

HORSHAM RURAL CITY TALKS EXPO 2022– 1 SEPTEMBER – 3 SEPTEMBER HORSHAM TOWN HALL

INTRODUCTION

Horsham Rural City Council recognises that effective community engagement is essential to achieving the best outcomes for projects and services that Council deliver.

The Horsham Rural City Council Talks Expo 2022 is Council’s major community engagement relating to the annual review of the Council Plan (and integrated Health and Wellbeing Plan), Annual Action Plan and Budget, providing a transparent mechanism for our community to receive information on current Council projects and priorities, and to provide genuine input into Council’s planning cycle for 2023/2024.

This Engagement Report will be used to inform Councillors about “what the community have told us is” at a Councillor workshop in September 2023.

Council thanks all members of our community who contributed to the Expo both in person at the Town Hall and on-line.

TIMING AND ATTENDANCE HORSHAM TOWN HALL

EXPO DOOR NUMBERS

Thursday 1 Sep 2022 6pm-8pm	26
Friday 2 Sep 2022 10am-7pm	295
Saturday 3 Sep 2022 10am-1pm	88
Total	409

ON-LINE PARTICIPATION HAVE YOUR SAY

ONLINE RESPONSES

My projects performance summary (website data)

Date	Individual Visitors	Total Site Visits	Individual Contributors
6/09/2022	73	84	33
7/09/2022	23	24	5
8/09/2022	23	24	16
9/09/2022	147	155	64
10/09/2022	24	25	13
11/09/2022	13	14	7
12/09/2022	2	2	4
TOTAL	305	324	142

KEY DEMOGRAPHICS

EXPO DEMOGRAPHICS:

Survey data from entry competitions indicate that the attendance at the Expo was heavily dominated by people aged 65+ and in particular aged over 75.

Key demographics:

Males	50%
Females	50%
Total aged 65-74	34%
Total aged 75+	39%

This data indicates that approximately 73% of participants at the Town Hall were aged over 65 and that almost 2 in 5 attendees were over the age of 75. There was an equal representation of men and women. This survey data supports anecdotal observations that the Council staff mainly talked to older community members.

The 2021 Census Data indicates that the median age of the Horsham Rural City municipality is 41 (a slight decrease from the 2016 median age of 42). HRCC is only three years above the median age for the whole of Victoria (38). HRCC's has a significantly younger population than the surrounding Wimmera Southern-Mallee Councils who have a median age of between 49 and 52. (*WDA 2021 Census Presentation*)

ONLINE RESPONSES

There was no demographic data requested for on-line responses. This is noted as an area that can be improved for future expos.

IMPACT OF DEMOGRAPHICS ON ENGAGEMENT FEEDBACK

The demographics of the attendees at the Expo highlights the following:

- The Expo format and venue suited older people
- We clearly heard feedback from people aged 65+ on a range of topics
- There was very limited participation by anyone under 35 (12%) and so we have not successfully engaged with this age group.
- Engagement feedback whilst useful is not representative of the broader demographics of our community, or reflect the 50% of our population that are equal to or younger than the median age of 41.

EXPO THEMES AND ENGAGEMENT FEEDBACK

The Expo featured a number of displays about current projects listed below. Where indicated, specific engagement activities (**SEA**) were undertaken, and at all other displays there was an opportunity for the public to discuss projects with Council staff and provide their thoughts and feedback which are documented throughout this report.

