

Collaborative Evaluation Unit (CEU)

Supporting Innovative Research and Evaluation



LATROBE CITY COUNCIL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SURVEY 2021 ANALYSIS

FEDERATION UNIVERSITY
COLLABORATIVE EVALUATION UNIT

SUPPORTING INNOVATIVE RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

LATROBE CITY COUNCIL
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SURVEY
RESULTS AND ANALYSIS
2021

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The Collaborative Evaluation Unit (CEU), Federation University Gippsland, is an innovative initiative that aims to build evaluation capacity and expertise within Gippsland. As a local provider the CEU understands the value of listening to the community and has the ability to deliver timely and sustainable evaluations that are tailored to the needs of a wide variety of organisations.

Associate Professor Joanne Porter is the Director of the CEU. Joanne has led a number of successful research projects and evaluations in conjunction with local industry partners. She has guided the development of the CEU since its formation in 2018.

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As part of Latrobe City's community engagement strategy, a survey was developed and distributed during May to June 2021, collecting both quantitative and qualitative data to capture feedback and suggestions on how Latrobe City could be a better place to live, work, visit and play. The survey also invited residents to share their thoughts on current and future challenges for the City. A total of 1552 responses to the survey were received of which 69 were blank, with 1453 making up the final data set. This report highlights the findings from the survey.

The majority of the 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 why 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 for Latrobe City Council to focus on this was evident in both the quantitative and qualitative 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, Safety, Transport, Education, Sport and Entertainment and Hope for the future.

Employment

Employment in the region featured very strongly throughout the survey responses with emphasis on the generation of new employment opportunities and the support for existing local industries. The closure of the power industries 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 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 in Latrobe City.

"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).

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 in the Latrobe City 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 move easily between Latrobe City and Melbourne were highlighted as important priority areas 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 Latrobe 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” (Yallourn North).

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, participants suggested 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” (Traralgon).

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 seen as necessary to attract major events. There were a large number of 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).

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” (Traralgon).

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.

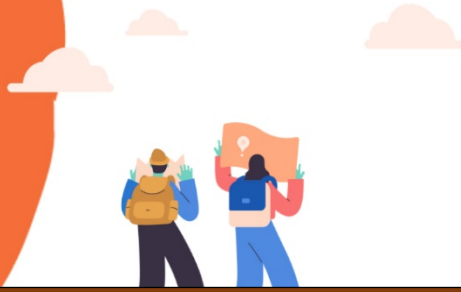
“A focus on community, bringing people together. Innovation, industry that employs people and addresses our current and future problems without impacting the environment, again, innovative forward thinkers!” (Other).

Key Community Suggestions

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
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

For the full list of community suggestions see page 50.

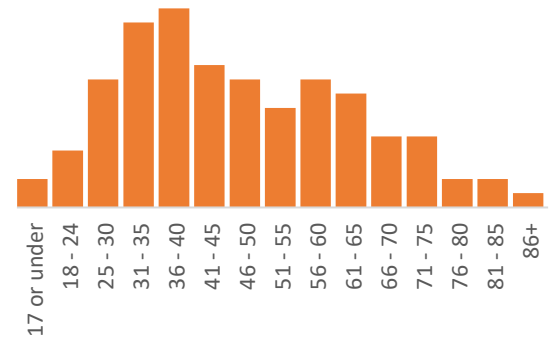
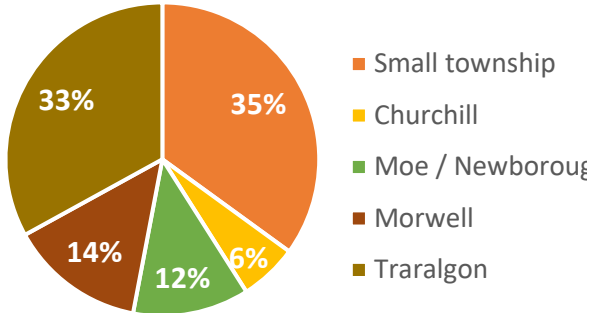
Survey



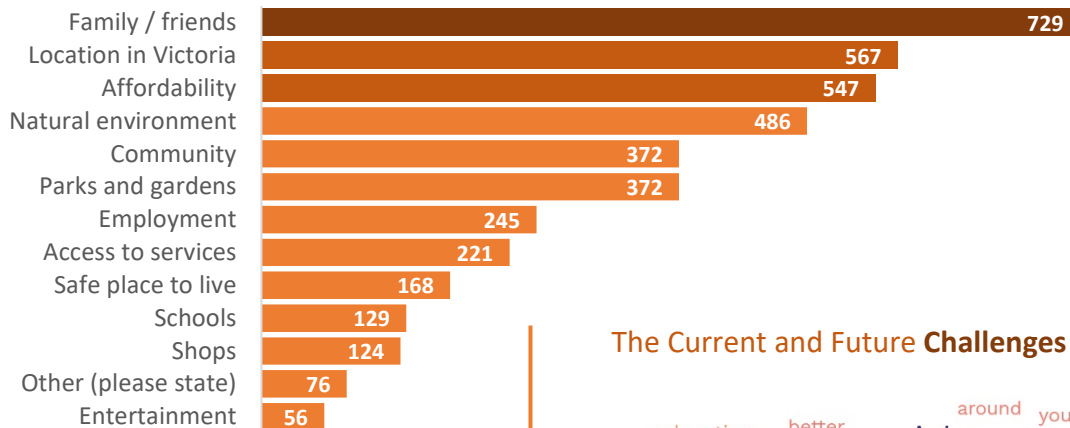
Analysis of Latrobe City Council Community Engagement Survey

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!**

2. INTRODUCTION: LATROBE CITY COUNCIL ENGAGEMENT SURVEY AND ANALYSIS

The *Local Government Act 2020* requires Local councils to engage with the local community using deliberative engagement practices 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. The Local Government area of Latrobe City has a population of 75,561, encompassing both urban and rural areas. Situated approximately 150 kms east of Melbourne it is comprised of four central towns, Traralgon, Morwell, Moe/Newborough and Churchill and a number of smaller rural townships. In accordance with the Latrobe City Council's engagement policy, the Collaborative Evaluation Unit (CEU) was commissioned to develop and analyse a community survey in collaboration with the Council.

The survey was created in Qualtrics and distributed by Latrobe City Council both online and paper based during May and June 2021. It was open to all residents, workers and visitors to Latrobe City. A series of "Listening Posts" were held between May 2nd and 27th 2021 in Yinnar, Morwell, Yallourn North, Traralgon, Traralgon South, Moe, Budgerie, Glengarry, Tyers and Newborough and Churchill. where surveys and the link to the online survey were distributed. Further planned listening posts were cancelled due to the COVID-19 global pandemic and State Government restrictions. The online survey was promoted through Latrobe City Council social media and Council's Community Noticeboard in the Latrobe Valley Express.

The survey collected both quantitative and qualitative data through open ended questions. It included asking residents what makes Latrobe City a great place to live, work, study and play. It also invited residents to share their thoughts on current and future challenges for the City. A total of 1552 responses to the survey were received of which 69 were blank, with 1453 making up the final data set.

The CEU used a mixed method approach to analyse the combined quantitative and qualitative data collected.

3. THE SURVEY AND ANALYSIS

The aim of the analysis of the Latrobe City Council “Community Engagement Survey” was to explore how Latrobe City residents felt about living, working, studying and playing in the city.

3.1 EVALUATION RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following key research questions shaped the survey and allowed for the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data:

- How do Latrobe City residents feel about living and working in the Latrobe City?
- What things are most important to making Latrobe City a good place to live, work and play?
- What do residents believe could be improved?
- Do feedback and suggestions differ according to the resident’s hometown?

3.2 DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The survey design:

- Allowed for the collection of information directly from a defined group of stakeholders
- Enabled a large amount of data to be collected quickly
- Was convenient for respondents.

3.3 DATA ANALYSIS

Quantitative data extracted was entered into SPSS Version 26¹ for analysis. Qualitative data was analysed using Braun and Clark (2006)² six step thematic analysis technique, with findings presented under theme headings together with participant quotes

See section 8 for Methodology

¹ IBM Corp. Released 2017. IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version 25.0. Armonk, NY: IBM Corp

² Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3 (2). pp. 77-101. ISSN 1478-0887.

4. SURVEY FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

A total of 1552 responses to the survey were received of which 69 were blank, with 1453 making up the final data set. This section sets out the findings from the survey; firstly demographic data (5.1), secondly multiple choice and Likert scale questions (5.2) and finally a thematic analysis of the open-ended questions with the results separated under the headings of each question (5.3).

4.2 PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Gender

The majority of survey participants identified as female (65%, n=744), while 32% (n=363) identified as male, 0.3% (n=5) identified as non-binary/third gender, 0.5% (n=8) as other and 2% (n=21) preferred not to say.

Residence

The place of residence of the majority (65%, n=744) of survey participants was in one of Latrobe City's major towns; Traralgon (33%, n=381), Morwell (14%, n=163), Moe/Newborough (12%, n=143) and Churchill (6%, n=73). The remaining 35% (n=390) live in a smaller township or elsewhere (Figure 1).

Participants Place of Residence

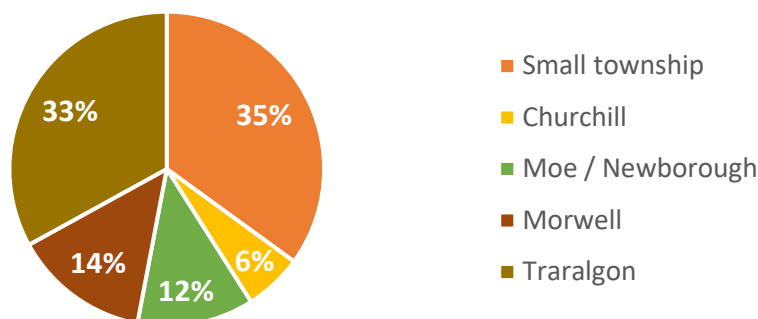


Figure 1: Participants Place of Residence

Of the participants who did not answer the question or selected the option of 'other' (13% n=195), many live (41%, n = 80) or work and live (29%, n = 57) in Latrobe City. Additionally, a further (19%, n=37) work in Latrobe, and 13 (6%) were visiting. Others live in adjoining local government areas.

Age

The highest number of participants were in the 36-40 age group (14%, n=140) followed by 31-35 (13%, n=132) (Figure 2). The least common age groups were 86+ (1%, n=8) and 17 or under (2%, n=16).

Distribution of Survey Participants Age Groups

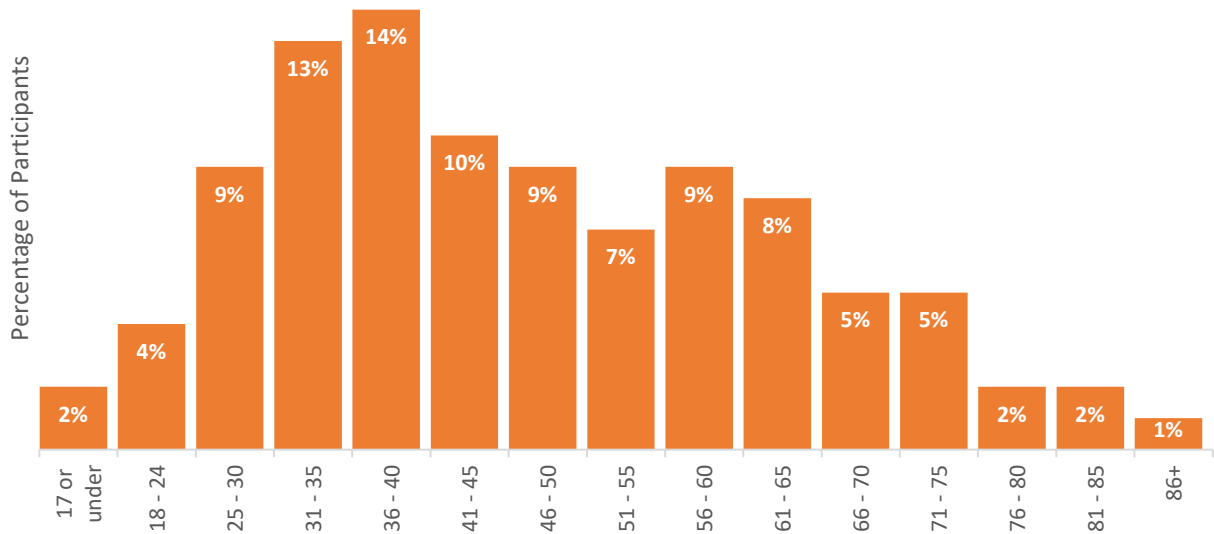


Figure 2: Distribution of Survey Participants Age Groups

Occupation

Participants were asked about their occupation. Healthcare and social assistance (16%, n=115) was the most common, followed by education and training (15%, n=110) (Figure 3).

