

Collaborative Evaluation Unit (CEU)

Supporting Innovative Research and Evaluation



LATROBE CITY COUNCIL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SURVEY 2021 SUMMARY OF THE ANALYSIS



Collaborative Evaluation Unit

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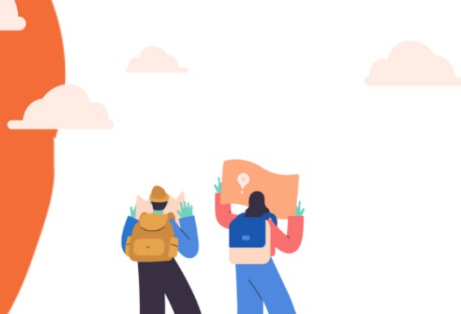
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Federation University Australia acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters where its campuses are located, and we pay our respects to Elders past and present, and extend our respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and First Nations Peoples.

Front cover image: Morwell Rose Garden

Survey

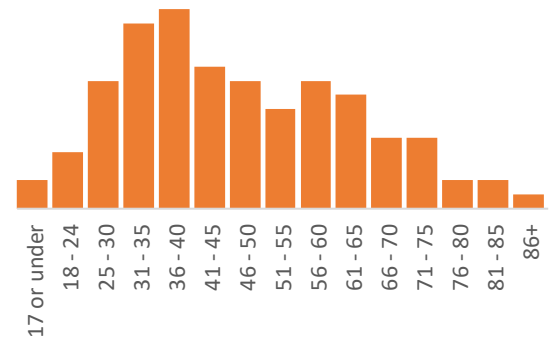
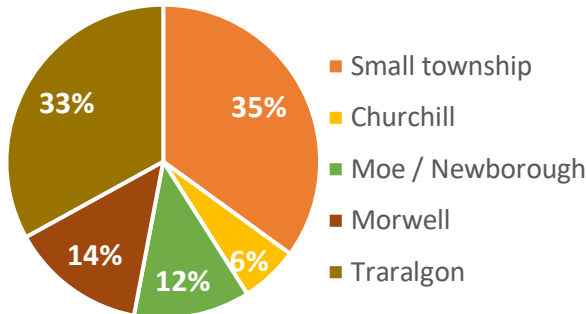


Analysis of Latrobe City Council Community Engagement Survey

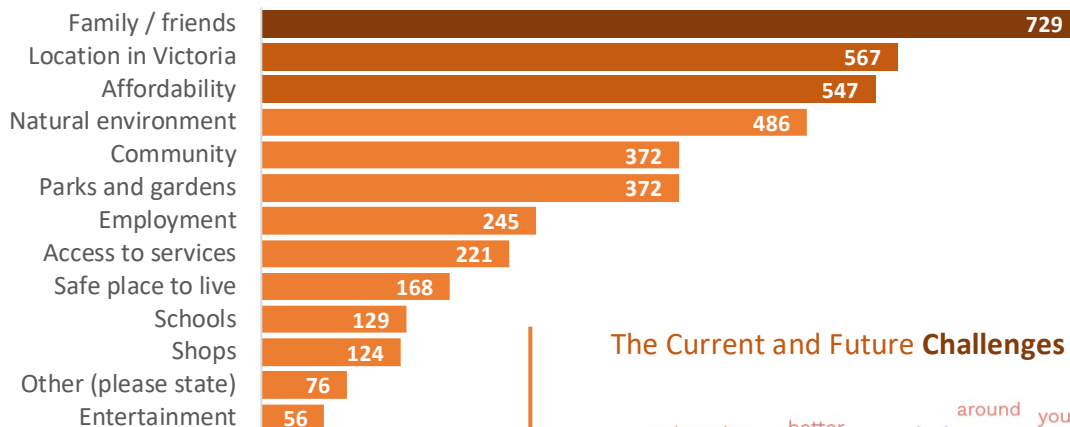
The aim of analysis of the Latrobe City Council **Community Engagement Survey** was to explore the how Latrobe City residents felt about living, working, studying and playing in the city. The results will help to **inform** development of a new **Community Vision**, a **Council Plan**, a **Financial Plan** and a **Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan**

1453

Survey Responses
Analysed



What makes Latrobe City a good place: three top answers



What the Community Said

Create a **new narrative**. The past has been based on our coal resources. This is the time to **reinvent** our image and the economy. Our skill base extends to **innovation, education, IT, arts, renewable energy** and much more.

