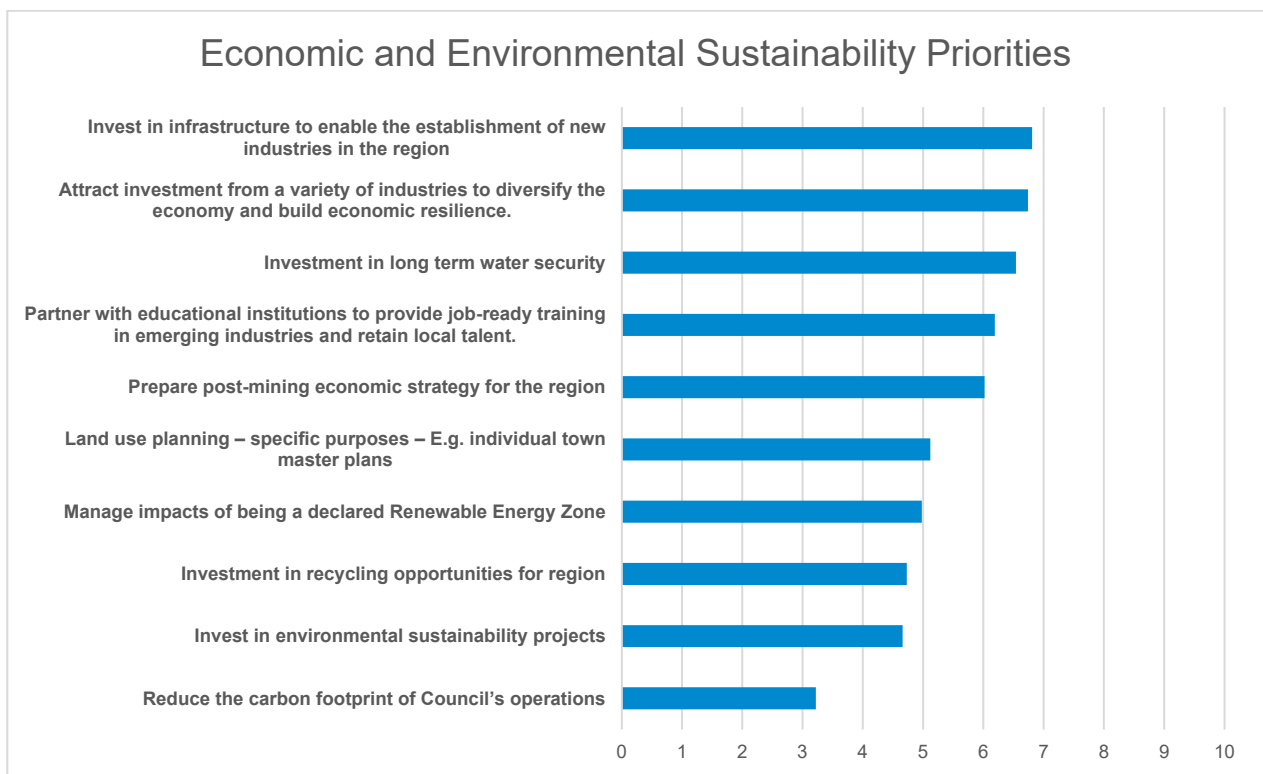
5.6 Online Surveys

Online surveys were used to reinforce the information that the mail-out exercises were designed to capture. The online surveys focused on asking the community for their priorities for the region into the future. All surveys had the opportunity for respondents to provide free text suggested if not listed in the questionnaire.

SURVEY 1 – ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

- What should Council's strategic priorities be for economic and environmental sustainability for the next 15 years and beyond?

Please rank your priorities by reordering the options below (1 being most important and 10 being least important)



Respondents: 329

The top priorities identified in the data are investing in infrastructure to support new industries, attracting diverse industry investment, and ensuring long-term water security.

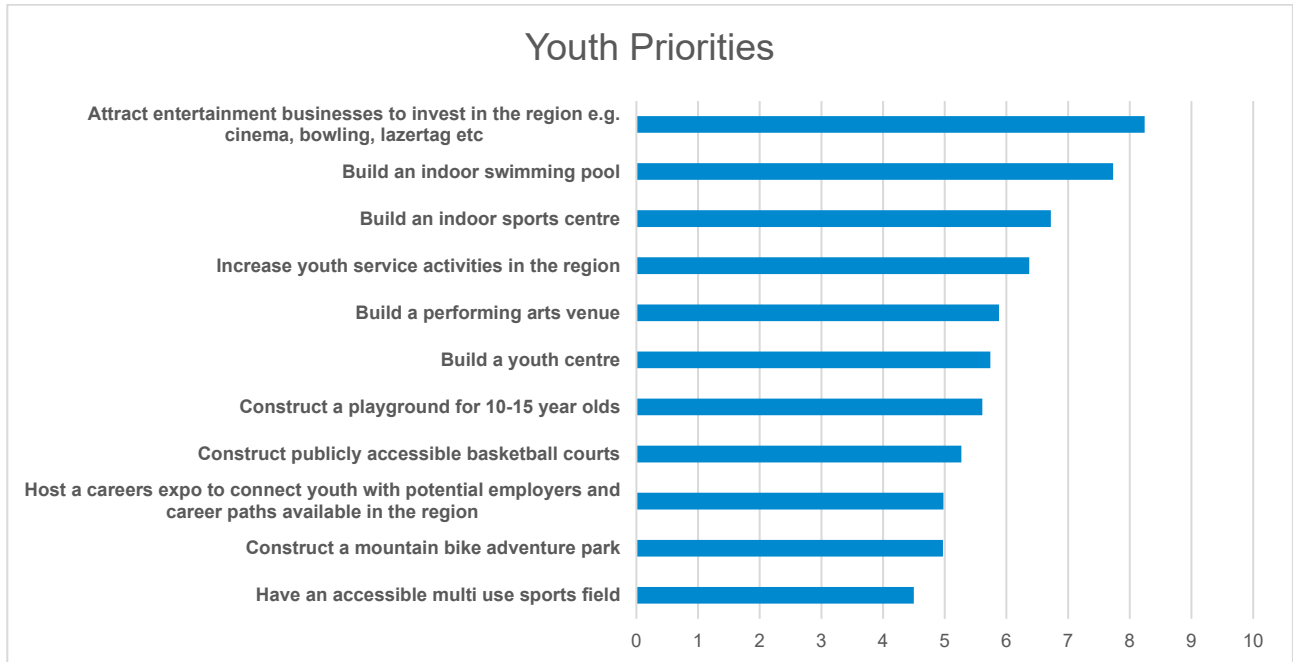
Other feedback received from this survey included:

- Shopping & Retail – Develop a larger shopping centre with diverse retail options and job opportunities.
- Tourism & Economy – Support local businesses, promote tourism, and improve planning for economic sustainability.

