

2024-2025 Council Budget Consultation Report

Introduction

Each year Council prepares an annual budget which outlines the financial and non-financial resources that are required to achieve the objectives set out in the Council Plan.

A key part of this process is that Council undergoes community consultation in line with its Community Engagement Policy. The feedback received is then used to inform Council and Council Officers to assist with the allocation of resources throughout the budget process.

As in previous years, this year Council reached out to the community seeking feedback to help identify priorities for the draft 2024-2025 budget. Residents, both full-time and part-time, along with visitors to the area were encouraged to share with Council how best they believe budget spending should be allocated and told Council what they thought mattered most in terms of funding as a community.

Across four weeks in January and February, a total of 353 respondents took part in an online survey that revealed important insights about our community's priorities for the next financial year. In addition, Council also received six budget submissions in both hardcopy and electronic formats.

The levels of community participation in the 2024-2025 budget community engagement process are up over 30% on last year. This level of community participation allows Council to develop a deeper understanding about what matters most to residents, ratepayers and visitors to the Borough.

This report outlines the themes and trends that emerged from the survey, and captures feedback from participants that will have given Council some clear direction about community priorities.

Promotion

Several methods were used to promote the consultation including:



Website and social media promotion



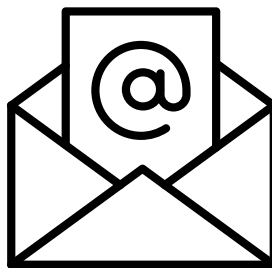
Bellarine Times half page ad



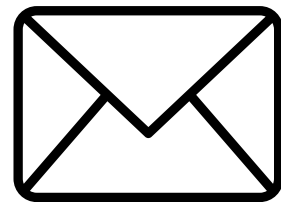
Borough wide flyer mail drop



Write up in the Borough Bites



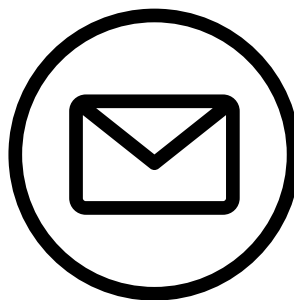
Email to previous survey participants



Hard copy mail out to Aged Services clients inviting participation in the survey



Flyers in reception at Town Hall



Email to Lived Experience Disability Group (LEDG) inviting participation in the survey



Hard copies available at reception in Town Hall

Demographic

Council received survey responses from hundreds of members of the Borough community, providing a wide range of diverse opinions.

According to the 2021 Census, the median age in the community is 62, and this is reflected in the survey, with 44% of the respondents falling in the 50-69 age bracket.

The next largest age demographic to complete the survey was 70+, accounting for 36% of respondents, followed by 17% falling within the 30-49 age bracket category.

When asked if they were a full-time resident, part time resident or a visitor to the Borough, the consensus was overwhelmingly a full-time resident, with 66% of respondents selecting this option. 26% of respondents were part-time residents and 4% were visitors.

3% of respondents selected “other”.

This insight illustrates that most of the survey respondents are full-time residents of the Borough who are between the ages of 50-69.

Overall, the survey results showed that the top three services which are most important to residents are:

- Environment and Waste
- Assets, Facilities & Public Spaces
- Arts and Libraries

Respondents to the survey highlighted that they would like to see more of the following:

- Weed removal
- Improved roads/crossings/additional speed humps
- Improved footpaths
- More public toilets/improvements to current ones
- Support for local traders
- Increased tourism

