



Community Consultation Report

March 2015

www.strathbogievoices.com.au



Acknowledgements:

Strathbogie Voices acknowledges and pays respect to the traditional owners of this land.

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The Strathbogie Voices committee would like to thank all those people who have participated in, and assisted, this consultation process.

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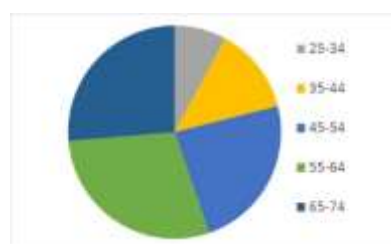
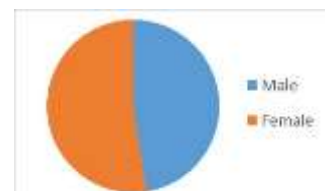
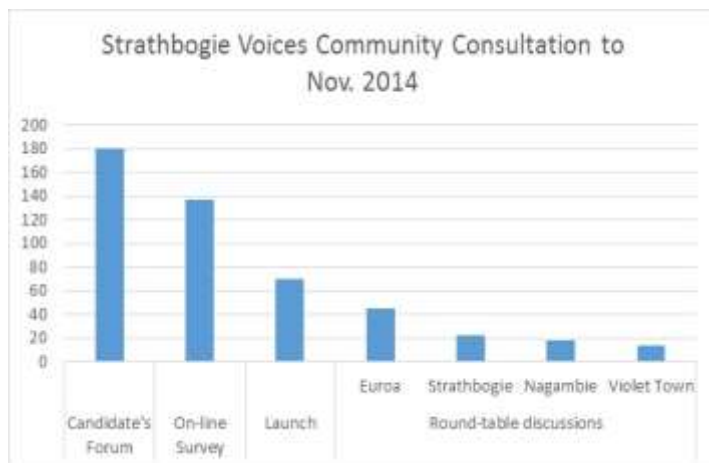
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Executive Summary

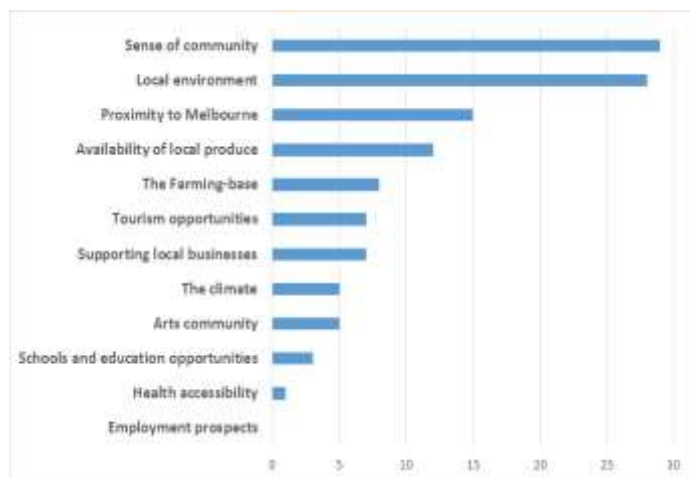
Who we are: Strathbogie Voices is a community initiative that aims to link the community to government and democratic processes in the Shire of Strathbogie..

What we did: We've engaged with over 480 people across the Shire to gauge their values and expectations when it comes to government representation and issues in our region.

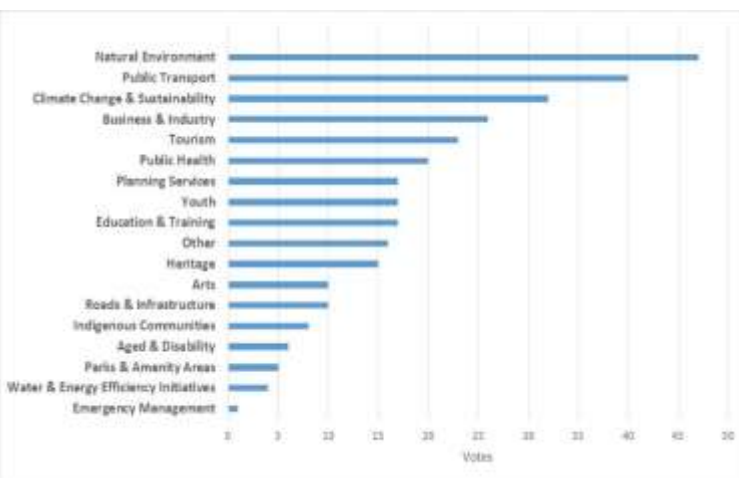
Consultation processes to date:



Age of respondents



What do we value most about our region?



What are our priority issues?

"We want to vote for real change. Not just an individual." Strathbogie resident, Nov 2014.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

"We are paying rates to an entity that is not delivering – in the business world people would switch to another provider."

Strathbogie resident, Nov 2014

"Council should be out there sponsoring change, supporting debate and discussion, promoting the exploration and implementation of ideas. This does not always cost money. Council should stop excusing inaction on the basis that it all costs money."

Euroa resident, Aug 2014

"Our voice doesn't count. The executive staff take this away from us."

Violet Town resident, Sept 2014.

KEY ISSUES:

- Greater **transparency** in expenditure. **Change** business planning. Rates are **too high** and don't reflect the socio-economic base.
- Effective and innovative planning: develop youth services, attract small businesses, increase walkability and bike friendliness, support small farms and local produce, increase environmental recognition and protection.
- Asset management needs big **improvements** –community input into prioritisation of infrastructure management, exploring shared maintenance costs of roads and bridges, environmental assets.
- Completely **rework** Communications Strategy and establish a procedure for consultation. Develop the **collaborations** needed for more **effective** grant-seeking opportunities.
- Representation – the **culture** is such that the Councillors, and therefore the community, lack an effective voice. Establish a **performance review** of the Executive Staff by the community.

STATE GOVERNMENT

"We need to call ourselves 'Melbourne' to get any attention from the State Government." Nagambie resident, Sept 2014

"The region needs a youth engagement strategy for employment and education for all needs at all levels. Most importantly, we need this for our future."

Nagambie resident, Sept 2014

KEY ISSUES:

- Public Health – **public beds** for Euroa, **ambulance** for Nagambie, **increased** community outreach, preventative care and aged care services
- Public Transport – **reliable** train service to Melbourne, **XPT train** to stop at Euroa, inter-community transport, increased freight trains
- Environment – **sustainable** forestry, **increased** native vegetation protection, **decreased** foreign ownership of farms, **no** corporatisation of National Parks, **increased** efforts on abating climate change
- Decentralisation – **equitable** share of funding and initiatives between city and rural areas.

Executive Summary cont.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

"We have no NBN, mobile phone black spots, and satellite capacity is a real problem for people wanting a new internet connection."

