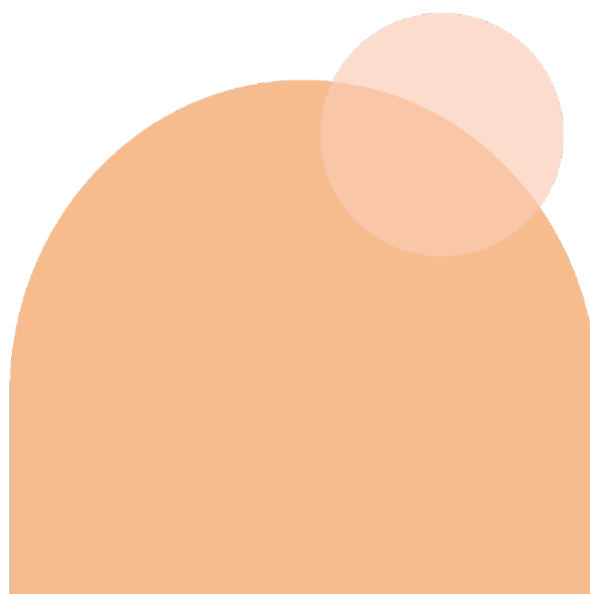
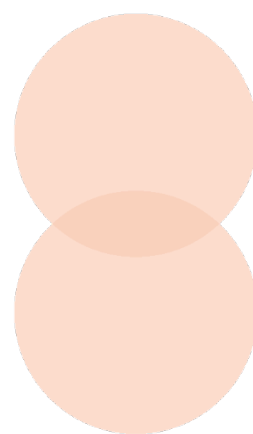


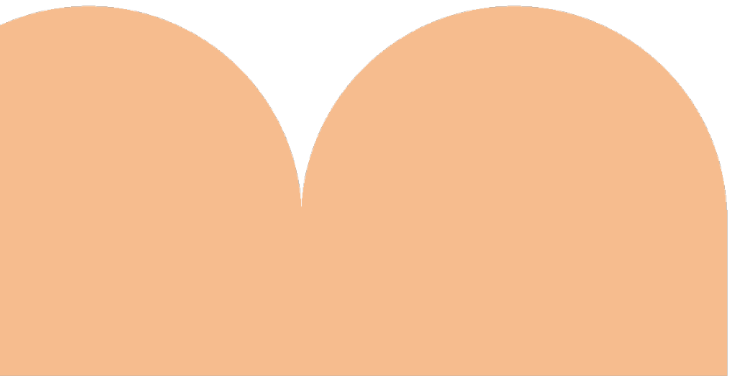


Future Federation 2040 Community Strategic Plan

Engagement Report

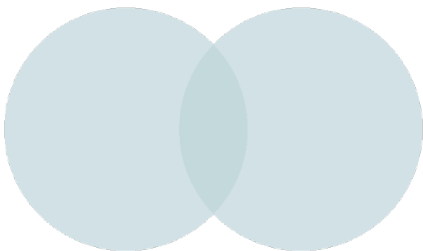
March 2025





Future Federation 2040
Community Strategic Plan, Engagement Report

Prepared for	Federation Council
Date	March 2025
Version	FINAL
Author	Karina Dooley Projectura



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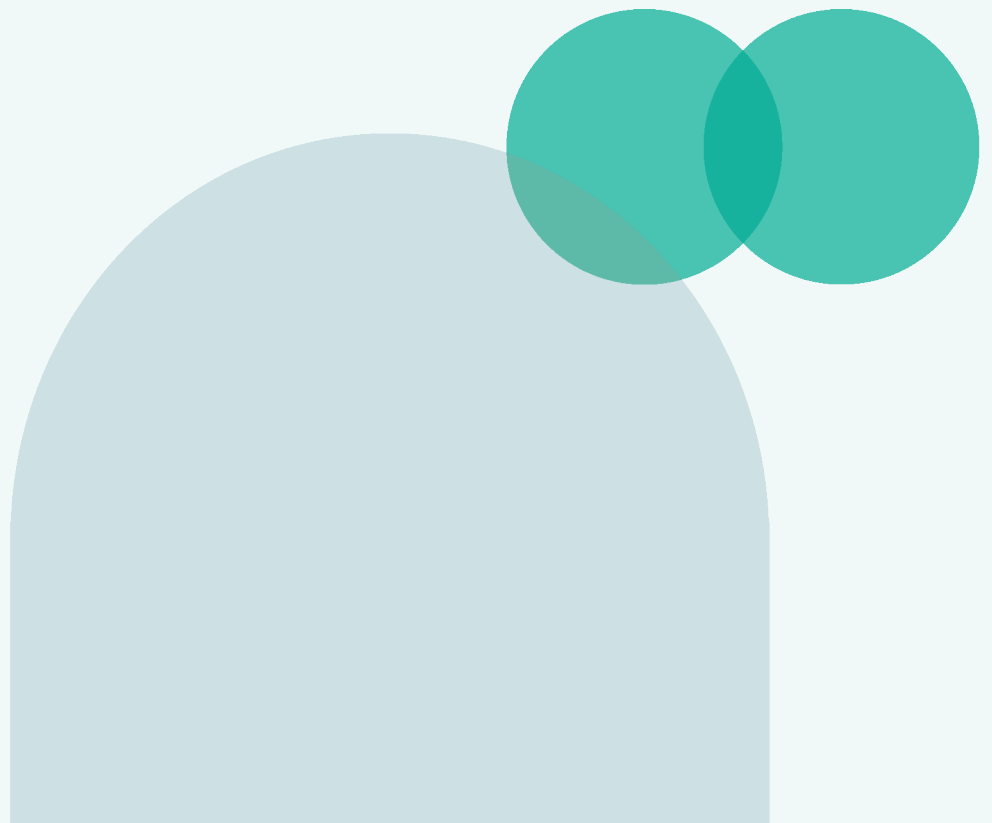
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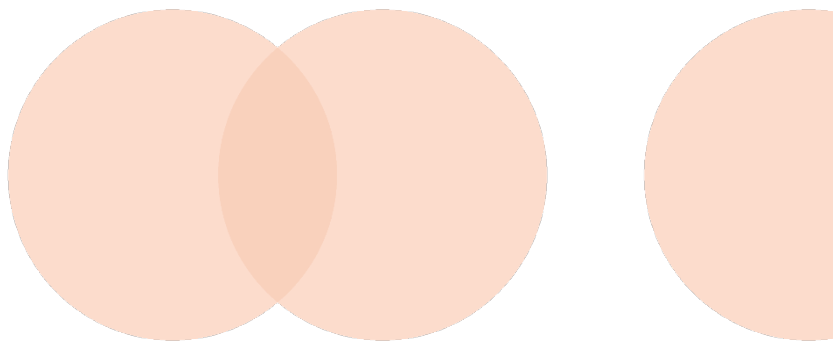
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Projectura acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work and recognise their ongoing connection to the Wiradjuri land and waterways.

We also recognise the many other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members across the region who make up the vibrant communities where our organisation visits and works.

Projectura pays respect to the wisdom of Elders, past, present, and emerging and shares a commitment to engaging communities with a spirit of reconciliation and respect.





The Future Federation 2040 Community Strategic Plan (CSP) project reviews the current CSP, and meaningfully document the vision, aspirations and priorities of the community for the next 15 years.

As the Council's highest-level planning document, the CSP ensures Council's corporate planning, decisions and public investments are based on a sound understanding of the communities' priorities. This community-owned plan reflects the collective input and ambitions of residents, with the Council acting as a custodian and facilitator of its development.

The current CSP review builds on the Federation Council Community Strategic Plan 2022/23-2031/32, extending the vision through to 2040. The review is being delivered in two stages: Stage 1 (broad engagement) and Stage 2 (testing the draft CSP).