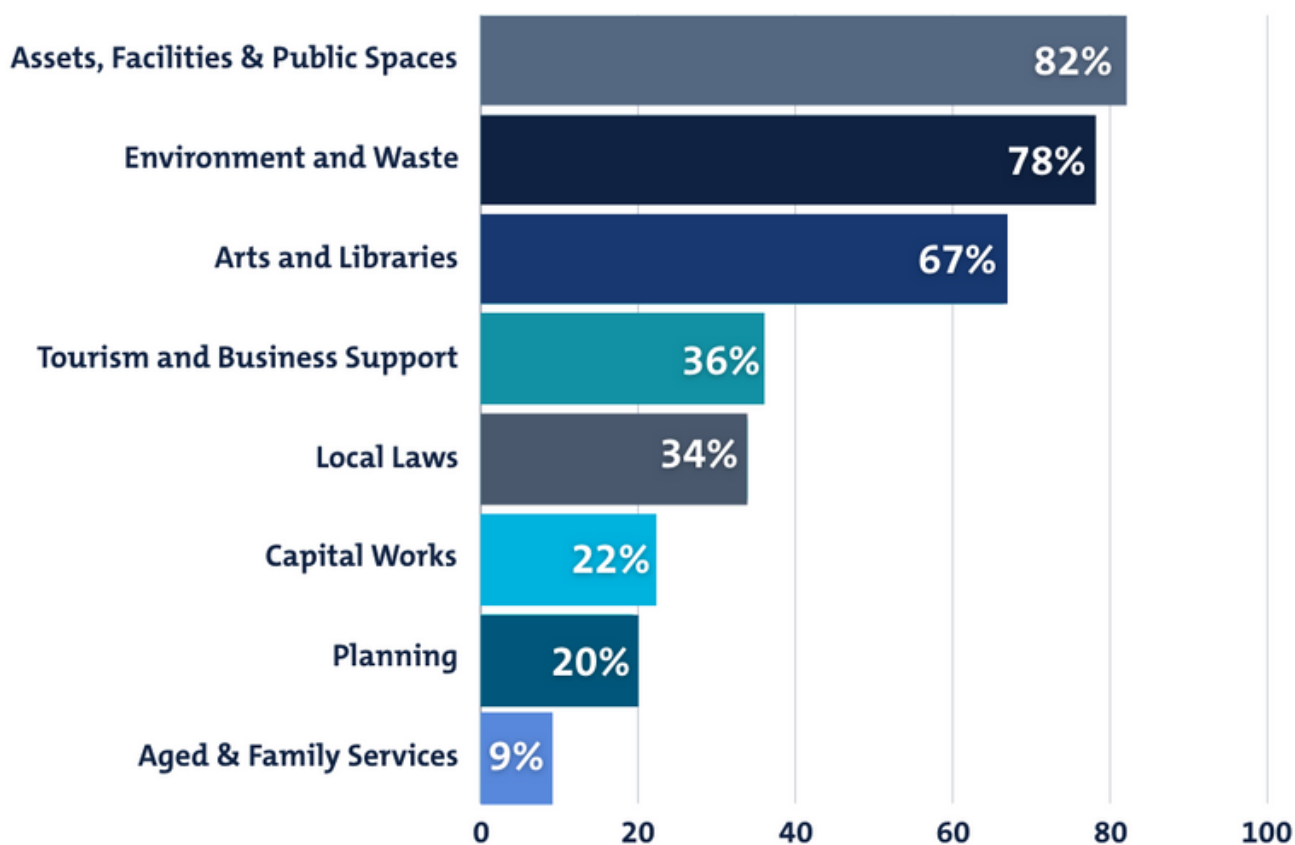
Capital Works and Local Laws were highlighted as areas where people thought Council could spend less. Feedback included the need for Council to determine if works are required and the needs of people were seen to be more important.

The areas where respondents thought Council should spend more included CERP initiatives, 24-hour toilets, improved beach access, footpath maintenance, health, aged and community services, and the provision of indoor sport facilities.

Further detailed results data and sample comments can be found throughout this document.

Survey Question Results:

In the past 12 months, how many of these service areas have you utilised? Select which ones below.