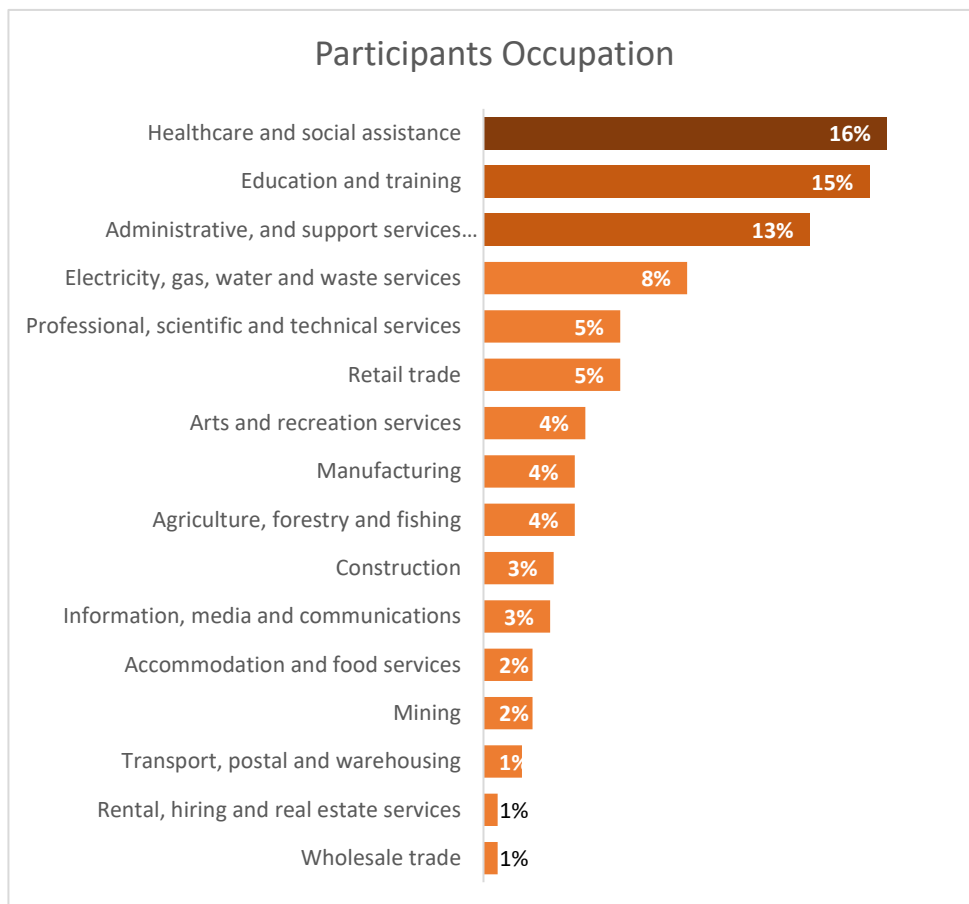


Figure 3: Participants Occupation

Living, Working and Studying in Latrobe City

Participants were asked if they lived, lived and worked, studied, studied and worked in Latrobe City or if they were visiting. The majority (89%, n=1,293) indicated that they either lived (50% n=722) or lived and worked (39%, n=571) in Latrobe City. Visitors to Latrobe City represented 1.5% (n=21) of participants (Figure 4).

Other answers include being a former resident (n = 9), participants who reside in a close surrounding local government area (n = 2), and people who work, study and live in the Latrobe City concurrently (n = 5).

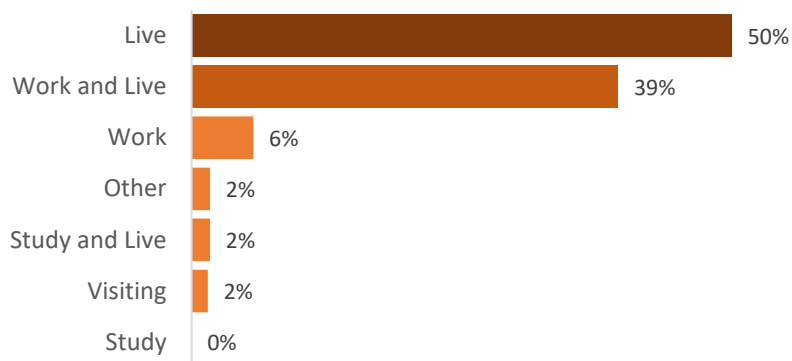


Figure 4: Living, Working and Studying in Latrobe City

Less than 1% (n=2) of participants studied in Latrobe City. This reflects the demographic of people who chose to answer this survey. The Australian Bureau of Statistics shows that the majority of higher education students are aged 15-24 years (59%)³. However, 5% of the participants identify with this age group.

4.3 LIVING, WORKING AND STUDYING IN LATROBE CITY

What makes Latrobe City a good place?

Respondents were asked the question “*What makes Latrobe City a good place?*” and asked to select the top three answers which best represented how they felt. The most common reason people gave for Latrobe City being a good place was Friends and Family (n=729), followed by Location in Victoria (n=567), Affordability (n=547) and Natural Environment (n=486).

³ ABS. (2011). Hitting the books: Characteristics of higher education students. Australian Bureau of Statistics. Retrieved July from <https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0main+Features20July+2013>

What makes Latrobe City a good place: three top answers

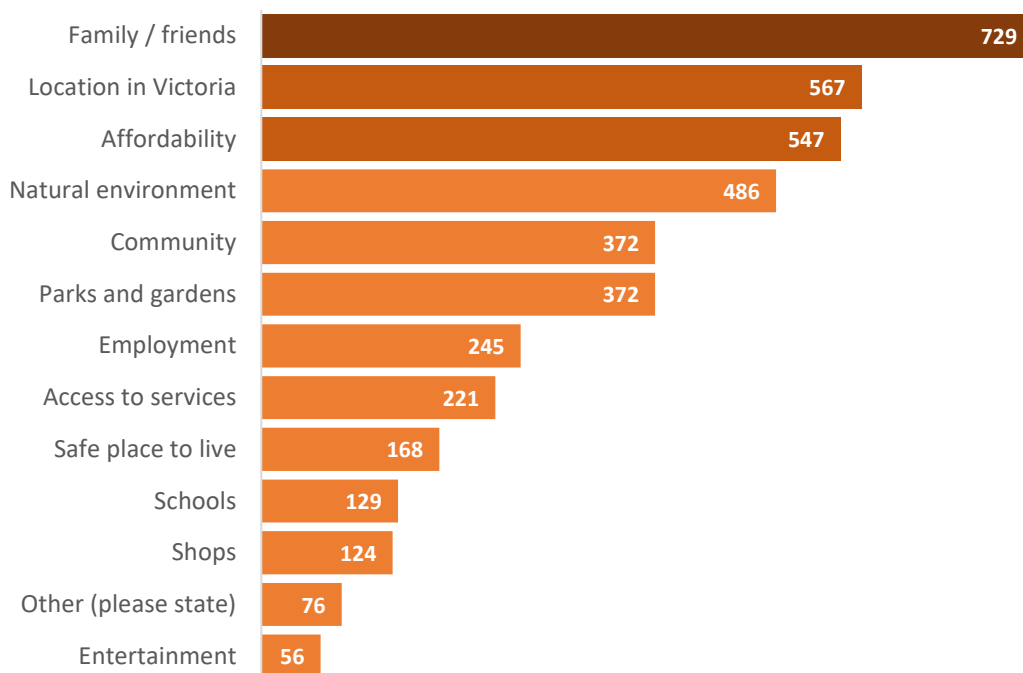


Figure 5: What makes Latrobe City a good place: three top answers

When analysed based on individual towns, it showed that Access to Services was one of the top three reasons why Latrobe City is a good place to be for 21% of people from Morwell, and 14% of people from Traralgon. However, participants in Moe/Newborough and Churchill did not rate this so highly, with 10% and 8% selecting this option respectively.

Across all towns Family and friends was rated highly, however the highest was Hazelwood North where 71% of participants included this in their top three.

Traralgon South was the only town where more than 13% of participants thought that Schools were a reason that Latrobe City is a good place, with 25% of respondents including this in their top three.

A sense of Community was a strong reason for respondents in Churchill (41%), Callignee (42%) and Yinnar (50%) for why they thought that that Latrobe City is a good place. None of the 13 respondents from Tyers put Community in their top three.

Natural environment rated highly amongst all towns but was not one of the top three reasons for people in Traralgon (25%) and Morwell (28%) as often as it was for those from Moe-Newborough (41%), Churchill (41%) or the smaller towns combined (48%). Within the smaller towns, Natural environment was very highly valued by people from Callignee with 75% of respondents putting this in their top three.

A safe place did not rate highly as to why participants thought Latrobe City was a great place. In particular, 6% of participants from Morwell and no participants from Toongabbie and Traralgon South selected this answer.

What makes Latrobe City a good place to work?

Participants were asked the question “What makes Latrobe City a good place to work?” and to select the answer which best represented how they felt. The most common reason people gave for Latrobe City being a good place to work was Distance from home (n=504) (Figure 6).

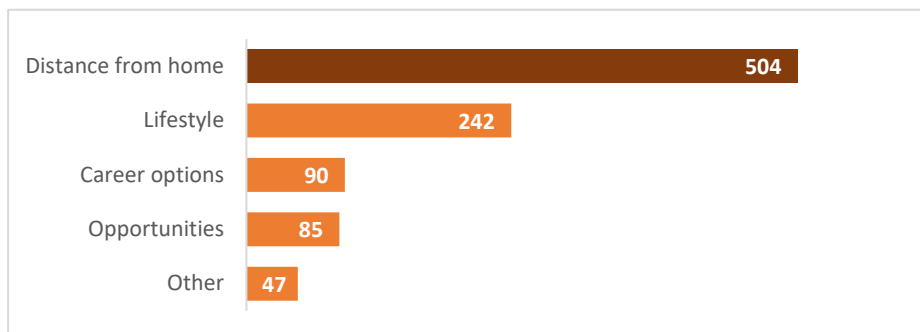


Figure 6: What makes Latrobe City a good place to work?

Other reasons participants thought Latrobe City was a good place to work included many of the area’s specific services and facilities, the quiet, and support of the arts.

When analysed based on individual towns, it was indicated that Lifestyle was more often selected by respondents from smaller towns (33%) than those in larger towns such as Traralgon (20%), Morwell (16%), Moe/Newborough (14%) or Churchill (18%). In particular, Boolarra was the town where the most participants (57%) chose Lifestyle as the reason that Latrobe City is a good place to work.

Opportunities and Career options were rarely selected by respondents from any town, except Traralgon South where 2 of the 4 respondents (50%) chose Career options as the reason Latrobe City is a good place to work.

What makes Latrobe City a good place to study?

Participants were asked “What makes Latrobe City a good place to study?” and to select the answer which best represented how they felt. The most common reason participants gave for Latrobe City being a good place to study was because it was Close to home (23%, n=337) (Figure 7). This is very similar to the most common reason people gave for Latrobe City being a good place to work, which was Distance from home. The location of work and study venues is something that participants value in where they live.

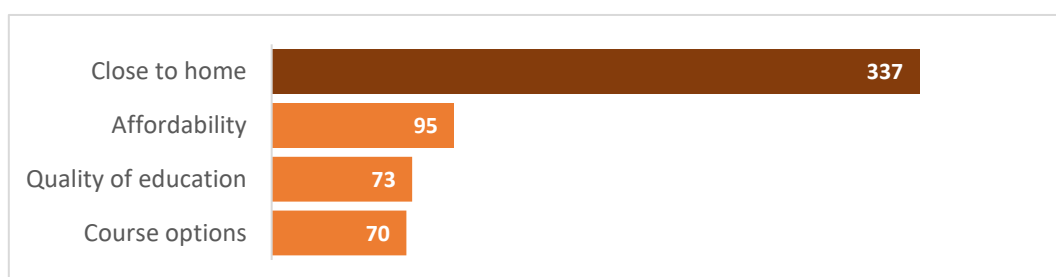


Figure 7: What makes Latrobe City a Good place to study?

When analysed based on individual towns, it was indicated that while being Close to home was the primary reason most respondents think Latrobe City is a good place to study, Traralgon South (13%) and Budgeree (13%) did not select this answer as often as people from the smaller towns overall (27%).

In comparison, Quality of education, Course options and Affordability was not selected by more than 20% of respondents from any town.

What things do you think are the most important for Latrobe City Council to focus on?

Participants were asked “What things do you think are the most important for Latrobe City Council to focus on?” and to rate each of 7 options on a scale from “1 = Not at all important” to “5 = Extremely important”.

Safety (n=756), Economy (n=608) and Built environment (n=596) were each rated as extremely important. Arts and Creative Industries rated of the lowest importance (n=243).