Strathbogie resident, Nov 2014

"The federal government program wants me to employ 30

people to help my business idea. I want assistance to employ six." Strathbogie resident, Nov 2014

KEY ISSUES:

- Increased **action** on climate change – great **need** for renewable energy. Greater **recognition** that rural areas can be a big part of this.
- NBN, internet connection and mobile phone black-spots – addressing this will **address** some of the **inequality** between city and country people.
- Greater **partnerships** that invest in real community priorities. Example areas are environmental protection, tourism, and economic development – attracting small businesses to rural areas.

Introduction

“A strong, cohesive community is one which recognises the richness within its diversity and is open and determined to engage with all members.” Euroa resident, August 2014.

Strathbogie Voices is a community initiative that was formed in August 2014 to ensure the above sentiments are represented in our democratic processes. It arose from a group of residents within the Shire of Strathbogie region concerned about the lack of representation and transparency in decision-making in (particularly) local government processes. Strathbogie Voices is inspired by the Voices for Indi movement, which has led the way in developing a solid community democracy model (see www.voices4indi.com). At the heart of this model is understanding community sentiments through thorough consultation, informing the community about identified issues and advocating for the collective community position at a governmental level. Strathbogie Voices aims to do this in a positive, strategic and proactive way.

While Strathbogie Voices was primarily formed to promote sound community representation at the local government level. However, to represent the compliment of issues and ideas that inevitably arise from thorough community consultation processes, the focus of Strathbogie Voices will not solely be local government issues. Each tier of government in Australia has various responsibilities that communities depend upon. Local, State and Federal government will therefore be in Strathbogie Voices' spotlight, depending on the issue at the time.

“A strong community is created when the local government vision has been built from the 'bottom up', is understood by all and all work towards its achievement.”

Violet Town resident, September 2014.

Purpose of this report

This report is the culmination of a three-month community consultation phase that was undertaken by Strathbogie Voices from the 25th July 2014 to the 24th September 2014. It provides an overview of the consultation methods used, the engagement opportunities undertaken, and the consultation results. The report will be used as the basis to formulate community priorities and to analyse where action is needed to better link these priorities with governmental processes and decision-making.

Objectives of the Community Consultation

For the community consultation Strathbogie Voices was interested in what the community response was to several areas. The following is a list of the objectives to be met from the community consultation processes:

Objective 1: To understand the community's values, issues and concerns for the region

Objective 2: To explore what respondents believe a strong, cohesive community is

Objective 3: To understand what makes good local government representation and relationships

Objective 4: To understand the key issues – within and beyond – the state government electorate of Euroa.

Community consultation processes used

Strathbogie Voices applied a number of different processes to gauge community concerns and priorities for the local area.

Firstly, there was a public meeting called to introduce the Strathbogie Voices concept and to seek priority areas of interest and concern from the attendees.

Secondly, a Kitchen-table Discussion Host Kit (Appendix 1) was developed (with support from the Voices 4 Indi group and the Victorian Women's Trust). Guiding questions, based on the consultation objectives, were developed for hosting a community discussion, as well as the laying out of some ground-rules. Training was held for people willing to host these discussions, and it was encouraged to undertake this activity with a group that people were a member of, a group of friends or work colleagues.

Thirdly, an on-line survey was developed that followed the same questions as the Host Kit. This allowed people who weren't comfortable in expressing views in a group format, or couldn't make the consultation sessions, to provide their thoughts (anonymously).

Fourthly, a printed version of the on-line survey was available at the library in Euroa for those unable to complete it on-line.

Lastly, a Candidate's Forum was organised for the state government election, giving constituents the opportunity to hear how representatives from each political party responded to local priority issues.

Media and its impact

To increase the awareness of what Strathbogie Voices is about, and what the community consultation processes were trying to achieve, many different forms of media were embraced by the team. Social media was seen as a key player. A twitter account, @BogieVoices, and Facebook page was set up, and a website developed to provide a forum for community discussion, access to the consultation survey, and regular updates of news and activities (see www.strathbogievoices.com.au).

The Twitter account put Strathbogie Voices in touch with journalists, students, researchers and like-minded people globally. Representatives of Strathbogie Voices were interviewed by university students studying political science, and newspaper journalists contacted @BogieVoices for interviews and articles.

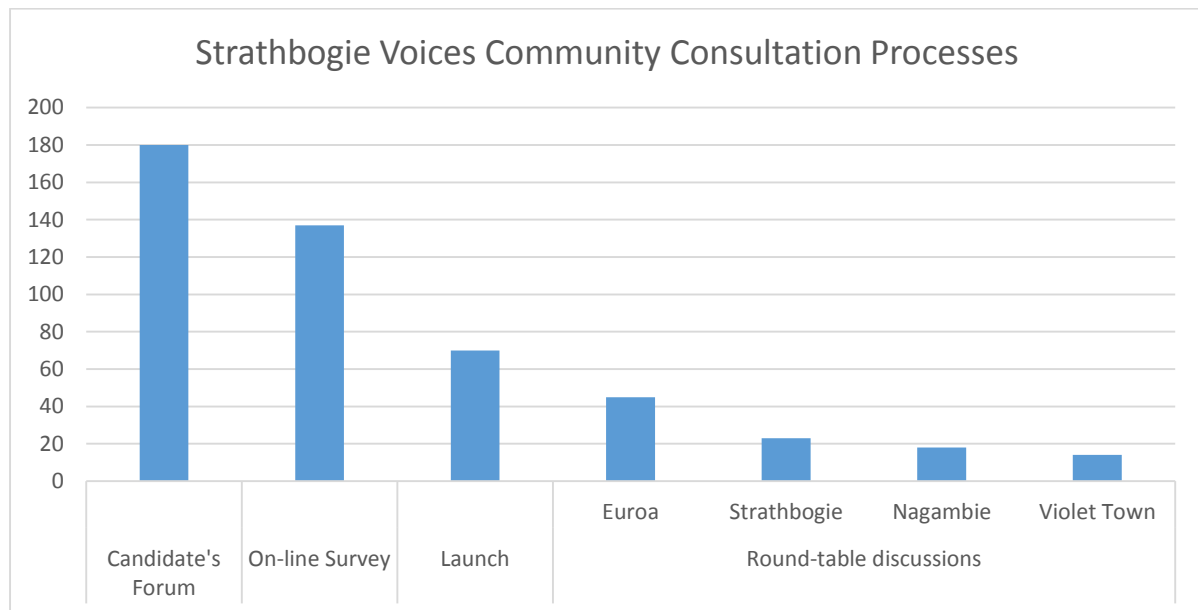
Over the period of the consultation and survey, the Strathbogie Voices website had a total of 192 unique visitors. The average time spent on the site was 5.5 minutes and the 'bounce rate' was 21% (anything less than 30% is considered the target for engaging viewers).