SURVEY 2 - YOUTH

- Thinking specifically about youth. What should be Council's focus to improve youth services in the region?

Rank in order of priority where 1 is the highest priority.



Respondents: 444

The highest priority identified in the survey is attracting entertainment businesses to invest in the region, followed by building an indoor swimming pool and an indoor sports centre.

Other suggestions received included:

- Water park or splash park installation.
- More activities for non-sporty kids (gaming, art, writing, music), which aligns with the fourth priority above.
- Skatepark improvements and better facilities.
- Synthetic hockey field at Glen Willow.
- More shared pathways, cycle tracks, and BMX trails.
- More shaded public spaces with seating and toilets.
- Repurpose buildings for community programs
- More local job opportunities for youth.
- Scholarships to encourage students to return as professionals.
- Support for homeschooling families with venue access.
- Improved access to mental health services.
- More engagement programs to prevent boredom and risky behaviour.

SURVEY 3 – RECREATION

- The community have a wide range of recreational desires. What recreational activities or facilities would you like built or have more access to in our community?

Rank in order of priority where 1 is the highest priority.



Respondents: 677

The highest priority in this survey is building an indoor swimming pool, followed by constructing an indoor sports centre, increasing youth service activities in the region and constructing a rail trail between Rylstone, Mudgee and Gulgong.

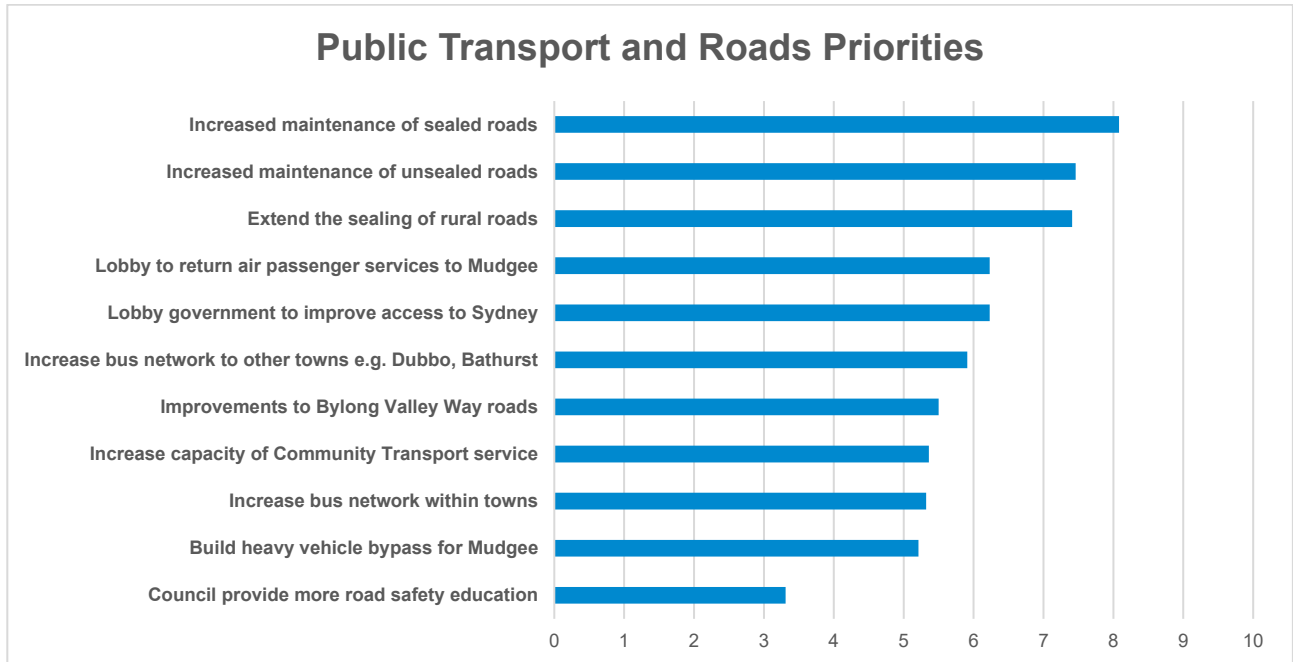
Other feedback included:

- Indoor Entertainment Options – Bowling alley, laser tag, arcade, trampoline park, and cinema.
- Water Park/Splash Pads – Free access water play areas in multiple towns.
- Adventure & Play Areas – Larger, more interactive playgrounds, BMX tracks, skateparks, and mountain bike trails.

SURVEY 4 – TRANSPORT AND ROADS

■ What improvements would you like to see in public transportation and road safety in your area?

Rank in order of priority where 1 is the highest priority.



Respondents: 355

The highest priority in this survey is the increased maintenance of sealed and unsealed roads, followed by the extension of rural road sealing. There is also significant support for lobbying efforts to return air passenger services to Mudgee and improve access to Sydney, highlighting a desire for better regional connectivity.

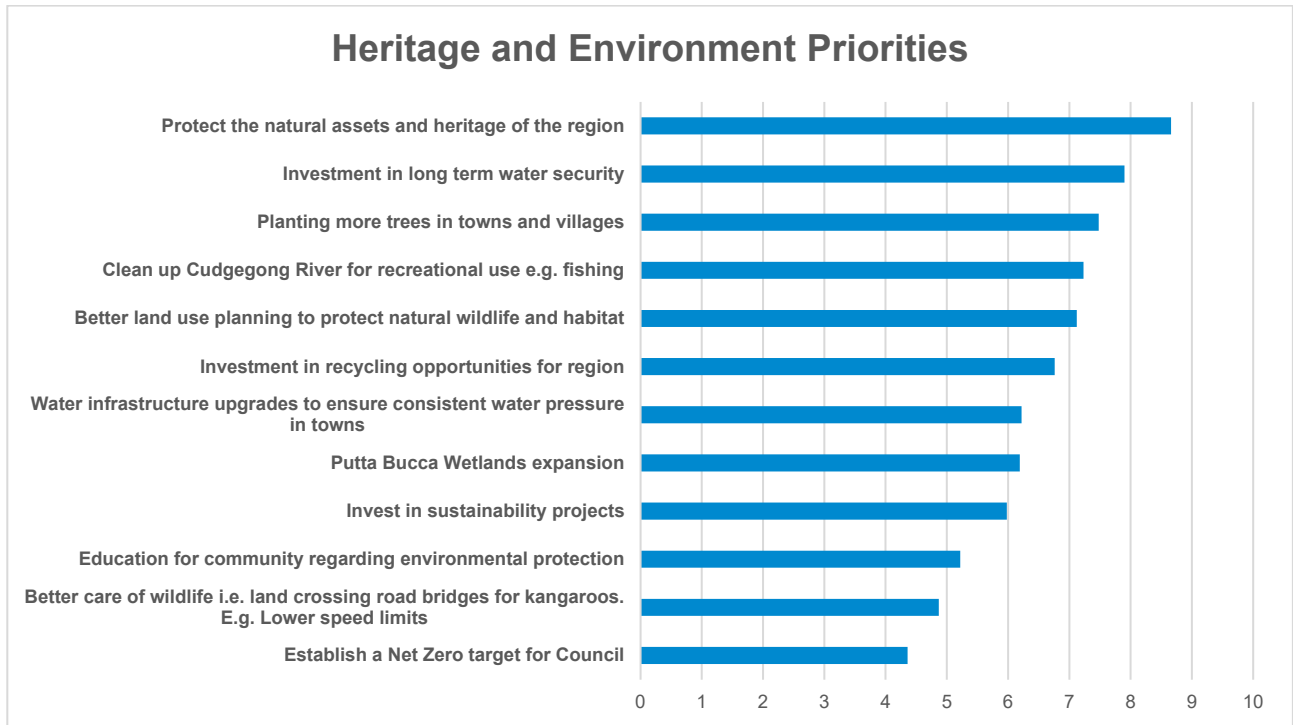
Other feedback included:

- Upgrade major intersections – roundabouts at Bunnings, Sydney Rd, and key areas.
- Improve drainage to prevent road deterioration.
- More overtaking lanes on key roads (Gulgong Rd, Bylong Valley Way, Ulan Rd).
- Better parking – larger spaces, caravan parking, more off-street options.
- Install traffic lights at high-risk intersections (Douro St, Horatio St).
- Lower speed limits in pedestrian-heavy areas.
- More pedestrian crossings, particularly near schools and shopping areas.
- Improve signage and line markings for safer driving.
- Reinstate passenger rail services (Mudgee to Lithgow/Sydney).
- Develop more cycle paths and safe pedestrian routes.
- Rail trail project for cycling, walking, and tourism.
- Wider footpaths for prams, mobility scooters, and pedestrians.
- Better street lighting and public toilets.
- Improve town congestion – open closed streets and crossings.
- Maintain and clear vegetation along roads for safety.

SURVEY 5 – HERITAGE AND ENVIRONMENT

■ Thinking about your natural environment and heritage what is more important to you?

Rank in order of priority where 1 is the highest priority.



Respondents: 201

The highest priority in this survey is protecting the natural assets and heritage of the region, followed by investment in long-term water security and planting more trees in towns and villages.

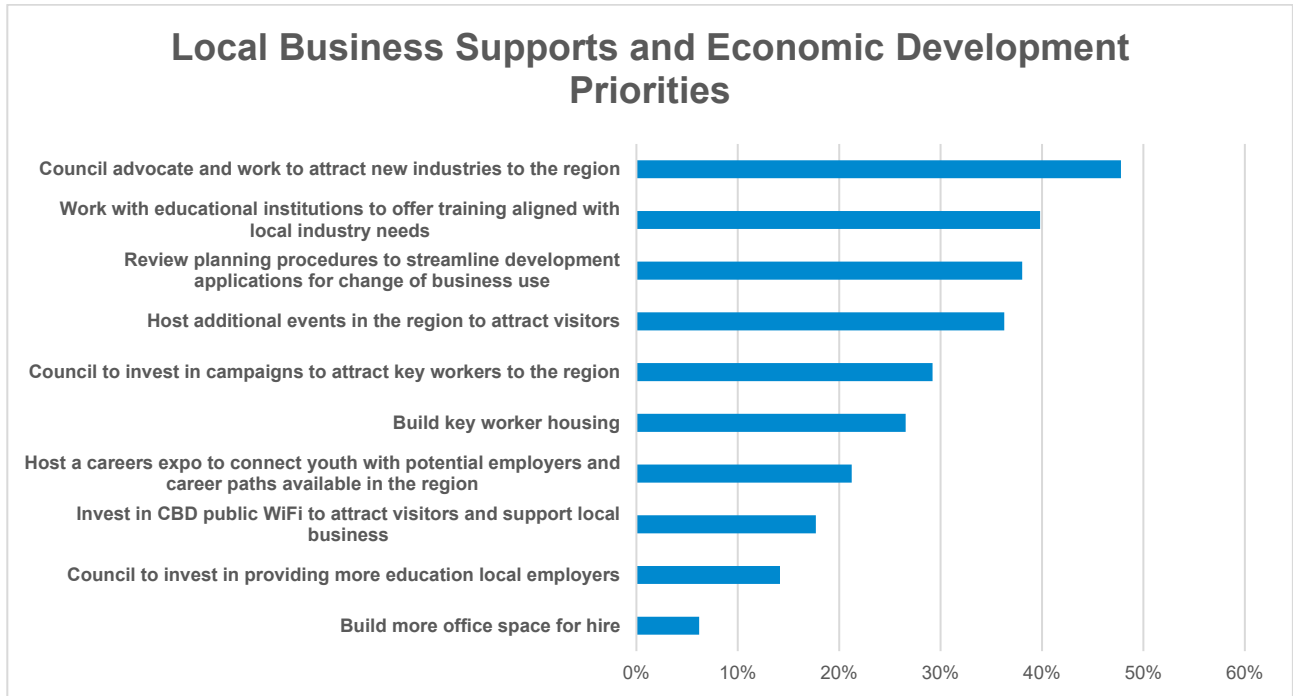
Other feedback received from this survey included:

- Preserve and restore heritage buildings.
- Better waste management and recycling facilities.
- Maintain and beautify town streetscapes.
- Develop a community garden for schools.
- Climate change adaptation strategies (drought planning, tree planting).
- Promote renewable energy while balancing environmental concerns.

SURVEY 6 – SUPPORT LOCAL BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

■ How can Council better support local businesses and economic development?

Select your top 3.



Respondents: 112

The highest priority in this survey is for the Council to advocate and work to attract new industries to the region followed by collaboration with educational institutions to offer training aligned with local industry needs and streamlining development applications for business use.