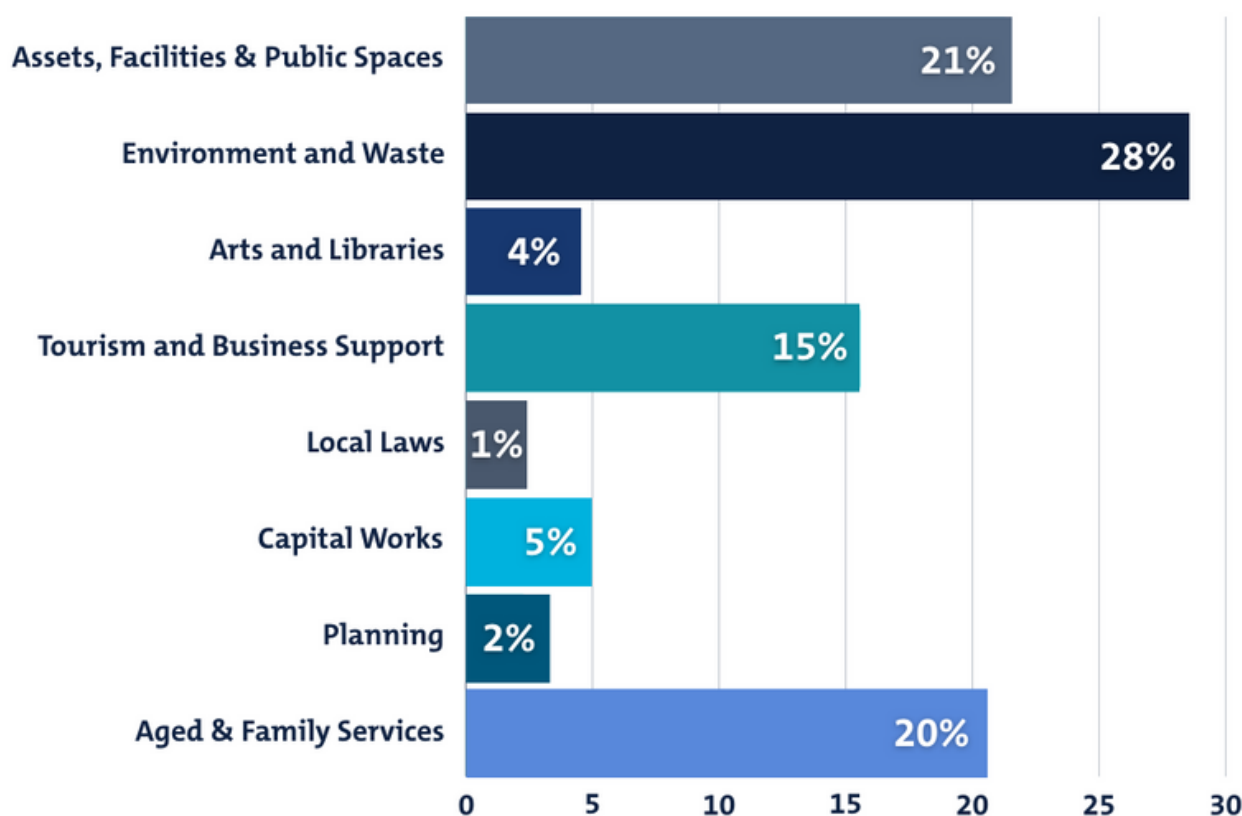


The results for this question demonstrate that while all Council areas are used, the most frequently utilised is Assets, Facilities and Public Spaces, with 82% of respondents selecting this option. This was followed closely by Environment and Waste with 78%, and Arts and Libraries with 67%.

The least selected option was Aged & Family Services, having been utilised by only 9% of the survey population – however, this is not to say it is the least important area, only that of those surveyed, it is not a highly used.

All service areas covered in the Annual Budget are important to our community. If you had to prioritise spending, what areas would be your priority?

First Ranked Priorities



When asked to rank service areas in terms of priorities, the highest ranked areas were consistently Environment and Waste, Assets, Facilities and Public spaces, and Aged & Family Services. These three areas were placed higher than other areas confirming first, second and third ranked priorities.

What we heard:

The following are comments provided by respondents.

“To ensure our beaches and oceans remain clean free of waste, reduce shipping and investigate the fishing industry and health of our bays.”

“As the highest priority, ensure adequate funds are available to properly maintain assets.”

“Rationalisation of domestic waste collection. Having landfill 2 out of 3 weeks is unhygienic and illogical. Should be weekly with green and recycle week about - like every other council. Also, some consideration should be given to more categories of waste.”

“Build a beachside footpath/bike path from Dog Beach to Lighthouse carpark”

“Fix the footpaths in Point Lonsdale”

“24 hour public toilets, unisex - in or near Hesse Street bus stop.”

“Indoor Basketball/netball/gym centre.”