Recognising the attributes of our regional target audience, the Strathbogie Voices team also used local media, both in print and radio form. News articles were run in local papers, including the Euroa Gazette, Benalla Ensign, Seymour Telegraph and Shepparton News, and on local radio news headlines. Conversations on local radio during prime time were also undertaken.

Numbers of people contributing to consultation process

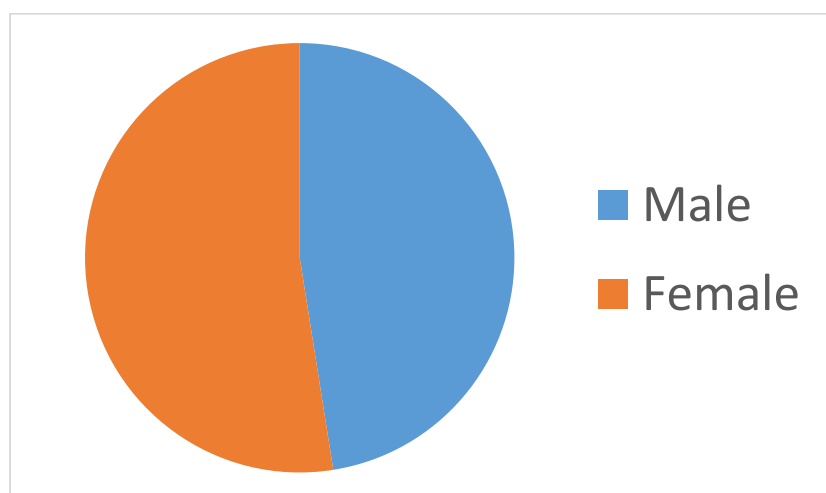
Overall, a total of 487 people contributed to the consultation process through the various forms on offer. A breakdown of where these people contributed is found in graph 1.

Each of the consultation processes have varying levels of demands on participants. The Candidate's Forum and the public meeting launch offered people a short, snap-shot, more quantitative opportunity to put their priorities forward. On the other hand, the Kitchen-table Discussions involved more intense consultation. Those taking part in the Kitchen-table Discussions comprised a small proportion of the big numbers of people contributing, overall, however, it can be argued that the information received from this process was richer and more meaningful in terms of understanding community needs. The package of consultation choices provided a range of opportunities for getting information from people and running an inclusive process.



Graph 1: Numbers of people contributing to the consultation process across the various forums.

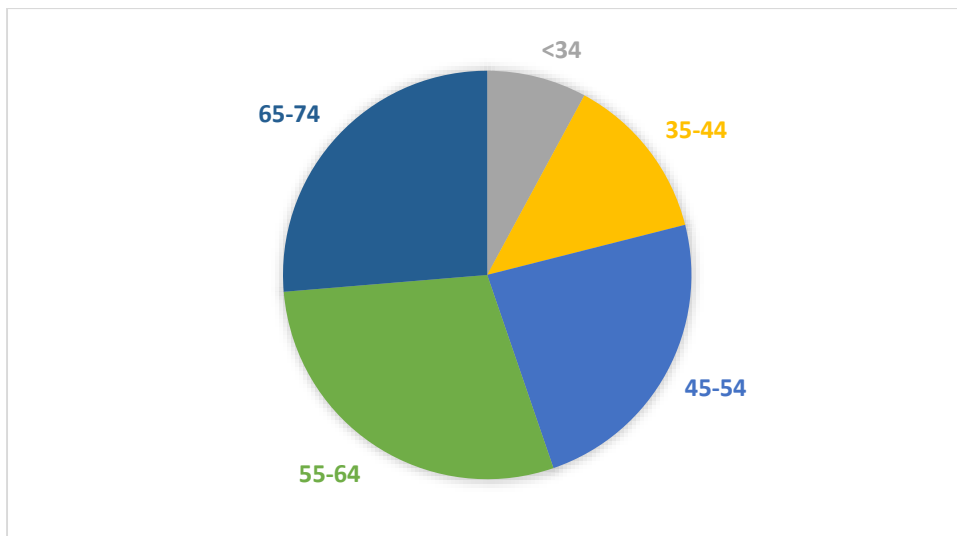
With regards to the gender of the participating community members, 52% were female and 48% were male (see Graph 2).



Graph 2 (left)

The age of the participants in the consultation processes were varied (see Graph 3), however the majority were within the 45 – 54 years (24%), 55 – 64 years (29%) and 65 – 74 years (26%) age brackets. Given the higher representation of these age brackets in our region, this is not surprising.

The younger age group of those under 34 years, made up only 8% of the consultation input. This does, therefore, highlight the need for some more targeted work with the younger people of our region to increase their representation in the future identification of community priorities and issues.



Graph 3: The age demographics of the community members consulted

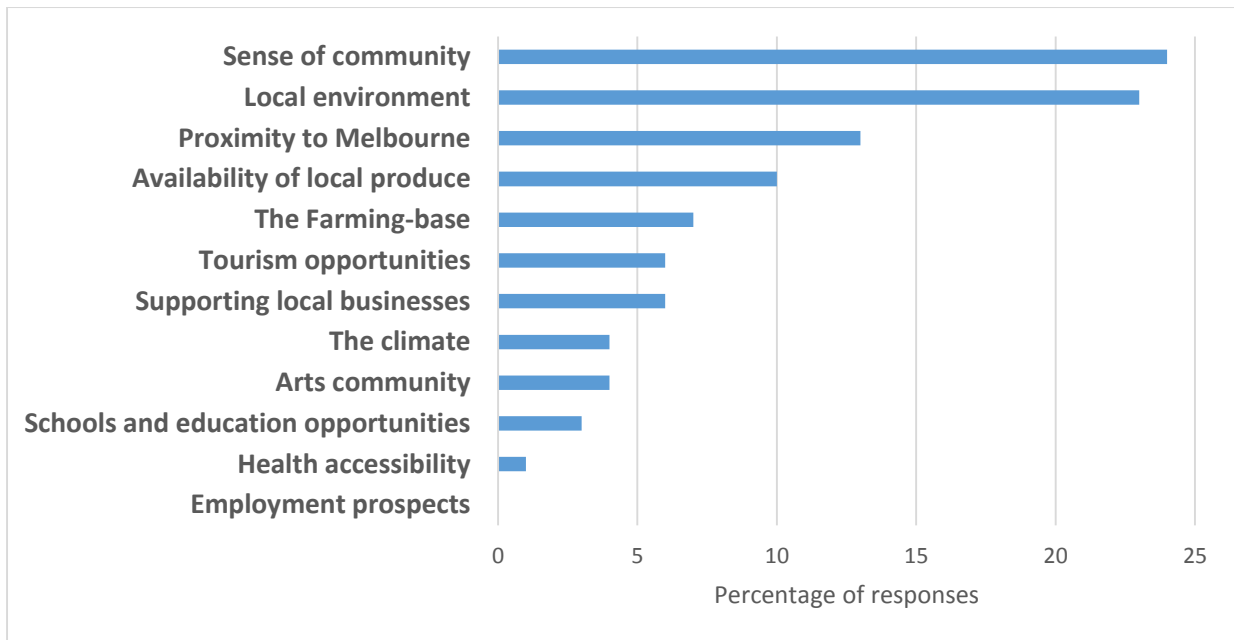
Consultation Results

Values and Issues of concern

Values

With regards to what the community values most about the region, there were two close leading responses – a ‘sense of community’ (24% of respondents rated this the highest) and the ‘local environment’ (23%). The responses that followed these were ‘proximity to Melbourne’ (13%), availability of local produce (10%) and the ‘farming-base’ (7%). The total responses to this is shown in Graph 4.

