



HORSHAM 2041 COMMUNITY VISION

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Horsham Rural City Council acknowledges the five Traditional Owner groups of this land: the Wotjobaluk, Wergaia, Jupagulk, Jaadwa and Jadawadjali people. We recognise the important and ongoing place that all Indigenous people hold in our community. We pay our respects to the Elders, past, present, and emerging and commit to working together in the spirit of mutual understanding and respect for the benefit of the broader community and future generations.

HORSHAM RURAL CITY TALKS COMMUNITY PANEL

Horsham Rural City Council acknowledges the commitment, creativity and hard work of the 26 residents who volunteered to be on the Community Panel. They were randomly selected to work together to develop the Horsham 2041 Community Vision. They undertook this task with enthusiasm, respect, passion and integrity.

OUR COMMUNITY

We acknowledge the 937 responses from 926 people and 11 groups who participated in a variety of engagement activities to share their views and aspirations on their vision for the future of the Horsham region. We thank the participants from all areas within the municipality, as well as those who come for work or to visit for helping make our region what it is and what we aspire for its future.



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MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR

I am delighted to present Horsham Rural City Council's first 20-year Community Vision which has been developed by the community for the community.

Wide community engagement, capturing the aspirations and priorities of almost 1000 community members, representing diverse backgrounds, ages and localities, helped inform the Horsham Rural City 2041 Community Vision.

A deliberative Community Panel was central in developing this Vision. Twenty-six community representatives worked closely together over three Sundays, to create the Community Vision.

Their task was a challenging one; as they worked to understand the community feedback; analyse information and data; and collectively develop a long-term vision that could meet the current and future needs of our municipality.

Thank you to the community members who provided feedback via the survey, hosted a Community Conversation or contributed in any other way.

Congratulations to the Panel for developing this 2041 Community Vision which will be central to the strategic plans for our municipality into the future.

Cr Robyn Gulline

MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

The Horsham Rural City 2041 Community Vision provides Council with a solid foundation for future planning and resource allocation. It will guide Council to deliver on what our community values most for the future of the place they live, work, play, and invest in. We are grateful for the time and effort many of you gave to voice your aspirations for the future of the municipality. I thank the Community Panel members for their commitment to produce an impressive Community Vision that is representative of our community.

For Council, delivering this vision is not something we can achieve in isolation. Shared decision-making and effective working partnerships with government, non-government organisations, local businesses and of course our community will be critical to our success. Through the development of our Council Plan we will work towards achieving the Community Vision.

I look forward to working with our community to bring the Community Vision to life.

Sunil Bhalla

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY VISION?

A Community Vision describes our community's hopes, ideas and aspirations for the future of Horsham Rural City region. The Community Vision will be developed through reflection, feedback from the wider community, and produced through the work of the deliberative panel.

The Community Vision will shape our next four-year Council Plan, 10-year Asset Plan and 10-year Financial Plan.

Council is required to develop a Community Vision under the *Local Government Act 2020*. The Community Vision is a high order document that guides all of Council's plans and strategies, ensuring that the community is at the heart of everything we do.

FOREWORD

In June and July 2021, community members from across Horsham Rural City developed our first Community Vision. While we have had visions for the future of our municipality in the past, this is the first time the community have been empowered to develop their vision. This is a Vision for Horsham Rural City in 2041 that will guide Council's strategic planning based on the values, aspirations and priorities of the community.

The Community Vision was developed through the Horsham Rural City Talks engagement program, undertaken by Council in partnership with community engagement specialists, i.e. community and Max Hardy Consulting. Following a broad engagement process to capture the aspirations of people from every part of our region, Horsham Talks concluded with a Community Panel to synthesise the inputs and draft the Vision.

With every household in Horsham Rural City receiving an invitation to register their interest in being part of the Community Panel, a final group of 26 people was randomly selected, to represent the population as a whole. Over three Sundays, the Panel came together to share, discuss and deliberate on their vision for the future of the Horsham region and provide recommendations as input into the Council Plan (including the Health and Wellbeing Plan), Asset Plan and Financial Plan.

The Panel demonstrated passion and commitment to complete a challenging task, involving much discussion and deliberation, drafting and redrafting, compromise and voting to produce a vision they could be proud of. The Community Vision was supported by more than 90 percent of the Panel. It was unanimously endorsed by Council on 26 July 2021.