PARENTING SPACE FOR HORSHAM CAD (**SEA**) – FEEDBACK

Participants were asked to highlight areas they felt were important to a parenting space in Horsham:

Feature	Number of dots	On-line responses
Privacy – ability to close door or make space private	1	2
Gender neutral	2	2
Inclusive and welcoming for all parents and carers	2	2
Safe space to entertain other children/ toddlers	3	3
Frequently cleaned	3	3
Close to Firebrace	1	3

Close to car parking	3	1
Monitored/ Safe	1	2
Easy to access	2	3

Mostly week days: 1

Mostly weekends: 1

Both: 1

General Comments:

- Location – Roberts Avenue kindergarten – fencing to stop kids from running off
- Consider a “carers room” also with adult and family access
- Carers room with a shower and access during business hours
- Parenting space – inclusive purpose designed for children and toddlers with developmental delay
- Cleaner toilets - non-touch with better facilities for out of town mothers/aged and other to have a hygienic environment to be in. Toilets in the mother’s facility.
- Put the serenity garden in the children’s area at Roberts Ave.
- Ideas for location of parenting space – potentially May Park, Bus Station or the Botanic Gardens
- Submission made by telephone – consider the usage needs of in town mothers, out of town mothers (rural residents) and those visiting from other towns. Needs of rural and visiting from out of town is different from local mothers as the need a place to land for cleaning, changing, feeding breast or otherwise. Ensure the space allows them to get on with their day and do their shopping rather than having to pack up and head home.

COMMUNITY INCLUSION PLAN

Participants were asked how can Council make it easier for people with disability.

HOW CAN BUILDINGS AND PUBLIC SPACES BE IMPROVED FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY?

- Quiet, low sensory space at Civic Centre
- Darlot Street and others where footpaths are paved mean that I never get to those shops because I need flat concrete
- Where disabled parking spaces exist install “proper gradient” ramped paths to access footpaths
- Quiet spaces with lots of plants
- Height of toilets – they are too low
- Access for wheelchairs and gophers
- Carer’s space that is adult friendly for disability support workers and carer’s of elderly parents
- Tree planting in Horsham north
- All-inclusive park in Horsham North (Foundry Park)

HOW CAN EVENTS AND SERVICES BE IMPROVED FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY?

- Earplugs available for loud events or events that may have loud elements
- With events – tell the proper time for the main acts
- Tenants length of tenure
- Work with the Wimmera Sports Assembly to attract disabled sporting events
- Who is the person responsible for equal opportunity in HRCC? Highlight their work and profile in the newspaper

HOW CAN EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES AT COUNCIL BE IMPROVED FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY?

- Cease double and triple barrelled questions as part of interview process
- Psychometric testing is stupid

HORSHAM'S HERITAGE

General comments

- put heritage signs throughout the CBD – street walk brochure
- Save the remaining heritage buildings – get heritage listing for them
- A heritage Horsham is needed for tourism and locals alike
- Developing Heritage – Horsham Rural City Band being dehomed for sporting improve. Band 150 years old.
- Does the Horsham Rural City Band fit all dot points of heritage – Yes!
- Horsham Historical Society needs more storage space
- Guided Heritage Tour
- Historical Society – recognise former site of Horsham 298

10 YEAR CAPITAL WORKS PIPELINE

The purpose of this activity was to give Council an idea of community priorities in relation to capital works projects, noting however that delivery of capital works projects over the next ten years is impacted directly by aspects such as strategic planning, detailed design, project readiness and grant funding.

It is also noted that the list below does not include regular programmed works for asset categories such as roads, bridges, plant & equipment and footpaths. These programs receive annual budget allocations that are indexed by at least the annual increase in rates and comprise around 40% of Council's total capital works expenditure each year.

Participants at the Expo and on-line where asked to place 3 dots against large capital projects of more than \$1million on the Long Term Capital Works Pipeline.

WHICH THREE PROJECTS DO YOU THINK SHOULD BE A PRIORITY?

