

ADELAIDE HILLS

2023 Community Survey Outcomes

A snapshot of the process, what we heard and where to next.



Adelaide Hills
COUNCIL

Council acknowledges that we conduct our business on the traditional lands and waters of the Peramangk and Kaurna people. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging as the Custodians of this ancient and beautiful land.

*Thank you to everyone who took
part in the 2023 Community Survey
for the Adelaide Hills Council.*

The survey process

On 24 May we launched the 2023 Community Survey.

The Community Survey is undertaken every two years.

726 people participated in the survey.

The survey was anonymous and could be completed in about 7-9 minutes. There were 20 main survey questions (8 of these were open ended) and 10 demographic questions.

The survey could be completed online, in hard copy and over the phone.

The survey closed on 25 June 2023.

In recognition of people's time they could go in the draw to win vouchers to Warrawong Wildlife Sanctuary, Cleland Wildlife Park or Gorge Wildlife Park.

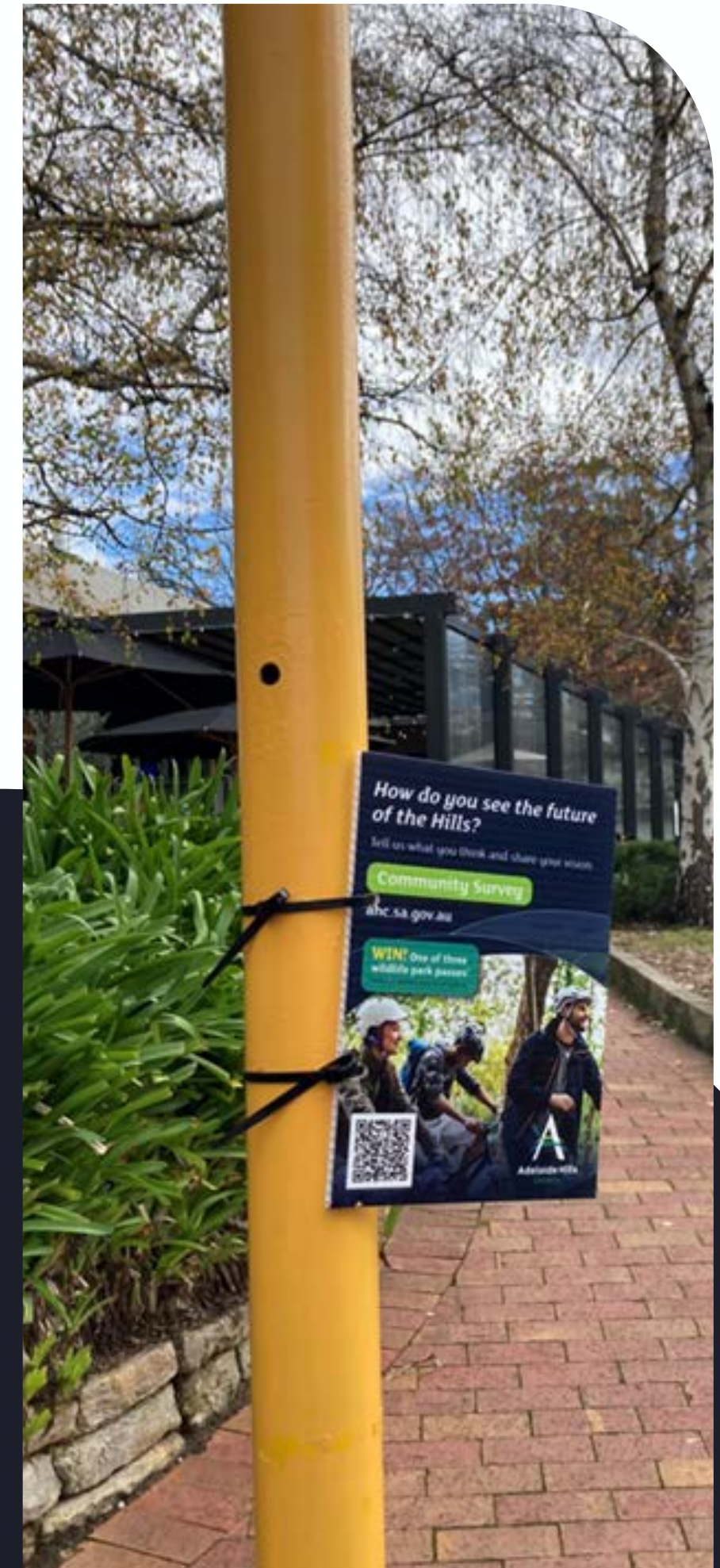


We wanted as many people as possible in our community to participate.