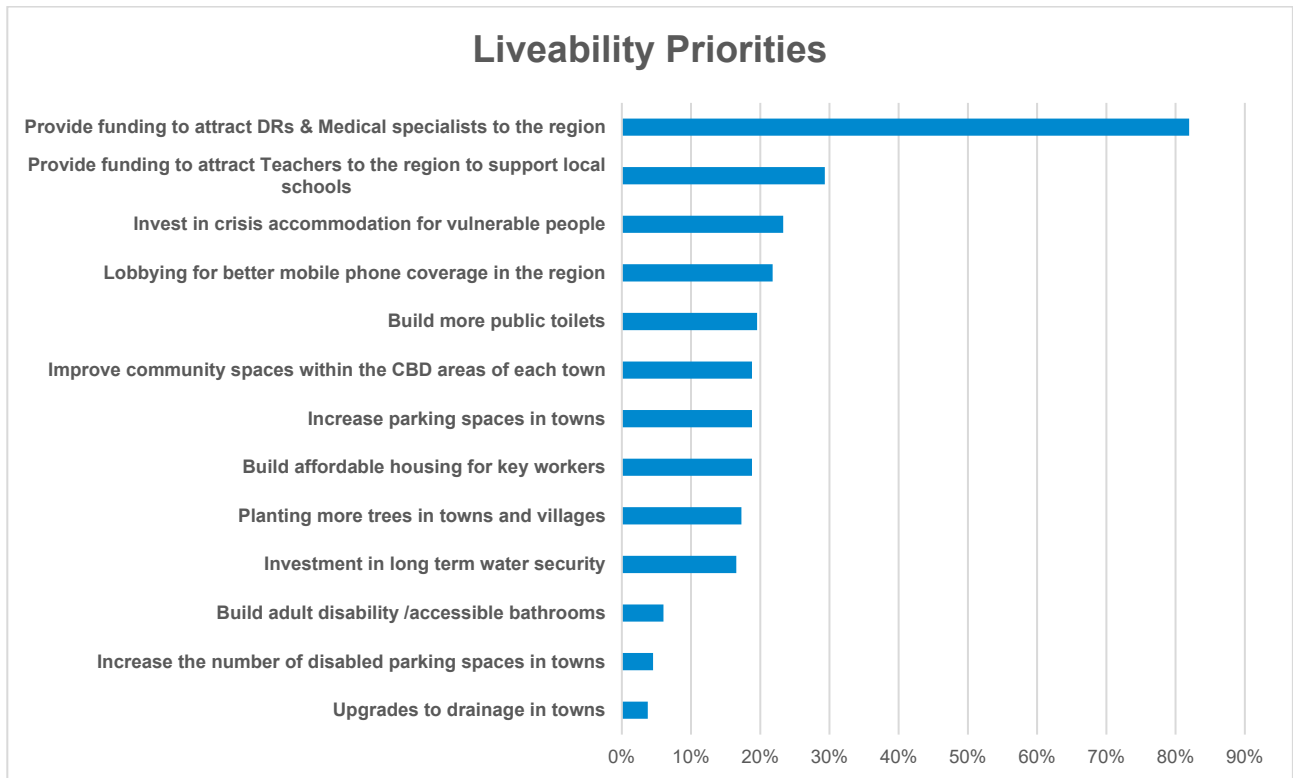
Other feedback received from this survey included:

- Lower commercial rent prices to make business ownership more affordable.
- Create a business hub or small mall to cluster local businesses.
- Provide free advertising or promotional support for small businesses.
- Encourage outdoor dining to enhance the town’s atmosphere.
- Increase investment in tourism to attract more visitors and extend their stay.
- Develop the old Kandos Cement works into an industrial hub.
- Improve roads (e.g., Bylong Valley Way) to support tourism and local businesses.
- Promote and protect the agricultural sector from mining impacts.
- Attract more doctors and key workers (childcare, nursing) with housing and incentives.
- Fund a youth café to provide jobs and engagement opportunities.
- Maintain the country-style street-front shopping aesthetic.

SURVEY 7 – LIVABILITY

- What projects do you believe are the most important for Council to prioritise to improve liveability in our region?

Select your top 3.



Respondents: 152

The highest priority in this survey is providing funding to attract doctors and medical specialists to the region, followed by attracting teachers to support local schools and investing in crisis accommodation for vulnerable people.

Other feedback received from this survey included:

- Improved recreational facilities (indoor sports centre, cricket, netball, ten-pin bowling, soccer, arcade games, trampoline park, rock climbing, dedicated cinema, outdoor theatre). This was covered in the recreation strategy.
- Better shopping options (more focus on local residents, not just tourists; a full-size supermarket outside the town centre).
- Family-friendly amenities (parent-friendly facilities in toilets).
- Roads and transport improvements (fixing roads, better town parking, increased disability/senior/parent parking, undercover car parking near essential services).
- Infrastructure and housing (simplify building and subdivision processes, improve housing for key workers like supermarket and petrol station staff).
- Environmental concerns (upgraded recycling facility, climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts).

- Public services and utilities (better water access for those outside town, necessary infrastructure to reduce congestion).
- Economic development (incentives for large-scale long-term employment in Kandos).

6. APPENDICIES

6.1 Appendix 1 - Outcomes from Youth engagement activities by Town/Village

6.1.1 GULGONG AREA

WHAT CHILDREN IN GULGONG LOVE ABOUT LIVING IN THE REGION:

Community & Lifestyle

- Strong sense of community and friendly people
- Safe and peaceful environment
- Small-town feel, with no traffic and everything within walking distance
- Not overcrowded, making it more comfortable to live in
- Family and friends are close, making social life easier

Recreation & Activities

- Adventure park and skate park are popular places for fun
- Gulgong Pool is frequently mentioned as a favourite
- Parks, playgrounds, and walking paths
- Soccer fields and football ovals
- Hunting, fishing, and camping opportunities
- Community events like the Gulgong Show and lantern-making workshops
- Variety of sports available in the town

Schools & Education

- Schools are highly valued, and many kids enjoy attending school
- Dance classes and swim clubs are well-liked
- Many appreciate having a good education system in their small town

Nature & Environment

- Beautiful scenery, hills, and mountains
- Jacaranda flowers and the town's green spaces
- Old buildings and historical sites, including those related to the gold rush
- Rivers, lakes, and dams for outdoor activities

Local Amenities & Services

- Shops, cafes, and food places (IGA, bakeries, McDonald's, KFC, Sports Power)
- Gulgong Social Society, which plays a role in the community
- School bus services, making transport easier

Quiet & Relaxed Atmosphere

- Many children love that the town is quiet and not as noisy as big cities
- The laid-back, country lifestyle is appealing

- Sense of space, making it easy to explore and play outside

This information highlights that children in Gulgong appreciate the strong community, recreational activities, natural environment, and peaceful lifestyle.

IMPROVEMENTS YOUTH IN GULGONG WOULD LIKE TO SEE INCLUDE:

Recreational & Sporting Facilities

- Expansion of Gulgong Pool (more shade, open diving boards, water slides, canteen)
- New water park in Gulgong
- Indoor swimming pool for year-round use
- Bigger skate park with more equipment
- More bike tracks (BMX, pump tracks, mountain bike trails)
- Larger soccer fields, football ovals, and netball courts
- More sports facilities, including indoor stadiums for basketball and netball
- Upgrades to pony club, including bigger jumps
- Go-kart track and other activity-based facilities
- More activities for teens and children (arcades, bowling, laser tag, adventure parks)

Infrastructure & Roads

- Fixing roads (potholes, gravel, unsafe areas)
- Better road safety for kids
- More footpaths to improve walkability
- Public toilets in more locations
- Better parking areas in Gulgong

Shopping & Food Options

- More shops in Gulgong, including clothing stores, a shopping centre, and bookstores
- Fast food options, especially McDonald's, KFC, Subway, Hungry Jack's
- Cafes and smoothie bars
- Lower prices on food and fuel
- More retail shops, particularly aimed at teens