Stage 1 engagement was delivered by both Projectura and Micromex. This report documents the findings from Projectura's engagement activities during the first stage of engagement.

Participation

Stage 1 engagement ran from September 2024 to January 2025, and a total of 469 residents contributed input, representing 3.6% of the population.

Questions focused on identifying where we are now, where we want to be in 2040, how we will get there, and how will we know we've been successful.

Participation methods included:

- Online survey: 196 respondents
- Telephone survey: 201 respondents (conducted by Micromex as part of the Community Satisfaction Survey)
- Pop-up sessions: Engaging 51 attendees across three locations
- Workshops: Five workshops attended by 13 participants
- Telephone interviews: 8 interviews conducted

Participants reflected a broad cross-section of the Federation community; however, there were notable gaps in representation among people aged 24 and over 70 years, males, residents of Mulwala, and those from non-English speaking backgrounds.

Findings

The engagement findings highlight the community's appreciation for Federation's natural beauty, rural charm, and strong sense of community while identifying areas requiring attention and improvement.

Vision

The incumbent CSP vision resonated with respondents with over 60% feeling neutral or happy about the current vision.

Strengths

When asked what makes their community a great place to live, respondents told us the region's strengths were the beautiful natural environment, lifestyle, peace and quiet, community groups and volunteers, and the sense of community.

Key strengths include:

- The region is easy to navigate, with minimal traffic and valued community assets such as parks, gardens, and sporting facilities. Proximity to Albury-Wodonga and other major centres enhances accessibility and convenience.
- Federation benefits from relatively lower living costs and vibrant tourism assets, including local wineries, cafes, and river-based attractions.
- The Murray River, Lake Mulwala, and other natural assets provide scenic beauty and recreational opportunities, making the region highly desirable.
- The supportive nature of the community fosters a sense of belonging. Community groups and clubs are active and inclusive, contributing to a vibrant social fabric.
- The council's ability to secure funding for key projects and commitment to ethical practices are viewed positively when resources are allocated effectively.

Challenges

Respondents told us the greatest challenges facing the community were road and infrastructure quality, an ageing population, council leadership and financial sustainability, cost of living, development concerns, and crime and public safety.

Key challenges include:

- Poor road conditions, limited lighting, drainage, sewerage systems hinder development, and footpath connectivity.
- Rising costs, including council rates and essential services, are causing financial strain. The limited focus on attracting investment and expanding tourism infrastructure further impacts growth.
- Climate change, drought, floods, and rising temperatures challenge the region's natural resilience. Limited shade and tree canopy cover are environmental concerns raised by respondents.
- Social isolation, particularly among older residents, and limited youth engagement opportunities are concerns. Housing affordability and access to health services also emerged as critical issues.
- Perceived gaps in leadership, financial sustainability, and community engagement have created frustrations. Rate increases during a cost-of-living crisis and lack of communication were key themes.

Priorities

Community priorities were identified by asking "what is one thing you would like to see achieved in the next ten years", and "what have you seen in another area or shire that would work well in your community". Respondents prioritised infrastructure upgrades, affordable housing, economic growth, enhanced health services, community events, community safety, education and training, environmental resilience, and improved transport connectivity.

Key priorities include:

- Infrastructure upgrades such as improved roads, lighting, drainage, sewer upgrades to facilitate growth, streetscape revitalisation, and better pedestrian and cyclist connectivity.
- Support and grants for local businesses, strategies to attract younger populations and diversify job opportunities, and enhanced tourism infrastructure and promotion.
- Climate change initiatives, tree planting for shade and biodiversity, and improved riverfront developments.
- More community events, youth engagement activities, support older people to remain socially connected, improved access to medical and mental health services, and expanded aged care and childcare.
- Transparent and accountable leadership, improved financial management, reduce rate pressures, and stronger community engagement processes to ensure residents' voices are heard and acted upon.

Project overview

Each NSW Council must have a Community Strategic Plan (CSP) which outlines the vision, aspirations and priorities for the community for a minimum period of ten years into the future.

This becomes Council's highest level planning document, and ensures that Council's planning and use of public funds is based on a sound understanding of the community's aspirations and priorities.

While the CSP is Council's highest level planning document, it is a community-owned plan. Council's role is custodial; to guide the community through discussions about their aspirations and priorities for the future, document these in a meaningful plan, and house the plan on behalf of the community.

The current Federation Council Community Strategic Plan 2023-2031/32 (CSP) was prepared with the community in 2022.

Federation Council is currently engaging the community to review the CSP and create a vision through to 2040.

Project stages

The Future Federation Community Strategic Plan is being delivered across two stages:

- **Stage 1:** Broad engagement
- **Stage 2:** Testing the Draft Community Strategic Plan.

Each stage incorporates community engagement, ensuring the Plan reflects the community's aspirations and priorities. This document summarises the findings from Stage 1 engagement.

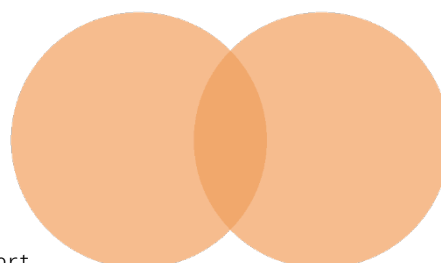
Findings from Stage 1 which include Projectura's Engagement Report (this report) and Micromex's telephone survey findings, will be published separately on Council's website.

Engagement objectives

The communications and engagement approach were guided by the Community Engagement Plan finalised by Federation Council in September 2024.

The objectives of the engagement are to:

- Raise awareness of the project amongst those who live, work, and play in the Federation region.
- Provide interested community members with an opportunity to contribute their views and identify long-term priorities for local identity, growth and lifestyle through to 2040.
- Use a variety of engagement techniques to connect with stakeholders within the council region to gather a range of feedback on the long-term vision for their municipality.
- Effectively engage using the social justice principles of equity, access, participation and rights.
- Use targeted engagement approaches to connect with specific target groups of community members, and relevant departments and agencies to identify how to deliver new strategic actions.
- Ensure local, regional and state priorities are considered in the development of the Draft CSP.