How was the survey promoted?

1. Roadside signs
2. Community centres and libraries
3. Post cards and posters in businesses
4. Online - Community Engagement hub page
5. Email to contact lists
6. Youth Advisory Group
7. Access and Inclusion Advisory Group
8. Council website
9. Courier newspaper
10. Council eNewsletter
11. Radio advertising on community radio
12. Paid social media posts campaign (Instagram and facebook)
13. Bus stops
14. Messages on hold when calling customer service teams
15. Internally to all staff

Targeted digital, radio and print tools were used to reach our community.

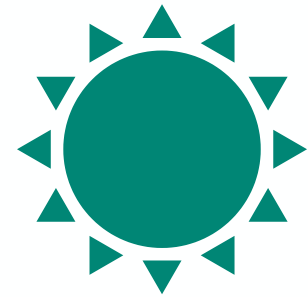


Who responded?

726 people responded



Highest responding locations:
Aldgate, Crafers/ Crafers
West, Stirling, Woodside



44 respondents
have a disability



54% of respondents
volunteer for a local
community group.



Highest responding age
categories were: 60-69 (24%),
35-49 (23%), 70-84 (22.5%)
and 50-59 (20%)



Retirees and those
employed full-time make
up the majority of
respondents (65%)



92% of respondents
live in the Adelaide
Hills Council area



76% of respondents have
lived in the Adelaide Hills
Council Area for 10 years
or more



Why people choose to live in the Adelaide Hills Council area?



Most responses:

- Lifestyle
- Natural environment attractions
- Bigger block sizes



Least responses:

- Work and business opportunities
- Access to schools
- Housing options

Additional comments made regarding living in the Adelaide Hills Council area:

- Having lived in the Hills for a long time, whether by birth or though moving to the area a long time ago, and never wanting to move away
- The climate, trees, fresh air, tranquility and environment
- Ease of access to the City
- Being around like-minded people
- Farming
- Cycling opportunities
- Hiking and walking opportunities

What people liked most about the Adelaide Hills Council area?

- Strong sense of **community**, caring for each other, connectedness.
- **Natural environment**, natural surroundings and natural assets.
- **Open spaces** or space in general.
- **Larger block sizes**, low housing density and distance to neighbours.
- The “country living” and lifestyle that is **clean and green, serene, quiet and tranquil**.
- **Ease of access to facilities** and amenities, from schools and medical needs to supermarkets to restaurants, wineries, playgrounds and local businesses.
- **Trees, greenery, bushland** and green canopies.
- **Ease of access to the city** while living in the country, including the freeway and public transport.
- Everything about the Hills and their **beauty**.
- Unique **nature of the townships and villages** and the vibrancy and atmosphere they bring.
- The local **wildlife, flora and fauna**.
- Recreation options, such as **parks, trails, cycling and bushwalking**.
- The climate – particularly the **different seasons and cooler temperatures**.

In their words: What people liked most about the Adelaide Hills Council area?



"I feel safe, enjoy the open space around me, easy access to the freeway. I like that it is a community minded area with enough essential services such as a supermarket, op shop, post office, servo, medical centre and pharmacy."

"Rural feel but also like being close to the city and Mt Barker to access services."

"I like that it is not overly developed like Mt Barker and it is close enough to the city to not make it a chore to get there. Love the community feel. Like living on a larger block. Love the greenery everywhere."

"The natural setting and large housing blocks, nature corridors, parks, playgrounds, village atmosphere in each of the towns like Crafers, Stirling, Aldgate and Uraidla."



What concerns people the most about Adelaide Hills Council area?

- **Increasing development**, infill, decreasing block sizes and changing character.
- **Poor condition of roads and footpaths** and the lack of adequate footpaths.
- Risk of **bushfire and exit and access in emergency situations**, bushfire preparedness and overgrown verges.
- Increasing **traffic volume, road safety, congestion and noise** were issues. Safety was often referenced in relation to the growing volume of traffic on the roads.
- **Loss of trees** and the natural environment and **impacts on biodiversity**. In particular, the cutting down of trees attracted many comments.
- **Poor public transport options and connections**, with a particular focus on the challenges this causes for young people and the elderly.
- **Overgrown road verges**, overhanging trees and weeds, in particular relating to bushfire but also road safety due to roads being narrower as a result.
- Significant **Council rate increases**.
- **Lack of services, infrastructure and facilities** and / or their **uneven distribution**, such as medical, education, sports infrastructure, support services for all ages or aged care.
- **Control of dogs and cats** in terms of barking, not being secured, interference with wildlife and increasing numbers.
- Other topics raised with less frequency include: lack of transparency and engagement with Council, uneven investment within the Council area, unreliable internet, poor air quality in winter, long turnaround times on development approvals and building over too much agricultural land.