The Current and Future Challenges for Latrobe City



It should always be top of mind that our region is not seen as a failure after the transition from brown coal generation rather an **innovative** and **exciting** place to **work, learn and visit**.

I think we need to **embrace** the difference between country and city and promote the **value of country industries**, ways of life, to make a real selling point to moving here rather than doing what is done in the city. We should **not feel a cultural cringe** about living in the country, but **champion and celebrate** the differences with a sense of **pride!**

SUMMARY OF THE LATROBE CITY COUNCIL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SURVEY ANALYSIS

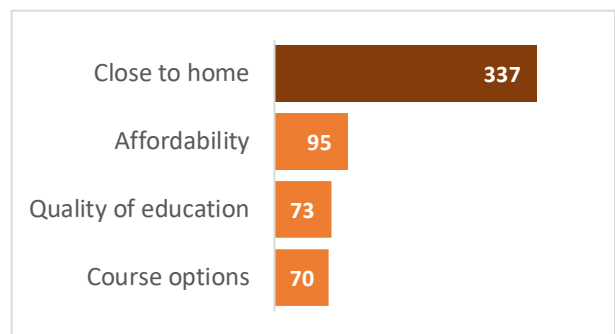
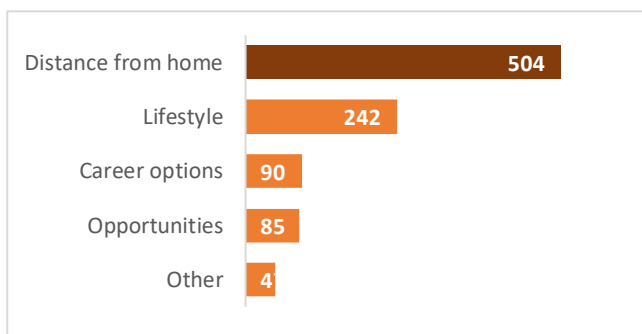
INTRODUCTION

The *Local Government Act 2020* required Local councils to engage with the community to inform the development of a new Community Vision, a Council Plan, a Financial Plan and a Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan by October 2021. As part of Latrobe City Council's engagement strategy to facilitate this, the Collaborative Evaluation Unit (CEU) was commissioned to develop and analyse a community survey to capture feedback and suggestions on what would make Latrobe City a better place to live, work, play and visit. The survey also invited residents to share their thoughts on the current and future challenges for the City.