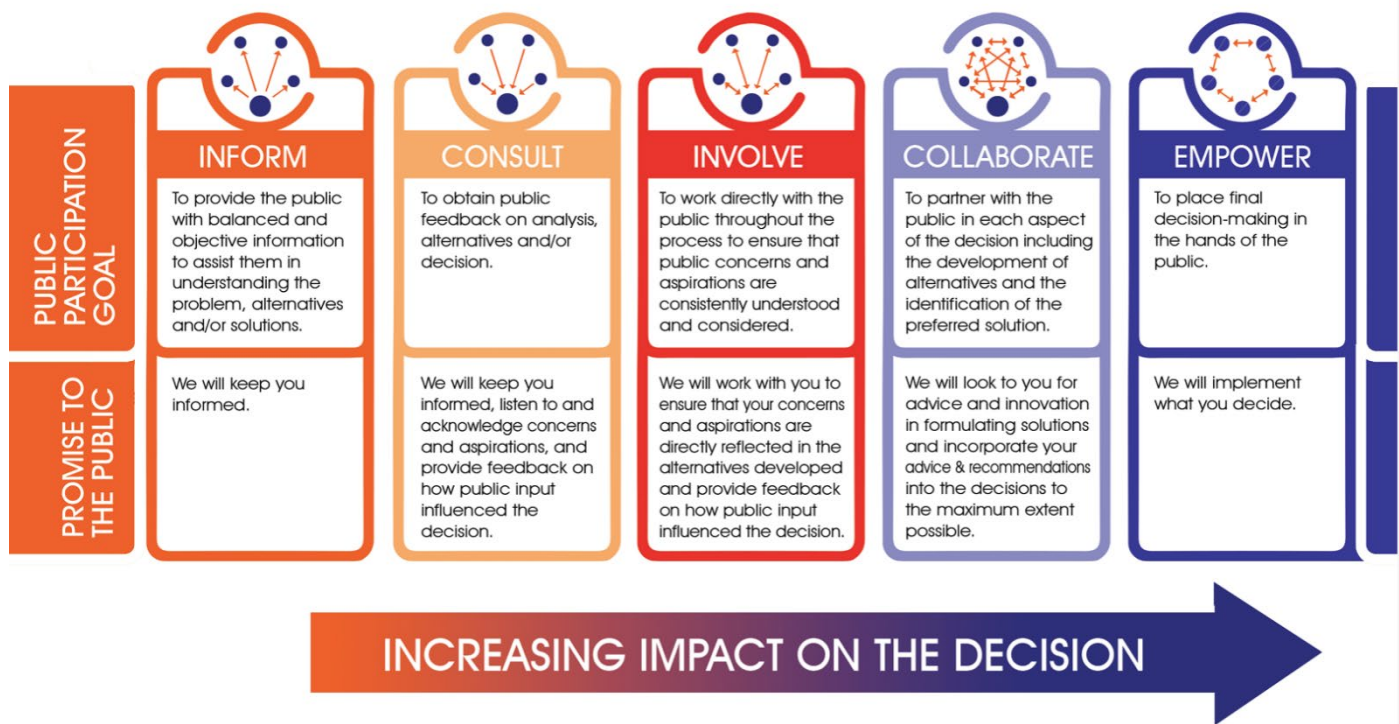


Figure 1. IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

Figure 1 was inserted at the request of Federation Council to explain the engagement language used in this document and what it means.

Stage 1 engagement overview

Between September 2024 and January 2025, Council engaged with 469 community members to shape the Future Federation 2040 Community Strategic Plan.

The engagement process was guided by Council's Community Engagement Strategy, with the highest level of engagement reaching Involve.

- Inform: Sharing information via website, social media, email newsletters, newspapers, flyers and direct mail.
- Consult: Online and telephone surveys to gather feedback on key issues.
- Involve: Telephone and online surveys, workshops, pop-up sessions, and telephone interviews to deepen engagement and ensure community voices shaped the CSP.

Engagement activities sought responses to some key questions:

1. What makes your community a great place to live?
2. What do you think are the main challenges facing your community?
3. What have you seen in another area/shire that you think would work well in your community?
4. What is one thing you would like to see achieved in your community in the next ten years?

The same questions were used across each method to guide discussion and provide localised perspectives. Time and age-appropriateness meant that an abridged version of questions was asked in the in-person engagement.



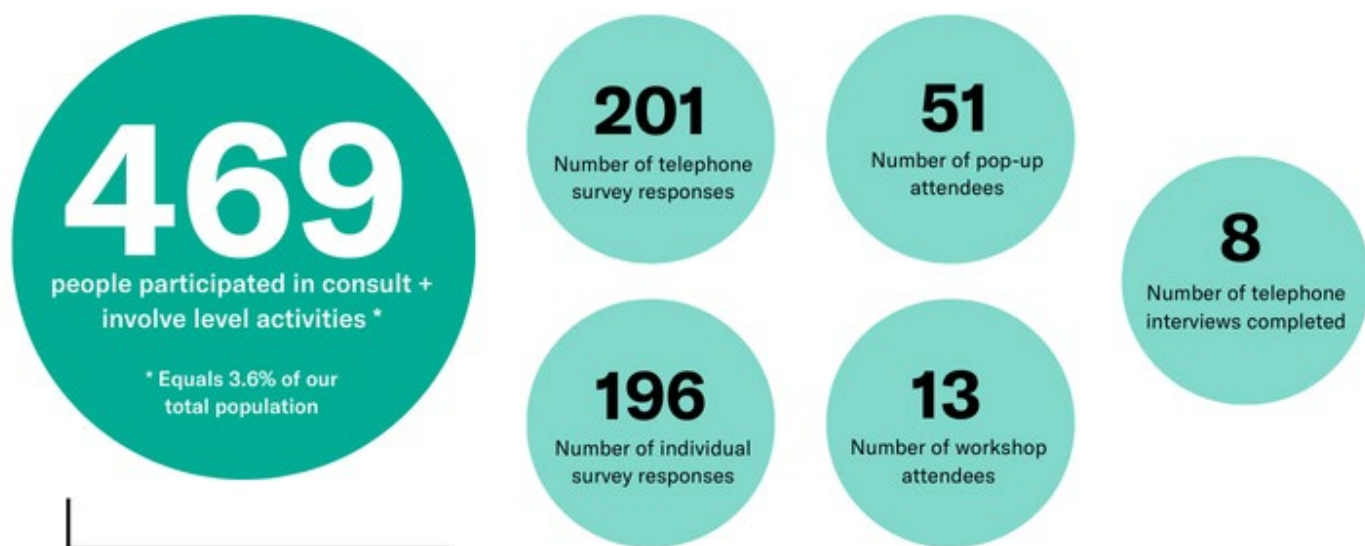


Table 1. Participation by activity

Name	Date	Location	Participation
Community Satisfaction Survey *	25 Sep – 10 Oct 2024	Telephone (conducted by Micromex)	201
Online survey	28 Oct –6 Dec 2024	Online – on Council’s Have Your Say page.	196
Pop-up session 1	6 Nov 2024, 10am to 12pm.	Howlong Bakery, Hawkins St, Howlong	15
Workshop 1	6 Nov 2024, 1-2:30pm	Howlong Golf Resort, Golf Club Dr, Howlong	8
Workshop 2	6 Nov 2024, 6-7:30pm	Federation Council, Urana Council Chambers, William St, Urana	1
Pop-up session 2	20 Nov 2024, 10am-12pm.	Corowa Memorial Plaza, Sanger St, Corowa	10
Workshop 3	20 Nov 2024, 1-2:30pm.	Miss Birdy Room, Club Corowa, Betterment Pde, Corowa	1
Pop-up session 3	21 Nov 2024, 10am-12pm	Mulwala Bakery, Melbourne Rd, Mulwala	26
Workshop 4	21 Nov 2024, 1-2:30pm	Mulwala Library and Resource Centre Hall, Melbourne Rd, Mulwala	1
Workshop 5	21 Nov 2024, 6-7:30pm	Online (Google Meet)	2
Interviews	Dec 2024	Telephone	8
Total			469 people

* NOTE: The Community Satisfaction Survey conducted by Micromex included specific questions that supported the review of the Community Strategic Plan. Micromex has prepared a separate report analysing their findings. While their findings will inform the preparation of the Community Strategic Plan, they are not included in this document.

Who did we hear from?

The profile of the participants shows a broad cross-section of the Federation Council community were involved in terms of age, gender, location, and diversity characteristics.

Engagement activities were designed to enable broad participation (in-person, online and in writing, as well as at both structured

times, and at times that suited the participants). Consequently, participant demographic details were captured to varying degrees and some individuals may have participated in more than one engagement activity. The full suite of characteristics was collected through the survey and telephone interviews, partial demographic characteristics were collected through the pop-ups (age, gender, location, urban/rural), and the workshops (age, location).