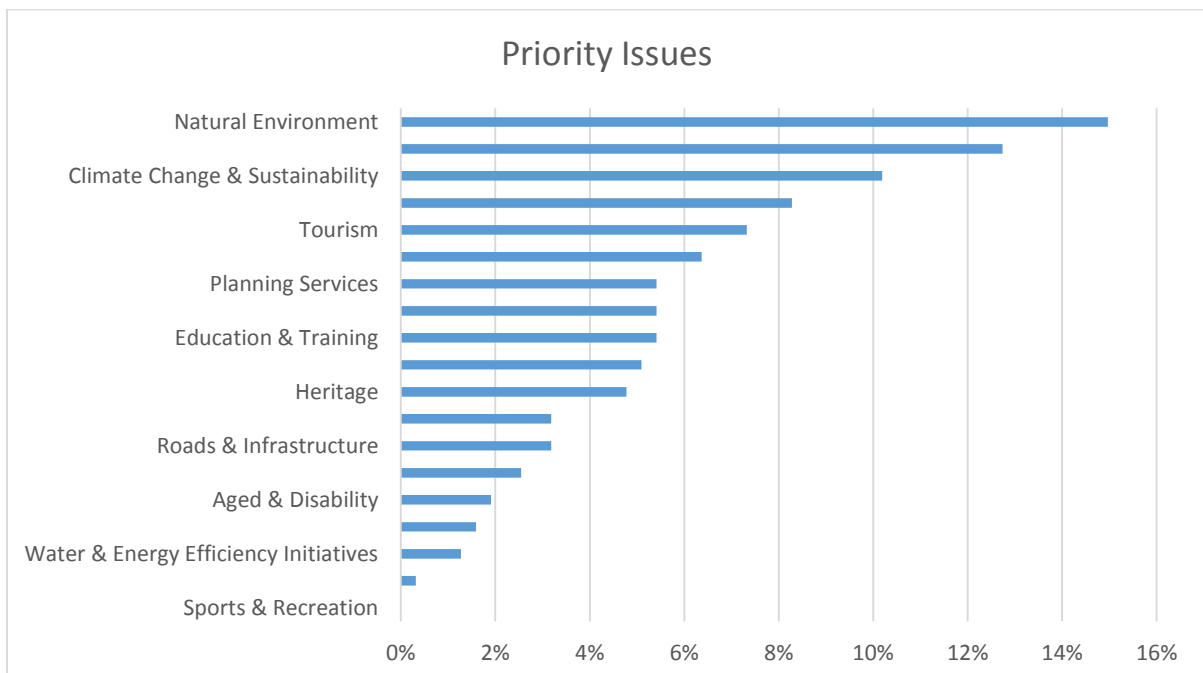
The ‘sense of community’ was followed up with a few qualitative responses that included “there is a good mix of people and community spirit, especially sporting” and “the friendliness of locals”. With regards to the ‘local environment’, respondents remarked “brilliant environment for bushwalking and camping” and “the beauty of the natural environment – its forests and woodlands”.



Graph 4: The breakdown of responses with regards to what the community value most about the region.

Issues

The top three priority issues arising from the consultation processes were the 'natural environment' (15% rated this their highest), public transport (13%) and climate change and sustainability (10%). The full list in order of priority is presented in Graph 5. There were a number of 'other' issues listed separately to the choices offered for people. These responses included 'Attracting Multi-Cultural Population', 'Coal Seam Gas', 'Rates and Financial Efficiency', 'Community Engagement', 'Youth Unemployment', 'Quality Retirement Living' and 'Weekend Trading'.



Graph 5: Community priority issues arising from the consultation processes

Strong, cohesive community

Participants in the on-line survey and the Kitchen Table Discussions were asked an open-ended question about what makes a strong, cohesive community. Responses were broadly in two categories – firstly, the qualities of such a community and secondly, the services that a strong, cohesive community should or could provide.

“What makes a strong community? Working together, listening to each other, being open-minded, and support from government for community initiatives.”

“Adequate employment opportunities, (and training in the form of apprenticeships, certificate courses); availability of health and associated transport services; support for the elderly and people with disabilities; trust and respect between people and local government.”

Qualities of a strong community included things like ‘cooperation’, ‘listening’, ‘communication’ and ‘participation’. Others included ‘embracing differences’ and ‘respecting processes’ that achieve ‘common goals’. With regards to services, ‘good health care’, ‘public transport’ and ‘strong local businesses’ were all cited as provisions of a strong, cohesive community.

The complete list of responses to this question can be found in Appendix 2.

Local Government Representation

‘Someone who listens and has time to know a spectrum of their community. Also someone who is able to see beyond their personal bias and exercise meaningful empathy.’

‘Approachable, personable, genuinely interested in public service advancement. Not someone on Council for their own self-importance. Councillors who are not intimidated by the CEO.’

The above quotes represent many of the qualities that were given by respondents with regards to what they thought made a good local government representative. Someone who is “honest”, and “spends time talking to the community to find out what is important to them” and then “can deal with the bureaucracy” were key qualities outlined by respondents. Being “educated” on issues, “happy to defer to others” and “trying not to please everyone” were also qualities mentioned.

The full list of responses to this question are contained in Appendix 3.

Adequacy of local government representation

With regards to the quality of current local government representation, 85% of respondents did not think this adequate, while 15% of respondents did. Reasons for respondents not believing they had an adequate voice included the belief that Councillors were “rubber stamps” for what Council staff wanted and “did not represent the people”. Others mentioned a “lack of vision” and “leadership” as well as “very poor genuine consultation processes”. The majority of reasons given with regards to the lack of an adequate voice in local government representatives centred around two key areas: that Councillors were driven by the executives of Council (and therefore not representing the community), and that there was a lack of community consultation processes in order for the community voice to be heard.

“Too many decisions are made ‘in secret’, by the time the general public know what council has debated it is too late to question. It does seem to be difficult to have ‘consultation’ with local government.”

A few respondents here conveyed what they believed were the difficulties of the position of Councillors.