Project	Expo Votes	Online Votes	Total	% votes
City Oval community facility and change rooms redevelopment	8	85	93	14.7%
City Oval Netball facilities redevelopment	2	89	91	14.4%
City Oval redevelopment grandstand/ north landscaping	1	68	69	10.9%
Horsham Rail corridor redevelopment	33	28	61	9.6%

Aquatic Centre - hydrotherapy pool, spa, steam and sauna rooms	18	32	50	7.9%
Haven Hall replacement	11	38	49	7.7%
Laharum Oval Community Facility	4	43	47	7.4%
Extend bike tracks from Bike Plan	21	25	46	7.3%
Aquatic Centre - outdoor splash pool and playground	8	34	42	6.7%
Horsham Central Activity District (CAD) Revitalisation projects	13	12	25	3.9%
Horsham Urban Shade	13	12	25	3.9%
Riverfront Activation Stage 2 - redevelopment of the Rowing Club building	5	10	15	2.3%
Horsham Natimuk Cycle Path	9	3	12	1.9%
Zero Net Emissions Action Plan Project	5	4	9	1.4%
TOTAL	151	483	634	100%

What do the results indicate?

- Strong level of interest and voting
- On-line voting more popular than in person (just over 3:1 ratio)
- Approx. 50 of the 400 people who attended in person voted (assuming 3 votes per person) – 12.5%
- Expo votes were quite different to on-line preferences – possibly relating to the age demographics
- On-line voting very much supported the City Oval Project – top three votes were for City Oval projects – with the three projects comprising 40% of all votes
- In person voting – highest votes for the Rail Corridor project and extending bike paths. Voting did not support the City Oval Project
- Projects that were well supported by both in-person and on-line voting – Rail corridor, Aquatic Centre hydrotherapy and extension of bike paths

Should Council include this type of survey again?

- Level of voting and interest in the display indicates yes
- Strong on-line voting activity which potentially reaches a different demographic
- Was a good starting point for conversations around Council's major projects
- Criticism that no \$\$ values were placed against projects – next time consider using a Small, Medium, Large project indicator.

DO YOU HAVE ANY OTHER COMMENTS?

Space was provided for community members to provide feedback on any topics of interest and concern to them over the course of the Expo. Genuine and detailed conversations with Council staff was appreciated and a summary of “other comments” is provided below (under key themes). Some operational suggestions can be implemented within the next twelve months and will be considered by relevant Council teams.

CAD STREETSCAPE PLAN

The CAD Streetscape Plan includes 7 strategies and 15 different projects that will begin to transform the CAD over the next ten+ years. The Plan is at concept level and raises opportunities to deliver significant improvements.

Almost all of the discussion at the Expo centred on two main issues relating to Firebrace Street: removal of parking for mid-block raised pedestrian crossing and widening of the median strip and how that will impact on traffic flow. Examples of comments:

- Concern about how much parking would be lost in Firebrace street to tree planting
- Parking Meters - delete to encourage business in the CBD
- Street trees should not have roots that impede pedestrians where getting out of cars etc.
- Query – 1 hour free parking like Ballarat
- Parking metres – consider remove parking metres and replace with parking zones e.g. ½ hr, 1 hr, 2 hr – Consult Ararat on feasibility of removing metres
- Median pedestrian crossing - why lose three parks on either side – why not one?
- Wombat pedestrian crossings don't work – e.g. Mildura/Warrnambool
- Removal of parking spaces to plant trees i.e. Page 41 of Streetscape Plan – not sure if this takes away too many car parks
- Median strip widening not necessary by 3metres
- Against trees in median strip

Some positive feedback was around the idea of the children's play area (at the old kindergarten site) and the town square project.

FOOTPATHS, ROADS AND BRIDGES

Participants at the Expo had access and Council staff support to enter specific service requests on-line.

General comments included:

- Roundabout needed at corner Darlot Street and McLachlan Street
- School road Pimpinio – dirt should be all weather road
- Thomas Road (on roads plan - combined project)
- Get the bypass built ASAP – It will do more for Horsham than anything else suggested here. Build it along Stawell/Plumpton/Currans roads and that will encourage the tourists to visit or stay
- Horsham Truck Diversion (Alternative Truck Route) from Wail nursery put 2 lane improved road to Dooen – connecting with Henty highway to Mildura, and continue highway past Longerenong and south to interstate Western highway opposite new sale yards road. Keep Melbourne to Adelaide traffic out of Horsham - later connect Henty Hwy south of Horsham