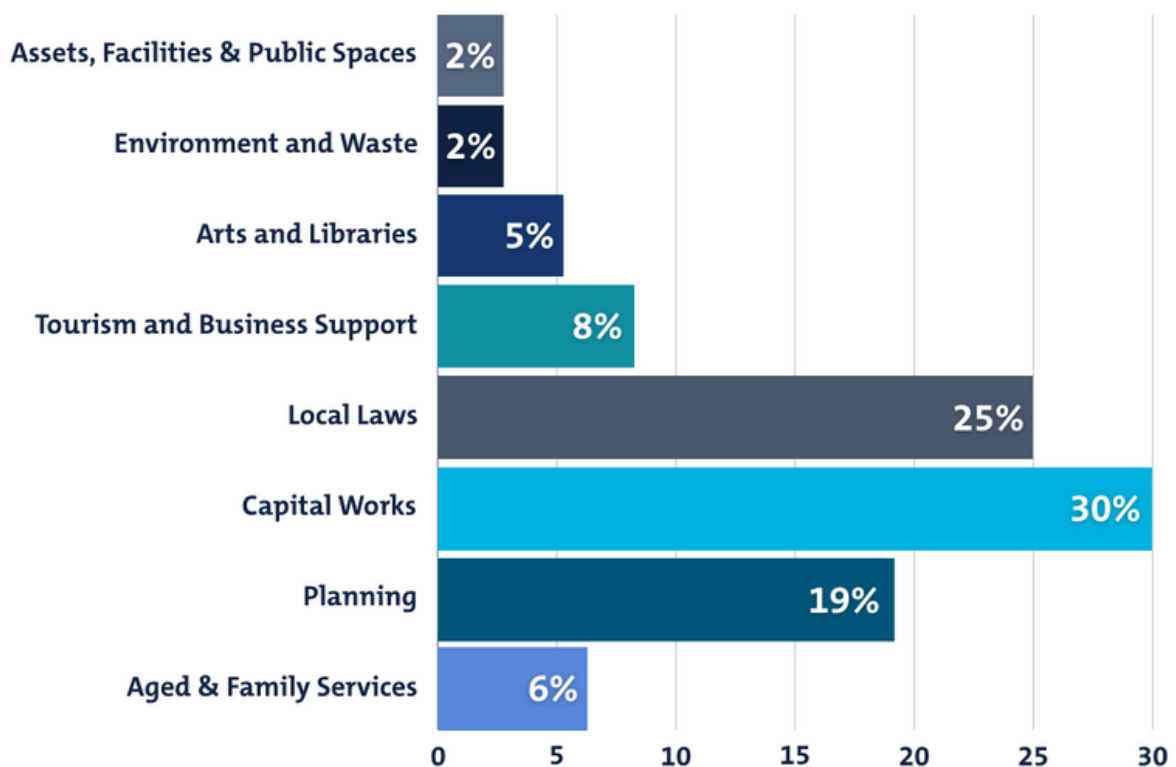
“Hesse Street needs trees and needs to be a place that we can be proud of. Not just a drive by. We need to make it attractive, a place visitors want to stop and spend time in the town.”

“Weed removal and control in public spaces.”

“Hard rubbish day needs to be more fixed in the calendar.”



Lowest Ranked Priorities



The areas voted the lowest priority was Capital Works, with 30% of respondents ranking it last, followed by Local Laws with 25% and Planning at 19%. However, this contrasts with many free form comments calling for more funding in these areas. Many comments called for further funding to be dedicated to Local Laws to increase patrols and police dogs on leads rules more stringently, with other comments calling for various new capital works around the Borough, namely indoor sporting facilities.

What we heard:

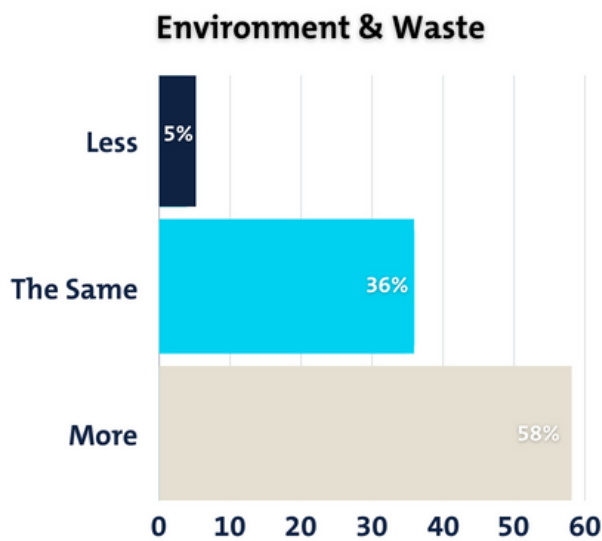
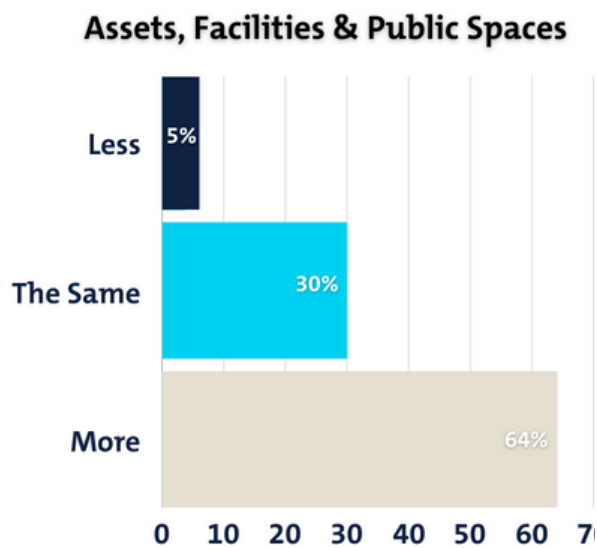


“Use the money to maintain what you have. Don't create new projects if you don't have a comprehensive maintenance plan.”