In their words: What concerns people the most about Adelaide Hills Council area?



- *“More than 30 years after the Ash Wednesday bushfires and few lessons have been learnt. The Hills population has increased exponentially since then, and there is no plan that enables us all to get out of the hills safely....”*
- *“As my age increases, and I will probably not drive my own vehicle, eventually. There is no public transport available within walking distance of my home, nor is my road suitable for safe pedestrian egress should I be capable of walking at least 3km to a limited bus.”*
- *“Severe lack of road maintenance both on Council and state government managed roads. This is coupled with poor stormwater management which further degrades road surfaces and results in debris covering the road surface.”*
- *““We must preserve our beautiful heritage, stop this destruction before we lose everything that makes our way of life so precious and unique.”*

Perspectives on development

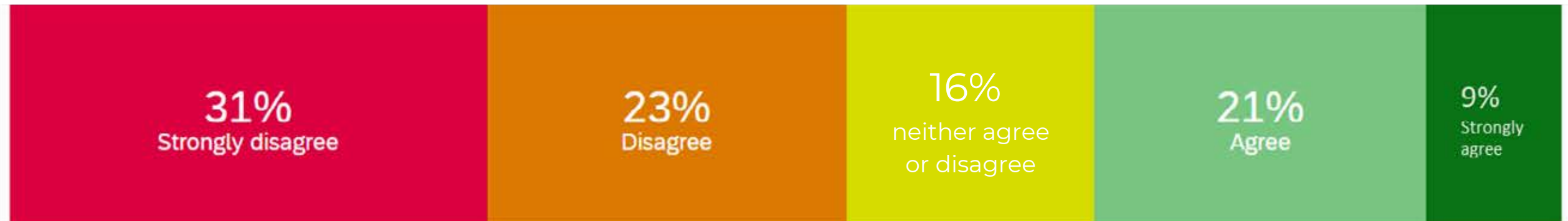
Expansion of township and suburban boundaries should be explored to increase housing and land supply.

Strongly disagree

Strongly agree



Residential development opportunities **within townships** and **suburbs** (i.e. into 2 subdivision) should be increased in suitable locations.



The local housing market provides suitable **options for household lifecycle stages** (e.g downsizing for empty nesters, growing family or first home buyers).



Connection and wellbeing – how do our people feel?

Our community feel connected and well.

On average most people rated their sense of connection and wellbeing as 9 out of 10.