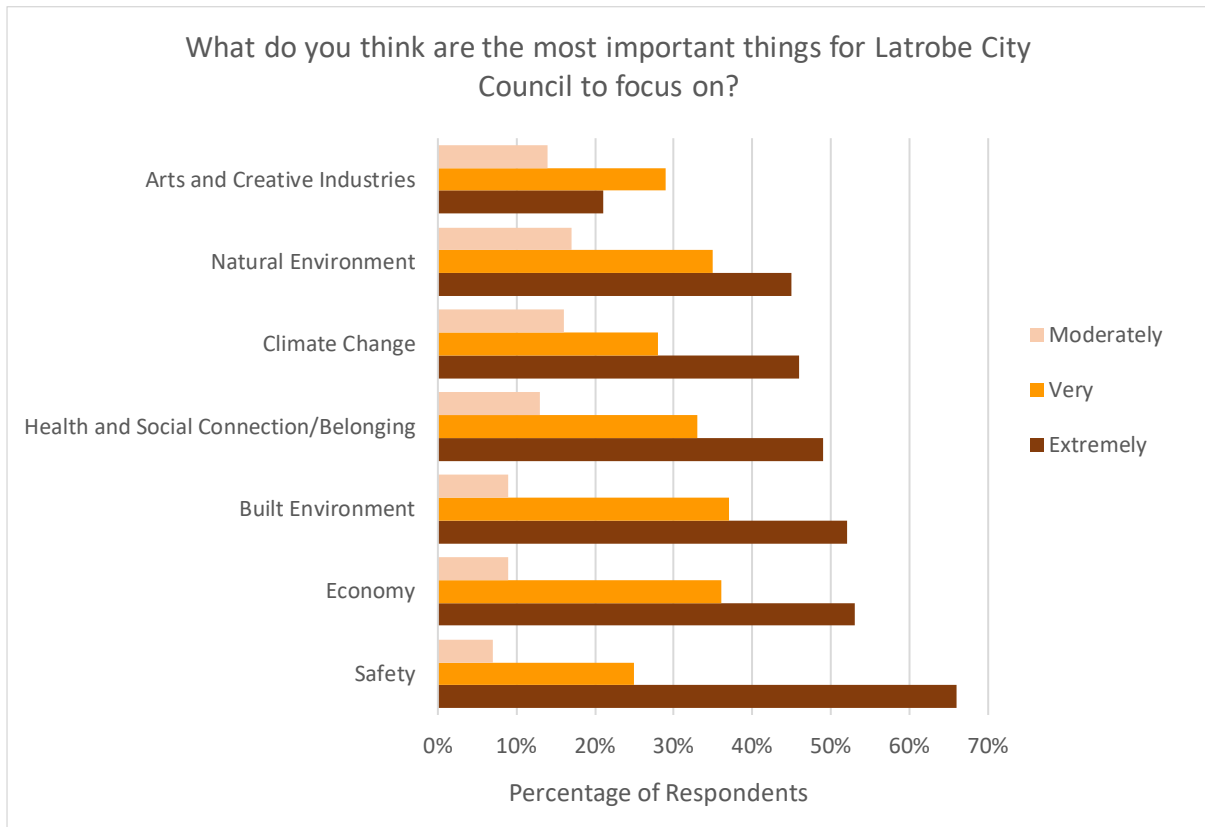
The survey was distributed throughout May and June 2021 and was open to all residents, workers and visitors to Latrobe City. A total of 1552 responses to the survey were received, of which 69 were blank so 1453 made up the final data set. The majority survey participants were female (65%, n=744), 33% were from Traralgon, 35% from smaller townships with the remaining 32% from Moe, Newborough, Morwell and Churchill. The participants ranged in age from 17-30 years (15%), 31-40 years (27%), 41-70 years (43%) 70+ years (10%).

The majority of the participants were employed in healthcare, education and administrative roles with 89% stating that they live and work in Latrobe City. Friends are family was cited as the most common reason participants believed that Latrobe City was a good place, with Location in Victoria, Affordability and Natural environment rounding off the top four responses.

The most common reason people gave for Latrobe City being a good place to work was Distance from home (n=504) and similarly the most common reason participants gave for it being a good place to study was Close to home.



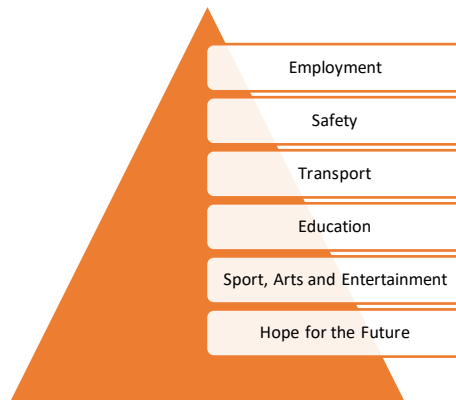
Safety, Economy and Built environment were considered the things most important things for Latrobe City Council to focus on this was evident in both the quantitative and qualitative responses.