Community & Environment

- A cleaner town (less graffiti, less rubbish)
- Better community engagement for youth
- More parks and green spaces
- Tree planting for an eco-friendly environment
- Dog park in Gulgong
- More animal-friendly spaces, including horse-riding tracks

Entertainment & Social Activities

- Movie theatre in Gulgong (better cinema in Mudgee with recliner chairs)
- More youth events and social spaces
- Workshops for creative activities (art studio, theatre, dance classes)
- More shows and community festivals
- Places for teenagers to hang out, including youth spaces

Public Services & Transport

- More teachers in schools
- Better hospital facilities and more doctors
- A train connecting Gulgong and Mudgee
- More youth employment opportunities

Outdoor & Nature-Based Improvements

- Stocking rivers with native fish (Murray cod, golden perch)
- More hunting and fishing opportunities
- More sports fields and outdoor courts
- More places for outdoor activities (hiking, exploring, camping)

Summary

The youth in Gulgong are looking for better recreational options, improved infrastructure, more shopping and food choices, enhanced entertainment, and stronger community engagement. There's a strong interest in creating more youth-focused activities while also improving roads, public services, and environmental sustainability.

6.1.2 VILLAGES AROUND THE REGION

WHAT CHILDREN IN VILLAGES LOVE ABOUT LIVING IN THE REGION:

Natural Environment & Open Space

- The country and space – the open landscapes, fresh air, and rural lifestyle
- The weather – a pleasant climate that allows for outdoor activities
- Nature & wildlife – forests, rivers, lakes, and farms
- The views – scenic beauty and peaceful surroundings
- Peace & quiet – ability to enjoy rural life without city noise
- Small, calm, not busy – a relaxed and stress-free lifestyle
- Living on a farm – enjoying farm life, animals, and open land

Recreational Activities & Outdoor Facilities

- Pools – swimming as a popular activity
- Fishing & boating – enjoyment of local dams, rivers, and lakes
- Hunting & farming – connection to the rural lifestyle
- Motocross & mountain biking – availability of tracks for riding
- Pump track & skate parks – fun and accessible places for youth
- Touch football & other sports – various sporting opportunities
- Glen Willow Sporting Grounds – high-quality sports facilities
- Playgrounds & parks – well-maintained community spaces
- Waratah Park & Vic Park – places for social and recreational activities

Community & Lifestyle

- Nice community – friendly and welcoming people
- The good people – strong sense of support and connection
- Safe town – low crime rates and secure environment
- Not as many people – less crowding compared to bigger cities
- Diverse food options – good selection of restaurants and cafes
- Small country towns nearby – places like Rylstone and Bylong add to the charm

Education & Public Amenities

- Schools & libraries – access to education and learning resources
- Shops & businesses – convenience of local shopping
- Public restrooms & amenities – accessible facilities for the community
- Restaurants & cafes – good places to eat and socialise
- PCYC & community centres – safe and structured activities for young people

Summary

- Nature & space – fresh air, open landscapes, and country living
- Recreational opportunities – pools, fishing, biking, sports, and parks
- A strong community – friendly, supportive, and safe environment
- Good facilities – schools, libraries, shops, and community centers

WHAT CHILDREN IN VILLAGES WANT TO SEE IMPROVED IN THE REGION:**More Recreational Activities & Entertainment**

- Water parks – multiple mentions of a water park to increase fun activities for kids.
- Trampoline parks (Flip Out) – high demand for indoor trampoline parks.
- Go-kart tracks – a dedicated track for go-karting is desired.
- Bowling alley – indoor entertainment like bowling is a common request.
- Rock climbing centres – interest in indoor rock-climbing facilities.
- Amusement parks – children would like larger-scale attractions.
- Time Zone / Arcades – requests for arcades and interactive gaming areas.
- Airsoft arena – an alternative, action-packed activity for older kids.

Improved Public Spaces & Infrastructure

- Better skate parks – upgrades requested for Gulgong, Rylstone, and Clandulla skate parks.
- Adventure playgrounds – calls for more playgrounds for ages 11-15.
- More public parks – with additional swing sets, improved landscaping, and better maintenance.
- Petting zoo – an interest in animal-friendly spaces.
- Better community amenities – including public trash bins, aquatics centres, and putt-putt golf.

Roads & Public Transport

- Fixing roads – especially around Twelve Mile, Goolma, and Bylong Valley Way.
- More public transport options – calls for train station reactivation and better transport links to larger towns.
- More footpaths – making walking safer for kids and teens.

More Retail & Food Options

- Fast food outlets – McDonald's, Hungry Jack's, KFC, and Guzman y Gomez frequently mentioned.
- More shopping options – requests for clothing shops, sports stores, and general retail expansion.
- Men's clothing stores – a specific demand for more variety in male fashion retail.

Sporting Facilities

- Rebuilding local parks – Clandulla Park and other community spaces need investment.
- More sporting opportunities – requests for rugby league teams, AFL stadiums, and indoor sporting facilities.
- Diving boards at pools – strong interest in reopening diving boards.
- More fishing zones – suggestions to restock rivers with fish.
- Equestrian facilities – safe places for horse riding and training arenas.

Summary

- More recreational activities – water parks, trampoline parks, arcades, go-karting, and amusement parks.
- Better roads & public transport – road repairs, more public transport, and safer walking paths.
- Expanded shopping & dining – more clothing stores, food outlets, and retail variety.
- Improved sports & public spaces – upgrades to skate parks, pools, parks, and equestrian facilities.

6.1.3 KANDOS RYLSTONE AREA

WHAT CHILDREN IN KANDOS AND RYLSTONE LOVE ABOUT LIVING IN THE REGION:

Community & Lifestyle

- Strong sense of community, with close-knit and friendly people
- The small-town feel—quiet, not crowded, and no traffic
- Knowing most people in the area, making it feel safe and familiar
- A peaceful and relaxed environment, especially compared to cities

Outdoor & Natural Environment

- Beautiful scenery, mountains, and rural landscapes
- Abundance of parks, open spaces, and wildlife
- Access to fishing spots, rivers, and forests
- Clean air and quiet nights

Recreation & Activities

- Pools (Mudgee Pool, Kandos Pool, local swimming areas)
- Parks (Rylstone, Kandos, and Waratah Park)
- Sports facilities (Basketball courts, soccer fields, skate parks, and touch football grounds)
- Outdoor activities (Biking, horse riding, fishing, and camping)

Schools & Education

- Positive feedback on schools, with many children mentioning school as something they like
- The ability to attend school for free

Local Amenities & Services

- Local shops like IGA, food places, and restaurants
- The new dog area at Rylstone Showground
- Playgrounds and community areas in Kandos and Rylstone

Social & Family Connections

- Enjoy spending time with family and friends
- Community events and gatherings
- Sense of belonging in a small town

Sense of Security & Comfort

- Less crime, fewer disturbances, and a general feeling of safety
- Lack of heavy traffic or urban chaos

Town Spirit & Identity

- The unique character of places like Kandos and Rylstone
- Local history and heritage
- The “vibe” of the town and its people

Entertainment & Leisure

- Enjoyment of sports competitions (town football)
- Fun locations like skate parks, playgrounds, and pools
- The availability of food places, slushies, and local cafes

Summary

These findings highlight that children value the sense of community, outdoor activities, local amenities, and a peaceful lifestyle in their region.