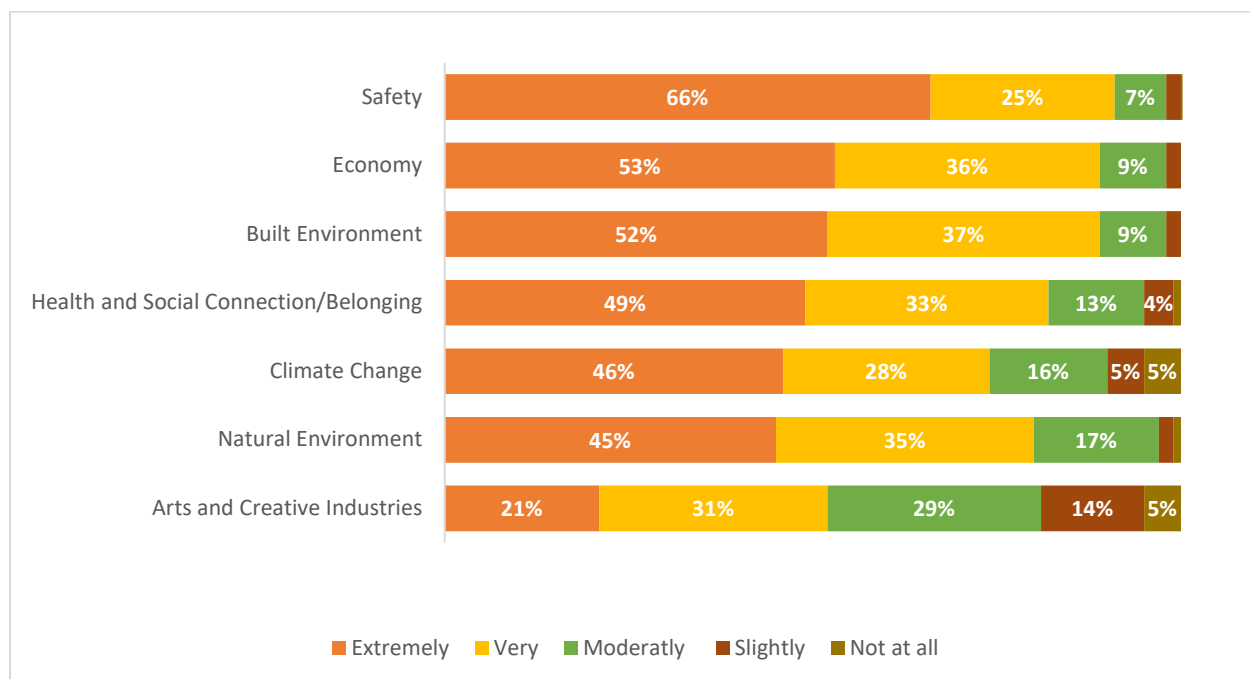


Figure 8: What things do you think are the most important for Latrobe City Council to focus on?

highlighted the need for streamlining of transport lines including road and rail options with adequate parking and lighting on the roads; Affordable housing which was an important issue to break the poverty cycle and to ensure that young people stayed in the area; Generate employment opportunities highlighted the creation of multiple employment options for all; Tackle crime and safety was a large theme with many residents commenting on the need to increase a positive police presence and to reduce the incidence of crime across Latrobe and Hope for the future, whereby people commented on the pride that they felt living in Latrobe and their hopes for a cleaner, brighter future for all.

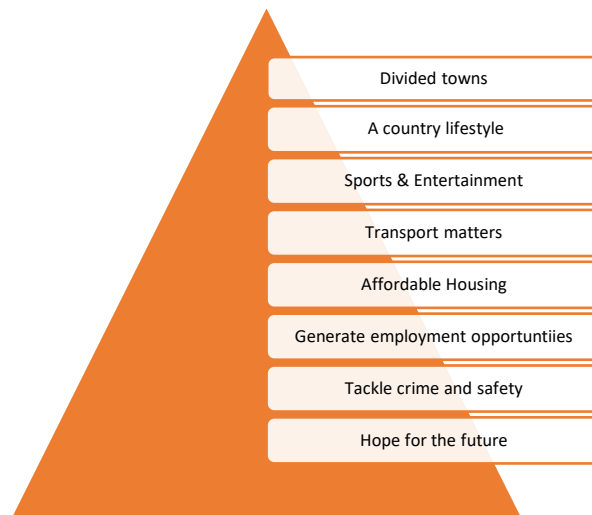


Figure 10: Current and Future Challenges for Latrobe City Themes

Divided towns

There is a perceived divide between the towns in Latrobe City with many expressing that there appeared to be a pooling of resources in the larger townships such as Traralgon and little to no resources for more rural towns.

“Neglecting satellite cities like Moe, Morwell, Churchill, Yallourn North, Tyres and Yinnar, Traralgon is not the centre and be all of Latrobe City” (Moe).

“In-fighting between the towns Traralgon, Moe and Morwell. No town is better than the other we are all part of Latrobe City and it doesn’t matter which town gets what, so long as the service is available in Latrobe City” (Morwell).

There is some concern about the lack of growth in the Morwell township, it was perceived that Traralgon continues to be given a greater number of development opportunities.

“All investments go to overpopulated Traralgon. As a Morwell resident this council already destroyed Morwell with the split of mid valley, town planning and lack of creative and diversity investments across the wider Latrobe City” (Morwell).

It was deemed important to share the resources and growth across the towns, *“Ensuring that all major services and industries are not located in one part of the city and that they are shared between the major towns” (Newborough).* There were a number of participants who indicated that there needs to be a greater balance or sharing of resources across all the towns in Latrobe and that it could lead to a

diminished community spirit. *“Balance the employment and growth opportunities across all three municipalities of Moe, Morwell and Traralgon”* (Morwell).

“Lack of development of Morwell, both industrially and the CBD. The favouring of Traralgon is marked, reducing Morwell to a second-class community. The town needs to concentrate on attracting working families and not be a repository for the disadvantaged” (Morwell).

A Country Lifestyle

There was a real sense of affection for Latrobe City with many people commenting on the beauty of the area, living affordability and work opportunities. *“We love Latrobe city and will continue to live here, work here and raise our little family”* (Hazelwood North). Participants wanted to maintain the country feel of Latrobe City. *“Retaining the country feel/ heart with expanding population”* (other). It was important to note that many were concerned about the redevelopment of farmland and the importance of strategic town planning. *“Minimise urban sprawl, maintain farmland which in itself maintains more natural environment”* (Jeeralang).

There were several suggestions about how to maintain the country lifestyle including further development of community areas, for example, one participant said; *“Building and maintaining community areas, I really like immigration park but feel like a lot more could be done with it”* (Morwell). Regeneration of native habitats was also suggested; *“Stop the removal of native vegetation and loss of habitat. Not just preserve the native bush areas but plant, plant and plant more trees and native plants in this area”* (Churchill). Upgrading of facilities was mentioned; *“Upgrade sporting facilities in smaller towns to encourage kids to stay involved in the town as well as upgrade park and recreational facilities”* (Churchill). There was a real desire to beautify community areas, townships and improve the overall visual appeal of the region. *“Removal of litter, dumped rubbish, abandoned trolleys and graffiti, all the things that make an area look rough, uncared for and unsafe”* (Churchill). The lack of attention to the appeal of the townships was seen to lead to an overall decline in the ability of some towns to attract new families to the area.

“I live in Morwell and it makes me feel so sad and bleak. All the beautiful works in Commercial Road still won’t attract people / business to the CBD. The lack of decent shops at Mid Valley, no wonder people travel to Fountain gate for their shopping. The rundown houses in the old commission areas, absolutely horrible and seeing this part of town does not inspire any hope for the future of Morwell in particular” (Morwell).

The negative sentiments were not shared by all, there were many who noted a number of positive changes in the City and the impact on current and future residents. However, there were suggestions for continuing to work on the overall appeal of the towns. *“Aesthetically pleasant towns attract people, make it nicer so people want to live here and those that do already take a bit more pride in their region”* (Traralgon). Climate change was mentioned with a suggestion that it become a priority area including a formal pledge to making a real difference. In contrast there was mention of the impact that poker machines were having on communities, *“Businesses are being choked out by poker machine losses that do not make up for loss to the fragile economy”* (Yallourn North). There was a sense of ongoing change occurring with the closure of the power stations and a need to redirect focus.

“Need to prioritise the environment (as opposed to the economy always being the first consideration) and instead of having a community that dwells on losing industry, power up and get out there and fight for new industry. We could be manufacturing materials for renewable energy. We need to diversify and be aggressive about it” (Moe).

"I think we need to embrace the difference between country and city and promote and 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!" (Traralgon).

Sports and Entertainment

There were a large number of 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 and parks recreational areas. There remained however a number of suggestions for 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). Skate parks were mentioned often, *"Sale skate park was used as an example of a how to set up a safe and user-friendly facility. Sale skate park has lights that are push button and stay on for an hour before needing to be pushed again. They also won't turn on after 10pm. It's a perfect balance"* (Traralgon). It was also suggested that there be a general upgrade of fun and interactive play equipment including a ninja warrior outdoor setting (Traralgon).

Some participants felt that there were not enough entertainment options to keep people engaged *"there is a lack of entertainment at present and people will travel outside of Latrobe to events"* (Moe). Keeping people engaged locally would contribute in a positive way to the local economy, *"Ensuring locals have access to entertainment so we can continue to feed money into the local community rather than taking it to other communities to spend"* (Traralgon).

"There are not enough artsy, pieces in public, e.g. Sale has the beautiful lake with animal carvings, Boolarra has the park for kids with beautiful trees, Moe has the best park in Latrobe. TRARALGON HAS NOTHING FOR KIDS" (Traralgon).

There were many positive comments about the variety of sport and entertainment options in Latrobe City.

"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" (Traralgon).

"I love visiting Latrobe Regional Art Gallery. It is a jewel in the crown of Morwell and the Gippsland region" (Other).

Transport matters

Parking, street lighting, traffic flow in central business districts and the transport infrastructure to move between Latrobe City and Melbourne were highlighted as important priority areas for the City 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 the University in Churchill from the surrounding towns which makes it difficult for international students studying at the University.

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

There were comments about the proposed fast train between Melbourne and Latrobe City suggesting that be built. *“Providing better transport. Traralgon by-pass, fast rail to Melbourne rather than a crawl behind metro trains”* (Other). In addition, it has been long proposed that a Traralgon by-pass be developed. *“There is constant traffic congestion in Traralgon. The by-pass is long overdue so just build it”* (Jeeralang Junction).

The lack of streetlights and available parking in CBD areas were highlighted as priority needs for community members. *“Working in the CBD there is not enough all-day parking for workers”* (Yinnar). In addition, Traralgon was also mentioned for its poor street lighting. *“Streetlighting is terrible especially in Traralgon. Why on earth the streetlights lean over into the road when they should light the dark pathway’s I have no idea”* (Traralgon). Further, better lighting was recommended for public transport areas such as taxi ranks. *“Need to invest in better lighting at Moe Taxi rank and Moe Newborough leisure centre”* (Newborough). Overall, it was suggested that communities should ride and walk more often.

“Encourage people to walk and ride around the towns where possible to help encourage a healthy lifestyle. Ensure lighting around town is consistent to help people to walk after hours rather than using cars at all times” (Other).

Affordable housing

It is feared that housing in the future will become difficult to attain for local people and could lead to increased homelessness.

“Prevent increase in homelessness by ensuring suitable refuges for both men and women, and public low cost but appropriate housing for families” (Yinnar).

As the population increases there is a need to ensure that comprehensive town planning occurs to accommodate the need for additional housing. There are, however, concerns that new subdivisions will impact on the rich farming land that the region is known for. *“Too many sub-divisions, must be done in a controlled manner that doesn’t effect farming operations”* (Yinnar). *“Over population particularly new subdivisions that destroy the very businesses and farmland that attract people here”* (Yinnar). Rural communities were particularly concerned about the loss of farmland in addition to the increase in housing costs, *“skyrocketing prices of houses is making it hard for our young ones to buy into their own place”* (Yinnar). The impact to future generations was highlighted as being an area of concern.

“As Melbourne gets more expensive people are moving further out. It is pricing us out of renting and buying in an area we grew up” (Newborough).

There were many who saw the shift to regional areas as a positive future for Latrobe City, with more people comes more opportunity and more industry. It was important to embrace the changes to ensure that the area could accommodate the growth.

“Meeting the needs of the growth in the area to the expansion for the metro corridor, i.e., employment opportunities, transport and affordable accommodation” (Newborough).

“To attract international visitors and students, the city needs to have opportunities for engagement, employability, internships for students, housing that is affordable” (Other).

In general, the growth to region will encourage people to work, live and study in Latrobe City. Affordable housing was seen as essential together with the necessary infrastructure to accommodate the population increase. The growth should be embraced.

“Develop a Destination e.g. unique feature attraction. More affordable housing, units etc, More public Transport. More small-town promotion” (Yinnar).

Generate employment opportunities

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

“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)

There was a call to stop thinking of coal-based industries as the only alternative. *“Changing the mindset of people who think coal power is the only option” (Moe).* Providing a variety of employment options for existing workers and future workers in the region was seen as a priority; *“Ongoing employment opportunities and fixing the environmental impacts of the mining industry” (Morwell).*

“Stop talking about coal as having a future. Be honest with people. We need to transition away and find new industries and jobs” (Callignee).

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 change the areas to a cleaner industry focus. *“Attract clean and green industries which provide employment and steer away from harmful industries” (Morwell).* It should be noted that there were many participants who mentioned their dislike of the possibility of a lead smelter being approved in the region.

“After the shutting of Hazelwood Power station and Morwell power station this would’ve been the time when the area could’ve turned a corner and kept polluting industries away. But now there is a Waste to Energy and Used Lead Acid Battery plant approved for the valley so again the areas future is set. Educated and people with means won’t stay in the Valley if industries like this come to the area” (Morwell).