Boolarra - Mirboo North Rail Trail

THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF SURVEY RESPONSES

A thematic analysis process was used to analyse the content from the six open-ended questions in the survey. Six main themes emerged.



Employment

Employment featured very strongly throughout the survey responses with emphasis on the generation of new opportunities and the support for existing local industries. The closure of the power industry may result in a number of associated businesses being disadvantaged and support is needed to embed an alternative customer base.

The ongoing closure of the power stations in the Latrobe Valley brought with it a sense of new opportunities and possibilities with comments around changes to the population dynamics, skilled labour force and clean industry options. *“New, safer industries must be developed, possibly by expanding supported social enterprise business”* (Yallourn North). It was hoped that the new industries would bring change and a cleaner industry focus. *“Attract clean and green industries which provide employment and steer away from harmful industries”* (Morwell).

“Transitioning from coal-based energy to renewables and bringing existing employees from the coal sector across to working in renewables or other sectors” (Traralgon South).

The issue of employment security and opportunities was raised by participants from both small and large towns. It was repeatedly suggested that greater opportunities for employment, and specifically unskilled employment, would make Latrobe City a better place to work. Upskilling the local workforce and making strong industry connections was suggested as a solution to the perceived lack of employment security and opportunities.

“More partnerships between major employers and the local university and TAFE, so local people study where they live, and then work where they studied” (Traralgon).



Word cloud representing the top 50 answers all the open-ended survey questions.

Safety

Feeling safe living in Latrobe City was mentioned with many participants suggesting that a greater police presence was needed to tackle the complex issues of drug abuse and related violence and crime in the region. *“Lower crime rates and less drugs on the street. I feel its unsafe to walk around Morwell with my children”* (Morwell).

*“I have grown up here and wouldn’t want to live anywhere else, but I do wish I felt **safer** going for **walks** and being out with my kids”* (Other).

In addition, it was noted that *“better funded community programs aimed at tackling antisocial behaviour, crime and substance abuse”* are needed and that the lack of *“sustainable employment”* (Morwell) is a contributing factor to these behaviours.

Transport

Parking, street lighting, traffic flow in central business districts and the transport infrastructure to be able to move easily between Latrobe City and Melbourne were highlighted as important priority areas for Council. *“Easily accessible and faster commute times for people travelling to Melbourne”* (Newborough). *“Making the trip to Melbourne via public transport more affordable and faster”* (Other). In addition to speedy reliable transport to the major centres, there were concerns about the availability of reliable transport to and from Federation University in Churchill from the surrounding towns which makes it difficult for international students studying there.

*“More public **transport options** from / to Fed Uni from / to our major centres. This is the main complaint from international students”* (Other).

Public transport was thought to be unsatisfactory and unable to support residents who relied on it, and it was suggested that an improved transport system would help ease traffic congestion: *“More accessible public transport to help workers from small towns reach major work precincts”* (Yallourn North). Many participants acknowledged that Latrobe City’s proximity to Melbourne had the potential to attract Melbourne residents to relocate to the City, but that this would be aided greatly by an improved rail service: *“Transport to connect to Melbourne so skilled people can transition their working lives to Latrobe without sacrificing employment in the short to medium term...”* (Morwell).

Education

Participants suggested that Latrobe City Council help with *“transitioning persons from no or little education through to tertiary activity in both the VET and academic field”* (Yallourn North). In addition, it was suggested that more support was needed with students from low socio-economic groups to ensure they are given equal opportunities to learn.

*“The establishment of **Homework Hubs** may bridge the gap for students who may not live in healthy home environments”.*

Ideas such as these were often accompanied by comments relating to *“intergenerational social problems”* and the need to bring this cycle to an end. The need to assist mothers returning to the workforce was also highlighted and it was suggested that there be *“free education for mums looking to get back into the workforce”* (Morwell).