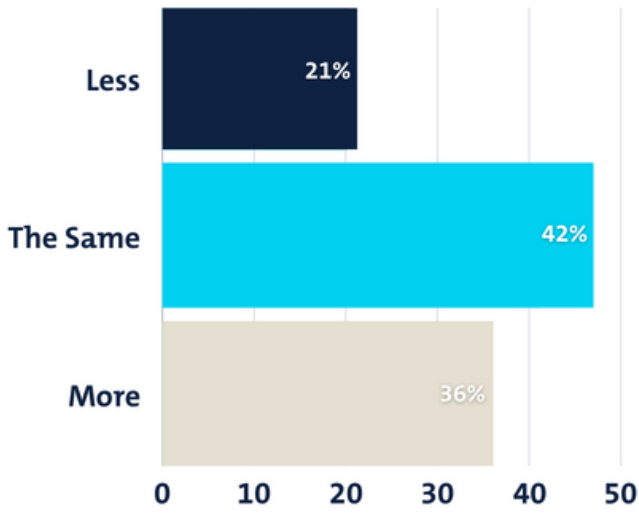
“Restrictions on dog use of our beaches is far too harsh.”

“Increase policing and penalties against dog owners. Dog waste on paths and Hesse St outside shops continue to be a problem.”

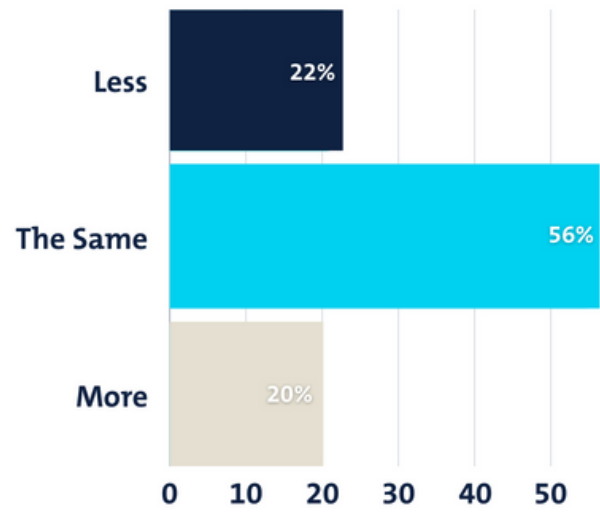
If you were a Councillor, would you spend less, the same, or more on the following areas?