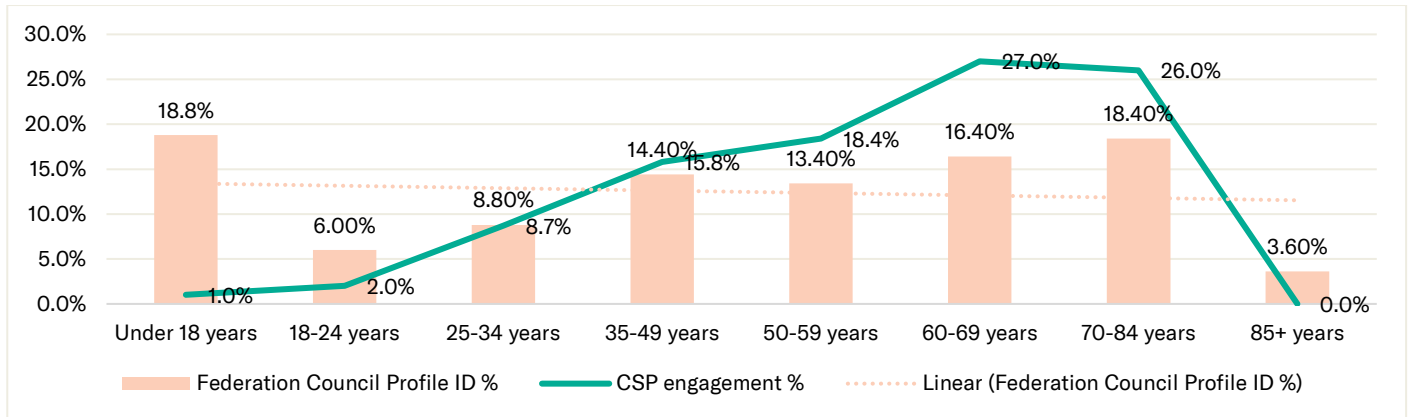


Figure 2. Respondent age

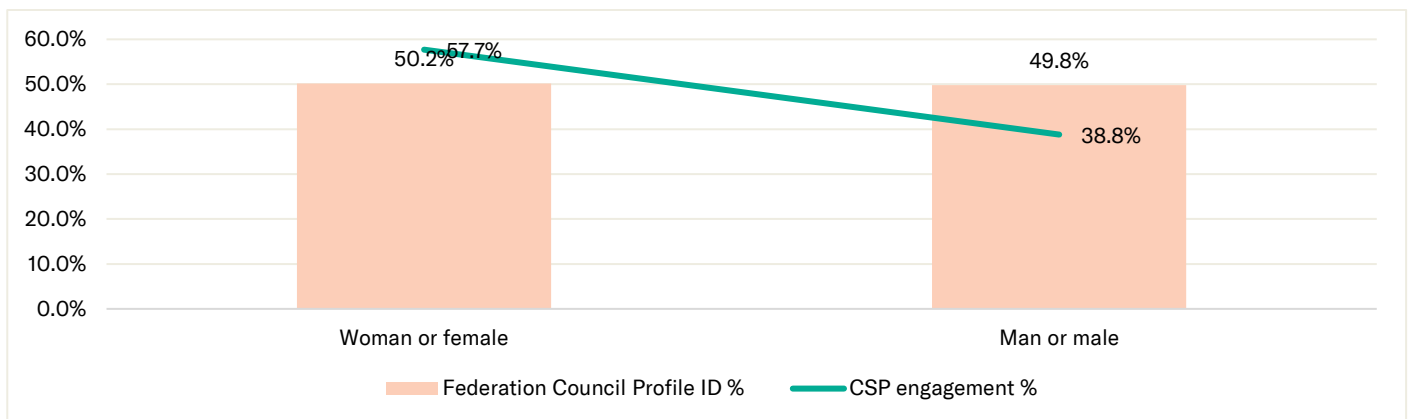


Figure 3. Respondent gender

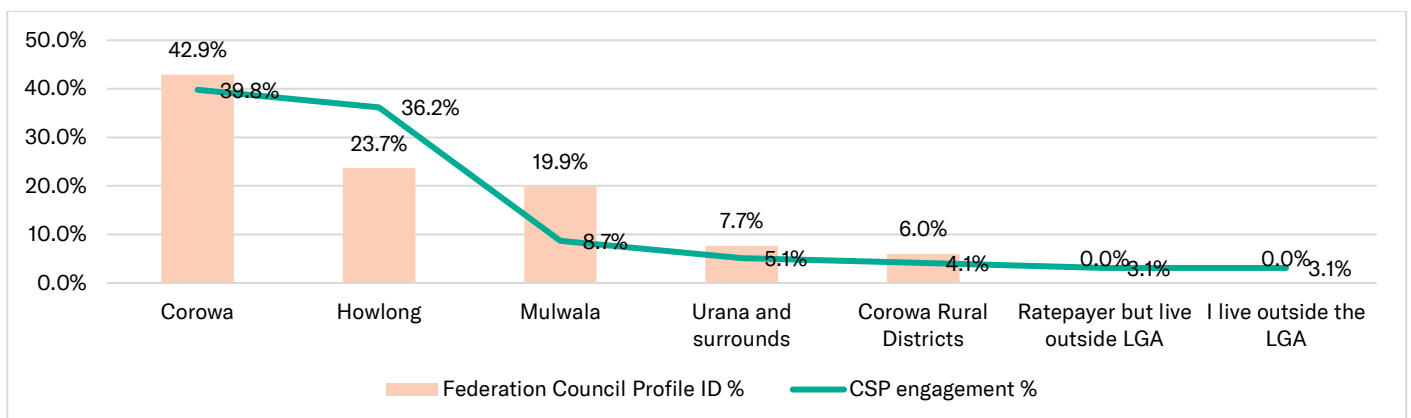


Figure 4. Respondent location

Table 2. Respondent profile

Demographics		2024 CSP engagement	FC Profile ID
Characteristic	Breakdown	% of people engaged	Accessed Jan 2025
Age	Under 18 years	1.0	18.8
	18-24 years	2.0	6.0
	25-34 years	8.7	8.8
	35-49 years	15.8	14.4
	50-59 years	18.4	13.4
	60-69 years	27.0	16.4
	70-84 years	26.0	18.4
	85+ years	0.0	3.6
Gender	Female	57.7	50.2
	Male	38.8	49.8
Location	Corowa	39.8	42.9
	Howlong	36.2	23.7
	Mulwala	8.7	19.9
	Urana and surrounds	5.1	7.7
	Corowa Rural Districts	4.1	6.0
	I'm a ratepayer but live outside the council area	3.1	-
	I'm not a resident or ratepayer	3.1	-
Urban/Rural	Urban	77.0	-
	Rural	23.0	-
Diversity	Person with a disability	6.6	7.1
	Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	2.0	2.3
	Non-English speaking background	0.5	2.0
	LGBTQIA+	3.6	-
	Lived experience of housing stress or homelessness	4.6	-
	Lived experience of mental health issues	13.8	-
	Lived experience of alcohol or drug issues	4.6	-
	Lived experience of family violence	5.6	-

NOTE: Red represents underrepresentation, and green represents overrepresentation compared to the 2020 census data shown in Profile ID.

* Source: ABS Cat 2001.0

Future community consultation should aim to improve representation of:

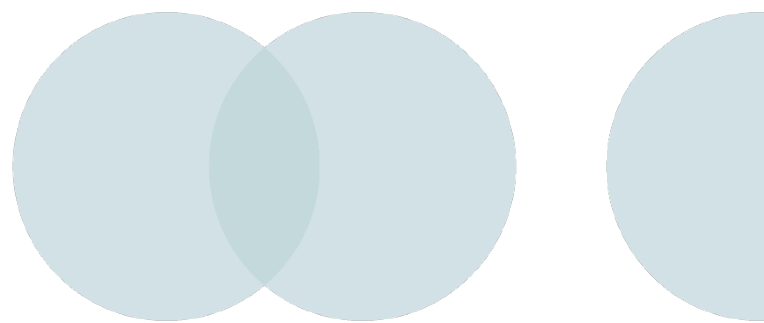
- People aged under 24 years and over 70 years.
- Males.
- People living in Mulwala.
- People from non-English speaking backgrounds.