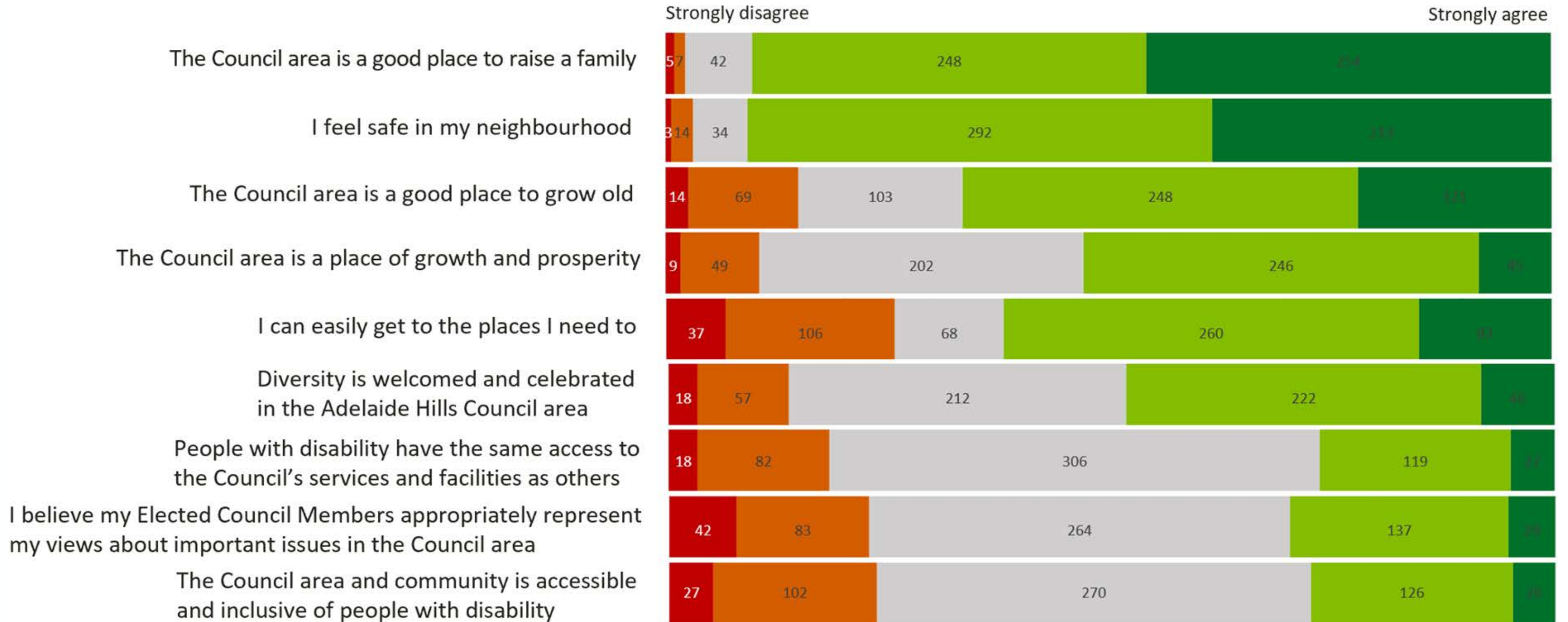
Connection to Adelaide Hills community scale: 0, not at all – 10, very connected

- A very small proportion (3%) of respondents selected the three lowest scores of 0, 1 and 2.
- Results showed little notable variation when filtered by age group or length of time living in the Adelaide Hills Council area. The mean dropped to 8.25 when results were filtered by those living with a disability.
- Those renting a property (mean of 8.06) felt less connected to the Adelaide Hills community than those owning a house, albeit this is based on a small sample size of 17.

Wellbeing scale: 0, extremely poor – 10, as good as it could be

- A very small proportion (1%) of respondents selected the three lowest scores of 0, 1 and 2.
- Results showed little notable variation when filtered by length of time living in the Adelaide Hills Council area.
- Most age groups were consistent, with the exception of the 70 – 85 plus group rating their overall wellbeing more highly, with a mean of 9.34.
- The mean dropped to 7.79 when results were filtered by those living with a disability.

Experience of living in the Adelaide Hills Council area



What's your vision for the Adelaide Hills Council area?