“Local government is difficult as residents are generally only interested in their opinion, their street and what really matters to them. So finding balance can be difficult, where local councillors have to be all things to all residents, react appropriately and provide real and visible benefits to as many community members as possible.”

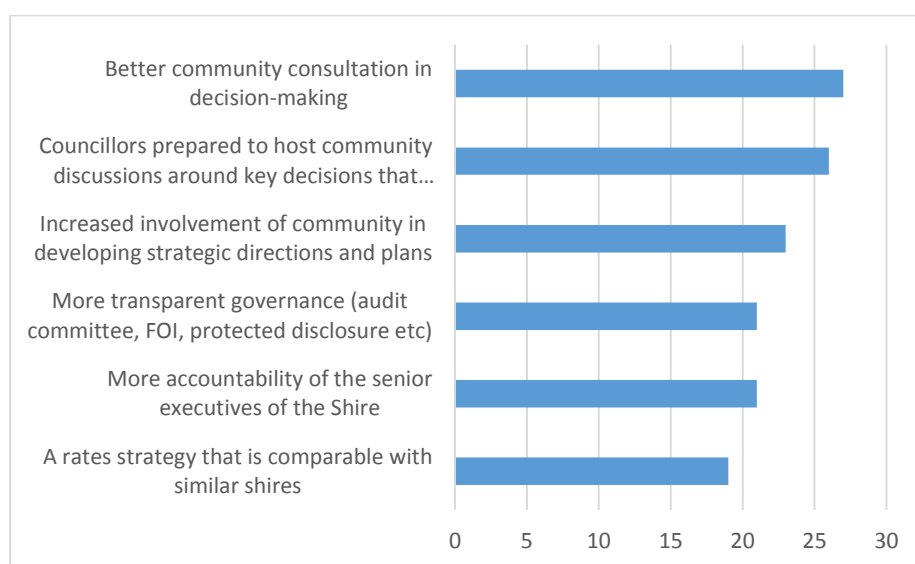
The main reasons for the respondents answering positively to the adequacy of local government representation was the ‘accessibility’ of the Councillors.

Full responses to this questions can be found in Appendix 4.

Stronger relationships between community and local government

Respondents to the on-line survey were asked to choose three out of a total of six options regarding how relationships between community and local government could improve. Graph 6 shows the results of these responses. The highest-rated statement was ‘*Better community consultation in decision-making*’, while the least preferred statement was ‘*A rates strategy that is comparable with similar shires.*’

There was also an optional ‘Other’ – an open-ended question that followed the statements provided. The responses ranged from Councillors needing “specialist knowledge” to increased “participation” in local government processes. The complete list of ‘Other’ responses can be found in Appendix 5.



Graph 6: The results of responses to the on-line survey rating the above statements according to how much they would improve the relationships between community and local government.

State Government Issues

There are four key state government issues resulting from the community consultation. These issues formed the basis to the advocacy that Strathbogie Voices undertook in the lead up to the state government election in November 2014. These four issues continue to remain key priorities for the area. They are:

1. Public health services, including public beds for Euroa hospital and an ambulance to be permanently stationed in Nagambie.
2. Public transport that not only includes improved services on the key north-south train lines, but also inter-town connectivity – accessible public transport in an east-west direction
3. Involvement of the local community in the decision-making with regards to the management of the Strathbogie Forests
4. Development of plans to address the economic viability of small shires.

Other issues identified across the region included youth unemployment and retention in the region, tourism opportunities and how we promote these with better integrated governmental partnerships, and encouraging businesses to regional areas.

The full list of responses about local State Government issues can be found in Appendix 6.

Broader State Government issues

Participants were asked about what the key state government issues are that have a broader context than just this particular electorate. The most popular response to this question revolved around the issues of climate change, environmental protection and renewable energy initiatives. This theme was extended at times to include protection of the farming landscape, addressing bushfire risk, public transport and strategic planning to take these things into account.

The full list of response to this question can be found in Appendix 7

Dealing with the issues

Respondents were asked how the issues raised in the discussion and the responses could be dealt with effectively.

“Ensure the right people are elected - this is not an easy job and we often end up with people who have egos rather than the passion to work for the betterment of the community. Elected officers are more worried about appeasing people and being re-elected than making the hard decisions that make a difference.”

“Through leadership and consultation with the public. Proper policy development processes which are adhered to.”

The responses here largely revolved around good political representation, financial management that produced sound outcomes for the community and solid infrastructure to support the community needs.

The full responses to this question can be found in Appendix 8.

Conclusion

The Strathbogie Shire community clearly values the strong sense of community that exists in the region. Working together, listening to each other and contributing to actions, all assist in the promotion of this sense. Outcomes that benefit the community are sought from all government decisions, and frustrations within the community arise where there is a discrepancy between the relative level of priorities of actions undertaken between government and community and the lack of involvement in decision-making by interested community members.

The need for thorough consultation processes underpin much of the feedback received from community respondents with regards to local and state government. In light of this Strathbogie Voices will provide as many opportunities for community consultation as possible. The enthusiastic response to this consultation process by the community, and the level of discussion and responses gained, is a small indication of the possibilities that could be achieved with strong government-community partnerships.

Appendix 1: Kitchen Table Host Kit



www.strathbogievoices.com.au

Kitchen Table Discussions

The Strathbogie Voices Committee acknowledge the contributions of the Voices for Indi committee and the Victorian Women's Trust in preparation of this information

INFORMATION FOR HOSTS

Welcome to Strathbogie Voices

Strathbogie Voices is a community initiative working to link the community to government and agency decision-making processes in the Shire of Strathbogie. A committee of people have initiated Strathbogie Voices in order to provide a simple and effective process for people's voices to be heard. This process aims to help to create a region with vision, initiatives and outcomes that truly represent the community living in it. Strathbogie Voices has no party-political allegiance.

Strathbogie Voices is positive, strategic and proactive in how it sources information and community needs. It provides an opportunity for the municipality of Strathbogie community to express their vision for their area, their needs, their priorities issues and their suggestions on building effective community and government and agency relationships. Strathbogie Voices encourages people to be forward-thinking, collaborative in their initiatives and vocal in their views.

Find out more about Strathbogie Voices on www.strathbogievoices.com.au.

You can become part of this initiative...

During September and October 2014 across the municipality of Strathbogie groups of people will meet for kitchen table discussions. The responses from all of these discussions will be compiled into a document called Strathbogie Voices.

The idea has been inspired by the 'Voices for Indi' process. In its essence, it is simple and powerful.

Appendix1 cont...

Everyone is welcome and encouraged to participate. One of the keys to Strathbogie Voices being a success is for people to step forward and agree to host a kitchen table discussion'. These people bring together small groups. These might be friends, neighbours, family, workmates, or people they know from community networks. They meet around the kitchen table or their workplace or wherever is easiest for them.

