



Asset Management

Community insights report

November 2020



**Council acknowledges
the traditional owners
of the lands of Hornsby
Shire, the Darug and
Guringai peoples.**

We pay our respects to
Elders past, present and
emerging.



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1

Introduction

During 2020, Hornsby Shire Council (Council) involved its community in research to inform management of Council's asset portfolio. Council sought to understand the community's satisfaction with the condition of current assets, service levels and future asset funding priorities.

Council's goal is to ensure that assets and resources meet the needs of current and future generations and contribute to Council's long-term sustainability.

Council commissioned Urbis and Jetty Research to lead a process of community research and participation to inform this process.

Asset planning process

Council is reviewing its Asset Management Plans as part of Council's long term financial planning process. Council is committed to involving the community in its decision-making.

Asset management sits within a framework that incorporates Council's *Community Strategic Plan*, which outlines the community's current and future requirements, and its *Resourcing Strategy*, which informs the time, money, assets and resources required to deliver upon these needs.

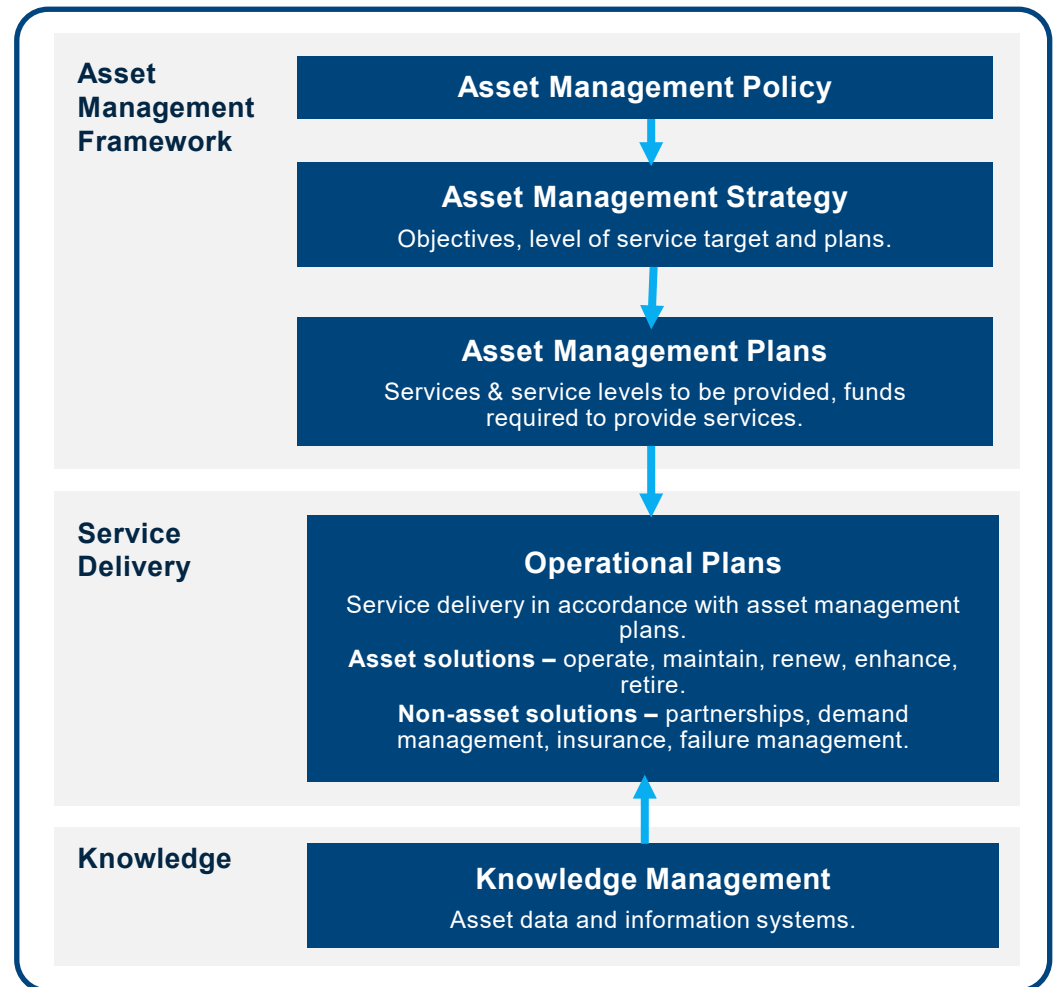
The *Resourcing Strategy* includes three aspects:

- Long term financial planning
- Workforce management planning
- **Asset management planning.**

The goal of **asset management** is to ensure that services are provided:

- In the most cost-effective manner
- Through the creation, acquisition, maintenance, operation, renewal and disposal of assets
- For current and future generations.