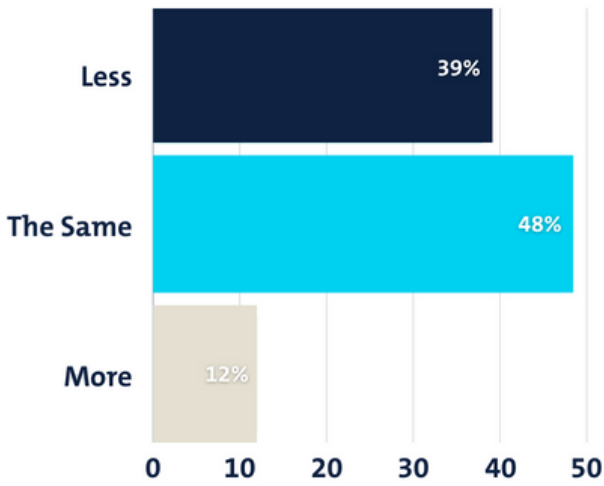
Tourism & Business Support



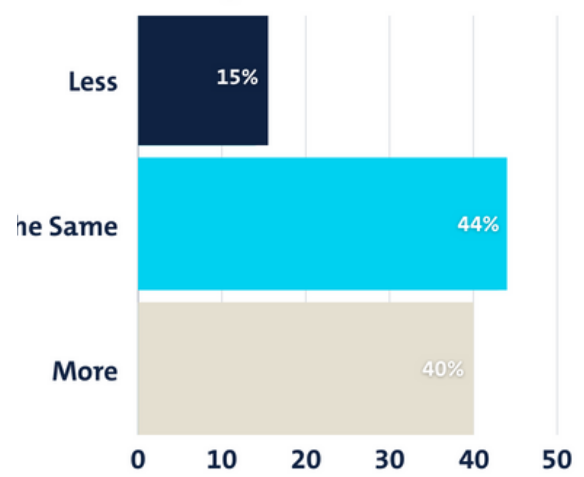
Arts & Libraries



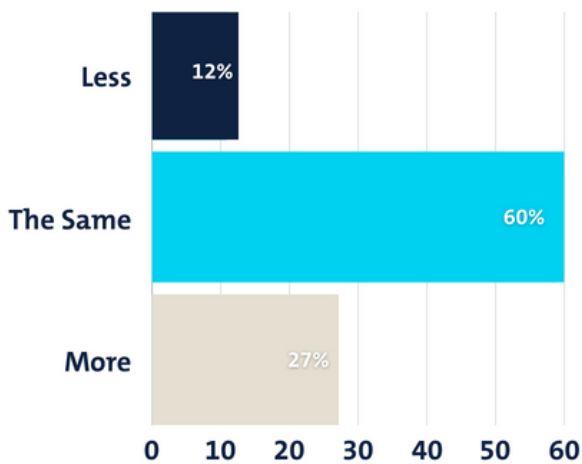
Local Laws



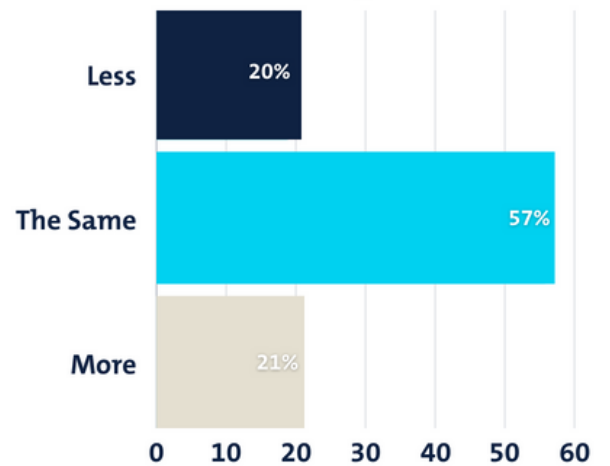
Capital Works



Aged & Family Services



Planning



The results of this question show that the majority of respondents believe Council is spending the appropriate amount on most service areas, including Aged & Family Services, Local Laws, Tourism & Business Support, Arts and Libraries, Planning and Capital Work.

However, in terms of Environment & Waste and Assets, Facilities & Public Spaces, the majority believe more should be spent on these areas. 15% of free form comments were in regard to Environment & Waste, calling for increased weeding throughout the Borough, as well as increased rubbish collection (including Hard Waste).

While weeding also falls into an improvement to public spaces, many comments also called for streetscape beautification, improved beach access and improved gardens in public areas, also highlighting a community desire for more funding in the area of Assets, Facilities and Public Spaces. This is the area deemed most in need of increased funding with 64% of respondents ranking this in need of more.

What we heard:

'Maintenance and weed removal along the foreshore particularly along the rail trail.'

'Plant more mature trees in main street & improve the buildings in town.'

'Beautify the Shortlands Bluff precinct it has more visitors than the first but would be the most neglected area in Queenscliffe.'