The hosts facilitate a conversation for an hour or two (or longer, if you like!), focused on the three themes outlined in this pack. Participants' ideas and thoughts will be collated by the hosts and forwarded to the **Strathbogie Voices** team for processing and integrating with all other kitchen table discussions across the region.

The task of being a Host

As one of the hosts enabling and leading a kitchen-table discussion, you would be expected to:

- set a meeting date
- invite friends / family/ colleagues/ neighbours / community members to your home **or** other suitable venue for an hour or more of discussion
- collect contact details for the group (on the form provided in this pack)
- facilitate the discussion
- ensure there is a summary of the opinions and ideas of your group and that it is forwarded to the **Strathbogie Voices** committee at **contact@strathbogievoices.com.au** or **P.O. Box 77, Euroa VIC 3666**, by the 3rd November.
- invite participants to register on the **Strathbogie Voices** website if they are interested in becoming a kitchen table discussion host
- *create a positive ripple* – suggest that participants talk about their discussions and the ideas that emerged with other people at work or home or in their community.

Handy tips for hosting the kitchen table discussion

- explain **Strathbogie Voices**, the community conversation process and the reporting back to Strathbogie Voices
- ask participants to introduce themselves and say briefly why they have come to be part of the conversation
- appoint a scribe – someone from the group who is able to track the discussion and capture it in as much detail as is practically and reasonably possible
- It is important that your scribe accepts the need to try and represent the conversation fairly and in as much detail as possible and not be selective
- The group does not have to reach consensus! What is important is that people feel as though they have been able to contribute their ideas and opinions – and for these to be recorded faithfully
- Make sure you allocate enough time for each of the suggested conversation starters

Appendix1 cont...

- Sit down with your scribe straight after the meeting and flesh out the meeting's content as much as you can while it is fresh in your minds – and then develop the written summary by referring to the Discussion Starters that are listed in the next section. Naturally, if there happened to be additional discussion beyond these Discussion Starters, it is important that this is captured as well

Some simple but effective ground rules for running the meeting

Meetings full of people with good intent can still come unstuck. A simple and balanced set of ground rules will go a long way to achieving a productive meeting.

It is important the Host establishes the ground rules as soon as introductions are over. The following five such rules are tried and well-tested:

- We accept that everyone is entitled to have a say
- We will make the effort to listen to one another
- We respect people's right to their opinions even if we disagree
- We will try at all times to be constructive
- We will try to stay on track

It is important that people at the meeting are provided with the chance to hear these suggested ground rules; and that they indicate their willingness to adhere to them during the course of the discussion. If necessary, the Host can draw people's attention back to them all or some in particular.

Kitchen Table Discussion: Starters

Any discussion requires something to kick start it!

Strathbogie Voices begins by establishing an accurate view of what people think and feel about their region.

The following discussion starters will help to guide the meeting; and provide the basis for capturing and writing up the meeting so the conversations and ideas can be compiled, and integrated into broader themes with coherence.

1. Theme: Living in the Strathbogie Region

- What are the best things about living in our region?
- What makes for a strong, cohesive community?
- Are there particular issues or concerns in our region that you feel strongly about?

2. Theme: Representation at the Local Government level

- What do you think makes for a really good local government representative?
- Do you feel you have an adequate voice in the way you are represented with regards to local government issues? If yes, why? If not, why not?
- What would make for a stronger relationship between our community and our local government?

3. Theme: Representation at the State Government level

- Are there particular issues ***within*** the Euroa electorate that you feel should be addressed in the run up to the state election on 28th November 2014?
- Are there issues ***beyond*** the Euroa electorate that you think should be addressed in the run up to the 2014 state election?
- Any ideas as to what you think could be done that might deal with these issues effectively?

Contact and clarifications

If you would like to talk over any aspect of the Host role in more detail, feel free to contact us at <http://www.strathbogievoices.com.au> or contact@strathbogievoices.com.au

Participant profile: to be returned to
contact@strathbogievoices.com.au or **PO Box 77 Euroa 3666** with the
discussion summary

Host name

Location of the meeting

Each Participant to complete:

GENDER		AGE							
M/F	Post code	<18	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+

Appendix 2: Strong, cohesive communities

Below is the full list of responses to the open-ended question “What makes a strong, cohesive community?”

Survey (on-line and written) data:

- Services and support
- Engagement, participation, interesting things happening, good leadership
- Shared projects and events. Good and open communication and information sharing. Tolerance and respect of each other's differences
- Energy for others
- Talking
- Organic and spontaneous economic activity centred around features of natural resources, e.g farmland, rivers, overland routes. Intentional community by cadres of newly arrived liberal elites, (an emerging new class) is a crock that is detested by locals ...real community takes many generations to establish
- Working together, listening to each other, being open-minded, and support from government for community initiatives
- A community that is willing to embrace different points of view and be tolerant of others differences is a strong community. One that respects process to achieve the community's goals. One that has many volunteers. One that cares about others, within and outside the community, one that cares for the environment, one that is willing to look at the bigger picture; regionally and nationally.
- Hard work, co-operation, united goals, trust.
- Communication and pulling together as one as far as possible, which means making allowances for the less privileged and needier and becoming members of one healthy body.
- Consultation and collaboration
- Leadership and contribution at local govt, sporting and all other levels. People who are prepared to give and contribute not just sit back and criticise
- Social similarities
- A community which recognises the richness within its diversity and is open and determined to engage with all members.
- Community events; pride in our town;
- One where the local government vision has been built from the 'bottom up', is understood by all and all work towards its achievement.
- People working together to achieve common goals.
- All opinions are valued
- Listening to community, giving community the opportunities to become involved to create change that effects their lives
- If Government supports the ideals of the community and backs those things that are community inclusive.
- Adequate employment opportunities, (and training in the form of apprenticeships, certificate courses); availability of health and associated transport services; support for elderly and people with disabilities; trust and respect between people and local government.
- Interaction between various groups in the community,
- General pride for your local town and district with a high proportion of volunteers prepared to work for the well being of the district and its people.
- Sense of belonging and inclusiveness.
- Respect for others. Caring and sharing.
- Common sense, compromise when required, not be judgemental out of ignorance or prejudice, a sense of fair play and a bloody smile at someone passing by
- Transparency, inclusion, optimism, leadership - most of the things the current Shire is crap at.
- People willing to share ideas, and leaders being prepared to acknowledge and adapt to change. Communities that flourish have mostly been keen to embrace diversity and difference, and are often built around people prepared to just 'have a go". Supporting innovative and skilled local people and business is the cornerstone of a strong, healthy and cohesive community.
- People being friendly and open to new people and changes for the better. Caring for the disabled and elderly. Better communication
- Clear, concise and transparent communication.
- A feeling of belonging and engagement. Access to good health care, public transport and strong local businesses so that there are opportunities to grow the community and ensure future viability

Summary from Round-table discussion::

- Broadmindedness; tolerance
- Ability to communicate and listen
- Volunteerism
- Size, small rural town
- People who take on responsibility
- Shared projects
- Common goals
- Common activities – like the market
- Proactive groups – HREP, Market
- Diversity of adversity, communication
- People pulling together in times of adversity – Toxic Dump, bushfires
- Openness
- Involvement with issues
- Inclusiveness is very important
- If moved here and away from family the community is a new family
- Welcoming to newcomers
- The Strathbogie Primary School is vital to the community feel
- Lots of community groups
- People do 'turn up' when it matters
- Diversity – wine, thoroughbred industry, farmers, traders, retired, some old money,
- Clubs – strong, seniors, RSL
- Just been by-passed (Nagambie) – traders challenged this, but now it's a joy to be in town

Appendix 3: Local government representatives

Below is the full list of responses to the question 'What makes a really good local government representatives?'