The findings of this research will inform Council's approach to asset management.



Approach to community research and participation



Objectives

Council sought community views on:

- Council's approach to asset management
- Levels of service expected for particular asset classes and assets within the class
- Approach to funding and resourcing asset management activities for current and future generations.



Approach - survey

Quality of Life survey

- As part of an integrated report requirement a random and representative telephone survey was conducted of 600 adults living within the Hornsby Shire in March 2020. The survey included specific questions on asset management to inform the asset management community participation.



Approach - workshops

Community participation workshops

- **Recruitment:** Participants who expressed an interest during the survey were contacted to participate. Each workshop sought to achieve a cross-representative sample of Ward location, age, gender and cultural background.
- **Discussion guide:** Prior to the workshop, participants were emailed a 14-page document which provided an overview of the topic.
- **Workshops:** Three, two-hour deliberative workshops were held online, with approximately 20 participants per workshop.

Limitations

This report should be considered with the following limitations in mind:

- Opinions may be biased to those who participate in online panels and may not be representative of the whole population
- The length of time residing in the Shire, stage of life and experiences with Council assets will inherently be reflected in the results.

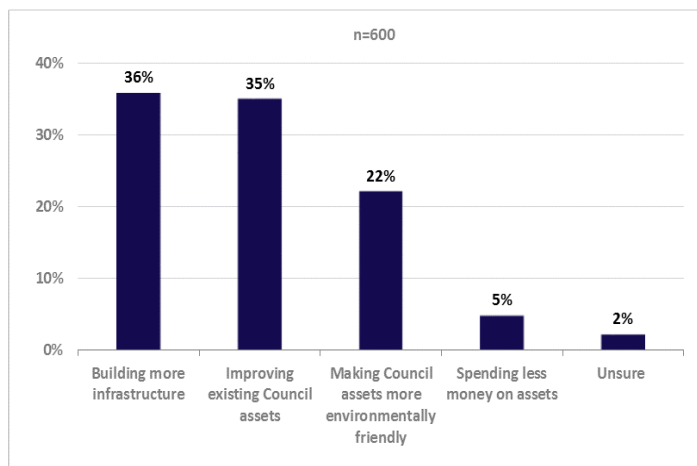
Quality of Life and asset management survey – key findings

The community indicated they highly value leisure and sporting facilities, with Hornsby Aquatic Centre, Thornleigh Brickpit Stadium and Greenway Park frequently cited.

Around three-quarters of those surveyed were able to think of Council assets that needed improvements, however often cited non-Council owned assets such as arterial roads and commuter carparks.

Residents were asked which should be Council’s highest priority when it came to future assets and infrastructure. Opinion was evenly split between the need to build more infrastructure (n=36%) and improve existing Council assets (n=35%). Therefore, this informed a key area of focus for the workshops

What should be the greatest priority among the following?



Most proud

-  **27%**
Sports grounds and facilities – specific
-  **22%**
Parks, gardens and playgrounds – specific
-  **14%**
Bushland/green space – general

“Specific” references where a respondent cited a specific asset or facility. “General” refers to a respondent using a broad statement regarding this category. Quality of Life and Asset Management Survey report, May 2020 is available from Hornsby Shire Council.

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Key themes



Key themes

Members of the community identified the following themes across all asset categories as important considerations for Council in managing its asset portfolio.



COVID impacts

The community indicated their usage of assets has changed as a result of COVID. For example, visiting buildings less frequently and using open spaces, parks and cycle and walking tracks more frequently.



Access and hours of operation

Access and hours of operation should encourage use, particularly after hours and on the weekends. Hornsby Aquatic Centre and Community Recycling Centre were most frequently mentioned.



Changing demographics

The ageing population requires flat and accessible spaces and seating, and increased population and density is increasing usage of open spaces.