The engagement process provided valuable insights into the strengths, challenges, and priorities of the Federation community.

Qualitative insights and quantitative data have been combined to provide a comprehensive overview of the community's current landscape and its roadmap for the future.

This section explores the findings, which are presented as follows:

- **Vision:** Feedback on the overarching community vision for Federation.
- **Where are we now:** Explores the community's current strengths and challenges.
- **Where do we want to be in 2040:** Key priorities for the future, reflecting the community's collective goals for growth, sustainability, and inclusivity.
- **How will we get there:** Insights into services and projects that residents believe should be prioritised for Federation.
- **For each pillar:** This section addresses the strengths, challenges and priorities for each of the five pillars in the current CSP:
 - Pillar 1: Built Federation
 - Pillar 2: Economic Federation
 - Pillar 3: Natural Federation
 - Pillar 4: Social Federation
 - Pillar 5: Well Governed Federation



Vision

Feedback from Federation respondents reinforced that the incumbent Vision still resonated for the community.

Comments made on the vision weren't necessarily in response to the vision statement, but more broadly addressed challenges and frustrations, and aspirations for the future. Commentary focused on the need for improved infrastructure, equitable resource allocation across the region, and better engagement with and responsiveness to community needs. Common themes included frustration over perceived biases towards certain towns, lack of focus on tourism, and inadequate attention to essential services such as drainage, tree planting, and medical facilities. Residents also emphasised the importance of promoting inclusivity, improving communication, and delivering on commitments outlined in the vision. Additionally, concerns about rates, internet connectivity, and the accessibility of council documents were raised.

Q1. How do you feel about the vision in the endorsed Federation Council Community Strategic Plan 2022-2032? n=100

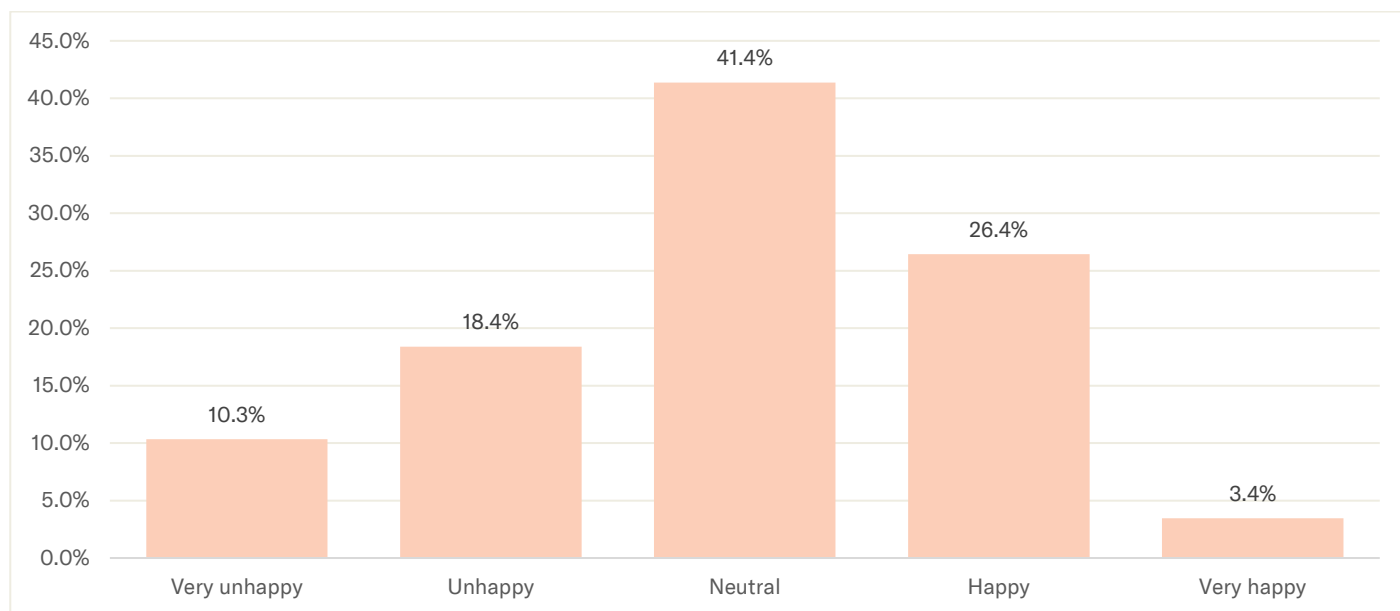


Figure 5. Vision satisfaction

Where are we now?

Strengths

We asked respondents “What makes your community a great place to live’ so that we could take a strengths-based approach to future planning and get clear on what we needed to protect and retain.

Q1. What makes your community a great place to live? n=150

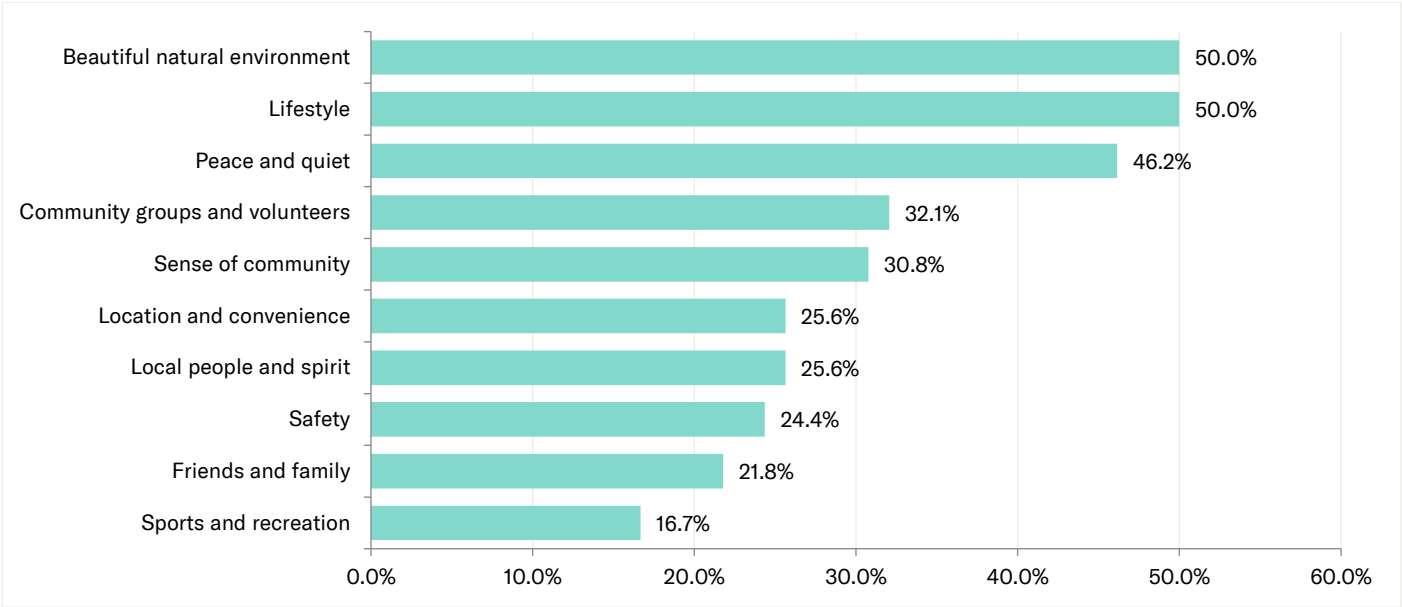


Figure 6. Strengths

“It is an incredible region to live in and the lifestyle is enjoyable.”

“The river which is natural and not over developed.”

“We are close to the things we need without being on top of each other.”

“It’s a beautiful place to bring up children, and to retire as well.”