It is important to ensure that in future planning youth employment is prioritised for it will ensure that young people remain in the Latrobe City. *“The young people need work, if they have work, they are more likely to stay around” (Churchill).* In addition to a focus on youth employment it is also important to retrain and diversify the work force in the region. *“Retraining talent as remote work options become more readily available encouraging those who work in the area to spend more time / money locally” (Other).* It is also important to have a range of employment options, *“diversification of employment options, concentrated effort in assisting / supporting those from low / economic backgrounds” (Tyers).*

It is essential that new industries are attracted to the area which, in turn, will attract new people and families and provide a boost to the local economy.

“Attracting new people to live in the area, to bring new skills, businesses and ideas, and hopefully raise the socio-demographic to make it an overall better place to live” (Morwell).

It was further suggested that Council continue to target and develop industrial and commercial employment opportunities. It was thought that new industries would lead to a brighter future for children. *“I feel that we need to attract new industry so our kids will be able to live in this beautiful*

area" (Budgerree). Finally, it was suggested that Council prioritise employment as a top key area for consideration in future planning moving towards a brighter future for Latrobe City.

"The ability to provide a healthy environment for our community, while supporting meaningful employment opportunities" (Hazelwood North).

Tackle crime and safety

Feeling safe living in Latrobe City was mentioned repeatedly with many participants pointing out 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). Generational poverty was highlighted as a major contributor to the ongoing issues around crime, drugs and the incidence of domestic violence. *"Generational poverty and generational poverty moving from different areas, Drug and alcohol abuse. Domestic and family violence. Escalating numbers of trauma in childhood"* (Glengarry) were highlighted as the key areas of concern. *"There needs to be more support and engagement to stop the cycle of inter-generational trauma across our communities whether unemployment or substance abuse / poverty driven"* (Traralgon).

One participant said that the increasing levels of crime made them reluctant to settle in the region.

"Increasing levels of crime is a concern and I'm hesitant to build a forever home for me and my family due to safety concerns. Will a new home attract criminals? I already know a drug dealer and a bikie gang member living in my street" (Other).

Addressing these issues could include drug rehabilitation facilities to assist with the recovery process. A general cleaning up of some areas was also highlighted *"just a bigger clean-up of needles around the area I live in"* (Morwell). In Moe the number of youth visible in town was of concern *"kids in Moe not wandering around aimlessly all day every day. I want to see kids engaged in something"* (Moe). More proactive policing throughout the City was suggested. *"More police presence not just in a negative way but proactively in the community and schools"* (Churchill). Another participant put forward a similar request for Moe; *"the drug and social issues in this area need a larger policing presence"* (Moe).

Participants stated that there was evidence of crime and violence in the schools and also on the streets, and that crime and safety needed to continue to be a key priority area.

"Getting local crooks and crime under control and addressing family violence more seriously. Addressing the amount of violence at high schools in the area it's away over the top and teachers are dealing with students that aren't wanting to listen or learn" (Morwell).

There were comments made about the centralisation of social services in Morwell, although necessary, these deterred families from moving to the area.

"Having Anglicare, Centrelink, Sexual Abuse Centre and Court Precinct all in Morwell does nothing for the town. Whilst necessary services for the region, they are all negative and does nothing to promote the town, it says more about what the town is then where you want it to be!" (Traralgon).

Gambling was also highlighted as an area of concern and that support was needed to reduce its effects. *"To face to the fact that gambling is a very big problem in Latrobe Valley, so more intensive residential treatment facilities should be provided"* (Yallourn North). In addition, gender equality needs to be addressed to ensure that all family members remain safe. *"Gender equality and reducing rates of*

family violence, work needs to be done to challenge past views that are still ever present in rural areas” (Boolarra).

There were several examples of when and how people felt unsafe in Latrobe City, with participants wanting to feel safe walking in their neighbourhoods. *“I wish there were more areas I could walk and feel safe” (Traralgon).*

“On one occasion we were approached by a drug affected lady, two other times saw men with no children come and sit in their car or on seats smoking and watching children. Don’t feel safe, the playgrounds are old and not safe in terms of being fenced or sun safety”. (Traralgon)

Although crime and safety were highlighted as areas of concern there were also many comments about participants love of the area and that they wouldn’t choose to live anywhere else. *“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).* There was a link between employment rates and opportunities and crime, with many suggesting that if there was an emphasis on helping people find jobs it would reduce crime rates in Latrobe City.

“Employment opportunities to get unemployment down which hopefully would have a positive effect on crime in the area, more police presence would help to make a safer community. Greater tourism and attractions so people want to keep coming back” (Traralgon).

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).*

“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” (Traralgon).

Continuing to develop infrastructure and encourage clean industries and businesses into the area were seen as key priorities, allowing 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 City.

“Lack of United community vision about future self and what it could be. Area has all things to achieve great things but doesn’t advocate around a meaningful long-term vision” (Traralgon)

“There needs to be a vision for future generations even though current citizens may not get to benefit fully from the establishment of new structure, events and environments” (Jeeralang).

It was deemed important that Latrobe City find a balance between economic growth and the health and wellbeing of its communities. *“Create a long-term plan for the Valley and include whole community not just the louder same, same voices” (Yinnar).*

Central to the future success of Latrobe City is the need to embrace tourism in the region showcasing the varied environments. *“With developed forestry and beautiful urban environment, it is an emerging city with strong comprehensive strength” (Boolarra).* There were a number of key tourism areas

identified as being attractive to visitors into the future. *“We are destined to failure if we don’t embrace tourism and actively develop these opportunities to grow and develop”* (Traralgon). In particular, there were comments made about the future of the mine sites and how they could be central to the success of future tourism plans for the region.

“Repurposing the mines, unifying the towns / districts to create a cohesive unit, marketing the area for tourist, overseeing the establishment of new and smart industries that have longevity and which reflect use of local resources” (Yallourn North).

“Creating a new economy for Latrobe City and Greater Gippsland by transforming from mining to tourism: repurpose the LV mines to be economically useful and visually attractive to provide jobs, address health and liveability and benefit from accessibility to Melbourne” (Moe).

There were a lot of comments about changing the focus, mindset and narrative around ideas of what Latrobe City is to what Latrobe City could be in the future. For this to happen it was suggested that new professionals need to be recruited into the area which would ultimately infuse fresh ideas into the mix.

“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” (Morwell).

“Establishing a clear identify following the closure of the power industry. Creation of new jobs and new industries. Health has improved a lot but there is still limited or no access to specialists like dermatologists. Attracting and retaining skilled professionals as well as creative and passionate young people” (Traralgon).

Participants noted that the development of infrastructure needed to be whole of life focused so that people could live in the area long-term. *“Continuing to develop infrastructure that allows people to remain in the area for life e.g., medical facilities, housing, recreational facilities and organisations, transport, retirement villages, parks etc”* (Traralgon).

The Latrobe Health and Wellbeing charter was identified as being key to the development of priority areas.

“The Latrobe health Innovation Zone Charter was right to prioritise health and wellbeing – but that charter needs to be set in stone and maintained as being of prime importance when undertaking ALL Latrobe Valley planning, including planning with state government” (Yallourn North).

Focus on Safety

The theme, focus on safety, explored the participants views on the level of safety and need to feel safe within the Latrobe City. Participants voiced concerns about their feelings of safety, for example, they wanted to be able to;

“Feel safer in our community, [there is] too much crime currently happening and not feeling safe to let children walk to school or after school activities due to this” (Other).

Despite concerns participants raised about their feelings, many made constructive comments and suggestions that could help increase community safety. For example, while *“crime is getting out of control ... street lighting, improved accessibility with footpaths”* (Traralgon) would assist the community in feeling safer. In order to reduce crime *“[a] larger police presence”* is required in the region as they *“quite often do not feel safe in [their] community”* (Moe). In addition, it was noted that *“better funded community programs aimed at tackling antisocial behaviour, crime and substance abuse”* (Morwell) are needed in the Latrobe City and that the lack of sustainable employment is a contributing factor to these behaviours.

“... increase opportunity for all people and families to help lift unemployment and crime” is needed and *“Morwell especially is very disheartening and worrying [at] the level of drug affected people, intergenerational poverty and welfare recipients”* (Other).

Employment Opportunities

Many participants commented that the feeling of community safety could be improved by stable employment opportunities in Latrobe City. Participants acknowledged the impact of the coal and power generation industries.

“remove the coal industry asap [and] support the workforce into new areas and remediate the affected lands and air” (Yallourn North).

Participants wrote that the area needs to look at *“diversifying employment options away from mining and transition to manufacturing on a larger scale”* (Morwell). This was also supported by a number of other participants who noted, *“a municipality without mining and with the mine voids used so that they are safe, stable, sustainable, useful to residents and visitors and visually attractive”* would lead the Latrobe City to having a *“vibrant industry”* (Yallourn North).

Participants also commented on the attractiveness of Latrobe City for work and study indicating that to *“make it more attractive to professionals [a] cleaner image is needed, the Valley is regarded as a polluted place”* (Churchill). Furthermore, *“community engagement to lessen the reliance on social financial supports an encourage employment”* (Traralgon) would assist. In addition, there is a need for *“work opportunities and a variety of course options for our younger generation, it’s not affordable for them to study and live in the city”* (Traralgon). Participants also commented on the need to attract business to the area to support employment opportunities, and to move to a *“more diverse workforce, attracting new investments, better connectivity and more expansion”* (Other). Further, such *“diverse employment opportunities and more things for young and old to do”* (Traralgon) are required in Latrobe City. Lastly, participants also commented on the necessity of *“investment in industry to increase employment opportunities and [that] better government high school options”* (Other).

Improved Health Services

The theme of improved health services was voiced by the participants, particularly in relation to environmental issues affecting the health of residents.

“Health, specifically the health of those who’ve been impacted in the long term, whether by natural disaster, proximity to factories/power plants/the mine fire, inability to access healthcare in a reasonable time” (Traralgon).

According to another participant *“a greater emphasis on environmental and person health...it is very alarming with the current statistics of health within the community, and the lack of consideration shown for a healthy environment” (Hazelwood North)*. This concern was echoed by a number of participants, *“industries and business that is not heavy industry and that may lead to poor health and poor environmental impact” (Traralgon)* were a concern for the area.

“More housing availability, better mental health services and an increase in police presence ...a commitment to health of its citizens and moving away from polluting industries especially lead smelters” (Traralgon).

Despite concerns for the effects of environmental issues on the health of the residents of Latrobe City one participant surmised that *“it is not possible to remove all heavy industry, but it is possible to have better standards of pollution control so that our health is not impacted so significantly” (Other)*.

The lack of specialist health services was raised by participants, for example, *“more health services, especially medical specialists and particularly in relation to services for children”* were needed.

Services like paediatricians, psychologists/neuropsychologists specialising in children, occupational therapists and the like have waiting lists sometimes longer than a year, local children can’t get assistance they need within an appropriate timeframe” and that “trying to attract more of these services to the area would be beneficial for families” (Traralgon) within Latrobe City.

Revitalisation of Latrobe City

Ideas about shaping the revitalisation of Latrobe City was a strong theme that emerged from responses to this question. Education was seen as one way of doing this; *“encourage students to use the increased learning facilities being built in the valley” (Morwell)*. It was suggested that the Latrobe City should *“become leaders in the production of clean energy and environmentally friendly industries [and] promote this on the media to create a positive vibe about the Latrobe Valley” (Traralgon)*.

Investment in the area’s heritage was another suggestion.

“A historical/heritage museum and a substantial botanic garden in cooperation of native flora and history of indigenous flora as well as European/British heritage in gardens. Local histories can coexist and enrich each other” (Traralgon).

There was also a focus on Indigenous history as a source of pride in the Latrobe City;

“More reference and pride to Australia’s history and culture ... real First Nations people’s history, not the recent coal mine and industrial history, that part makes me embarrassed of Latrobe City” (Morwell).

In addition, there should be a *“focus on a cultural and indigenous heritage, revitalising CBD buildings to their full historic glory” (Traralgon)*.

Improvements in parks and open spaces were seen as another way to re-invigorate the City, be a source of pride and which could attract tourists.

“...better quality open spaces, this relates to CBD’s, parks, nature strip planting, median strips, fencing, pavements, public toilets, playgrounds, skateparks – the whole lot needs improving and more regularly than once every 30 years. If everything looked better, felt cleaner, people would have more pride in Latrobe City” (Traralgon).

Participants commented on the need for improved transport and infrastructure.

“I would like to see more traffic controls in way of traffic lights, roundabouts have worked until now but the increase in traffic has made the use of these traffic management issues redundant” (Traralgon).

Better train services were seen by a number of participants as important, particularly services to Melbourne. They need to be *“faster, more reliable instead of constantly being changed to bus services”* and *“a reliable express train services”* is needed (Traralgon).

“We need to expand and upgrade our airport to accommodate Rex style of planes and allow for even more air traffic in the future, we need to make our area more accessible to all travellers” (Traralgon).

Other areas that could be targeted for revitalisation included the *“creation of tourist attraction or major annual festival so as to get it on peoples mind map in [the] region and beyond”* (Traralgon) or as described by participants, *“a thriving performing arts and gig scene with plenty of shows and activities, this gives people more to do than go out for tea or go to a licenced venue”* (Traralgon). The issue of empty shops in the towns was raised and it was suggested that there are;

“Subsidies for small business and entrepreneurs to rent empty shops, more community activation events that celebrate our region (food and wine festivals, music and dinner in the park, art gallery takeover in the streets” (Traralgon).