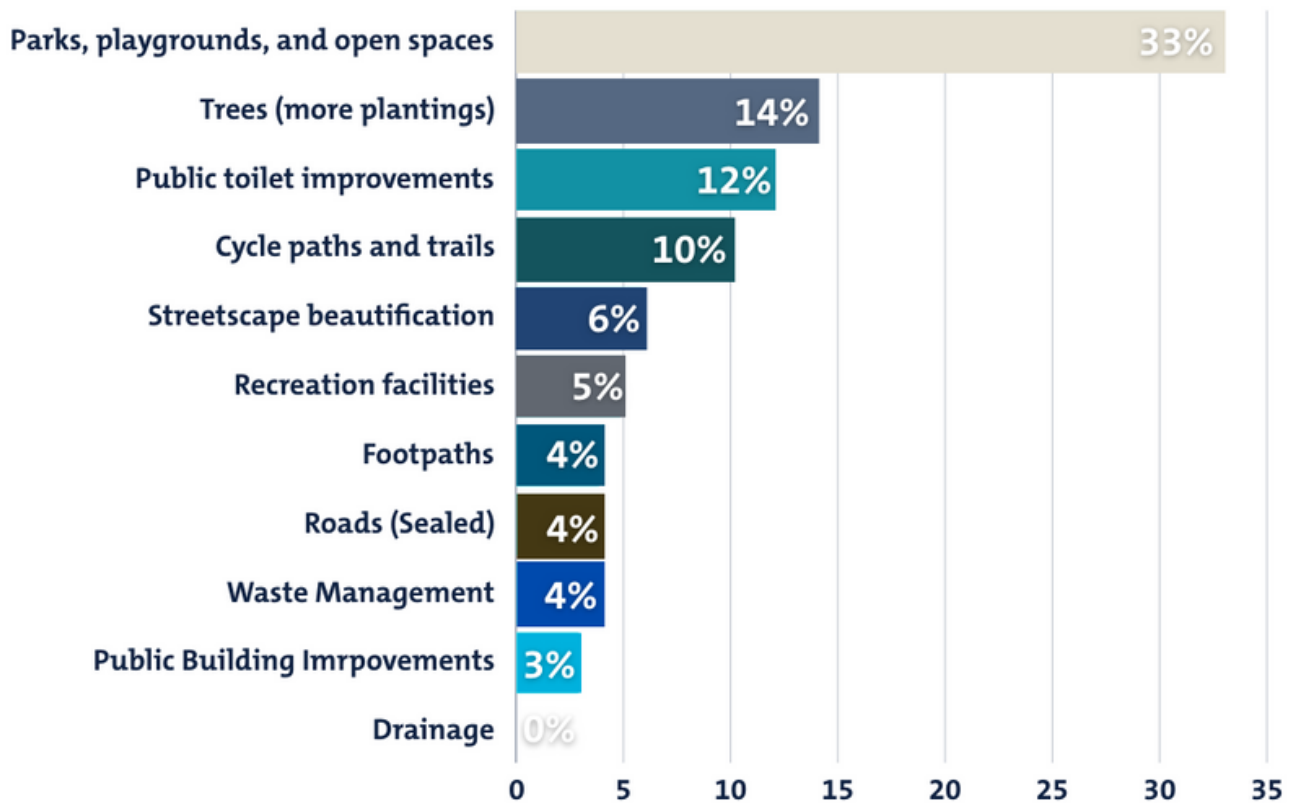


'The dunes and foreshore need a lot of work in weed control, and this can't just be the work of volunteers. The public and dog owners need to better understand the need to minimise foot traffic in these areas.'

'A rejuvenation of Springs Beach and oval to improve parking, open up the bush with tracks, build modern toilets and change rooms, clean up vegetation, replace seating so that it is usable not surrounded by scrub.'

From the categories listed below, rank in order of priority (starting with 1 being the most important) the areas where you think capital investment is most needed across the Borough.

Number 1 Priority for More Investment



According to the survey findings, most respondents believe Parks, Playgrounds and Open spaces should be prioritised in terms of capital investments, with 33% placing it first.

Many free form comments mention a lack of facilities for the youth of the Borough. As mentioned above, many comments were also made with respect to the improvement and beautification of open spaces.

The next area that users voted should be prioritised was Trees (more plantings) with 14% of people voting for more investment. Many comments highlighted a need for more trees to allow improved shade and atmosphere, particularly along the main street, and other public areas.

The third most highlighted priority was Public toilet improvements at 12%. Out of all free form comments, 13% (33 comments in total) called for an increase in public toilets that are in commonly used areas and are accessible 24/7, particularly in Hesse St in Queenscliffe and Loch Street in Point Lonsdale.

A need for improved maintenance was also highlighted, particularly regarding the toilet available at the Lighthouse Reserve.

Most people ranked Waste Management and Drainage last, with 32% and 23% voting them as the least priority respectively.

What we heard:



Point Lonsdale is losing its precious Indigenous vegetation. Council planting and planning vigilance to prevent removal on private land is a priority.'

'Apart from mowing, roadside verges and roundabout plantings are poorly maintained and require regular maintenance.'

If you could suggest one project to add to the annual plan, what would it be?

When asked what project they could add to the Annual Plan if they could add one, respondents were invited to provide custom free form answers.

The most commonly found themes are in regard to infrastructure (37%), vegetation (15%) and tourism and business support (12%).

The following areas were mentioned as priorities in each category.

Infrastructure:

- Roads/road crossings/ speed humps
- Springs beach/accessible beach access
- Footpaths, esp. Point Lonsdale
- Public toilets

"We urgently need speed humps in Symonds Street"

"Creating a safe crossing at the end of Jordan Road across Point Lonsdale Road"

"Disability access & inclusion - no one can use any of the beaches safely as there are no walking/wheelchair matt's, no rails and ramps; The springs is a death-trap"

"Urgently need a footpath from the Camp Wyuna along Flinders St to Bethune St"

"Please fix the public toilet at the light house reserve"

"24 hour access to public toilets in the Queenscliff main shopping precinct should be a priority of Council."