Awareness and promotion

Participants indicated increased promotion and advertising of community buildings and spaces would encourage increased use.



Frequency of use

Participants indicated Council should prioritise assets which are regularly used by the community. Some participants expressed a desire for Council to allocate asset funding according to community use.



Quality spaces

Participants indicated quality is relative to usage, where Council invests in maintenance and increases the quality, it is likely to attract higher usage.



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Asset management planning

Asset management planning

Participants were provided information to consider the topic in depth. This included pre-reading which outlined Council's asset management planning process and the key challenges managing their assets and pre- and post-poll questions to understand how their views have changed.

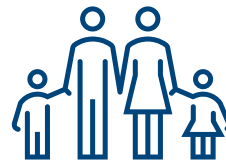
Participants were asked to select the most important factors Council should consider in planning, delivering and maintaining assets for the community's use. The following three factors were identified as most important:



Assets meet the needs of the community



Assets are cost-effective for Council to maintain



Assets are used regularly by the community



Asset management planning

The following assets were discussed during the community participation workshops. These assets were selected as they represent the greatest funding required and the most frequently used by the community.

Buildings	Open spaces and recreational needs	Roads
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Aquatic centres ▪ Amenities buildings ▪ Council offices / administration ▪ Commercial / leased facilities ▪ Community centres ▪ Indoor Sports Stadium ▪ Libraries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Formal gardens/landscaping ▪ Park facilities (e.g. BBQ, tables) ▪ Park lighting ▪ Playgrounds ▪ Mountain bike tracks ▪ Street trees and trees in parks ▪ Sporting fields 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bridges (vehicular) ▪ Carparks (on-road/off road) ▪ Footpaths ▪ Kerb and guttering ▪ Sealed roads and unsealed roads ▪ Shared paths and cycleways ▪ Stormwater drainage

Other asset classes

Council has other asset classes which were not discussed due to time limitations. These include Foreshore facilities and other structures and Bushlands.



Asset use

Workshops commenced with a discussion on how often participants use Council assets, and for what purpose.

Participants were asked:

- What would have you visit more often?
- What would improve your experience?

The responses outlined on the following pages provides further information on what would motivate participants to use the assets more frequently or improve their level of satisfaction.

Buildings

Participants had mixed usage of the facilities within this category. Although participants may not use these facilities frequently, they highly valued them and highlighted their importance to the broader community. It was noted community facilities and spaces were particularly important for higher density areas and to accommodate increasing populations.



Participants used facilities for:

- Exercise and leisure
- Events and gatherings
- Specific purpose, such as the recycling centre.

Participants noted the following:

- Council’s leased buildings required additional facilities to meet the needs of the hiring organisation – often volunteer-run groups
- Consideration should be given to what potential funding could be generated from commercial facilities, and whether hiring fees could be increased or if this would discourage use.
- Alternative service models such as Library online were valued.

“ *The Library is a bit noisy – it would be better if there was more breakout rooms or spaces for students to go to.*
- Workshop participant

 Encourage use	 Discourage use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Extended hours of operations e.g. Brickpit evening opening and community recycling on weekends.	<input type="checkbox"/> Conflicting uses e.g. loud vs quiet activities in libraries, lap vs play/informal swimming.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Awareness and promotion e.g. social media, leaflets/fridge magnets, improved website and activation of places.	<input type="checkbox"/> Difficult to access Lack of public transport or parking.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Higher quality facilities would increase use	<input type="checkbox"/> Restrictive policies applied to hiring and use of buildings.

Open space

Participants indicated they use these facilities very frequently for leisure, exercise and social gatherings. It was indicated their usage increased due to COVID pandemic and open space is greatly valued in the Shire.

Participants used facilities for:



- Informal and organised fitness and leisure
- Children playing
- Dog walking
- Picnics and BBQs.

Participants noted the following

- Amenities such as safe and attractive toilet facilities were important
- Lighting essential for safety and to promote use of facilities in the evening
- Level access, particularly important for family, elderly and people with disabilities
- Accessibility (walkable distance or by public transport)
- Safety and signage, particularly on walking and Mountain Bike tracks.

“ Parks were really important during lockdown, but what I would like to see is more range of facilities at the park for different age groups....