Participants commented that while all this may help *“we need to promote our area better; all promotions of our area are old and outdated [and] we need to reinvent our image”* (Traralgon).

Lastly, participants raised issues that they perceived hindered the revitalisation of Latrobe City. For example, they noted that;

“The rivalry between the towns that make up Latrobe City holds us back, as a community we need to work together to create a single identity. People say they live in Geelong or Ballarat, not the actual suburb within those cities where they live, what is good for one town or suburb with Latrobe City is good for everyone” (Churchill).

Similarly, participants commented that there needs to be an *“even distribution of funds across the community, invest in tourist infrastructure to bring money into the valley instead of holidayers (sic) bypassing the valley to East Gippsland”* (Tyers). This was further supported *“a more even distribution of finances for public work”* is needed and that;

“Council is concentrating on the Traralgon/Morwell corridor but ratepayers in Moe/Newborough supply a considerable amount of rates to Latrobe City and need to feel included” (Moe).

The unique make up of Latrobe City was seen as a positive with participants stating that;

“Accepting we are a variety of country towns and highlighting that is good, it’s good to have some rivalry between town rather than trying to be one community.... we are the only region in Victoria shaped like this, celebrate it” (Morwell).

Community engagement was seen as important, as *“increased community involvement in community development projects [as this] equals greater pride equals greater activism equals greater resilience”* (Yinnar). The participants go on to point out the *“direction for all of us to be part of the decisions made here and a purpose... [and] strong leadership”* (Yinnar) are needed with *“less bureaucratic red tape when dealing with Latrobe City”* (Churchill).

“...considering those who are struggling to find low-no qualification jobs would make the municipality a better place to work...” (Other) and explained that one of the barriers to employment is *“...lack of experience, half the work requires experience, and most people are willing to put in effort if they were just given a chance”* (Traralgon).

Upskilling the local workforce and making strong industry connections was suggested as a solution to the perceived lack of employment security and opportunities in Latrobe City.

“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).

This was seen as a community issue that should be addressed cohesively across Latrobe City: *“We need to consider as a region how not to leave people behind and create generational poverty”* (Traralgon). Further, many participants expressed concern for the closure of the power industry in the Latrobe Valley and what effect this would have on job prospects and availability for local residents. Participants wanted support for a broader range of industries, and the renewable energy sector was identified multiple times as a promising alternative industry. This type of industry, it was thought, should be given priority and support to create future employment opportunities.

“More jobs, especially in sustainable and future-proof industries. Stop relying on the power station industry and other dirty industries like paper, logging, and lead battery recycling” (Town not specified).

“Diversity of job roles through the development of the renewable energy sector, food and wine, and opportunities to connect to natural places in Latrobe that we love” (Traralgon).

Other participants recognised that Latrobe City is home to other industries, including education, healthcare, and aged care but there was a need to diversify.

“Latrobe City is a great place to work - though the industries available are limited really to the Council, the power stations and primary healthcare and aged care. Greater diversification of industry over the next 20 years” (Traralgon).

A minority of participants noted that Latrobe City has a reputation of high government support and low employee motivation, and suggested that this caused problems for economic advancement:

“I think there are jobs available but a lot of people are lazy and don’t want to work, they are used to government handouts. I know where I work we have trouble keeping staff, and employing suitable people who want to work” (Other).

Some participants referred to the number of vacant shops in local townships and suggested that there has been a recent exodus of businesses from the region. They suggested that this could be a source of feedback for why small businesses are not currently thriving: *“Look at why businesses are closing and the many empty shops/buildings. Attract new business to the towns.”* (Other), and that improvement in this area would make Latrobe City a better place to work: *“Better support and consideration for small business - the amount of red tape and cost of permits etc. can be quite prohibitive”* (Traralgon).

Participants said that there needs to be more support for local businesses by contracting them for available local work. They perceived that some employment opportunities were outsourced to larger, non-local organisations. They requested that;

“Council and other government bodies [utilise] local businesses, resources and talent rather than Melbourne or even interstate - keep jobs local” (Glengarry).

Their perception of this issue would be changed *“if Latrobe City stopped employing people from outside of Latrobe City to do jobs that contractors in Latrobe City can do” (Other).*

Traffic management and parking

The issue of traffic management and parking was a common answer to this question. Participants suggested that roads in major town centres are congested and were concerned that that this could become worse as the population increased. There were suggestions that towns had not been planned with a growing population in mind and that the location of some services intensified traffic congestion. One participant said that Latrobe City needs *“Better traffic management through the township but because schools are in the middle of town it creates so much extra traffic...” (Traralgon).*

Many participants acknowledged that parking has becoming an increasingly serious and frustrating issue, particularly in town centres:

“Long term parking, working all day without all day parking close to work is a struggle. Makes parking away from work and walking to car in the dark terrifying” (Toongabbie).

It was suggested that *“adequate parking and accessibility for workers and customers”* would help to *“support the diverse commercial concerns in the city” (Jeeralang).*

Public transport was also thought to be unsatisfactory and unable to support residents who relied on it, and it was suggested that an improved public transport system would help ease traffic congestion: *“More accessible public transport to help workers from small towns reach major work precincts” (Yallourn North).*

However, it was acknowledged that the ease of travel in rural areas compared with metropolitan areas was a major draw card for working in Latrobe City.

“One of the large attractions to working here is being able to live within a reasonable distance such that commute is short, allowing a much better work/life balance. So the more attractive the area is to live in, the more attractive it is to work in” (Traralgon).

Many participants acknowledged that Latrobe City’s proximity to Melbourne had the potential to attract Melbourne residents to relocate to Latrobe 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).*

Improved healthy living

With the closure of the power industry in Latrobe City approaching, there was a strong desire among participants to transition to cleaner energy sources. They suggested that there should be greater focus and support for *“Industries that don't involve pollution, into Latrobe Valley. People want to work in clean and safe environment” (Traralgon).*

“A guarantee that we do not bring any more high polluting industries to the area including NO LEAD BATTERY RECYCLING PLANT!!” (Traralgon).

“Less pollution! Cleaner air to breathe. It honestly doesn't feel healthy working in the Valley - let alone living in the Valley. The EPA need to be tougher on current and future industries” (Churchill).

Participants also wanted to change the reputation of Latrobe City. They suggested that Latrobe City is known for having a high degree of air pollution and fossil fuel industries and would like the region to be rebranded as a centre for clean and sustainable industry. One participant said Latrobe City could be a better place to work by *“Changing the “image” of Latrobe City by creating a series of lakes, wetlands and forests in the mines”* (Moe).

Similarly, there was a strong focus on supporting the local environment, however the need for sustainable farming and farm management was not commonly acknowledged. There were suggestions that *“Farms require clean soil, air and water so the Latrobe City needs to have and maintain high standards to protect soil, air and water quality”* (Jeeralang).

Attractive option

Participants provided multiple suggestions for making Latrobe City a better place to work by making it a more attractive place. Participants explained that having people attracted to the area would attract a high calibre workforce and strengthen current and emerging industries.

“Increasing desirability to live here long term... to encourage professionals to stay here and expand networks and grow skills rather than come for entry level jobs then leave as soon as they have enough skills to get desired positions in Melbourne” (Other).

Participants suggested that some improvements could be made to the physical representation of Latrobe City to attract people to the area: *“Cleaning up the streets and doing something about the homeless that are so confronting, especially in Morwell”* (Traralgon).

This included improving the regions community facilities which would strengthen the attraction for tourism and events and thus support businesses: *“Better outdoor venues - a decent multi-functional venue like Lardner park to attract large events”* (Churchill).

Participants also acknowledge the recent growth in population in Latrobe City’s larger townships. They encouraged council to prioritise improvements in smaller towns as well to attract newcomers to these areas, which would again support small local businesses: *“Attract more people to live in smaller communities and surrounding towns around our growing town, Traralgon”* (Tyers).

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!” (Other).

Participants explained that, *“the more pride, sense of community and want for a better life that people feel, the more said people will want to be a productive member of society, eg: find employment which leads to spending more money in local businesses, which in term helps people have a better work environment”* (Morwell). Promisingly, there was also multiple comments about the positive aspects of working in Latrobe City. *“Latrobe has it all. Close to the sea, snowfields. Diverse sporting activity”* (Budgerie), and *“More opportunities, but I do think this is improving with new aquatic centre, art centre and STEM facilities”* (Toongabbie).

“I believe that Latrobe offers an almost overwhelming amount of employment opportunities, supported by the state government and Latrobe council's hard work in advocating for community services, and govt industries to locate headquarters here, e.g., 'GovHub’” (Other).

What would make Latrobe City a better place to study?

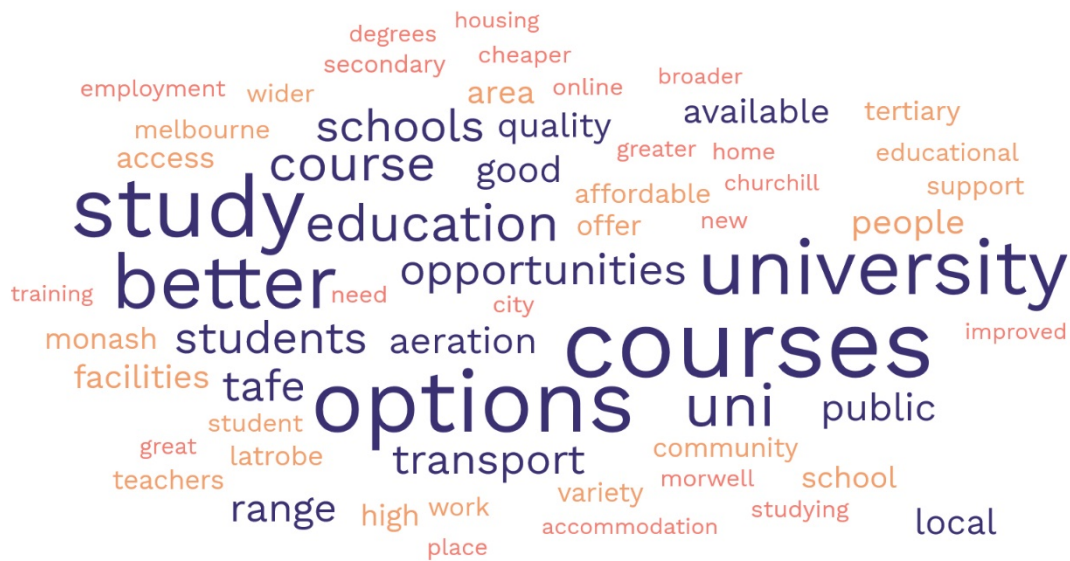


Figure 15: What Would Make Latrobe City a Better Place to Study

A total of 693 responses to this question included the words “course/courses” 182 times, “options” 112, “university/uni” 167, “opportunities” 45 and “transport” 43 times.

THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Answers to the question of ***What would make Latrobe City a better place to study?*** fell into one of four themes: Improving access to education, Improving the image of Federation University, Improving educational opportunities and Churchill - a university town. The majority of expansive responses focused on Federation University. This may have been the result of the way in which the question was worded. For example, participants appear to have focused on the tertiary level because, in contrast to primary and secondary education, it is discretionary, thereby giving people greater choice over where they choose to study (e.g., within Latrobe City or in Melbourne).

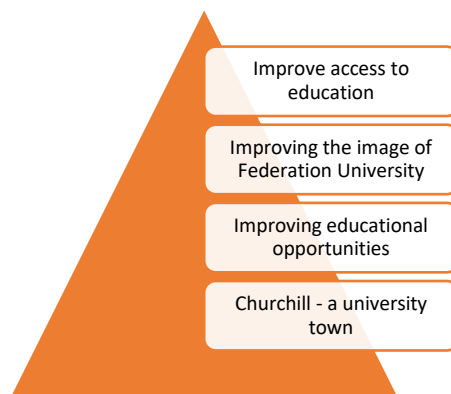


Figure 16: What Would Make Latrobe City a Better Place to Study Themes

Improve access to education

Participants recognised that new courses being offered at Federation University and the development of the Morwell Innovation Centre (MIC) had increased study opportunities and improved the overall quality of post-secondary education. The advantages that these presents should be promoted.

“Vigorous promotion of its benefits including that the Latrobe City is a cheaper place for students to live and play instead of Melbourne” (Other).

However, the success of the MIC was observed by another participant to have created problems of its own, observing that there was now the need to offer *“better parking at TAFE Morwell...all new buildings etc and no parking”* (Churchill).

It was thought that access to a greater range of courses and degrees at Federation University would encourage young people to stay in the area.

“...more opportunities at the university to avoid making students leave the area and risking them never coming back” (Traralgon).

Travel to the campus was an issue raised by several participants who suggested; *“better transport to the university...you look at other campuses they have designated University shuttles not relying on LV bus lines bus routes”* (Churchill). However, some participants interpreted the issue of access in a different light, placing the onus on the community; *“engaging with the university and fully utilising its capability...use it or lose it”* (Other).