Survey (on-line and written) data:

- Education and experience
- An ability to listen to the community, be available, and act as and when required. No political speak answers that provide nothing but hot air. Actions speak louder than words.
- Leadership, vision, innovative, entrepreneurial - looking for the NEW opportunities not just repeating the old ones.
- Open communication with residents. Having available time to investigate matters adequately. Being given the required information and support by the Shire Administrators - Assets management, social welfare, CEO etc
- Someone who listens and has time to know a spectrum of their community. Also someone who is able to see beyond their personal bias and exercise meaningful empathy.
- Listening
- Someone who is realistic about the demise of worldwide economic growth and its implications at the local level, someone who is apolitical....
- Someone who is willing to listen and talk to all members of their community. Someone who will embrace new ideas and new ways of thinking. Someone who will be analytical about the role and not just adopt a position because they were told to.
- Someone who spends a lot of time in their ward talking to people to find out what is important to them, and to listen to people's concerns and opinions. Someone who is honest and who can deal effectively with the council bureaucracy and executive staff.
- Good communicator and integrity.
- Being a listener and willing to change their exact former own view upon listening.
- Educated, to be informed and an ability for educating the population
- Being educated, articulate and fully aware of the issues that are effecting the community they represent. Listening and responding to the community in a positive manner. Having a strong voice in council (but not trying to please everyone all the time).
- Who is there to listen and serve and not grandstand and self-serve
- Common sense people with no egos that have the communities best interests at heart.
- One who values diversity and who is progressive, creative, intelligent, resourceful, happy to defer to others when appropriate, questioning, interested in others and who thrives on being challenged.
- Knows - and preferably lives in - the community they represent; understands the major issues, by talking to diverse range of people; ability to speak as a person rather than a politician/councillor - no poli-speak please;
- Approachable, personable, genuinely interested in public service advancement. Not someone on Council for their own self-importance. Councillors who are not intimidated by CEO.
- Someone who is in touch with community aspirations and values and able to translate these into sustainable policies.
- A good listener
- Ability to lead and create change via solid tender processes and ability for funds to be injected into community. Priority solutions finding and having appropriate staff to implement solid changes.
- Councillors come into the LG with good ideas but over the years they lose that passion and conform. There should be a limited time for LG Councillors to make it more relevant and keep the fire in their belly.
- Open and general consultation with community. Local government representatives must feel comfortable with, and open when communicating with community
- Forward thinking person with basic business acumen and good communication skills.
- One who listens to their constituents and acts on their wishes (not some big party line).
- A person comfortable in their own shoes who can both speak and listen. Heaps of common sense, balanced feeling for justice and the rest you can learn
- Transparency, inclusion, optimism, leadership
- Knowledge, accountability, and the courage to stand alone if required. A broader (more diverse) group of candidates would bring a new approach to community issues, resulting in more interesting outcomes.
- Someone working for the people not their own agenda who listens to a variety of opinions & can put Euroa on the map. Someone who cares about our natural environment.

Summary of Kitchen-table discussions:

- Be a rate payer and an original landholder
- Somebody who is well versed in business, has the sufficient time and energy to put into it
- Understanding of policies and public administration
- Ensure people have their needs met – understand what this means
- Communicate with the electorate to understand the priorities
- Connection with community
- Ability to have a say in all parts of the Shire's activity – not the divisiveness of 'operational activity' vs 'strategic activity'
- Have a Code of Conduct in place and allow the positive things to happen
- Too constrained in how the Councillors can operate
- Need to work with executive staff at Shire
- Really knowledgeable about the area and understand the issues
- Get out and engage with the community
- Genuine feeling about community

Appendix 4: Adequate voice in local government

Below is the full list of responses to the question 'Do you feel like you have an adequate voice with how you are represented in local government?'

From survey (on-line and written) data:

No

- Because I live out of town I feel isolated and disconnected. Our rates are the most expensive in Victoria and where I live we have fewer services than we need.
- Local government lacks vision and leadership and it is too stuck in the past.
- Very poor genuine community consultation processes. My local representative is often blocked from obtaining information about local processes and issues
- The local shire is the local corporate arm of a power structure centred in Melbourne. Its function is to assess how much wealth there is in a community, then match the price of services and upgrades to that wealth, serving the interests of an underlying web of business interests that seek to profit from local governance (in the absence of real economic growth)
- Councillors do not represent the people. They are currently rubber stamps for what the executive of the council want.
- I've ticked 'no' because I have to tick something but really I am not sure, never feel like I have enough time to get involved enough to find out!
- Local government officers and councillors do not appear to be very consultative.
- No; because feedback is poor re what is going on at council and meeting times don't suit workers...but I do feel a group like this could help our representatives better, if regularly we all commit to attending a few council meetings per year to inform others of what's going on.
- Lack of clarity and depth of knowledge by our reps
- Shire employees manipulate the elected councillors to get the outcomes they desire regardless of community opinion.
- Too much lip service eg rest assured I'll look into that and get back to you then deadly silence
- I am not convinced they have our best interests at heart. The only council meeting I went to they threw away the best part of a 100k on a street sweeping machine. That job would have employed a couple of people, instead they sent a lot of money out of our shire.
- I feel I don't get listened to nor that my values are represented by my local council.
- Very new to the community and haven't had a chance to vote for council yet, which is my loudest voice; think the council should be mindful when making decisions that are inherently controversial (as in the pokies issue) and consult more than statutes/laws dictate but don't want to be consulted on every small issue.
- Shire pays lip-service to public opinion. They (Officers and Councillors) think they know best and are not interested in community views.
- Current and past councillors seem ruled by the bureaucracy rather than the community which elected them.
- Not enough connection to local government
- Too many decisions are made 'in secret', by the time the general public know what council has debated it is too late to question. It does seem to be difficult to have 'consultation' with local government.
- Too many decisions are made without proper community consultation. Some issues need a plebiscite.
- Don't believe the local candidate has made any attempt to speak with me. Total absence of opportunity to speak to them outside an election.
- Our councillors seem to be driven by the executive (and not vice versa, as should be the case.)
- Shire makes a concerted effort to avoid constructively engaging community
- The natural environment consistently ranks as a highly valued asset by the community, yet is given the least consideration when decisions are made at a local government level. Strathbogie Shire don't even have a local environment officer!
- No! How would they know what I need.
- Local government is difficult as residents are generally only interested in their opinion, their street and what really matters to them. So finding balance can be difficult where local councillors have to be all things to all residents, react appropriately and provide real and visible benefits to as many community members as possible

Yes

- There are a variety of ways to get messages through to local government and our local Council member is fairly accessible.
- Good councillor
- Because people are accessible. The difficulty is overcoming bureaucratic roadblocks

- Again Councillors have to work within the parameters dictated by State Gov. However, they should remember why they stood for council and review if they have achieved what they set out to achieve.