1. **Natural environment** (50.0percent)

Murray River, Lake Mulwala, Urana Aquatic Centre, picturesque natural environments, waterways, trees and bushland, spring flowers, open spaces, wildlife.

2. **Lifestyle** (50.0 percent)

Affordable, diverse, family friendly, relaxed, safe, size of community, freedom and space.

3. **Peace and quiet** (46.2 percent)

Tranquil, space, quietness and serenity were enjoyed during non-holiday periods, and the surrounds and community are peaceful.

4. **Community groups and volunteers** (32.1 percent)

Community groups, things to do, people getting involved, sporting and social activities.

5. **Sense of community** (30.8 percent):

Supportive nature of the community, especially during difficult times. The community is becoming increasingly diverse as new residents are welcomed. People feel a sense of belonging that comes with residing in a close-knit community with good networks.

6. **Local people and spirit** (25.6 percent)

People are generally good, kind, caring and helpful. There is a strong friendly spirit among people, and some inspiring new personalities.

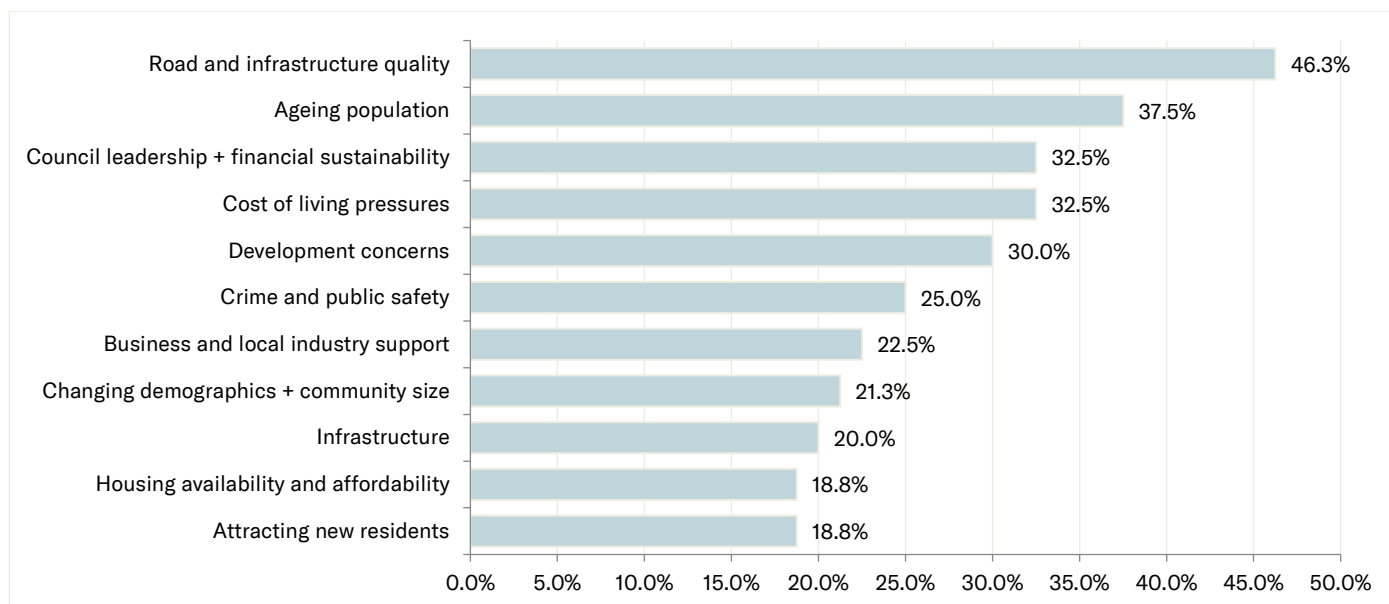
7. **Location and convenience** (25.6 percent)

The proximity to Melbourne and other regional centres like Albury, Wodonga, Wangaratta and Yarrawonga, being able to live, work and play in a small radius.

Challenges

We asked respondents 'What are the main challenges facing your community' to gain insight into the challenges and changes affecting communities and their progress. These challenges arise at environmental, economic, societal and local levels. By identifying them, the Community Strategic Plan seeks to develop strategies that effectively address, adapt to, and respond positively to these challenges.

Q2. What are the main challenges facing your community? n=152



"Keep the community safe and together."

"Policing (no resident officer)."

A summary of feedback for the top six challenges is provided below.

1. Road and infrastructure (46.3 percent)

- Road conditions, quality, and maintenance.
- Drainage issues in specific areas (e.g., Hume Street, Howlong).
- Speed and heavy trucks concerns in town centres.
- Lack of footpaths affecting mobility.
- Visibility at roundabouts.
- Water and sewer infrastructure needed for new housing developments.

2. Ageing population (37.5 percent)

- Need for affordable housing and healthcare services.
- Concerns about isolation and lack of engagement for older residents.
- Desire to attract younger populations to create a more balanced demographic.
- Infrastructure upgrades needed to cater to older residents, such as better mobility and footpath access.

3. Council leadership and financial sustainability (32.5 percent)

- Perceptions of overstaffing and inefficient spending.
- Concerns about financial and planning decisions.
- Lack of support for community-driven initiatives.
- Dissatisfaction with rate increases and budget shortfalls.

4. Cost of living (32.5 percent)

- Rising housing costs, including rent and property prices, and rising rates and insurance premiums.
- General cost of living pressures affecting families and individuals, particularly utility, fuel, health and food cost increases.
- Increased stress caused by financial strain.

5. Development and land use concerns (30.0 percent)

- Slow or restrictive Council development approval processes.
- Balancing development with adequate infrastructure provision.
- Concerns about becoming a "holiday town" with increased holiday rentals.
- Desire for long-term strategic planning to support sustainable growth.
- Hesitation toward growth from some community members.

6. Crime and public safety (25.0 percent)

- Lack of police presence and perceived increases in antisocial behaviour.
- Vandalism and behaviour problems among youth.
- Safety concerns related to poor lighting and infrastructure (e.g., streetlights in Howlong).

"Cost of living crisis and pressures on families to juggle work, family and life commitments. Society is time poor."

"This is an aging community, and we need to attract a younger population to advance this community."

Where do we want to be in 2040?

We asked two key questions to elicit where people want to be in ten years' time, and what their priorities are for the future:

- What have you seen in another area that would work well in your community? n=124
- What would you like to see achieved in your community in the next ten years? n=137

The key priorities for the Federation region, guiding its vision through to 2040 are outlined below in order of importance.

1. Infrastructure

- Infrastructure upgrades across roads, drainage and sewerage systems.
- Heavy vehicle bypasses to relieve traffic in main streets.
- Streetscape revitalisation to improve town centres.
- Enhanced riverfront developments.

2. Housing for all

- Affordable housing for young families and downsizers.
- Manage holiday rentals in Mulwala to balance accommodation needs.
- Address homelessness and housing diversity.

3. Economic growth

- Support businesses through grants, education and reduced red tape.
- Increase retail diversity.
- Implement economic strategies for job growth.

4. Health services

- Improve access to medical and allied health services.
- Increase permanent ambulance stations.
- Better access to mental health support.

5. Community spirit and events

- More events to bring the community together.
- Preserve and celebrate our heritage and history.
- Develop key regional events and attractions.
- Youth facilities and activities to improve social cohesion.

6. Safety and security

- Better lighting and safe walkways.
- Increase in police presence to reduce crime.

7. Education and training:

- Improve secondary education facilities.
- Vocational training and support for apprenticeships.
- Equitable access to quality education.

8. Environment

- Improve tree canopy cover in towns for shade and aesthetic value.
- Move towards a decarbonised economy.
- Adapt to global warming and climate change.
- Better parks, gardens, and recreational spaces.