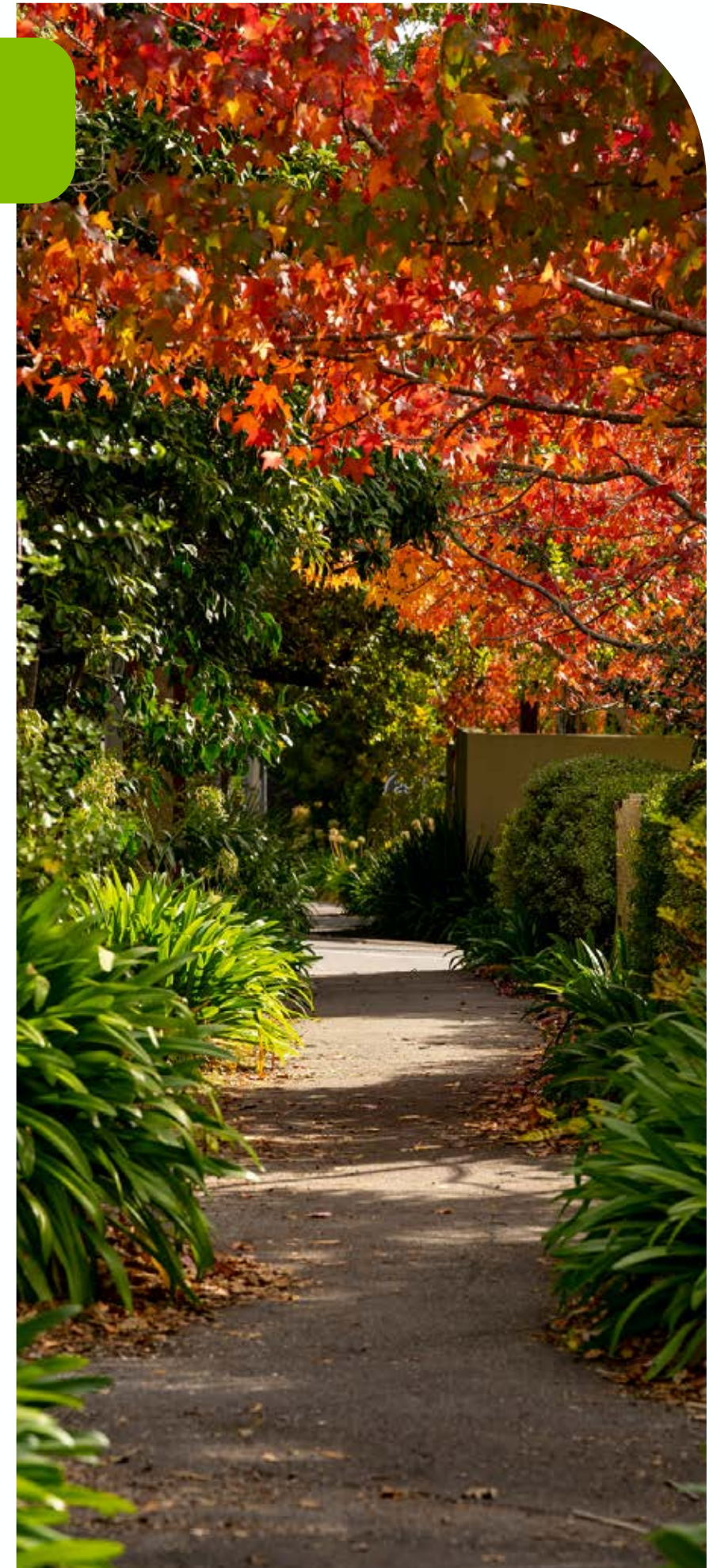
- Responses to this question often involved highly individual combinations of factors, with many respondents really taking their time to select their words carefully.
- While some responses were presented as a “vision”, others simply outlined current issues and opportunities.
- The wordcloud provides a high level insight into the most commonly used words.
- We have additionally identified key themes, noting that common factors emerge even though responses were tailored and individual (see following pages).



What's your vision for the Adelaide Hills Council area?

We asked you to describe your vision for the future and across all responses some key themes emerged:

- Ensure a **healthy and natural environment is retained**, with strong environmental protection measures, management of invasive species, preservation of trees and fostering biodiversity.
- Retain the **unique character, feeling and soul and the village feel** of the settlements, ensure they do not “spread” further than they already do.
- Retain a **“country” look** and ensure the Adelaide Hills Council area does not turn into “sprawling suburbs” and that it is not overdeveloped and / or overly subdivided.
- A **healthy, balanced and sustainable approach to planning, growth and the economy**, more self-sufficient in terms of employment, services and produce and fostering local small businesses.
- Retain a **strong community feel, connectedness and resilience** where people are happy and friendly, look out for each other and feel supported.
- Area to remain **beautiful, clean, green and natural / peaceful quiet and safe**
- Adelaide Hills Council area broadly **remain exactly how it is**.
- Vitally important to **retain prime agricultural land** dedicated to growing produce.



Continued: What's your vision for the Adelaide Hills Council area?

We asked you to describe your vision for the future and across all responses some key themes emerged:

- Adelaide Hills Council area as **peaceful, tranquil, quiet and safe**.
- **More inclusive and balanced availability of services and infrastructure** to meet community needs.
- Reference to Mount Barker and / or surrounding Councils as **examples of exactly what they do not wish to see happen** in the Adelaide Hills Council area.
- **Roads and footpaths** – repair, maintenance, availability, increased traffic volumes and safety being the recurring issues.
- **Additional factors raised include:** improved public transport connections, leveraging opportunities to foster eco-friendly and sustainable construction and building practices, further recreational opportunities (particularly for children and young adults), developing more walking and hiking trails, leading the way in responding to climate change and controlling population increases and commercialisation.



In their words: What's your vision for the Adelaide Hills Council area?