IMPROVEMENTS YOUTH IN KANDOS AND RYLSTONE WOULD LIKE TO SEE INCLUDE:

More Recreational Activities & Facilities

- More playgrounds for older kids
- Flip Out trampoline park
- BMX pump track
- Water parks
- More sports fields (soccer, football)
- More skate park upgrades (Rylstone, Kandos)
- Bigger slides/diving boards at pools
- More entertainment/events

Better Sports & Community Facilities

- More sporting facilities (fields, courts, equipment)
- Soccer tournament at Waratah Park
- Reopening footy stadium
- Canteens at sporting venues
- Better parks with modern equipment

Infrastructure & Roads

- Concern about fixing roads (Bylong Road, Kandos, Rylstone)
- More street lighting and footpaths
- Drainage improvements

More Shops & Services

- More shopping options in Kandos & Rylstone
- More fast-food options (McDonald's in Kandos)
- More bait & tackle/boating/fishing shops

Better Public & Community Amenities

- Air conditioning in Kandos High School Hall
- Better medical facilities (more doctors, hospitals)
- Faster internet & better public transport
- More libraries & young adult book sections

Youth & Social Issues

- Less smoking and vaping
- More activities for 10-15-year-olds
- Pay rises for parents
- Children in the region would like:

Summary

Overall, the feedback highlights a strong need for better recreational spaces, improved roads, more shops, enhanced public amenities, and structured sporting opportunities.

6.1.4 MUDGEE AND SUBURBS

WHAT CHILDREN IN MUDGEE AND SUBURBS LOVE ABOUT LIVING IN THE REGION:

Strong Sense of Community

- The friendly and welcoming community where everyone knows each other.
- A safe and peaceful environment, free from city stress.
- Community spirit with supportive people and local events.
- Close to family and friends, making social life enjoyable.

Recreational & Sporting Facilities

- Glen Willow Sporting Complex is a major highlight.
- Pools, skateparks, and pump tracks are popular places for fun.
- Wide variety of sports including football, soccer, netball, basketball, rugby, cricket, and golf.
- PCYC and youth sports opportunities.
- Fishing, dirt bike riding, and mountain biking are appreciated.

Natural Environment & Scenery

- Beautiful landscapes, open spaces, and fresh air.
- Hills, mountains, and rural views make the area scenic.
- Parks, forests, and rivers provide outdoor adventure opportunities.
- Stargazing and peaceful country living are valued.

Food & Local Businesses

- Variety of food places, including cafes, restaurants, and local markets.
- Big W, McDonald's, KFC, and sushi shops are favourites.
- Farmers' markets and small businesses add to the charm.

Local Events & Activities

- Flavours of Mudgee and other festivals bring the community together.
- Markets, fairs, and sports events provide entertainment.
- Christmas tree lights and decorations in town are loved.

Accessibility & Small-Town Benefits

- Easy to get around, with most places in walking distance.
- No traffic lights and low traffic congestion make driving stress-free.
- Convenient access to schools, shops, and sporting facilities.

Heritage & Culture

- Historical background, including old buildings and gold mining history.
- Vintage aesthetic of the town is admired.
- Museums, art galleries, and community spaces add to the cultural experience.

Education & Job Opportunities

- Good schools and education options.
- Work opportunities for teens in shops and hospitality.
- Programs at PCYC and other community centers.

Outdoor & Adventure Activities

- Fishing, hunting, camping, and 4WD tracks.
- Dams, creeks, and rivers for boating and exploring.
- Mountain biking, horse riding, and hiking trails.

Clean & Well-Maintained Environment

- Clean streets, parks, and community areas.
- Well-kept sporting grounds and public spaces.
- Good environmental management and preservation of nature.

Summary

The children in Mudgee and surrounding areas love the strong community, outdoor recreation, accessibility, and food options. They appreciate the small-town charm, beautiful nature, and opportunities for sports and adventure.

IMPROVEMENTS YOUTH IN MUDGEE WOULD LIKE TO SEE INCLUDE:

More Activities & Entertainment for Teens and Children

- Bowling alley
- Arcade (e.g., Timezone)
- Laser tag
- Trampoline Park (e.g., Flip Out)
- Go-kart track
- Rock climbing facilities
- Indoor adventure playground for teens
- Paintball and putt-putt golf
- Escape rooms and mini golf
- Drive-in movies or more frequent cinema showings
- More youth-oriented community events and festivals
- A theme park or water park with slides and wave pools
- More concerts or underage music festivals

More Shopping & Retail Options

- A large shopping centre/mall with:
 - Popular brands (e.g., Myer, Sephora, Foot Locker, Nike)
 - More clothing stores for teens
 - Electronics stores (e.g., JB Hi-Fi, EB Games)
 - More variety in grocery and specialty stores
- Bigger Bunnings
- More fast-food options (e.g., Hungry Jacks, Guzman y Gomez, Taco Bell, Oporto)
- More cafes and restaurants with diverse food options
- Better shopping variety for teens rather than just boutique stores

Improved Sports & Recreation Facilities

- Indoor basketball stadium (Glen Willow)
- Indoor swimming pool (Olympic size)
- Improved sports complexes and fields (e.g., larger soccer fields, AFL fields)
- Expanded netball courts
- More sporting competitions and opportunities for youth
- Indoor futsal/soccer centre
- New cricket facilities
- Upgraded PCYC with more courts and better facilities
- More BMX, dirt bike, and mountain bike trails
- A proper athletics track
- Expanded and upgraded skateparks
- More public basketball courts
- Improved and safer gym facilities for youth

Better Infrastructure & Public Services

- Fix potholes and improve roads
- More public footpaths, especially near schools
- Better parking in town and near key locations
- More frequent public transport (trains from Mudgee to Sydney)
- More lighting in public areas for safety
- More street seating and shade
- Upgrade Regent Theatre for cinema and live performances
- More modern public toilets
- Expanded Wi-Fi coverage and better internet access
- Lower cost of fuel, groceries, and housing

More Youth-Focused Community Spaces

- A dedicated youth hub with social and study spaces
- More free activities for teens (e.g. free workshops, community events)
- A community arts/music space for young people to explore creative hobbies
- Better support for non-sport-related interests (e.g. drama, music, arts, gaming)
- More employment opportunities for teenagers in town
- Better access to mental health and youth services
- Expanded career and education pathways (e.g. TAFE, university campus in the region)

Environmental & Outdoor Enhancements

- More green spaces and parks
- More trees planted around town
- Cleaner public spaces (less litter)
- More fishing spots and stocking rivers with native fish
- Better maintenance of public parks and sporting facilities
- Expanded camping and hiking areas
- More eco-friendly initiatives (e.g. sustainable community projects)

Summary

- More things to do – entertainment, activities, and events
- Better sports & recreation facilities – indoor sports, pools, and tracks
- More shopping & dining options – a shopping centre, fast food, and retail variety
- Improved infrastructure – better roads, footpaths, public transport, and parking
- More youth-focused spaces – creative, social, and study areas
- Environmental and outdoor improvements – more green spaces and better-maintained facilities

6.2 Appendix 2 - Outcomes from Youth engagement activities by Gender

6.2.1 WHAT CHILDREN LOVE ABOUT THE REGION:

Both young boys and girls in the region appreciate similar aspects of their community but also have some key differences in their interests and priorities. Below is a summary of their shared preferences as well as their distinct preferences.