- Domestic Bridge – Bennett Road to Ballinger Street
- Only have mid-block crossings in the CAD not a roundabout
- Map submission – develop Cameron Road from Henty Hwy to Western Hwy Bridge with a second bridge over the river at Cameron road (supported by three other participants). This would take trucks away from schools and city centre, would ease traffic from Stawell to north Horsham and would help Horsham's development from west

SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

General comments included:

- Pimpinio Community Planning session
- Utilise rear of the Pimpinio Uniting Church and War Memorial to provide a story board history of township including indigenous connections
- Museum Study Stage 2 – when will this happen?
- What other pop ups can be put up - other pop up parks? What about a pop up giant chess board or other interactive games – salvos piano pop up in different spots
- Rail station precinct - cement over unused rail precinct area for sport facilities (netball, bowls etc. and parking and club rooms)
- Support Town Square at Roberts Avenue
- Family friendly development in the Baillie Street helipad area such as toilets, BBQs, playground for public use and off-leash dog park
- Paddleboats – offer to service clubs the opportunity to operate
- The HRC Band has been around for 150 years and in its current location for 53 yrs. The HRCC is moving them out of their owned building to go to Jubilee Hall. Talk about Heritage.
- Horsham North Music Zone – people to access free music teaching and connection – like a fit for music community hub
- At the silo in Mill street – could the Aboriginal community use the area to show their art work and history of their peoples
- New Band hall – under events stage at City Oval

ACCESSIBILITY

General comments included:

- Lighting up the shop fronts with LED lighting – could be under awning lighting in the CAD
- Bird droppings on table and chairs along the river – standard replacement (near rowing club), cleaning regime – weekly
- Return of passenger rail advocacy project
- After recent trip around out beautiful country I found that towns the same size or smaller than Horsham strongly encourage and strive to encourage visitors to stay and visit. They often provide free parking, great visitor info from locals. Tourists bring in money.
- Vline services – ticketing now at library – can the bus pull in there – better for accessibility

- Refurbish all public toilets especially Roberts Ave.
- It has been mentioned over the last 10 years Council should be working to make Horsham a retirement city. Make the Council depot into senior citizens accommodation with appropriate gopher trails and that Council should be looking at these rather than bike trails.

4BIN WASTE SERVICE

The expo contained a large display introducing the 4-bin waste service that will start in April 2023. This display created a great deal of interest and the first opportunity for our community to ask questions about the new service.

General comments included:

- If you have one less bin – do you get charged less? – don't have glass in my home
- Colac Service – split bins with large 240 litre bin
- I am in favour of the recycling program. It is good to have a glass crusher.
- Winds blowing over the bin
- Wimmera village and other retirement villages – what will bin arrangements be? Ability to share bins?

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

General comments included:

- A to Z on council website to help rate payer and others
- Comms idea – short summary of Council Minutes after each Council meeting – to sit on agenda page
- People commented – “It was really wonderful to talk to actual people”
- No Natimuk projects on display apart from overdue bike track
- Expo a good idea
- Grant writing workshop in Natimuk
- Rural priorities weren't on display or up for discussion
- Forum with councillors and community for open questions – say Town Hall

BUSINESS ACTIVATION

General comments included:

- Outdoor furniture – café- restaurant – permits
- Vline station – edge of platform is terrible
- More community focus events
- Just not families or groups all the time – what about single people?
- Rates incentive for commercial owners to have tenants and business in their buildings
- Youth services – nothing programmed in Natimuk

- Council need to advocate for Natimuk Lake

OTHER UNTHEMED GENERAL COMMENTS

- People asked about the status of specific projects
- Health and Wellbeing for families activities focus – in a family friendly gathering space
- Train times and access to education – Tafe system has free courses but they cannot be accessed here. Only in Ballarat. Either advocate for education here or for changes to the transport timetables to allow local kids to get to Tafe in Ballarat and home in a day
- Projection on buildings all year around – Activated windows
- People participation – get people involved with Council projects