Participants suggested that the Latrobe City 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 families 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 (Yallourn North).

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 returning mothers was also highlighted as one participant suggested *“free education for mums looking to get back into the workforce”* (Morwell).

Improving the image of Federation University

The second key theme involved improving Federation University’s reputation, which would enhance its appeal to prospective students. A common theme in this regard was the perception that the quality of the university had diminished since the transfer of ownership from Monash University to Federation University.

“Federation Uni is ok but doesn't have a good reputation with potential students, it doesn't have a lot of status in the tertiary sector, Monash University degrees were seen have more prestige and status and were more sought after” (Traralgon).

Participants said that the university needed to be upgraded as; *“Federation Uni has become a glorified TAFE”* (Callignee). In order to compete with Melbourne based universities Federation University needed to continue to increase the quality of the teaching and improve its overall ranking becoming

competitive with other universities making it the preferred option for regional and international students.

“A well accredited university that offers more than social work, engineering and nursing. Fed Uni caters to local needs, which is fine if people don't have career ambitions broader than being a nurse. You lose these young people because the uni can't cater to their needs. The course selection also doesn't attract metro people to come to Gippsland. Because you would never choose Fed uni over Deakin or Melbourne...” (Other).

The delivery of courses that are more relevant to the area, for example tailored to the local industry, was suggested by Participants.

“Many professional jobs will look over a resume with Federation University on it and with it being the only option in the region it is quite concerning, this may be why we have such an issue getting doctors, teachers, and other professionals in the area” (Not stated).

Other responses focused on suggesting the solution to the problem was to *“bring Monash back”*. Participants suggested partnering *“with key Melbourne study providers. The area painfully misses the association it once had with Monash”* (Traralgon).

Improving educational opportunities

The third key theme involved increasing educational offerings within Latrobe City. Many of these responses again centred on Federation University, however, there were also references to high schools and TAFE. For example, participants suggested 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). In terms of Federation University, several suggestions revolved around ensuring that it *“provides the full range of courses. Not just those that pay”* (Morwell) and *“more offerings at Fed Uni, not just teaching and nursing”* (Traralgon). However, there was also a call for greater connectivity between work and study.

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” (Traralgon).

A small number of suggestions looked beyond the undergraduate level, suggesting that the university should *“offer better post-grad degrees”* (Traralgon). Discussion under this theme to this point, has focused on the *‘what should be offered’* aspects of educational offerings, however there were also some isolated references to the *‘how’* and the *‘why’* aspects as well. In the case of the former, participants requested that *“more courses [are] offered in person”* (Morwell), while in the case of the latter, another called for *“better course options so that students don't have to travel to Melbourne”* (Hazelwood North).

Churchill – a university town

The fourth theme involved re-developing Churchill into a university town. However, participants called for the beautification of one of Churchill's high schools:

“Kurnai College's junior campus in Churchill ... would have to be the ugliest high school I have ever seen. It would turn you into a delinquent just by looking at it. I would hate to be a teacher and have to walk into that environment every day” (Churchill).

This exception aside, the remaining comments focused on Federation University. Many of these were aptly summarised by the following quote:

“Make Churchill a better place to live and study. That town literally has nothing to offer students living on campus or renting in town. How can a uni town not cater to uni students?”
(Traralgon)

Participants suggested developing *“Churchill into a thriving social hub to support the university”* (Other). Another suggested that this might be achieved by bringing,

“...more events and culture to the university town. Redirect it to be based on development for young university students. Walkable entertainment, retail & hospitality” (Traralgon).

“...community days, travelling food, wine, travel expos encouraging people to visit. Using resources we have like Kernot Hall, Sunday Market site, new Performing Arts Centre, Uni Auditorium, for promotion, festivals, activities etc” (Morwell).

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.

Participants suggested that while Latrobe City had a number of festivals, the opportunity to grow these is overlooked as they stand alone.

“We could have a multi-cultural festival in Traralgon celebrating LV European heritage post WW2 including Greek, Italian, Maltese, German and UK. Food and wine theme linking it to Victory Park. We already do some of these things, but it’s not connected and misses the opportunity to scale up” (Traralgon).

Participants were unsure that Latrobe City could be promoted as a tourist attraction as *“is not a destination in itself, people visit here only because they ‘have to’ for work or a quick toilet stop on the way somewhere else in Gippsland”* (Morwell).

Having a caravan and recreational vehicle (RV) stop / dump point was suggested by many participants would allow people to take a break, *to stay, eat and play* while travelling through the region to holiday destinations in Gippsland.

“They will be more likely to stop for a break if they have great facilities to park their RV and therefore spend money in the local area” (Traralgon).

It was suggested that some attractions did not receive enough financial support to develop further and questioned their locality as being the cause of this.

“Development of its attractions. Lake Narracan, Edward Hunter Reserve, Old Gipps town etc get next to no money spent on development. Is this because they are Moe based attractions?” (Newborough)

Entertainment and hospitality were mentioned by many participants who they said offered opportunities for *“experiences to exploit our natural assets”* (Traralgon). It was noted that there was generally plenty for people to see and do but improving family and night-time entertainment was needed, for example, having a *wider variety of family entertainment places like waterparks, shopping malls with movie theatres, a theatre hall, art galleries, government funded ballet school and choirs”* (Moe).

The need for improvement of evening entertainment across all of the towns was noted by one participant who said that this should happen alongside an improvement in safety in the CBD’s. (Other)

Sports and Arts Attractions

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 seen as necessary to attract major events. It was noted that hundreds of families *attend* Latrobe City Stadium weekly to play soccer, but the facilities are in need of attention.

“The facility has one set of change rooms and having males and females sharing the change rooms is not good. We have a massive opportunity to bring millions of dollars into Latrobe City (accommodation, food, fuel and soccer events like Country Championships) but the facility cannot accommodate this because of the infrastructure” (Morwell).

The need to upgrade sporting and recreational facilities in general was noted by participants, the building of *“One major sports stadium that can attract national level sport (AFL, NRL) with a 10,000-seat capacity.”* (Traralgon) would greatly benefit to the region. Another suggested a baseball precinct (Yinnar), the motorsport park that has previously been proposed (Traralgon) and a *“proper”* skate park for Traralgon;

“...would be a great start, as bad as the current one is, it gets a lot of traffic. Imagine the action a new, well designed one would get. Fantastic thing to have for all ages” (Traralgon).

The arts and cultural entertainment were also seen as a draw card with Latrobe City having some *“amazing attractions”* (Moe). Many participants were complimentary about the facilities and venues with the Latrobe Regional Gallery being described as *“Simply WOW”* (Moe). Participants noted the *“wonderful arts program”* that could be used to attract tourists and added that they would like to see a *“big writers festival such as those at Bendigo or Clunes”* (Traralgon). It was also noted that the *“libraries are superb and truly could not offer a better service”* (Traralgon).

The new Performing Arts Centre in Traralgon was mentioned as an *“amazing start”* (Traralgon) for the production of live events, and several participants would like to see more art galleries in the area. It was noted that the Latrobe Regional Gallery needed an overhaul and that a new location could be considered.

“So the experience inside is enhanced when you step outside. That’s hard in its current location. When Hazelwood is fully rehabilitated is there a ‘wow’ location for gallery, gardens, waterside food and accommodation etc?” (Traralgon).

The industrial legacy of the area was something that had potential to be developed and it was an area that needed greater investment. Latrobe City had more *“interesting industrial works than many pieces at Dark Mofo or MONA”* (Churchill).

It was noted that, as with festivals, connecting sports, hospitality, arts and festivals was an opportunity to offer a package to visitors making the Latrobe City a more attractive destination; *“sports events are not integrated with accommodation, meals, wineries, galleries and festivals”* (Other).

Clean and Green

Presenting a clean and green image to visitors was seen as important by many participants. Littering, illegal rubbish dumping, and graffiti were all issues that were seen by participants as needing attention, for example, the area needs improvement.

“Less graffiti, less empty shops, clean, rehabilitated industrial areas. Tidy light-industrial yards / spaces e.g., approach to Commercial Road, Morwell from west” (Yinnar).

The streets, shopping areas, parks and gardens were also mentioned, and it was suggested that it could be an issue *“tackled through clean ups and education”* (Moe). The creation of employment opportunities for ongoing cleaning was seen as a solution which would also *“create pride in the area...for the locals and then tourists will notice”* (Morwell). Better maintenance and grooming of gardens, median strips and roadsides would, *“show we care about the aesthetics of where we live and that we look after our towns”* (Traralgon).

Habitat corridors that created opportunities for scientific research was put forwards as a suggestion, particularly in relation to the Strzelecki koala for protection *“as well as [educating] people about this amazing animal”* (Jeeralang). The impact of climate change was raised by participants.

“Future-proofing urban areas against heat impact by planting more shade trees would be wonderful” (Traralgon).

The issue of industry, pollution and air quality was a concern for many participants, in particular the smell from the Opal Australian Paper and the proposed Lead Smelter. Participants were reluctant to invite people into the area *“for the fresh air they think we have which will be gone soon, replaced by decades of ill health in the locals”* (Traralgon).

Pride in Latrobe City

Several participants commented that Latrobe City was not seen as a tourist destination, and that its many attractions go unnoticed.

“People don’t really think of it as a touristy place but there are many parks and playgrounds that are set up very nice, as well as information on energy production and plenty of great cafes” (Other).

Competing with other *“bigger-ticket natural/longstanding drawcards”* (Traralgon), for example East Gippsland and its popular tourist destinations is not possible, however Latrobe City has other things to offer; *“if we want to continue to build on tourism, we need to keep focusing on more people-centred things like the arts and food”* (Traralgon). Participants noted *“What’s different – what’s unique...that needs to be made really clear to everyone”* (Other). Changing the reputation of Latrobe City not being a tourist destination could be done by the promotion of its natural attractions, for example, its national parks and heritage. The need for improved signage and media exposure was highlighted to for example, promote the Gippsland Plains Rail Trail and Traralgon Morwell Bike paths as well as signs to entice travellers passing through the area to stay a while.

“More signage for parks, shopping etc. would be great, especially to prompt people to get off the highway. Nice big signs with photos and estimated travel times. Travel vouchers would be great to promote people to stay the night when passing through to travel hot-spots” (Toongabbie).

Alongside signage, tourist and visitor centres that had higher visibility were suggested. These had the potential for greater recognition of the history of the area *“and acknowledgement of it through more interpretation material, architecture and art (both acknowledgement of Tradition Owners and recent European history)”* (Traralgon).

The visitor experience as a unique country destination, where people can find something other than what they can find in the city was noted by participants.

“Boutique and unique accommodation that presents a form of escapism, so this can become a reason to visit (to escape), and the other elements become complimentary (e.g., Rose Garden, Gallery, hospitality in Traralgon)” (Traralgon).

Improving the entrances to the towns was seen as important by participants, for example, one entrance to Traralgon has a *“derelict car dealership and a second-hand goods warehouse”* (Other). This is not a good first impression for visitors, whereas big signs surrounded by attractive native vegetation would be better.

Engendering a greater sense of pride in the community was noted by several participants, with the effect of this benefitting residents and encouraging tourism.

"[It is important to connect] ourselves to the Indigenous people among us by having truth sharing events and conversations of the heart in authentic ways which bring healing to the land and to the First Peoples and depth of understanding to all" (Traralgon).

It was noted that the residents Latrobe City should have the opportunity to be proud of their towns, not just the larger towns and that it is younger people, those buying homes and starting families that are the future and their views should be heard and fostered.

Changing the reputation of Latrobe City as a dirty industrial area and presenting a clean image to residents and visitors was seen as important to building a sense of pride in residents that would be passed on to visitors.

A sense of pride in community and town would lift everything and everyone, because when you have pride you become a more social and happy person which then leads to residents to be nicer all round and more accommodating visitors/tourists (Morwell).

Good connections

Ease of access to attractions were seen as important by many participants in encouraging visitors to come to the area. Traralgon was seen as a bottleneck which did not encourage people to stop in the town, particularly those with caravans and trailers as there is no accessible parking for them. Parking in general was seen as an issue.

It was suggested there needs to be *"Better transport options for people moving in and out of the municipality or for visitors coming into the area"* (Traralgon). Good connections with attractions and railway stations suggested and trains that allowed for bikes, or a dedicated carriage for them, would be an advantage for residents and visitors. A fast train line in the area was seen as a way of increasing tourism, as was improved maintenance on roads.

As people are moving around the area it was noted by participants that,

"Our public toilets need revamping and be very clean. The standard at present is very poor and uninviting particularly for tourists" (Jeeralang).

It was noted by many participants that significant improvements have been made that attract visitors and that this needs to continue.

"Continue to improve infrastructure, major projects such as the Aquatic Centre and Arts Centre will bring people to the area, state of the art sports facilities, shopping centre's, family activities" (Traralgon).

Connecting the disparate attractions was seen to be an area that could be improved to increase visitor numbers and enhance tourist experiences. Towns working together, events being integrated with hospitality and attractions alongside promotion and signage were seen to be important. Connection to the history and heritage of the region, in particular the areas First nations Peoples was also seen as vital. One participant summed up how they felt about Latrobe City and their hope for the future

"I love Latrobe City and how it is continuously changing. I hope for the betterment of our towns that it will continue to grow" (Traralgon).