9. Transport

- Public transport services connecting our towns and regional centres.
- Connected walking and cycling trails.
- Traffic calming and pedestrian crossings.

How will we get there?

Respondents were also asked what services or projects should be prioritised for the region. A list was provided, and respondents were asked to select their top five (5) options. The top ten responses are in the figure below.

Q5. What services or projects do you think should be prioritised for the shire? n=74

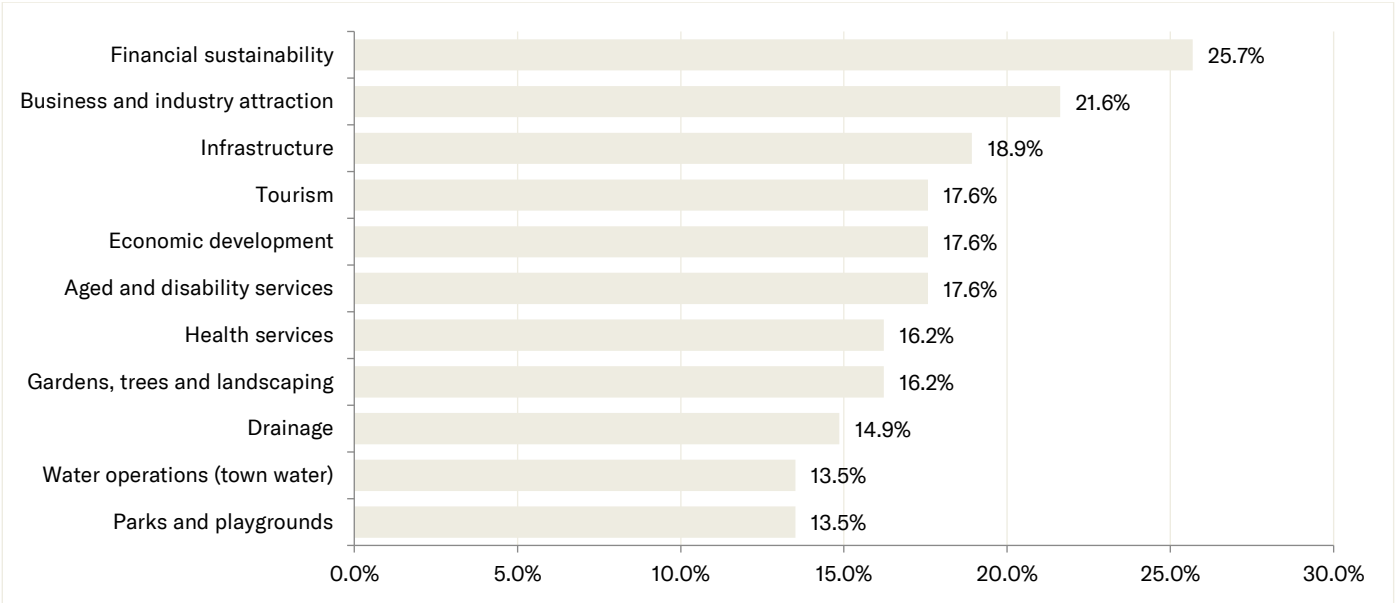


Figure 7. Services and projects

“Council spend money well but please keep rates down.”

“More business opportunities to grow the towns and offer more job diversity.”

“Improve the water pressure.”

“Open up more foreshore access and keep it public.”

“A new bridge between Mulwala and Yarrawonga would make travel much easier.”

Pillar 1: Built Federation

“The golf courses, parks, and gardens are some of the best features of our towns.”

The community appreciates the strengths of its built environment, recognising its accessibility, connectivity, and valued community assets. However, they also identify challenges and opportunities for improvement to ensure the region grows sustainably while maintaining its unique charm and liveability.

From transport and infrastructure to urban planning and community facilities, the feedback highlights a clear desire to balance future development with preserving the area’s character. Addressing these challenges will be essential to supporting growth and meeting the evolving needs of the community.

Looking ahead, the community envisions a Federation that embraces sustainable development, enhances liveability, and ensures future generations can enjoy the area’s distinctive qualities.

Strengths		Challenges	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">– The region is easy to navigate, with minimal traffic.– Parks, gardens, and sporting facilities are highly valued for promoting an active and connected lifestyle.– The libraries and riverfront areas are considered integral to community wellbeing.– The region’s infrastructure supports a relaxed, country feel that the community is eager to maintain even as growth occurs.		<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Poor road conditions, limited lighting, and heavy traffic in key areas.– Transport links between towns and access to major centres also need improvement.– Water pressure, drainage, and sewer systems require modernisation to support current and future development.– Limited bus services and infrequent public transport options hinder connectivity within the region and to nearby centres.– Mobility and movement are difficult as most streets don’t have footpaths.	
Priorities			
Improved transport and connectivity		Upgraded road infrastructure, including better lighting and safer intersections. A bypass for Howlong’s main street to ease congestion. Reliable and frequent public transport connecting towns to Albury, Wodonga, Wangaratta and beyond. Better walkable streets in Mulwala and Howlong. Improved pedestrian crossings in Melbourne Street, Mulwala.	
Infrastructure		Improve capacity of water and sewer to allow new development. Improve streetscaping in town centres to attract visitors and support local economies.	
Enhanced community assets		Inclusive and well-maintained parks, playgrounds, and walking trails. Expand aquatic facilities, including splash parks and indoor pools.	

“Upgrade our infrastructure to allow for new residential growth.”

“Reliable public transport to Albury and Corowa would make a world of difference.”

“Damaged roads are everywhere—better road lighting and safer conditions are overdue.”

“The river and local wineries are incredible—we need to showcase them more.”

Pillar 2: Economic Federation

The Federation community appreciates its strategic location, access to shopping and services, and vibrant tourism potential. However, challenges such as rising cost of living pressures, availability of housing for workers, limited economic development strategies, and workforce attraction pose barriers to achieving sustainable growth.

The community sees an economically vibrant future built on innovation, sustainability, and inclusive opportunities. By addressing challenges, Federation aims to attract younger generations, strengthen local businesses, and unlock the full potential of its tourism assets.

Federation’s economic strengths lie in its geographic advantages, rich community resources, and untapped potential. By building on these strengths, the region can pave the way for long-term growth and prosperity.

Strengths	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proximity to Albury-Wodonga and other major centres provides convenience while preserving the area’s rural charm. Wineries, cafes, and natural attractions are key draws for visitors. The relatively lower cost of living compared to metropolitan areas is a drawcard for residents and businesses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rising costs, including council rates, insurance, and essential services, are creating financial stress for residents. Gaps in strategic planning and a lack of focus on attracting investment. The region’s tourism infrastructure is underutilized, with significant potential for improvement. Limited access to essentials (supermarket, butcher etc) in some towns and villages.
Priorities	
Enhanced tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop RV facilities, free camping areas, and improved caravan parks. Create new tourist attractions, such as a splash park and better riverfront amenities. Develop Ball Park Caravan Park.
Support for local business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More retail variety and job opportunities to boost economic diversity. Support for small businesses and local industries.
Sustainable economic strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement the Economic Development Strategy to attract investment and younger populations. Develop vocational pathways to support local employment.

“More shops and job diversity will help grow our towns and keep people here.”

“We need to make the Ballpark camping ground a major attraction—it’s wasted potential.”

“Our tourism is far behind other towns on the river—it needs a major overhaul.”

“Not enough is being done to promote economic growth or bring in new industries.”

“Federation Council is restricting the development of subdivisions.”

Pillar 3: Natural Federation

The Federation community holds deep pride in its natural beauty, rural charm, and tranquil lifestyle. Preserving and enhancing these elements is a key priority, with a strong commitment to addressing environmental challenges and adapting to the impacts of climate change. Federation’s natural assets are not only valued for their aesthetic and recreational appeal but also for their role in supporting biodiversity and environmental resilience.