“Maintenance and weed removal along the foreshore particularly along the rail trail”

“Weed removal and control in public spaces.”

“Murray Road biodiversity conservation project - \$50,000 requested”

“Plant more mature trees in main street & improve the buildings in town.”

“Hesse street needs trees and needs to be a place that we can be proud of.”

“The addition in the next planting season of at least twenty new, large trees in Hesse Street for shade and comfort.”

“Reducing erosion of cliffs between Point Lonsdale front beach and the lighthouse”

Vegetation:

- Weed removal (foreshore, Rip, Narrows)
- Murray Road Biodiversity Project
- More tree plantings for shade and beautification
- Reducing cliff erosion

Tourism & Business Support:

- Wanting increased tourism, attracting more visitors
- Support for traders
- Training for businesses
- Welcome to Queenscliffe sign down near ferry

“There needs to be a cultural shift and a reimagining of what the Borough offers its residents, visitors and community.”

“Help traders so we have a vibrant shop and restaurant scene.’

“Queenscliff needs reinvigorating to get more tourists through and support the local traders such that empty shops may be taken up by new business.”

Anything else you’d like to tell us?

Respondents were also asked if they had anything else they’d like to tell us. Feedback received clearly showed that our respondents prioritise infrastructure improvements and vegetation management again over other categories. Coming in third was a suggestion that more investment could go towards tourism initiatives.

“Sealing the area around the lighthouse would be helpful. A lot of visitors come to this area.”

Infrastructure (22%)

- Lighthouse improvements
- Improved public transport
- Footpath improvements
- Road improvements
- More public seating
- Traffic calming
- Improved cycling tracks
- Improved pedestrian crossings

“We are also desperately in need of a local bus travelling Between Pt Lonsdale and Queenscliff and Pt Lonsdale/Queenscliff and Geelong. The public transport connecting these areas is woeful.”

“Please add more seats along Hesse Street and along trails.”

“Symonds street is desperately in need of permanent traffic calming.”

“Other cycle tracks to separate cyclists from fast arterial traffic (e.g. Point Lonsdale to Portarlington)”

“Install pedestrian crossing from Fisherman's Flats to Beach”

“More accessible footpaths e.g. Fellows Rd.”

Vegetation (17%)

- Weeding
- Maintenance of roadside verges and roundabouts
- Vegetation trimming
- Vegetation maintenance & beautification

“The dunes and foreshore need a lot of work in weed control.”

“There are noxious weeds on the foreshores that needs immediate attention.”

“Roadside verges and roundabout plantings are poorly maintained and require regular maintenance.”

“Removal and trimming of dangerous roadside trees in Kirk Rd forcing people to walk on the side of the road”

“Need to “beautify” (i.e. low planting) various roundabouts, particularly the intersection of Kirk and Fellows road.”

Tourism (10%)

- Increased tourism to the area
- More support for local businesses
- Filling empty shops
- Increased accommodation

“Attract more and a wider range of businesses to the area.”

“The Council needs to better support the Borough with active engagement and development of a tourism attraction agenda.”

“We have more empty shops in Hesse St than we should. What level of support can BoQ provide?”

Conclusion

In conclusion, the survey reached a wide range of people and achieved an increase in participation of over 30% on last year. The survey was promoted through various methods, such as through social media, mailouts, newspaper advertisements and a Borough wide flyer drop.

The themes that emerged in response to the survey remain consistent to previous years, with Environment & Waste, Assets, Facilities & Public Spaces, and Tourism & Business Support being ranked highly as important to respondents in various questions. Respondents indicate these are the areas they would like to see prioritised in terms of investment.

Respondents also indicated that they would like to see less investment in Local Laws, Planning and Capital Works.

Road maintenance, footpath upgrades, increased support for tourism and local businesses, weed removal and an increase in public toilets were highlighted as top priorities for respondents throughout this survey.

Overall, a wide range of responses were received to shape up an informed picture of what Borough residents, rate-payers and visitors would like to see in Council's 2024-2025 Budget.

Next steps

Council has the 2024-2025 Budget Consultation findings report to guide key decisions in preparing the 2024–25 Borough of Queenscliffe budget.

Initial work has already started, and a draft budget is expected to be adopted at the Ordinary Meeting of Council in April 2024.

The community will be invited to provide submissions to the draft budget from April 26 until May 24 2024.

There will also be a presentation to the community on the 8th of May where the Mayor, Councillors and Officers will speak to the draft budget and answer questions the community may have.