General community feedback

The following comments were listed as general feedback suggestions and comments for council but did not fit into any of the major themes for this section. The comments reflect the communities need to see transparency and commitment to continue to listen to the voice of community to ensure a brighter and more productive future for Latrobe City.

Table 1. General Comments and feedback for Council

Quote	Town
Continue advocating for the communities' voice to be heard	Other
Congratulations on engaging with community and providing so many opportunities for feedback and input	Other
Important to engage with the community and do things with them and not to them	Other
Latrobe City has multiple current and future challenges. You name it and the Valley has it!	Churchill
Clean up of council properties and crown land to reduce fuel load	Jeeralang
Council should recognise the importance of farming, and the need to restrict housing development in fire prone areas	Callignee
Environment, lack of vision, politics over purpose	Newborough
The biggest challenge in the future for the Latrobe Valley is to seek and receive effective public feedback from a traditionally 'silent' citizenry. This survey shows that the challenge is being addressed.	Yallourn North
Traralgon, its infrastructure cannot handle the high growth its going through	Traralgon
Sustainable small business: Council to work with small business better to be supported and sustainable to keep spending within Latrobe	Newborough
The lead smelter being built in hazelwood North. This is terrible for Latrobe Valley and will poison our community. the citizens of Latrobe Valley have not been listened to at all in regards this. I feel I concerned that this is a trend – we won't be listened too in the future	Traralgon
It was highlighted across a number of years that Councillors and Council had a focus on Traralgon and have forgotten all about the wider Latrobe City. Where is the investments in Morwell, Moe, Churchill, Newborough etc. With exception to government handouts and criminal precincts Morwell attracts the wrong type of people whilst Traralgon is treated and targeted to a "higher class"	Morwell
We have been through enough with mine fired, bushfires, illness due to heavy industry killing out workers -make us clean, green and great.	Hazelwood North
We need to start embedding health into all aspects of planning and decision making	Hazelwood North
Latrobe City should ensure that our citizenry is fully informed not just of the benefits of any initiative – but also of the 'costs'	Yallourn North
I think that our LCC is working very hard to galvanize a very apathetic populace into action. Our Council also needs the resources to address these causes, once they are clearly identified. It may also have to stand more	Yallourn North

aggressively against influential but predatory businesses e.g., gambling venues	
Like the snap, send solve app and hope it helps speed up resolution of issues that may detract from the area.	Newborough
Please look at all sporting types when funding. I think if an internal review was done you would find a disproportionate amount spent on basketball, football (AFL), netball and the soccer grounds and facilities are not supported equally.	Traralgon
Investing in research and generation of data bank to enable them to see trends and gaps would help them stay ahead of the curve and invest and advocate for rate payers and its community better	Traralgon
It just looks shit. Local Government does nothing to improve the aesthetics of each township	Traralgon
Lack of strategic direction – pick a main town and focus on its growth and the role other towns can do in supporting it	Traralgon
The slow death of the coal fire power industry, the slow death of the University, the ongoing decay of Morwell, losing our young people to Melbourne and other areas, our crime rates, and the severity of assaults. The lack of late-night entertainment for people, housing accessibility, our domestic violence rates, The lack of areas and things for our local young people, the competitiveness (resentment) between towns	Other
More transparent in decision particularly those that impact community and health	Hazelwood North
Too many government hubs in Morwell, that have now influenced the operational hours of the local shops. Nothing is open in Morwell CBD after 5pm or on weekends.	Glengarry
Yes, it needs to get better at allowing the community to be part of the infrastructure planning	Churchill
Climate change whether man made or environmental should be one of council's priorities now	Moe

5. SURVEY COMPLETION TIMELINE

The survey was distributed by LCC both online and paper based. A series of “Listening Posts” were held between May 2nd and 18th 2021 in Yinnar, Morwell, Yallourn North, Traralgon, Traralgon South, Moe, Budgerie, Glengarry, Tyers and Newborough and Churchill where surveys and the link to the online survey were distributed. Further planned listening posts were cancelled due to the COVID-19 global pandemic and State Government restrictions. The online survey was promoted through LCC social media accounts and the Community Noticeboard in the Latrobe Valley Express. A total of 88% of the surveys were completed online via Qualtrics. 12% paper-based surveys were returned either at the event or later by mail to LCC.

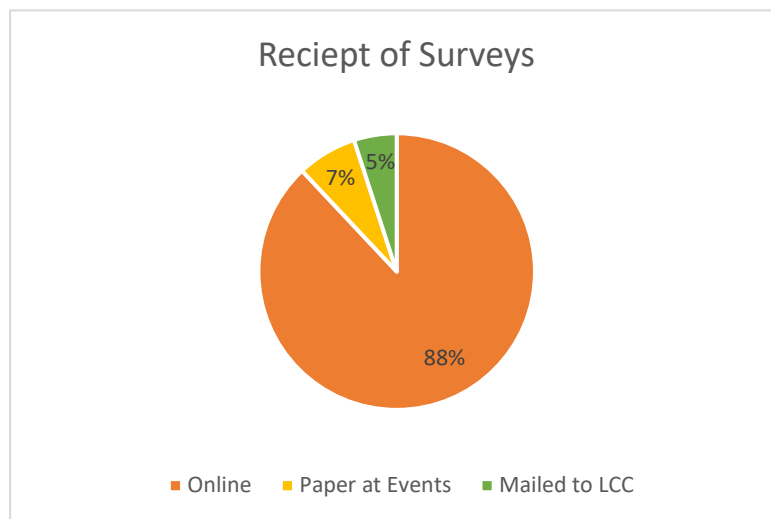


Figure 19: Receipt of Surveys

Of the surveys completed online across May and June, there was a peak on 13th May and again on 10th June as per Figure 20.

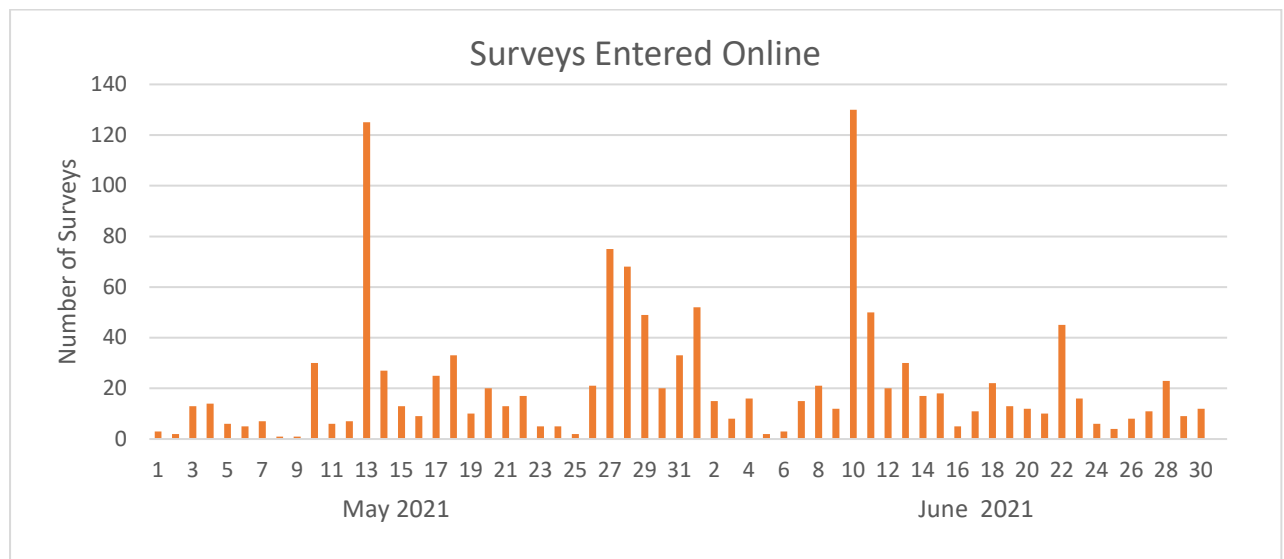


Figure 20: Completion of Online Surveys Timeline

6. DISCUSSION

The findings of the combined quantitative and qualitative data collected as part of the Community engagement survey were used to answer the following four key research questions.

How do Latrobe City residents feel about living and working in the Latrobe City?

There were a number of similarities to the themes from living and working in Latrobe City. Both questions evoked a focus on safety and employment opportunities as being key. Encouraging professionals into the area and growing new and innovative industries was a common theme through the responses. In addition, there was a call to improve health service delivery which included the recruitment of a number health professionals to the area to fill workforce and service delivery gaps.

There was a need to make some significant improvements to the aesthetics of the towns which included some upgrades such as lighting, parks and sporting facilities. Special events and an emphasis on tourism industries such as food and fibre were mentioned.

What things are most important to making Latrobe City a good place to live, work and play?

There were a number of key points highlighted as being essential to making Latrobe City a better place to live, work and play. There was mention of the transportation issues that are present including the speed of the rail travel, congestion in the larger towns, access issues to rural and remote areas and in particular travel to the Churchill campus of Federation University for students and the availability of parking in shopping areas. Increasing employment opportunities and encouraging new businesses and industries into the area were deemed essential. A focus on youth engagement to ensure they are supported to stay in the area was seen as crucial. Improving overall safety felt by participants was important to ensure that families stay in the region and communities continue to thrive. Increasing the police presence was highlighted using a positive role modelling approach.

What do residents believe could be improved?

The areas of Latrobe City which residents felt should be improved and remain a key priority in strategic planning included employment, safety, transport, housing and health and wellbeing. Planning is needed to ensure that townships are equally represented with a division of resources evenly distributed. There remains a perceived inequity of the allocation of resources among residents in the larger towns compared with the rural and remote township, in particular Traralgon was highlighted as receiving a greater share of resources, infrastructure and ongoing development compared with other townships.

People want to continue to have a country lifestyle but were also mindful of the population growth and development that was occurring. It was important that valuable farmland was not destroyed and that the town planning maintained a country feel with large housing blocks, recreational facilities and park land. Affordable and appropriate housing was deemed essential in order to avoid homelessness and family displacement. Transportation and parking remain areas requiring improvement. The generation of employment opportunities and the creation of innovative businesses and industries in the region are essential for future growth. Reducing unemployment rates would also assist with reducing crime and domestic violence rates in Latrobe City.

Does feedback and suggestions differ according to resident's hometown?

Analysis was undertaken to compare statistical findings and also the responses to the open-ended question found that there was no statistically significant difference between the townships. There were also no significant differences between the responses across the towns. The four large

townships, Traralgon, Morwell, Moe and Churchill were well represented. Newborough was combined with Moe for analysis purposes. The smaller remote and rural townships had an even distribution of responses. It should be noted that the majority of survey responses were from small townships (35%) then Traralgon (33%) with Morwell, Moe, Churchill and Newborough equating to the remaining 32% of responses.

Across all towns Family and friends was rated highly, however the highest was Hazelwood North where 71% of participants included this in their top three. Access to services was rated highly by residents in Morwell and Traralgon however Moe/ Newborough and Churchill did not rate this so highly. A sense of community was a strong reason for respondents in Churchill (41%), Callignee (42%) and Yinnar (50%) to think that Latrobe City is a good place. Natural environment was very highly valued by people from Callignee with 75% of respondents putting this in their top three.


During the analysis of the open-ended questions townships were sorted in the first instance to ascertain if there were particular topics raised in individual towns. Following initial coding it was discovered that there were no outstanding issues that needed to be reported by township and the responses were once more combined for analysis. To hear voices from individual townships the town from which the person originated was written after each quote.

7. COMMUNITY SUGGESTIONS

The following suggestions are a summary of the community voices from the Community Engagement Survey. They were written to reflect the responses of the 1453 people who completed the survey.

1. Ongoing Community engagement activities
 - a. Listening posts be set up during data collection periods to ensure all sections of the community can participate, particularly those in rural areas, and those with limited access to the internet and technology.
 - b. Publish the findings of the community survey providing a feedback loop to the Latrobe City communities.
2. Generate new and innovative employment opportunities
 - a. Promote Latrobe City to new industries and organisations as a desired destination
 - b. Support local small businesses especially food, wine and tourism related industries
 - c. Promote clean and green industry development
 - d. Develop sustainable partnerships between education providers and employers
3. Review of public transport services and resources
 - a. Review of the lighting near public transport areas
 - b. Annually review the availability of parking in central business districts
 - c. Develop strategic plans to address the flow of traffic in Latrobe City
 - d. Review and address the lack of public transport to major centres such as Federation University, sporting and entertainment venues
4. Focus on improving safety and reducing crime in Latrobe City
 - a. Support community programs that address antisocial behaviour
 - b. Provide support for people to make positive behavioural changes
 - c. Develop strategic plans to address the incidence of family violence in Latrobe City
 - d. Review and address public safety issues
 - e. Provide communities with resources to improve safety such as adequate lighting in public areas.
 - f. Promote a positive police presence in Latrobe City
5. Support education providers to offer a wide range of courses and programs
 - a. Support people to retrain and upskill
 - b. Ensure there are accessible education options available in Latrobe City
 - c. Support youth education, training and career counselling
 - d. Support return to work and transition training and education programs

6. Ensure all sporting facilities and entertainment venues are of the same high quality and equally accessible.
 - a. Review and upgrade sporting facilities in Latrobe City
 - b. Upgrade of amenities to be gender inclusive
 - c. Focus on tourism highlighting the many natural attractions and activities

 7. Foster a positive cultural change in Latrobe City
 - a. Develop campaigns to improve community pride
 - b. Post positive social media items to highlight the attractions and benefits of regional and rural living
 - c. Focus on community and bringing people together.
- 

8. METHODOLOGY

8.1 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The approach of the CEU to this evaluation was informed by a Participatory Evaluation and Co-Design Framework.