Looking ahead, the community envisions a sustainable Federation where the natural environment thrives, ecosystems are protected, and climate resilience is at the forefront of local initiatives.

Strengths	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The Murray River, Lake Mulwala, and Urana Aquatic Centre are deeply appreciated for their environmental and recreational values. – Rural landscapes and atmosphere. – The environment is open and abundant providing a sense of freedom and tranquillity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ongoing impacts of drought, floods, and rising temperatures will require proactive planning. – Balancing protection and enjoyment of our natural environment. – Accessing our natural assets for recreation purposes is difficult, especially for people with disabilities. – Planning processes that stifle development. – Lack of shade from tree canopy cover.
Priorities	
Access to our natural environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Improve our foreshores, with accessible parking, boardwalks, amenities and picnic areas. – Expand immersive experiences in nature.
Climate change initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Shade our urban areas with a diverse tree canopy. – Promote alternative energy sources to reduce environmental impact.
Development and housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Speed up development application approval processes. – Availability of quality and affordable housing to cater for all life stages. – Thoughtful planning to open up land for growth while maintaining the area’s character.

“The river is our pride—it’s natural, beautiful, and peaceful.”

“We need to protect our natural environment while adapting to climate change.”

“We need more street trees and parks to help counteract the changing climate.”

“There’s lots of holiday rentals and AirBnBs taking over our community.”

Pillar 4: Social Federation

“It’s a friendly community with lots of activities to get involved in.”

Federation’s social pillar is built on its strong sense of community, safety, and inclusivity, with its people and community spirit serving as its greatest strengths. While the region is celebrated for its welcoming and friendly atmosphere, the community has identified key social challenges that need to be addressed, including cost of living pressures, limited access to health and medical services, and the need to improve youth engagement and equity.

Looking to the future, the community envisions a socially inclusive Federation—one that fosters a vibrant calendar of activities, creates opportunities for connection, and cultivates a strong sense of belonging for all residents.

Strengths	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Our people are wonderful and friendly. – Our community groups and clubs are welcoming and inclusive. – People feel safe and trust their neighbours. – The area’s low crime rates and safe environment are deeply appreciated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The population is ageing. – Patterns of socialising are changing, and people are becoming increasingly socially isolated. – Perceived increase in antisocial behaviour and lack of respect for each other. – Increased difficulty accessing affordable housing, particularly in holiday towns. – People living with disabilities face stigma and limited opportunities to participate fully in the community. – There are few activities or spaces catering to teenagers. – Lack of police presence throughout the region.
Priorities	
Our people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Support older people to live connected lives. – Attract young people and families to live in the region. – Provide facilities, programs and opportunities to excite young people.
Cultural activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Host more free or low-cost events and activities to bring people together. – Celebrate art and heritage in our public spaces.
Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Increase police presence in our region. – Decrease waiting times and travel distances to see health and medical practitioners. – More access to mental health supports. – Expand aged care services to allow people to age in place. – Create more childcare spaces.

“I feel safe here—my kids can ride their bikes and walk the dog without worry.”

“We need more street markets and festivals—they bring people together and keep the town alive.”

“We need to attract a younger population to advance this community.”

“If you’re not born and bred in a country town, it’s hard to settle in. “

Pillar 5: Well-Governed Federation

“True leadership means listening to the community and acting with accountability.”

Good governance is the cornerstone of a thriving community, and the Federation community values transparent, accountable, and inclusive decision-making. Feedback highlighted a desire for stronger communication between Council and residents, greater community engagement, and sound financial management to ensure the long-term sustainability of the region.

The community expressed the importance of leadership that reflects their values and priorities, fostering trust and collaboration. Challenges such as improving service delivery, balancing budgets, and responding to the diverse needs of the Federation region were identified as key areas for improvement.

Looking to the future, the community sees a well-governed Federation characterised by transparency, responsiveness, and effective leadership that supports growth, innovation, and community wellbeing.

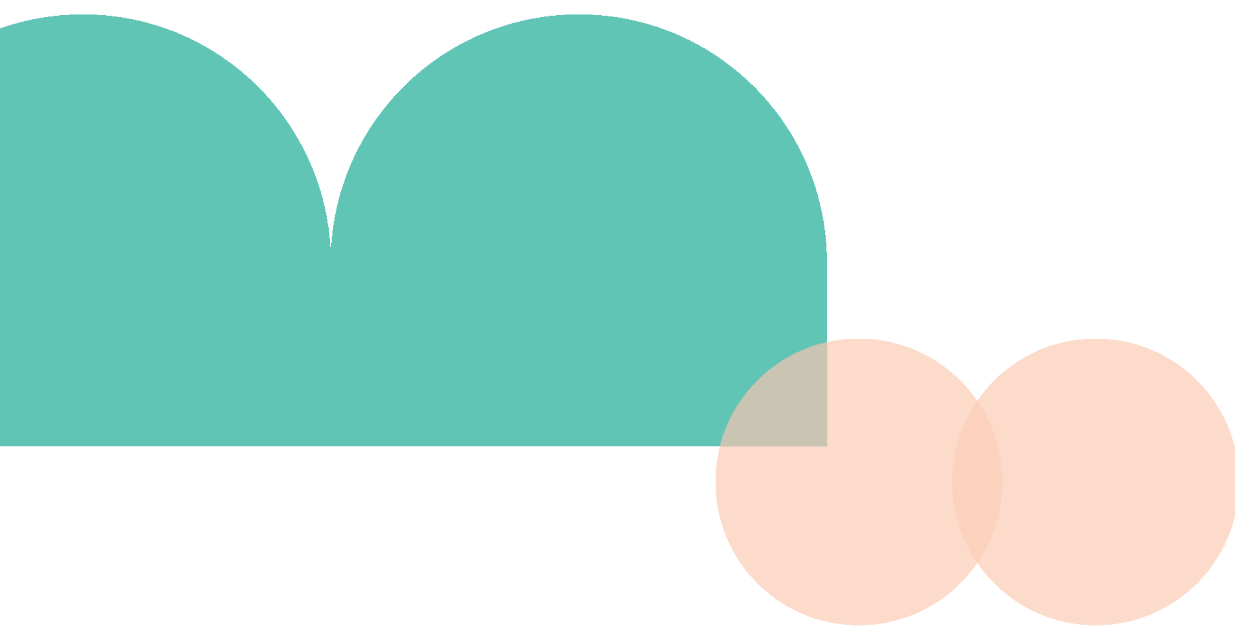
Strengths	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The council’s ability to secure grants and funding for infrastructure and development projects is viewed as a strength when used effectively. – Commitment to ethical practices. – Recognition of honest, accountable, and fair governance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Significant rate increases during a time of cost-of-living pressures have caused frustration and financial strain. – Council leadership and staff competence, highlighting the need for innovation and community-focused decision-making. – A lack of communication and meaningful consultation with residents has created disconnects between council decisions and community expectations.
Priorities	
Improved financial management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Keep rate increases in line with CPI to reduce financial stress. – Ensure equitable and efficient allocation of resources across the local government area.
Transparent and accountable leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Employ forward-thinking and competent staff to drive innovation. – Create opportunities for more diverse representation, including women and younger leaders.
Enhanced community engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Strengthen consultation networks and providing regular updates to residents. – Encourage greater participation in decision-making through accessible communication channels.

“The council has access to funding, and when spent well, it benefits everyone.”

“The massive rate increases are putting unnecessary pressure on families.”

“We want a council that is ethical and makes decisions for the community, not self-interest.”

“The council must prioritise financial sustainability for ratepayers—not just its own budgets.”



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