Workshop participant

 Encourage use	 Discourage use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Easy and flat access Important for people with disabilities, elderly and children.	<input type="checkbox"/> Unsafe environment.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Safety and amenities Toilet facilities and access to drinking water is very important.	<input type="checkbox"/> Poor lighting Particularly during winter.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Activation e.g. food trucks or events.	<input type="checkbox"/> Anti-social behaviour

Roads and stormwater

Participants indicated they use these facilities daily and often due to need or lifestyle such as day-to-day travel. Key drivers for use included safe and well-maintained assets.



Participants used facilities for:

- Necessity – taking the shorter and faster route
- Travel to and from work and school (day-to-day life)
- Leisure or recreation (shared paths and cycleways).

Participants noted the following:

- More parking is needed
- Roads need to be maintained regularly so they are safe to use
- Footpaths are often damaged due to tree roots and Council should consider alternative ways to construct footpaths.

“ Existing cycle paths are too short, disconnected and don’t link. Bicycles can cover a vast distance over an extensive area quickly, cheaply and efficiently. ”
Workshop participant

 Encourage use	 Discourage use
<p>✓ Safety Well maintained and free from obstructions.</p>	<p>✗ Congestion Particularly around school zones.</p>
<p>✓ Clearly marked lanes and cycleways</p>	<p>✗ Access Avoid locating car parking at a distance from destinations e.g. shopping, public transport.</p>
<p>✓ Capacity in carparks</p>	

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Future planning

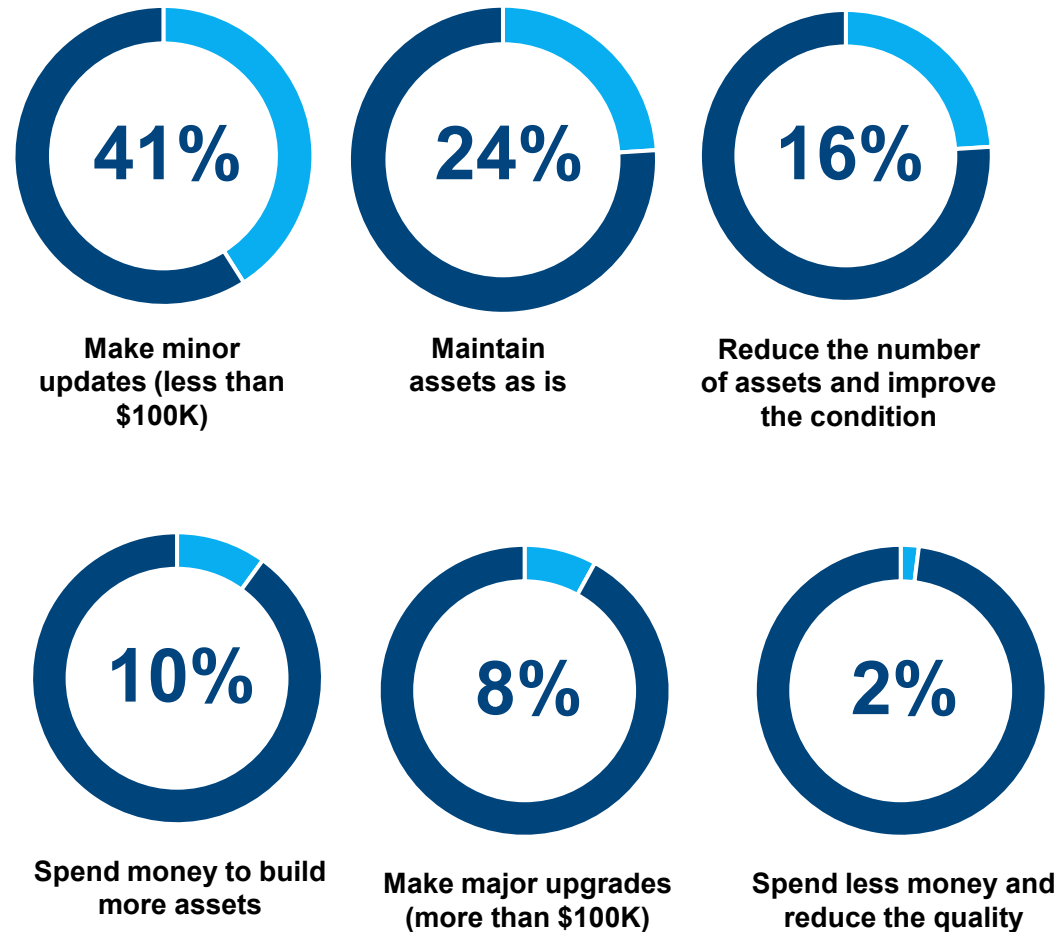
Future planning

Participants were asked what should be Council's greatest priority in managing its infrastructure and assets. The participants were asked the same question at the beginning and end of the workshop. Participants' views changed in these areas:

- Fewer participants identified these areas as being the greatest priority:
 - Make major upgrades (more than \$100K) (8% less)
 - Spend money to build more assets (6% less)
- More participants said making minor updates is the greatest priority (10% more).

Greatest priority for future planning

The results below show what proportion of participants identified that area as being the greatest priority at the end of the workshop:



**The results above add to 101% due to rounding.*

Future planning

Participants were randomly allocated into three groups to participate in a budgeting exercise. Each group was assigned an asset class and seven types of assets within it. They were allocated a finite budget (\$25 Hornsby dollars) and were required to prioritise funding for each type of asset within the asset class, according to the group's preferences for the desired levels of service.



Levels of service

Levels of service represent an agreement between Council and the community to perform certain activities now and into the future.

This determines the required maintenance, renewal, replacement and disposal.

- 1** **Excellent/very good** High standard, no work required. Only ongoing maintenance.
- 2** **Good** Meet the needs of the community with some minor maintenance.
- 3** **Satisfactory** Requiring of some ongoing maintenance to maintain acceptable standard to the community
- 4** **Poor** Facility generally not meeting the needs of the community with regards to appearance, capacity, access or overall utility.

Buildings

The following analysis represents the funding priorities and preferences of all workshop groups aggregated*.

There were two clear priorities (libraries and amenities buildings), followed by the remaining assets which received similar prioritisation

Asset type Listed by group priority	Preferred condition
1. Libraries	2
2. Amenities buildings	2
3. Indoor sports stadium	3
Aquatic centres	
Community centres	
Council offices/administration	
Commercial/leased facilities	

Primary considerations

Libraries: Participants valued libraries and the associated services they provided, particularly during COVID-19.

Other considerations:

- Participants discussed the benefit of a higher level of condition on the attractiveness of the facility, and thus usage.
- Consideration should be given to the revenue generated from commercial hire fees and the benefits should be to all residents.
- Participants sought to understand the use of the facilities and current condition to further inform their recommendations.

*Some groups did not complete the funding activity in full.

Open space

The following analysis represents the funding priorities and preferences of all workshop groups aggregated*.

For open space, there was one clear priority (sporting fields), followed by park lighting, facilities and playgrounds and the remaining assets were similarly prioritised.

Asset type Listed by group priority	Preferred condition
1. Sporting fields	2
Park facilities (e.g. bbq, tables)	2
2. Park lighting Playgrounds	
Street trees and trees in parks	3
3. Formal gardens/landscaping Mountain bike tracks	

Primary considerations

Sporting fields: Participants indicated they valued the sporting fields and higher levels of condition would attract visitors to Hornsby which would create additional economic benefits.

Other considerations:

- Community indicated the importance of open spaces during COVID-19.
- Safety was considered a high priority, particularly for playgrounds.
- The community expressed the associated benefits with open spaces and street trees on health, wellbeing and the urban heat effect.

Roads and stormwater

The following analysis represents the funding priorities and preferences of all workshop groups aggregated.

For roads and stormwater, footpaths, bridges and roads were priorities, followed by all other assets.

Asset types Listed by group priority	Preferred condition
Footpaths 1. Bridges (vehicular) Sealed roads and unsealed roads	2
Carparks 2. Shared paths and cycleways Kerb & guttering Stormwater drainage	3

Primary considerations

Footpaths: Participants expressed the importance of flat, safe and unobstructed footpaths. Participants recommended better connected footpath networks and pedestrian crossings.

Other considerations:

- Shared paths and cycleways were discussed as important for family activities.
- Participants indicated they used these assets out of necessity
- Carparks rated highly during the Community Survey and this was further echoed during group discussions, particularly commuter carparking capacity.