PART ONE – AS PREPARED BY THE HORSHAM RURAL CITY TALKS COMMUNITY PANEL 2021

INTRODUCTION

The Horsham Rural City Talks Community Panel met over the course of three days in 2021. Our Panel consisted of 26 people from diverse backgrounds, and we came together with an aim to generate our vision for future Horsham in 2041.

The Community Panel was made up of 26 community members, including: Cecile, Craig, David, Debra, Don, Donald, Fred, Greg, Joel, Karl, Kath, Kola, Matthew, Noah, Petar, Rebecca, Renae, Renee, Scott, Stephen, Tanya, Terry, and Wendy.



THE HORSHAM 2041 COMMUNITY VISION

In 2041, Horsham region is a vibrant, liveable hub that thrives on strong economic growth and social connectedness. Empowering people to live, work and access opportunities for recreation and culture, now and into the future.

SUSTAINABILITY

A sustainable community is driven by strong economic growth in a healthy and safe, natural environment.

ACCESSIBILITY

An accessible community is a connected hub supported by an extensive transport network. It is designed to meet the growing demand for services and supports education and wellbeing.

LIVEABILITY

A liveable community is a place where green spaces are prioritised and specialised services are available to promote physical and mental health and wellbeing.

COMMUNITY

A welcoming community connects the diverse population and enables all people to feel a strong sense of belonging. It is underpinned by a framework of community consultation and accountable and transparent decision making.



CONCLUSION

Our Community Panel expects Council will be able to benefit from the knowledge and lived experiences of members of the community, who came together to create this vision and these recommendations*. We look forward to seeing Horsham grow and prosper over the course of the next 20 years through the implementation of our recommendations.

*Recommendations can be found on Council's website under Community Vision



PART TWO – DELIBERATIVE ENGAGEMENT

As Horsham Rural City Council grows and changes, so do the needs and aspirations of our community. The Horsham Rural City Talks Community Panel provided a unique opportunity for members of the community to come together to think, discuss and debate the future of our municipality. Their task is to deliberate (carefully consider) the big issues and explore opportunities for our future.

DELIBERATIVE PRINCIPLES

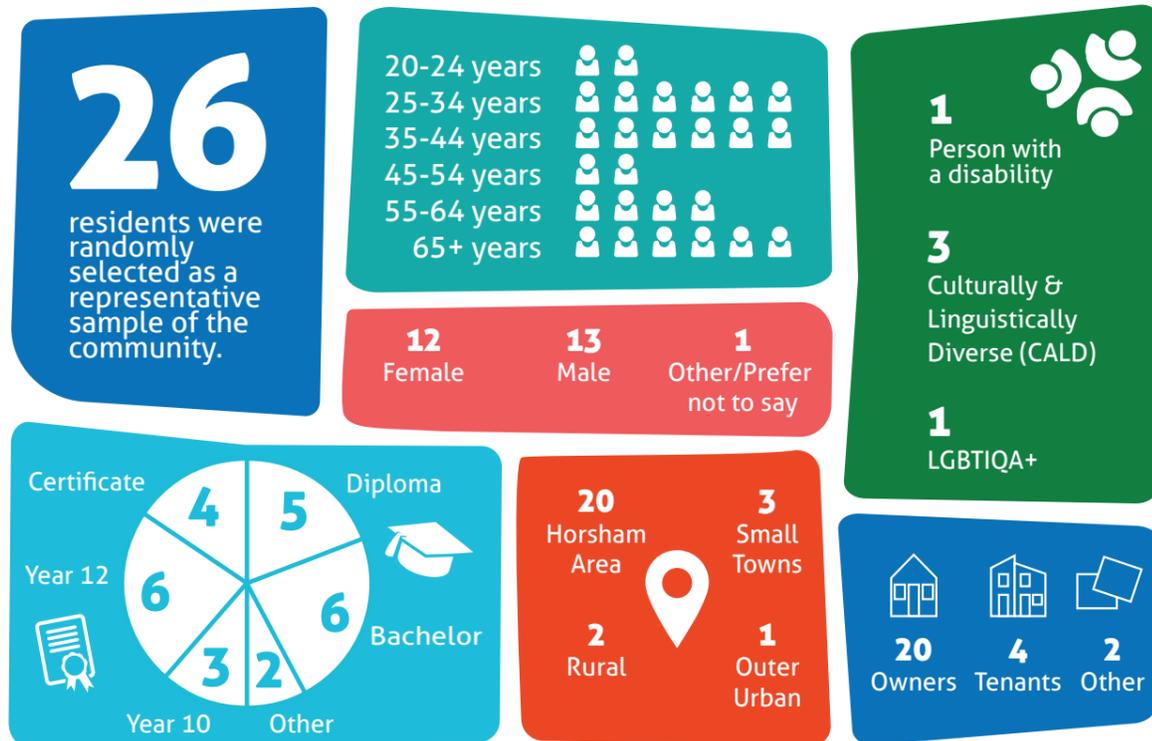
The key principles that informed our approach to the deliberative process were:

- **Transparency and accountability** – of the drivers, process, outputs and response.
- **Support for the process** – commitment is made to build stakeholder confidence in the process.
- **Openness** – sponsors or decision-makers have not already made up their minds – they are open to advice and seriously considering the community's recommendations.
- **Commitment to the outcomes** – sponsors or decision makers back the process and commit to responding.
- **Neutrality** – of recruitment and facilitation.
- **Fairness** – a fair spread of evidence and information is provided and drawn upon.
- **Do-ability** – the time allowed is sufficient for deliberators to respond to the remit with reasonable confidence
- **Clarity regarding connection to broader engagement process** – it is clear how the deep deliberative process relates to broader engagement.

Details of the process around deliberative engagement and further engagement results can be found on Council's website under Community Vision.



HORSHAM RURAL CITY TALKS COMMUNITY PANEL



PANEL RECRUITMENT

Recruitment of the Horsham Rural City Talks Community Panel was completed by independent consultants 'i.e. community'. The Panel consisted of 26 members that were randomly selected to form a representative sample of the Horsham Rural City community.

An invitation was sent out to every household across the Horsham Rural City municipality. These households were provided the project background and the times and dates of workshops and asked to register their interest online or via the phone. Respondents were asked to provide information on their age, gender, suburb, education, housing tenure, whether they were from a culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) background. They were also asked if they identified as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, LGBTIQ+ or as having a disability.

Close to 100 registrations were received. From the pool of registrations, a stratified random sample was selected to broadly represent the Horsham Rural City community demographics. This included stratification by age, gender, education attainment, and location, with particular focus on ensuring a fair representation of urban and rural residents.

While the original target for the Panel was between 30 and 40 participants, due to the changing COVID-19 situation that had brought Victoria into lockdown, the dates of meetings had to change, resulting in a number of applicants withdrawing from the process.

An overview of the final panel is provided above.

PART THREE – ENGAGEMENT FINDINGS

BROAD COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Introduction

The Horsham Rural City Talks - Our Future 2041 community consultation ran from February to May 2021, providing opportunities for the community to have their say through a variety of channels, including:

- online engagement on 'Have Your Say' platform
- random telephone surveys as part of the Community Satisfaction survey process
- hosting a community conversation
- providing feedback via a postcard distributed through Council and community facilities
- listening posts held at Jung Market and the Horsham Plaza.

Across all activities, a total of 937 responses were received from 926 people and 11 groups. We heard from people of all ages and all areas of the Horsham region, including those who come for work or to visit. Questions were consistent across activities, allowing for collective analysis of results. The data was analysed using qualitative methods, to identify key themes as a starting point for deliberation by the Panel.

During the consultation period, two 'What we've heard' reports were posted on Council's website, providing updates to the community on the responses heard to date. At the end of the consultation period, a final "What we heard" report was produced, as well as a comprehensive Engagement Findings report. These final reports were shared with the Community Panel so that they understood the aspirations of the broader community to inform their deliberations*.

* Reports can be found on Council's website under Community Vision



WHAT DO PEOPLE LOVE ABOUT LIVING IN THE HORSHAM REGION?

What we heard from 937 people



1 Community and people – 23.5% of comments noted the friendly people, the community feel, sense of camaraderie and the close-knit friendships as what they most love about living in the Horsham region. “The community is amazing. Everyone rallies around everyone and is so supportive.”

2 Services and facilities – 13.8% of comments expressed their love for the ease of living in Horsham - that it is a small town that has everything you need close by. “Horsham has everything we need in terms of retail and shopping precincts but without the hustle and bustle of a main city.”

3 Natural environment / open space / aesthetics – 13.3% of comments mentioned the natural environment (including the Wimmera River, nearby national parks and lakes) and wide open spaces as why they most love living in the region. “I love the wide open spaces and beautiful natural environment. It’s so peaceful and beautiful there.”

4 Country lifestyle – 12.9% of comments indicated that the laidback, rural and slow-pace of the region’s country lifestyle is what they most love about the area. “Horsham has a lovely country town feel. A slower paced lifestyle than the city.”