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- *“A district with townships that have a distinct identity, that is pleasant, vibrant and welcoming to people of all backgrounds and demographics, with facilities, services and targeted programs on offer to enable residents to meet their aspirations and to live a fulfilling and connected life. This includes local employment options and accessible and adequate public transport - both within the district as well as to other places.”*
 - *“A haven for residents and visitors alike. Coming through the tunnels a weight is lifted and the pace of life slows as you are greeted at welcoming cafes on picturesque main streets. People walk their dogs through beautiful nature reserves or enjoy a glass of wine at a cellar door feeling like they are a million miles from the city.”*
 - *“A place to live where I can walk/bike easily between townships and still hear the birds and see koalas. A place where I know the locals and I am connected to others via volunteering and working on community projects. A place that is safe for our elders and kids. A place of opportunities and welcoming people from other cultures. A place where Refugees are welcomed and integrated. A place where we learn and listen to the wisdom of Indigenous elders. A place where we take care of our environment and we feel we are part of it.”*
 - *“Adelaide Hills is a unique place where you are 20 minutes away from the city. You are in the country, beautiful scenery, good food , good produce, good wine. We should treasure this place, promote it as a South Australia’s treasure without making it too touristy.”*

In their words: What's your vision for the Adelaide Hills Council area?

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- *“For the Adelaide Hills Council to keep sustainability at it's core, embracing the unique biodiversity which supports fabulous food, wine and tourism opportunities. To keep in mind the long-term irreversible impacts of subdivision - ensuring that any new development occurs only on already cleared land (of which there is plenty). My vision is that all current bushland is retained (as only 10% remains), and that the council spear-heads and support. What a wonderful world that would be!”*
 - *“Green, healthy, democratic but not bureaucratic. A beautiful environment that enables you to build mental and emotional strength in a world where this is becoming a challenge. A community that is not hamstrung by box-ticking bureaucracy or small-minded reaction to minor issues. An area where culture and the arts are valued as much as sport. An area where people are tolerated and valued for their differences, but also for their sense of 'community wholeness/oneness.’”*
 - *“I think township boundaries in the main should remain however towns should increase in density and rules around car parking provision shouldn't be applied with such vigour by Council, which would enable increased retail and commercial development in towns. I also see more walking trails between townships to encourage people out of cars and also increase tourism. Improved cross-region public transport would also be developed, under the AdelaideMetro banner, operating 7 days a week link the northern and southern parts of the Council area.”*

In their words: What's your vision for the Adelaide Hills Council area?

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- *"I envisage small towns with small farms that can supply food to the local community. We have such productive land and good rainfall - we can model and build on our reputation for local produce. We should be supporting our apple growers and dairy farmers and helping them provide to our community increasing food security for the hills and wider SA area. Then in times of pandemics / economic crises - we don't need to rely on the larger food suppliers. I do not want more houses, cellar doors on every corner (as great as they are! - there's just a lot) and definitely not expansions of townships! Increasing housing in a bushfire zone is just dangerous. The traffic congestion when evacuating is ridiculous as it is."*
 - *"Inclusive communities with housing diversity options within township boundaries. broader areas (outside of township boundaries) designed to protect and enhance natural landscapes and environment. moderate and well considered ."*
 - *"Rural land and food production areas will be protected and not encroached upon by housing to enhance and retain the character of the area and ensure land is preserved for productive purposes. Areas of native vegetation will be protected and expanded as a priority to improve the conservation of threatened flora and fauna. Large, landscaped blocks will be retained to protect the mature gardens and tree canopy that provides the valued character and lifestyle that attracts people to live in the Adelaide Hills. Limited land division in close proximity (within 400m) to town centres will enable down-sizing or options for first home buyers. Better facilities for pedestrians and cyclists, especially for children and the elderly, will reduce reliance on cars to access local facilities. Community activities and events will bring communities together and promote local interests and attributes. Opportunities will exist to promote recycling, reuse, waste minimisation with the enhancement of the environment being central to decision making."*

General comments about living in the Adelaide Hills Council area



- **Public transport options** are limited.
- **Accessibility** is limited by the current standard and / or lack of footpaths, cycle paths and street lighting, particularly for children, members of the community with a disability and the elderly.
- It is virtually impossible to live in the Adelaide Hills Council area without a driving licence and vehicle – or at minimum, access to a vehicle – given the **limitations of public transport** and the dispersed nature of the community.
- Additional **bus services and options** would be beneficial given public transport limitations.
- **Development** needs to be more **proactively managed** and the current pace of change and construction is not viewed as sustainable, with added impact of increased traffic and a sense the Hills are “at capacity” and further development would see the area lose its charm.
- **Decision-making** by Council appearing somewhat **out of touch** with what is important to community.