Participants suggested that there be an increase in educational offerings within Latrobe City. Many of these responses centred on Federation University, however, there were also references to high schools and TAFE, for example, offering *“more courses in social media, technology, science and STEM in secondary schools”* (Moe), while others recommended that *“the TAFE or the university [run] affordable short courses so that people can learn new skills”* (Morwell).

*“More opportunities and **pathways** to work where you study. For example, if an Allied Health professional studies at Fed Uni, there should be grad. programs at the local hospital and community health service, and these should be widely **advertised**”.*

Sport, Arts and Entertainment

Sports events and the arts were seen by many participants as two areas of strength that could be further developed to attract more visitors to Latrobe City. The improvement to many sporting facilities, however, was considered to be necessary to attract major events. There were many positive comments about the number, variety and quality of the sporting and entertainment facilities throughout Latrobe City with mention of the arts centre, sporting grounds, parks and recreational areas. There remained however, a number of suggestions as to how these facilities could be improved and upgraded to meet the current and future needs, for example, *“No female friendly change-rooms in a world-wide cry for gender equality”* (Traralgon), and *“We need more investment in parks and natural play spaces, outdoor gyms, pump track skate parks”* (Other).



Word cloud representing the top 40 answers to the question ‘What would make Latrobe City a better place to visit?’

More festivals and markets were suggested by a number of participants, in particular those “*showcasing local produce*” (Traralgon) and supporting local businesses. Food and wine festivals that offered a “*diversity of cultural*” traditions it was thought would encourage people to visit. The rehabilitation of the mines into more than “*three big lakes*” (Morwell) was also seen as an opportunity to attract visitors and as an opportunity for employment.

“It is great to finally have the Latrobe Regional Galley, GRAC, tennis, basketball facilities and soon the Arts Precinct but we need good shows and events to **attract tourists** to our region on a regional basis”.

Hope for the future

There was an overwhelming sense of hope for the future with a large number of suggestions on how Latrobe City could bring back a sense of pride in its communities with a focus on “*promotion of all our areas (attractions, food, wine, nature) is needed to locals and the wider Victorian / Australian markets*” (Traralgon). Continuing to develop infrastructure and encourage clean industries and businesses into the area were seen as key priorities, allowing the Latrobe City to become a hub which attracts investors and families to the area. “*Finding a balance is a challenge for the future, however I can see Latrobe City being a rural hub that is close enough to Melbourne for people to visit for a weekend for an amazing experience*” (Traralgon). Participants wrote about the need for a long-term vision and plan for Latrobe which included a “*focus on a cultural and Indigenous heritage, revitalising CBD buildings to their full historic glory*” (Traralgon).

Participants also suggested that improvements could be made to non-physical elements of the Latrobe City to make it a better place to work. In particular, a sense of pride, community, and inclusion were recognised as important to support a strong economic environment.

“A focus on community, bringing people together. Innovation, industry that employs people and addresses our current and future problems without impacting the environment, again, innovative forward thinkers!

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Ongoing community **engagement** activities
2. Generate new and **innovative employment opportunities**
3. **Review of public transport** services and resources
4. Focus on **improving safety** and reducing crime in Latrobe City
5. Support education providers to offer a **wider range of courses** and programs
6. Ensure all sporting facilities and entertainment venues are of the same **high quality** and **equally as accessible**
7. Foster a **positive cultural change** in Latrobe City

Old Gippsdown, Moe



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Collaborative Evaluation Unit (CEU), Federation University Gippsland, acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the traditional owners and custodians of the land, sea and nations and pay our respect to elders, past, present and emerging.

The CEU would like to acknowledge the Latrobe City Council for funding the development of the Unit and for its ongoing support.

The CEU would like to thank the Latrobe City Council Councillors and employees for their contribution to this project. The CEU would also like to acknowledge and thank the people who completed the Latrobe Community Engagement Survey.

Waterhole Creek Cultural Trail, Morwell





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