8.1.1 PARTICIPATORY APPROACH

A participatory framework puts people from the community and those delivering the programs, projects and services at the centre of the evaluation. It is distinctive and is based on the following principals:

- That the project should be a co-designed, collaborative partnership through 360° stakeholder input including project participants and project funders;
- That integral to the project is a capacity-building focus within and across projects;
- The project adopts a learning, improvement and strengths-based approach;
- That innovation is supported, and it is accepted that projects will learn and evolve.
- That there is no one or preferred data collection method rather the most appropriate qualitative and quantitative methods will be tailored to the information needs of each project.

8.1.2 CO-DESIGN

Co-design is a process and approach that is about working with people to create ‘interventions, services and programs which will work in the context of their lives and will reflect their own values and goals’⁴. Co-design can be done in many ways but is about collaborative engagement that is bottom-up, creative, and enables a wide range of people to participate and importantly to steer decisions and outcomes. Co-design is not a consultation process but a partnership approach where ‘end-users’ actively define and shape strategies and outcomes. The role of the ‘expert’ is to facilitate this process.

8.2 METHODOLOGY

The collection of data for this project was via a survey co-designed in collaboration with Federation University and Latrobe City Council. The survey design:

- Allowed for the collection of information from a defined group of stakeholders
- Enabled a large amount of data to be collected quickly
- Was convenient for respondents

The survey was distributed by Latrobe City Council. Respondents completed the survey online and completion of the survey implied consent. The survey had a combination of multiple choice, Likert scale, yes/no responses and open-ended questions (see Appendix 2 Survey). The survey was validated for clarity and relevance via a content validity index through the Federation University School of Health.

⁴ VCOSS (2015). *Walk alongside: Co-designing social initiatives with people experiencing vulnerabilities*. V. C. o. S. Service. Melbourne.

ANALYSIS: QUANTITATIVE DATA

The data extracted from the survey was entered into SPSS V25 for analysis by members of the research team. Descriptive and inferential statistical analysis was conducted.

QUALITATIVE DATA

A thematic analysis technique was used for the qualitative data with findings presented under theme headings together with participant quotes. The thematic analysis utilised Braun and Clarke's six step process which included familiarisation with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and producing the report (Figure 31)⁵.

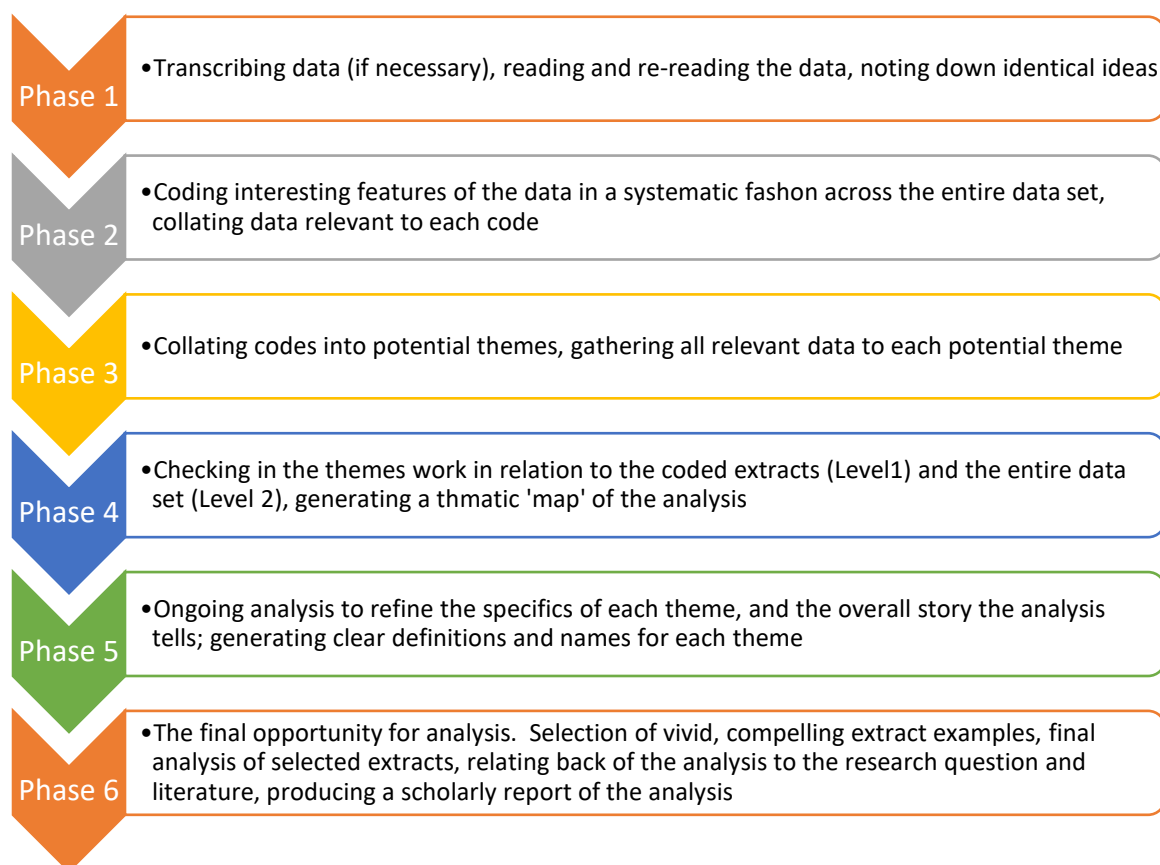


Figure 21: Six Step Thematic Analysis

As qualitative analysis is an inductive process, some interpretation of the data was required to create the thematic map. It was actively acknowledged that the researcher's interpretations would inform the results of this study, hence, any prior conceptions of the topic were reflexively bracketed to the best of the researcher's abilities⁶.

⁵ Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3 (2). pp. 77-101. ISSN 1478-0887.

⁶ Berger, R. (2013). Now I see it, now I don't: Researcher's position and reflexivity in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, 15(2), 219-234. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794112468475>

9. ETHICAL APPROVAL AND PRACTICE

Federation University aims to promote and support responsible research practices by providing resources and guidance to our researchers. We aim to maintain a strong research culture which incorporates:

- Honesty and integrity;
- Respect for human research participants, animals and the environment;
- Respect for the resources used to conduct research;
- Appropriate acknowledgement of contributors to research; and
- Responsible communication of research findings.

A Human Research and Ethics application, *'An Evaluation of the Latrobe City Council "Community Engagement Survey"'* was approved by Federation University Human Research Ethics Committee prior to data collection and analysis (Approval number C21-003). Participant anonymity was maintained by removing any identifiable information from the evaluation.

10. LIMITATIONS OF THIS REPORT

There are a number of limitations related to the survey and analysis that must be considered. These include:

The impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic:

- State Government restrictions during the data collection period meant the cancellation of Listening Posts, including ones planned in Moe and Newborough, which may have limited participation from communities in rural areas with poor internet access and those with limited or no access to technology.
- The ability of Latrobe City Council employees to fully participate in capacity building data analysis as per the participatory framework was restricted.

Despite these limitations, the evaluation is considered to present a credible assessment of the survey and analysis.

11. ABBREVIATIONS

CEU	Collaborative Evaluation Unit
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
GRAC	Gippsland Regional Aquatic Centre
LCC	Latrobe City Council
LRH	Latrobe Regional Hospital
MIC	Morwell Innovation Centre
MONA	Museum of Old and New Art

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Latrobe City Council Community Engagement Survey

Your Latrobe

We all have different ideas about what makes Latrobe City a great place to live, work and play.

We would like to hear from you about what makes Latrobe City a great place now and what could make it better.

Feedback received from this survey will help Latrobe City Council prepare a new Community Vision and Council Plan, Financial Plan, and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan by October 2021.

Participation is confidential and voluntary.

Q1 Which **one statement best represents you?**

- Live in Latrobe City
- Work in Latrobe City
- Work and Live in Latrobe City
- Study in Latrobe City
- Study and Live in Latrobe City
- Visiting Latrobe City
- Other (please state) _____

Q2 What makes Latrobe City a good place? Tick the **THREE responses that best represent how you feel.**

- Parks and gardens
- Natural environment
- Location in Victoria
- Employment
- Community
- Shops
- Entertainment
- Schools
- Family / friends
- Affordability
- Safe place to live
- Access to services
- Other (please state) _____

Q3 What makes Latrobe City a good place to work? (Tick one box only)

- Lifestyle
- Opportunities
- Career options
- Distance from home
- Other (please state) _____
- Not applicable

Q4 What industry best describes you? (Tick one box only)

- Agriculture, forestry and fishing
- Mining
- Manufacturing
- Electricity, gas, water and waste services
- Construction
- Wholesale trade
- Retail trade
- Accommodation and food services
- Transport, postal and warehousing
- Information, media and communications
- Rental, hiring and real estate services
- Professional, scientific and technical services

- Administrative, and support services (including Government agencies)
- Education and training
- Healthcare and social assistance
- Arts and recreation services
- Other

Q5 What makes Latrobe City a good place to study? (Tick one box only)

- Close to home
- Quality of education
- Course options
- Affordability
- Other (please state) _____
- Not applicable

Q6 In my view the current and future challenges for Latrobe City are:

Q7 What would make Latrobe City a better place to live?

Q8 What would make Latrobe City a better place to work?

Q9 What would make Latrobe City a better place to study?

Q10 What would make Latrobe City a better place to visit?

Q11 What things do you think are the most important for Latrobe City Council to focus on? Rate each one on a scale from 1 = Not at all important to 5 = Extremely important.

	1. Not at all important	2. Slightly important	3. Moderately important	4. Very important	5. Extremely important
Natural Environment Parks, gardens, outdoor spaces, bushland, wildlife, reserves, connection to country	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Built Environment Infrastructure , public buildings and facilities (e.g. Hospitals, schools, transport, industry etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Economy Employment, education, technology, legal systems and structures, sustainability of culture.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Arts and Creative Industries Music, performing arts, cultural and natural heritage, visual arts and crafts, books and press, audio-visual and interactive media, design and creative services (digital media)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Health and Social Connection/Belonging Good physical, mental and emotional health, healthy relationships, connections to community and culture, sense of belonging, cultural and religious practices and values.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Safety Feeling and being safe at work, at home and in the community. Reducing and preventing violence and injury.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Climate Change Job security, fire, flood, designing towns, health and wellbeing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q12 Do you have any other comments or feedback about Latrobe City Council future priorities?

Q13 What is your age group?

17 or under

18 - 24

25 - 30

31 - 35

36 - 40

41 - 45

46 - 50

51 - 55

56 - 60

61 - 65

66 - 70

71 - 75

76 - 80

81 - 85

86+

Q14 What gender do you identify as?

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary / third gender
- Prefer not to say
- Other _____

15 Where is your hometown?

- Boolarra
- Budgerie
- Callignee
- Churchill
- Glengarry
- Hazelwood North
- Moe
- Morwell
- Newborough
- Toongabbie
- Traralgon
- Traralgon South
- Tyers

- Yallourn North
- Yinnar
- Other (please state) _____

Prize Draw

If you would like to go into the Prize Draw please enter your details below:

Name

Email Address

Telephone Number

I am happy to be contacted by Latrobe City Council in the future using the details provided:

 YES NO

Thank you for completing our survey.

If you have any questions or would like to contact the CEU please email:

ceu@federation.edu.au

Associate Professor Joanne Porter
Director, Collaborative Evaluation Unit

Appendix 2: Human Research and Ethics

Principal Researcher:	Associate Professor Joanne Porter	
Co- Researcher/s:	Vaughan Reimers Michael Barbagallo Valerie Prokopiv	Elissa Dabkowski Michelle James
School/Section:	School of Health	
Project Number:	C21-003	
Project Title:	An Evaluation of the Latrobe City Council “Community Engagement Survey”.	
For the period:	07/05/2021 to 20/12/2021	

Quote the Project No: C21-003 in all correspondence regarding this application.

Approval has been granted to undertake this project for the period listed above. It is the responsibility of the Principal Researcher to ensure the Ethics Office is contacted immediately regarding any proposed change to the project.

Maintaining Ethics Approval is contingent upon adherence to all Standard Conditions of Approval as listed on the final page of this notification, including submission of annual progress reports on the anniversary of the approval date and a final report within a month of completion of the project – regardless of whether automated reminders are forwarded as a courtesy.

COMPLIANCE REPORTING DATES TO HREC:

Final project report:
20 January 2022

The combined annual/final report template is available at:

HREC Forms



Fiona Koop
Coordinator, Research Ethics
7 May 2021

Please note the standard conditions of approval on Page 2:



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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.