Conclusion



Community participation workshops

Participants appreciated learning more about Council's challenges and operations.

Most participants indicated they gained a greater understanding of how Council manages its budget and asset portfolio and more line of sight on how ratepayer funds are used to deliver assets for the community.

Participants expressed they would be interested in learning more about how Council makes decisions.



Understanding sentiment

Participants were educated on the topic with pre-reading, presentations and undertook polls at the beginning and end of the workshops.

Following the workshop:

- Participant knowledge and understanding of the topic increased their perceived level of satisfaction of Council's assets by 23%.
- Participant views shifted from prioritising major investment to minor investment and maintenance.



Future community participation

Some participants were keen for more information to inform their feedback, namely:

- Current condition of Council's existing assets
- Frequency of use per asset
- Cost required to maintain assets to their existing level of service.



Next steps

To respond to community interest in assets usage statistics, Council could consider:

- Collecting further data on usage patterns and experience, to drive efficiencies in operations and maintenance.
- Communicating usage data using promotional channels, electronic signage or digital dashboards. This would demonstrate further transparency and build community trust in Council's decision-making processes.

Workshop participant feedback

“

Roads are important because we all need them to get somewhere.

-Workshop participant

“

We need toilets and amenities in parks, you don't want to get caught short.

- Workshop participant

“

It is really loud in there [Library], so it isn't a great place to study at. Those [breakout rooms] rooms are good, but its hard to get them.

-Workshop participant

“

There's a park nearby which I like to go to and do a little bit of exercise. What I like about it, age wise and all that – is that is it's flat.

- Workshop participant

“

For me [the priority would] would be footpaths, I just want to get people off the roads as much as possible especially kids.

-Workshop participant

“

There is a park nearby that is dimly lit. If a place was not safe, I would not consider going there.

- Workshop participant

Glossary

Asset

An asset is a resource owned or controlled by Council as a result of past events; and from which future economic benefits are expected to flow to Council for greater than 12 months; and the cost or value of the resource can be measured reliably.

Asset Class

An Asset Class is a grouping of assets of a similar nature and use in Council's operations. Asset Classes include buildings, open spaces and recreational needs, foreshore facilities and other structures, roads and stormwater drainage.

Asset Management

The activities required to obtain value from assets, present and future. Value could be defined in financial terms or non-financial terms.

Asset Management Strategy

A document which outlines ways that the asset portfolio can meet the service delivery needs of the community. This guides the essential planning, construction, maintenance and operation of infrastructure.

Capital Expenditure

Capital expenditure includes renewal, expansion and upgrade works to an existing asset or creation of a new asset. Its benefits are expected to last for more than 12 months.

Maintenance Expenditure

Ongoing expenditure on an asset which is periodically or regularly required as part of an anticipated schedule of works that ensures an asset achieves its useful life. Maintenance expenditure includes reactive maintenance and repair, (pothole patching, painting etc.), planned maintenance (to a pre-determined schedule) and replacement of parts of assets.

Operating Expenditure

Ongoing expenditure which is required such as power, fuel, employee costs, telephone, materials, cleaning, minor equipment and overheads.

Capital Grants

Funding received specified for projects, upgrade, expansion or new assets.

Level of Service

The specified level of service which performance may be measured. Service levels usually relate to quality, quantity, reliability, responsiveness, environmental acceptability and cost.

Useful Life

The period of time which an asset is expected to be used by Council.

Workshop participant feedback

“

I enjoyed immensely the meeting today and the reality of council's difficulty in making decisions on priorities.

-Workshop participant

“

Council was listening to its residents. It was well run by well prepared, very personable people.

- Workshop participant

“

I liked the breakout rooms and the discussions generated. I particularly liked the budget exercise - very thought provoking.

-Workshop participant

“

The openness of council members to include us in the process of decision making. Even if it was a very small component, I valued that my opinion was asked.