In their words: Additional comments about living in the Adelaide Hills Council area



- *“Poor / unreliable public transport is a key issue, particularly for youth and others who do not have a driver’s licence and / or access to personal transport.”*
- *“Can only get where I need with a car. We desperately need more cycling infrastructure and public transport options.”*
- *“I am concerned that due to some facilities not being maintained can limit what people have access to e.g. pathways and paving.”*
- *“Paths even very close to the main street are difficult. They are either not there, or too narrow or dirt so if you have mobility issues you are limited.”*
- *“I enjoy living here and have done for over 20 years, but the area is becoming more urban and suburban and losing its essence.”*

How people felt the Adelaide Hills Council is going as an organisation

- 27% of respondents were very satisfied or satisfied
- 30% felt there are one or two things that bother them
- 22% felt a lot of improvement is needed
- 21% did not have an opinion or felt they did not have enough information to respond

Why did people feel like this?

- Adelaide Hills Council has **improved and / or generally does a good job**. While not everything is perfect, it is acknowledged **Council has a lot of conflicting and heavy demands** and that, under the circumstances, there are more positives than negatives.
- **Insufficient roads and footpaths maintenance, overgrown verges and poor street lighting.**
- **Overdevelopment** and an “urban” feel is creeping in and not being adequately controlled or planned well enough.
- **Enquiries to Council** taking a long time to be answered, or conflicting answers being given or no response being received at all.
- Main tangible outcome of paying rates is their **rubbish collection**.
- **Council areas are not treated equally** in terms of maintenance and investment and that the fringe areas are neglected.
- Council is **somewhat out of touch with reality**, operating to their own agenda, lack sufficient contact with community and is not proactively planning for, or addressing, key strategic issues and concerns. As a part of this, it was felt Council sometimes lacks a clear strategic direction and tries to do too much or makes investment choices that are misaligned with community wishes.

In their words: How you feel Adelaide Hills Council is going as an organisation?



- *“AHC has come a long way in recent years in community consultation. Cost versus wants will always be an issue.”*
- *“As a senior member of the community, the Council provides good services that are easy and affordable.”*
- *“Good services. Bushfire recovery improving, Council seems to be growing this area which is appreciated. Love your biodiversity officers, they do great work.”*
- *“Staff helpful. Library brilliant.”*
- *“The things I see are always good.”*
- *“As we are on the fringes we have limited services.”*
- *“It seems to take so long to take decisions.”*
- *“Our council rates are very high and if one is not a great user of services it can feel like we don’t get a lot.”*

Satisfaction level with how we consult and the opportunity to engage with issues affecting their area

- 36% of respondents were very satisfied or satisfied.
- 19% felt there are one or two things that bother them.
- 24% felt a lot of improvement is needed.
- 21% did not have an opinion or felt they did not have enough information to respond.

How people would like to participate in the future?

- Surveys, online polls, text message surveys and short surveys to address highly specific topics
- More engagement events, including open forums, discussion evenings, information booths, public meetings, information forums, localised meetings, community consultations and consultative groups.
- Councillors and Mayor to be present to engage with directly.
- Engagement sessions specific to local area as opposed to being generic and Council-wide.



Continued: Satisfaction level with how we consult and the opportunity to engage with issues



Additional issues raised:

- People felt that while they have actively participated in engagement they feel this does not lead to any tangible change and that the effort made becomes questionable.
- People commented they would like more time to consider issues and be made more aware of upcoming engagements or decisions. The feedback is a combination of wanting to be better informed to then decide whether to get involved or not, but also of being time poor and needing more reminders and a longer line of sight to consider issues and engagement opportunities.

In 2021, 17% of respondents felt the opportunities to participate in consultations appear to be in place but that they tended not to see them or hear about them and it was felt more widespread promotion of engagement opportunities was required. This has changed for the positive as **awareness of engagement opportunities appears to have risen** – the challenge now appears to be more around timely awareness and members of the **community needing or wanting more time than before to consider issues of interest to them** and a **desire for a greater range of engagement events**.