Similarities: What Both Boys and Girls Like:

Community and Small-Town Feel

- Both boys and girls appreciate the tight-knit, friendly community where everyone knows each other.
- They feel safe and comfortable in their towns.
- The lack of traffic lights and congestion is seen as a positive aspect.

Sports and Recreational Facilities

- Glen Willow Sporting Complex, skate parks, pump tracks, and adventure playgrounds are popular among both genders.
- They both enjoy swimming pools, parks, and sporting fields for different activities.
- Popular sports include touch football, soccer, netball, and basketball.

Nature and Outdoor Spaces

- Both appreciate the open spaces, fresh air, and scenic landscapes.
- Many enjoy activities like bushwalking, camping, and exploring.
- The quiet and peaceful environment is valued by both groups.

Shops, Cafes, and Restaurants

- Both boys and girls enjoy local cafes, restaurants, and food markets.
- They appreciate having places like McDonald's, KFC, and Big W for shopping and EATING OUT.

School and Education

- Schools and the sense of connection with friends through school activities are important to both groups.
- The library and learning opportunities are valued.

Differences: How Boys' and Girls' Preferences Differ

What Girls Prioritise More

Social and Cultural Aspects

- Girls place a strong emphasis on friendship, social activities, and community spirit.
- They value local events and festivals, such as Flavours of Mudgee.
- Many appreciate the welcoming and supportive nature of their town.

Aesthetic and Atmosphere

- Girls frequently mention the beauty of the town, including historical buildings, fairy lights, and clean streets.
- They appreciate the vintage feel and charming cafes.

Shops and Food Variety

- While both genders enjoy food, girls mention cafes, bakeries, sushi places, and markets more frequently.
- They seem to enjoy shopping in small boutiques and specialty stores more than boys.

Dance and Arts Activities

- Some girls highlight their love for dance classes, music, and creative events.
- They enjoy artistic and cultural elements of the community, such as book clubs and performances.

What Boys Prioritise More

Adventure and Action-Oriented Activities

- Boys are much more likely to mention motocross, dirt bike riding, fishing, and hunting.
- They enjoy rugged outdoor experiences like 4WD, shooting, and camping.

Competitive Sports and Facilities

- While both genders love sports, boys focus more on competitive sporting opportunities.
- Football, cricket, golf, and mountain biking are mentioned more often.

Fishing and Outdoor Exploration

- Many boys love fishing, boating, and outdoor survival activities.
- They mention Windamere Dam, rivers, and local creeks as their favourite places.

Infrastructure and Practical Features

- Boys highlight things like roads, Wi-Fi access, and town structure more than girls.
- Some mention the mines, agriculture, and employment opportunities as positives.

Conclusion: Overlapping and Distinct Interests

- Both boys and girls enjoy the sense of safety, strong community, and open spaces.
- Girls are more socially driven, valuing friendships, aesthetics, and cultural activities.
- Boys prefer action-based activities, including adventure sports, fishing, and competitive team sports.
- Both appreciate having good food, parks, and local events, but girls focus more on shopping and cafés while boys emphasize sports facilities and rugged outdoor activities.

Overall, while their preferences sometimes differ in focus, the love for their town's safety, friendly people, and natural beauty unites them.

6.2.2 WHAT CHILDREN WOULD LIKE TO SEE IMPROVED IN THE REGION:

After analysing the feedback from both genders, several key similarities and differences emerge in their suggestions for improvements to the region. While both groups focus on recreation, sports, entertainment, and infrastructure, their priorities differ in some areas.

Key Similarities Between Boys and Girls

Water Parks & Pool Upgrades

- Both groups strongly want water parks and improvements to public pools, including slides, diving boards, and canteens.
- Indoor swimming pools are also a priority for both.

Recreational & Sporting Facilities

- Boys and girls both value expanded playgrounds and sporting fields.
- Both requested better skateparks, trampoline parks (e.g., Flip Out), and BMX/mountain bike tracks.
- There is shared interest in basketball courts, soccer fields, and more sporting opportunities.

Entertainment & Social Spaces

- Both groups want more activities for youth, including arcades, cinemas, bowling alleys, and gaming centres (Timezone).
- Requests for music events, festivals, and concerts appeared in both lists.

Infrastructure & Community Services

- Road improvements were a major concern for both groups, including fixing potholes and adding footpaths.
- Better public toilets and more schools were common themes.
- Both groups mentioned lowering the cost of living, particularly fuel, groceries, and housing.

Shopping & Dining Options

- Both boys and girls expressed interest in more fast-food chains like McDonald's, KFC, Hungry Jack's, and Starbucks.
- A large shopping centre with popular stores was a frequent request.

Key Differences Between Boys and Girls

Category	Boys' Focus	Girls' Focus
Play Spaces	BMX tracks, skateparks, dirt bike tracks, obstacle courses	Adventure parks, play centres, petting zoos, dog parks
Water Activities	Water parks, bigger slides, diving boards	Indoor pools, bore baths, water parks with play zones
Sports	Soccer, motocross, AFL, rugby, parkour	Netball, gymnastics, horse-riding tracks, dance studios
Entertainment	Arcades, gaming zones, go-karts, bowling	Concerts, theatre, karaoke, social spaces
Shopping & Dining	Fast food (McDonald's, KFC, Hungry Jack's)	Fast food + smoothie bars, Starbucks, healthier food options
Infrastructure	Roads, fuel prices, internet connectivity	Schools, medical services, tree planting, pet-friendly spaces
Environmental Concerns	Less focus on environment	Strong interest in eco-friendly initiatives (tree planting, clean streets)
Animal & Pet-Related Facilities	Little to no mention	Strong interest in pet stores, animal shelters, and dog parks

Key Takeaways

- Boys tend to favour high-energy, action-packed activities, such as motocross tracks, go-karts, and BMX parks.
- Girls are more likely to request spaces for social interaction, such as theatres, cafes, and music events.
- Girls show greater concern for animals and the environment, with requests for pet-friendly areas, community gardens, and cleaner streets.
- Both genders agree on the need for more youth-oriented entertainment options, but boys emphasize gaming and action sports, while girls favour music, theatre, and creative activities.
- Both groups want improvements to local infrastructure, particularly roads, footpaths, schools, and medical services.