5 Rock climbing – 10.8% of comments highlighted the world-class climbing venues within the region, and the climbing community, to be what they love most about the Horsham region. “As a rock climber and lover of nature, living near Mt Arapiles and the Grampians has been a lifelong dream.”

6 Other themes that emerged –

- Good size and easy to navigate (9.2%),
- Peaceful, quiet and relaxed (8.1%),
- River and lakes (7.6%),
- Family and friends (7.1%),
- Proximity to Grampians (6.6%),
- Safety (5.2%),
- Weather and climate (3.8%),
- Central location (3.8%),
- Home town (3.6%),
- Rural/regional/remote (3.4%),
- Clean air (2.0%),
- Jobs/employment/farming (1.0%),
- Affordability (0.8%)

WHAT ARE THE THINGS THAT PEOPLE ARE LESS HAPPY ABOUT?

What we heard from 418 people



1 Rock climbing restrictions – 21.8% of comments admitted their despair over the rock climbing restrictions in the Grampians and at Mount Arapiles, also mentioning the negative impact this will have on tourism to the region. “Now that Parks Victoria have severely restricted rock-climbing there is no reason I, or other international climbers, will visit.”

2 Quality of roads and public transport – 16.3% of comments raised the issue of road quality and development within the region, along with lack of good public transport connectivity to nearby cities. “[I am unhappy about] the lack of progress regarding a transport bypass and a second bridge across the Wimmera River to get the heavy transport away from our beautiful city centre”

3 Council decision-making – 14.1% of comments mentioned they were unhappy with Council decisions, including those about rates levels and distribution, along with planning processes and decision-making. “The previous lack of consultation between community groups at Horsham Rural City Council in regards to strategic planning.”

4 Lack of tourism and recreation – 10.1% of comments indicated concern about the region not best utilising its tourism and recreation possibilities. “I don’t think we take advantage of the natural landscapes that would attract tourists, such as the mountains and the river.”

5 Other themes that emerged –

- Lack of community cohesion (2.9%),
- Town aesthetics - welcome signs, heritage sites, etc. (2.6%),
- Not sustainable enough (2.2%),
- Lack of cultural awareness (1.7%),
- City to River Masterplan - don’t like it (1.2%),
- Lack of safety (1.0%)

WHAT IS ONE THING PEOPLE WOULD CHANGE TO MAKE THE MUNICIPALITY BETTER?

What we heard from 539 people



1 No climbing restrictions – 12.6% of comments expressed their desire for rock climbing restrictions to be removed at Mt Arapiles and the Grampians, highlighting the economic benefits of climbing and the importance of paying traditional respect. “Recognise the importance and value of rock climbing and rock climbers to the region.”

2 Better utilisation of the river – 11.9% of comments expressed a keen interest in seeing the Wimmera River better utilised, and making it a feature of the town, with suggestions for a waterfront venue/restaurant, a boardwalk and cafes (among others). “Connect the river to the town, have live music and a cafe/bar down there to attract people.”

3 Quality of roads or public transport – 11.0% of comments indicated a desire for improvements to traffic congestion in the CBD, along with better public transport to nearby cities. “One item which concerns me greatly is that the Council does not seem to realise the importance of a detour road especially for the hundreds of trucks which are polluting the air especially for homes and businesses on the main routes.”

4 Council processes – 10.2% of comments gave suggestions as to how they would like to see Council improve, including comments about rates, recycling bins and improved communication. “More communication, more open Council meetings with the public. More question time and opportunities for input.”

5 Other themes that emerged –

- Business support (8.9%),
- Improved facilities and infrastructure (6.9%),
- Improved education and healthcare (6.7%),
- More greenspaces/ outdoor recreation/ natural environment (6.3%),
- Greater focus on youth (5.4%),
- Better town design (5.2%),
- More sustainable (5.2%),
- Greater community events, engagement and focus (4.6%),
- Increased tourism focus (4.1%),
- Greater cultural awareness (2.8%),
- Quality of non-motorised transport (2.2%)

WHAT GIVES PEOPLE A SENSE OF BELONGING, OR MAKES THEM FEEL CONNECTED TO THE COMMUNITY?

What we heard from 418 people



1 Hometown and the people – 27.5% of comments understood the people in Horsham to be the thing that gave them the greatest sense of belonging and connection to the community. Being raised in Horsham, and considering it their ‘hometown’, also gave people this sense of belonging. “I love that I can walk around and say hello to so many familiar faces in town.”