In their words: Satisfaction level with how we consult and the opportunity to engage with issues



- *"I like things like this survey! It gives me a voice and I feel like Council will look at what I have to say."*
- *"I'd like Council to hold more community consultation within each ward to allow ward specific planning."*
- *"Meet the Councillor / staff events in townships....issues based."*
- *"To be aware of the issues that are being discussed so I could make a choice if I can add value to the consult."*
- *"I already do participate in a lot of local issues. My problem is the lack of action when Council does not complete or follow through on its requirements."*
- *"I just sometimes feel like the Council make decisions based on what they choose to do and not what the rate payers believe is best for the area."*
- *"Let people know what is going on. Not all issues have been transparent or have even been informed to locals. Not sure of what issues are being addressed and found out after the fact many times."*
- *"Be given a longer period of time to consider issues."*

Council functions selected as being most important into the future (in order of priority)

Rank	Function ranking and percentage of response
1	Infrastructure (52.4%)
2	Emergency and disaster management, resilience and recovery (38.4%)
3	Biodiversity initiatives (33.8%)
4	Climate change action (33.8%)
5	Waste management (30.0%)

Rank	Function ranking and percentage of response
6	Roadside slashing and weed control (29.9%)
7	Public areas (27.2%)
8	Town planning, development and building control (25.8%)
9	Community wellbeing services (25.4%)
10	Library services (24.4%)

If there was one more thing you want us to focus on into the future what would it be?

The main themes were:

- Focus on **conservation, environmental protection and biodiversity** was needed, including the **protection of trees**.
- The need for **road repairs, pavement repairs, new pavements and street lighting**, particularly from a **safety and accessibility** perspective and the need for more road / pavement cleaning and sweeping.
- Ongoing concern about **managing development / preventing overdevelopment** and the loss of the hills character and unique identity. Many would like to **limit subdivisions and associated loss of trees**.
- **Climate change** being their most significant focus area.
- **Vital to retain the unique identity and character** of the Adelaide Hills Council area.
- **Public transport, accessibility and cycle paths**, requesting more options be made available.
- **Improved and more efficient Council management and finances**, with a **focus on core business**, noting that this had been promised but did not seem to have eventuated. Road repairs that deteriorated very quickly were used as an example.
- Focused on community in a range of ways, from **connecting community in times of disaster** to **support for youth and elderly residents** to **community connections and cohesion**.

In their words: If there was one more thing you want us to focus on into the future what would it be?



- *“Putting the environment first.”*
- *“The natural environment, more native trees and vegetation for our native wildlife.”*
- *“Activities which help preserve the local environment and unique qualities of the Adelaide Hills.”*
- *“Progress is necessary and inevitable. But it is important not to change the character of the area.”*
- *“Be more efficient and not all things to all people.”*
- *“Focus on what can be done, and done well rather than trying to do too many things.”*
- *“Be well considered regarding development. The hills cannot cope with the amount of people that are moving to this area. It has a huge impact regarding infrastructure, especially our roads, footpaths and public transport.”*



What's changed since the 2021 Community Survey?

- Perspectives on **protecting the “character”** of the Adelaide Hills Council area and its settlements, the risk of overdevelopment and subdivision and an “urban” feel creeping in that is not in keeping with the Hills have significantly risen in profile.
- As a part of this, there is also growing concern about the amount of **tree removal and loss of natural environments, reduced biodiversity** and the loss of valuable agricultural land.
- Issues such as **traffic, noise, speeding, poor driver behaviour** and a growing sense that roads are exceeding their capacity have emerged as growing concerns.
- There is an increased desire for **equity, sustainability, balance and carefully planned and managed growth** – whether that be related to population, the local economy, infrastructure or services.
- There is a **growing appreciation for the sense of community and connectedness** that exists – and a fear of it being diluted or lost altogether.



What's similar since the 2021 Community Survey?

Issues of interest – noting the first one attracted the most commentary:

- **Poor road and footpath maintenance / lack of footpaths** remain an ongoing issue of concern, with the added layer of safety being a growing component given increased population and traffic.
- **Responsiveness and communication by Council** in relation to issues / complaints was referenced, but not as frequently as 2021.
- A feeling that **Council / Council Members need to be more visible / accessible**.
- The sense of an **unequitable distribution of facilities and services** across the AHC area.
- High rates remain a topic of interest.
- **Bushfire risk, waste management and the planning approval process** are less of an issue than they were in 2021.

What's next?

- **Huge thanks** for taking part in the 2023 Community Survey for the Adelaide Hills Council.
- Your feedback was **presented to Elected Members** in a Council Workshop in August 2023.
- Comments and data will be used to inform the next Adelaide Hills **Council Strategic Plan**.
- Your input is **highly valued and we are grateful for the time taken** to provide such detailed feedback which will help shape our local Council area.
- We encourage you to **keep engaging with us on projects** by registering as a participant of our Community Engagement Hub platform- engage.ahc.sa.gov.au





Questions?

Get in touch with the
Council Community
Engagement Team



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Adelaide Hills
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