Conclusion

Both boys and girls want more engaging activities, better facilities, and improved infrastructure in the region. To create a well-rounded development plan, improvements should address shared priorities (water parks, shopping, entertainment, and road repairs) while also considering gender-specific interests (action sports for boys, social spaces and pet-friendly areas for girls).

6.3 Appendix 3 - Outcomes from Youth engagement activities by Age

6.3.1 WHAT CHILDREN LOVE ABOUT THE REGION:

The feedback from children across both age groups (under 10s and 11-17 years old) reveals common themes but also distinct differences as they grow older.

Key Similarities Between Under 10s- and 11-17-Year Olds

Community and Social Aspects

- Across both age groups, a strong sense of community is highly valued.
- They enjoy knowing people in town, having friendly neighbours, and feeling safe.
- Family and friends play a key role in why they enjoy living in the region.

Outdoor and Recreational Spaces

- Parks, pools, and playgrounds are consistently popular among both age groups.
- Skate parks and pump tracks are highly valued as recreational spaces.
- Sporting facilities (such as soccer fields, netball courts, and Glen Willow Sporting Complex) are enjoyed by both younger and older children.

The Rural Lifestyle

- Children in both age groups love the open spaces, country atmosphere, and natural environment.
- They appreciate fishing, hiking, and exploring the outdoors.
- The quietness and low population density are considered positives compared to bigger cities.

Local Events and Food Culture

- Both age groups enjoy local festivals and markets, particularly Flavours of Mudgee.
- Food options, cafes, and local shops (e.g., Big W, Kim's Kitchen, McDonald's/KFC) are mentioned as Favorite aspects of the town.

Key Differences Between Under 10s- and 11-17-Year Olds

Shift from Playgrounds to Sports and Social Activities

- Younger children (under 10) love playgrounds, climbing equipment, and play-based activities.
- Older children (11-17) shift toward organised sports, fitness activities, and socialising at cafes or town events.

Growing Interest in Independence and Accessibility

- Older children value the ability to walk places and have things nearby, whereas younger children rely more on family.
- Teenagers are more aware of job opportunities, transport options, and community engagement.

Different Views on Quietness

- While both groups appreciate that the town is not overpopulated, younger children do not seem as concerned with entertainment options.
- Older children sometimes mention boredom and the lack of activities, particularly during school holidays.

More Interest in Local Economy and Facilities Among Older Children

- Teenagers appreciate local businesses and food options, such as cafes and restaurants.
- They also care more about the quality of town infrastructure (e.g., roads, footpaths, public toilets).

Conclusion

- Under 10s focus on playgrounds, pools, and simple outdoor activities.
- 11–17-year-olds shift towards sports, independence, socialisation, and town facilities.
- Boys prefer adventure, sports, and physical activities, while girls prioritise social spaces, community, and cultural aspects.
- Both age groups and genders value the sense of community, safety, open spaces, and outdoor recreation that the region offers.

This data suggests that future community development should balance structured sports and adventure activities for boys with social, cultural, and creative spaces for girls, while maintaining the natural beauty and small-town charm that all children appreciate.

6.3.2 WHAT CHILDREN WOULD LIKE TO SEE IMPROVED IN THE REGION:

Summary Overview of Requested Improvements by Under 10s and 11-17 Year Olds

The feedback from both under 10s and 11–17 year-olds highlights shared priorities while also revealing age-specific needs. Below is a summary of the key similarities and differences between the two groups.

Similarities Across Both Age Groups

Play & Recreation Spaces Need Major Upgrades

- Water parks & pool improvements:
 - Both groups frequently requested **water slides, splash parks, and reopening diving boards** at pools.
- Bigger & better playgrounds:
 - Older children (11-17) requested **playgrounds that cater to teenagers**, while younger children (under 10) wanted **larger slides, climbing structures, and adventure-style playgrounds**.
- Trampoline parks (Flip Out):
 - Strongly requested by both groups.
- Skatepark expansions:
 - Both age groups called for **bigger and better skateparks** with safer, more exciting features.

More Sporting Facilities

- Both groups want more soccer fields, basketball courts, and sports stadiums.
- Indoor sports facilities (including indoor swimming pools, basketball courts, and **futsal/soccer fields**) were popular across all ages.

More Entertainment & Things to Do

- Bowling alleys, arcades (Timezone), and mini golf were popular requests.
- Cinemas & movie theatre improvements were mentioned frequently, especially by older kids who want better screenings and seating.
- Go-kart tracks and adventure parks were also a common theme.

More Shops & Food Outlets

- Both groups want a shopping centre/mall with well-known stores.
- Requests for fast food options (McDonald's, KFC, Hungry Jack's, Taco Bell, Guzman y Gomez, and Subway) were common.
- Older kids also requested clothing stores catering to teenagers, while younger children wanted toy and pet stores.

Improved Infrastructure & Safety

- Better roads and traffic management were a concern for both groups.
- More footpaths and safe walking/biking paths were requested.
- Cleaner public spaces were important to both age groups, with calls for rubbish removal and graffiti clean-ups.

Key Differences Between the Two Age Groups

Under 10s Are More Focused on Play & Fun, while 11-17s Want Social & Recreational Spaces

- Younger kids emphasised bigger play spaces, petting zoos, and interactive experiences like a science centre or art studio.
- Older kids were more interested in recreational spaces like youth hubs, music festivals, and social gathering spots.

Older Kids Want More Activities Beyond Sports

- While both groups requested sports facilities, older kids also wanted non-sport options, such as music venues, creative workshops, and gaming spaces.
- Older teens specifically asked for a focus on arts, theatre, and cultural events, whereas younger kids did not.

Older Teens Care More About Economic & Community Issues

- Housing affordability, job opportunities, and better school facilities were mentioned by 11–17 year-olds, while under 10s focused more on parks and play areas.
- Medical and healthcare services (more doctors, better hospitals) were also a concern for older teens.

Transportation & Connectivity

- Older kids want better public transport options (trains to Sydney, better bus routes).
- Younger kids did not focus on transport but did want safer roads and better footpaths.

Conclusion: What This Data Tells Us

- Younger kids (under 10) prioritise play, adventure, and fun spaces.
- Older kids (11-17) seek a mix of entertainment, social spaces, and practical community improvements.
- Both groups agree on the need for:
 - Better parks, sports facilities, and play areas.
 - More entertainment options like bowling, trampoline parks, and arcades.
 - Better roads, more shops, and improved community safety.

If the region aims to improve its youth engagement, a balanced approach that includes both play-based and social activities, alongside infrastructure improvements, would be ideal.