- Workshop participant

Urbis staff responsible for this report were:

Director	Dianne Knott
Senior Consultant	Alisha Filmer
Project code	P0019766
Report number	v1.0

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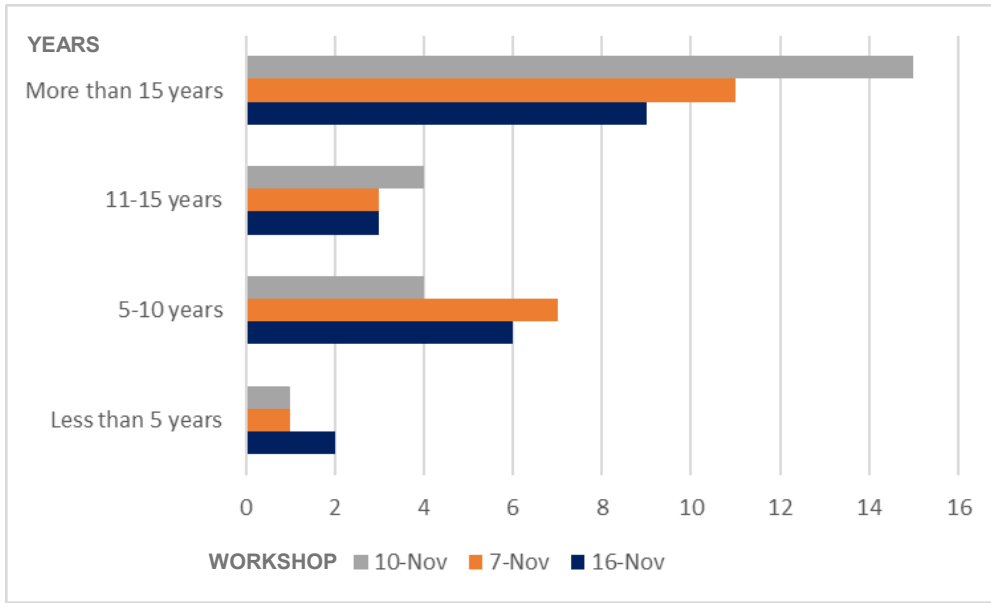
t 02 9847 6666

e hsc@hornsby.nsw.gov.au



Appendix A - Participant demographics

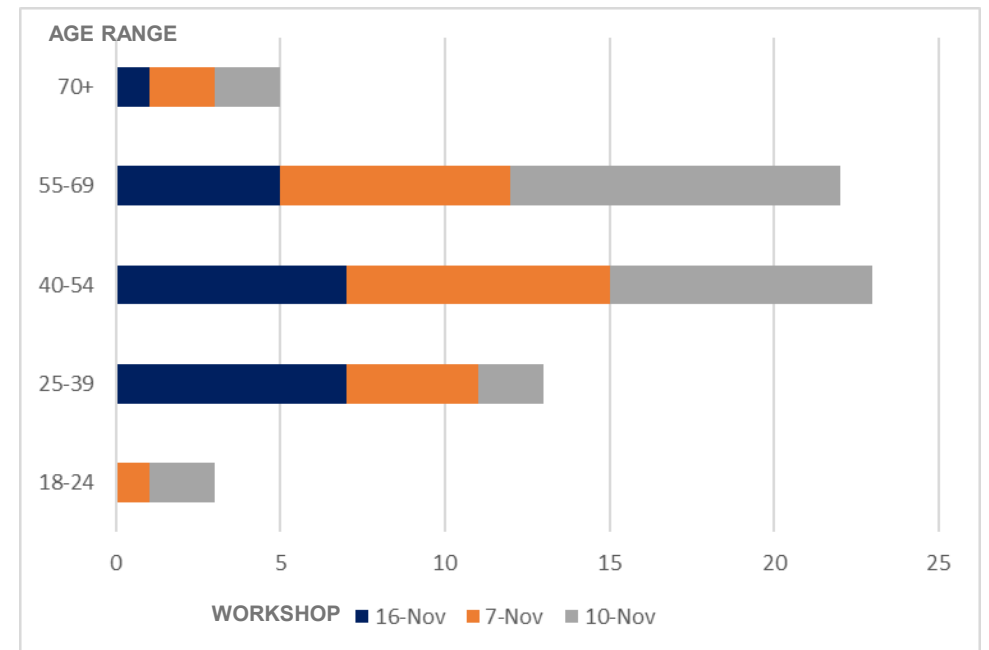
Years lived in Hornsby Shire



Participants' gender

53% male 47% female

Participants' age



Appendix B – Poll responses