2 Clubs, societies and volunteering – 18.4% of comments indicated that involvement in Horsham’s various clubs, societies and volunteering groups provided them with a sense of purpose and belonging, helping them feel greater connected with the community. “Being involved in community groups and sporting clubs gives me a sense of pride. But also being involved in volunteer groups where change can be seen.”

3 Community support and inclusivity – 18.4% of comments expressed that the inclusive nature of the community, in which it welcomes people from all walks of life, gives them a sense of belonging and connectivity to the region. “Groups that make you feel included and accepted... being accepted to be me no matter my race, religion, background, sexuality.”

4 Rock climbing – 13.9% of comments mentioned that the experience of rock climbing, and notably, the rock climbing community (especially in Natimuk), gave them a strong sense of belonging and connection to the community. “The rock climbing community. It is my family.”

5 Other themes that emerged –

- Natural environment (8.1%),
- Involvement in events and activities (6.2%), services and facilities (4.5%),
- Don’t feel connected (3.6%),
- Outdoor recreation (2.4%), safety (0.5%)

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE THE HORSHAM REGION TO LOOK AND FEEL LIKE IN 2041?

What we heard from 937 people



1 Better roads and transport options – 13.4% of comments expressed a desire for life in the Horsham region to include better roads and transport options by 2041. “Not a truck, highway, heavy transport route running through the very heart of our beautiful river town. We desperately need a transport bypass to progress our vibrant city in 2021 and beyond.”

2 More businesses, industry and employment – 12.1% of comments indicated an interest in developing a thriving business district in the future, with less empty shops, more cafes and other hospitality, greater amounts and variety of shopping and more employment opportunities. “Vibrant city with strong retention of professionals for multiple sectors, not just agriculture and healthcare.”

3 Well-maintained greenery, parks and walking tracks – 9.7% of comments mentioned an interest in more greenspaces, parks and walking tracks by 2041, enabling the region to be greener and more active. “A green community with plenty of parks, green spaces and play areas. A place designed for active transport - where it is the norm, not a rarity.”

4 River utilised to full potential – 8.9% of comments noted their desire for the Wimmera River to be better utilised and showcased by 2041, not only through beautification but through connection to the CBD. “Having a river precinct which people actually use and go to eat, to view and to enjoy.”

5 Other themes that emerged –

- Place for young people and families (8.7%),
- More community activities, engagement and involvement (8.5%),
- More environmentally sustainable (7.4%),
- Stay as it is (7.3%),
- Healthy, good health care (6.9%),
- Improved facilities (6.6%),
- Climbing allowed (5.6%),
- Better cultural awareness and inclusivity (5.1%),
- Vibrant (4.9%),
- More tourism (4.5%),
- Peaceful/relaxed/country town (4.5%),
- Happy/welcoming/friendly community (4.4%),
- More populated, (3.6%),
- Safe (3.6%),
- Clean/attractive (2.2%),
- Sufficient aged care (2.0%),
- Council processes (1.5%)

WHAT ARE THREE THINGS PEOPLE WOULD HIGHLIGHT WHEN TELLING SOMEONE THAT THE HORSHAM RURAL CITY MUNICIPALITY IS A GREAT PLACE TO LIVE?

What we heard from 408 people



1 Natural environment and outdoor recreation – 56.9% of comments stated the natural environment (including the river, national parks, Botanical Gardens and more) as the key reason why the region is a great place to live. “Abundance of wild, beautiful nature in the Grampians and Mt Arapiles.”

2 The community and people – 31.9% of comments mentioned the key thing they would highlight about the region would be the friendly and close-knit community and people. “The sense of community, including how welcoming people are... the generous nature of people who volunteer their time and skills to grow.”

3 Country lifestyle – 20.3% of comments emphasised the country lifestyle, in which the region is safe, peaceful and laid-back, as what they would specifically highlight about the municipality. “A simple and easy place to raise children free from the pressures of commuting. Kids can be independent to some extent. It’s quiet and life is easy.”

4 Other themes that emerged –

- Commercial services (11.3%),
- Proximity to larger cities and other attractions (10.3%),
- Affordable (6.9%),
- Education and schools (6.4%),
- Sports events and facilities (5.4%),
- Good jobs/ business/ other opportunities (5.4%),
- Health services (4.7%),
- The Arts (4.2%),
- Clean (4.2%),
- Activities and events (4.2%),
- Family friendly (3.2%),
- Aquatic centre (1.5%).