Appendix 5: Improving community and local government relationships

The extra, open-ended responses from the on-line and written surveys, with regards to how relationships between community and local government can improve. This was an optional extra of 'Other?', after respondents had chosen their three top rating statements out of six given to them.

- Availability of councillors for one to one discussion
- Participation should be actively encouraged and a serious vision should underpin planning
- Less reaction and caution, more joy and bravery - trusting that everyone will do their best if given the benefit of the doubt.
- Get rid of the bastards ...have a "town clerk" rather than a CEO
- Council staff to understand they are there to serve the people of the Shire
- Support our reps with specialist knowledge drawn from our community
- The need to act on the community's direction rather than ask for an opinion and continue with their own agenda
- Some assessment of the future sustainability of our shire
- Councillors with qualifications in fields of economic, social and environmental management.
- Leaders who have compassion and can share our country with less fortunate

Summary from Kitchen-table Discussions:

- Councillor should be a resident of the ward
- Councillor should be visible, approachable, hard-working, committed
- Ward structure is good for Strathbogie as long as the right person is elected
- There is a disconnect between Councillors and Council staff
- Question time at Council is not a real opportunity for community involvement
- We should understand the Local Government Act and benchmark whether Strathbogie Shire is doing what it is required to do under the Act
- There should be a performance review of Council Officers by the community
- There should be an audit of the Shire and how it operates
- Need to develop a big picture for Strathbogie and push for it
- Council doesn't seem active in generating economic development for the shire
- More people should go to council meetings and agitate
- There should be a limit on council terms i.e. number of times can serve on council
- Council has become corporatised and is not community focused
- We are paying rates to an entity that is not delivering – in business world people would switch to another provider
- Main issues – Council does not engage with local community. CEO needs to listen and engage. All happens in Euroa and nowhere else.
- Connected, needs to understand business, approachable, circumvent bureaucracy and challenge conventions of officers
- Decisions are made before community knows about it
- 5 year plans needs to be 25 year plans – long-term planning
- Shire has no Public Relations
- No input into the design of the main street. Why doesn't the CEO come and tell us why it is good? What are the reasons behind the design? We don't know these.
- Walking track needed around the lake
- Local roads need improvements – farming equipment is getting trashed going from farm to farm. There is a real lack of sealing

Appendix 6: State Government Issues

The full list of responses to the question: Are there particular issues within the Euroa electorate that you feel should be addressed in the run up to the state election on 28th November 2014?

- I support the public beds for Strathbogie Health issue. Mobility is my most pressing issue because of age and disease. I feel housebound with no footpaths locally.
- Public beds at the hospital public transport climate change and environment policies support for innovative regional tourism including funding for an information centre for the Strathbogie Ranges - either in the town or at the Arboretum
- Protection of remnant indigenous environment. Public transport, particularly the railway service. Renewable energy development
- Ongoing improvements to public transport and walking/cycling amenity - everywhere. Incentives for increased renewable energy uptake/initiatives.
- Financial support for such a small shire and community
- To their credit, the shire have produced a competent climate change report, which is on their website. Cities such as Maribyrnong and Stirling have also drafted peak oil reports, as the price of this rapidly diminishing commodity is set to remain at record highs. I think the rhetoric by council, mayor and local real estate boosters of "happy sunlit uplands of ever expanding, growing the business and this is why we need to raise rates" - should be brought out into the open and debunked. Ridiculous comments by mayor in local press recently "we should pay more to live out here because we dont have to pay for parking"
- Increased protection of the natural environment
- Public transport - more services, trains not buses, more transparency around what has gone wrong with the train service. Public beds for the hospital. Get a commitment from govt. to purchase Australian made goods and services, including food, rather than purchase from overseas. I would like to see a local group developing local strategies for the community to cope with/manage the impacts of climate change. What can we as a community do, how can we best prepare?
- Sound barrier on Balmattum hill bridge
- Safer public roads.
- Poor train service is most urgent of course..but that is being attended to! Not so urgent, now that the scare and close call of pokies being introduced here has been successfully avoided...but we do not want a repeat of that degree of poor listening and communication and rush! We could have avoided VCAT!
- Council is broke both financially and morally
- Native vegetation Loss & Bushfire control procedures, Trains on Albury line, Better internet options, lower Rates
- Efficiency and accountability of shire and councillors
- Public transport (trains)
- Better Transport, health and arts funding and support for education.
- Public beds/funding for the local hospital, Additional ambulance services
- Completion of remedial rail works and increased rail services to/from Melbourne; littering problem within the town – need for education program at schools perhaps and a clean-up Euroa Day (although this is probably something which the community (or even I) should suggest.
- Shire finances are unsustainable. State Government needs to come up with a strategy for shires like ours. Appalling train service. No transport to Shepparton.
- Public beds for the hospital.
- Why not lobby for the introduction of container deposit legislation.
- I would like to know what the candidates whom have been put forward views are about what? where? how?
- How are each representative going to assist VLine to provide a better and faster rail service.
- Public transport - to Melbourne and within region, regional employment and training opportunities, financial viability of smaller shires and possible solutions.
- Health area. Public hospital beds. Transport. Who gave the contract to the engineers for our railway line! And why hasn't it been fixed? Rates - why are Strathbogie rates about the highest in the state?
- Public Hospital beds.
- All candidates should be asked in advance to refer to their parties for the party policy on issues (as opposed to the candidates policy) for issues requested by Euroa Voices. In addition an action time should be requested. The issues I have are:
 - Euroa Health needs funding from the state government for 8 public patient beds
 - The rail service between Euroa and Melbourne needs to be fixed. Ten years ago we had 3 services per day to Southern Cross Station, travel time was consistently 1 hour 35 minutes.
 - VicForests involvement in the Strathbogie Ranges needs much closer scrutiny.
 - Management of native vegetation on roadsides and private land.

- The unsustainable logging of the Strathbogie forests by Vic Forests, the poor train service to N/East Vic, the loss of biodiversity in the region because of lack of government commitment and weak legislative protection, the inequitable health system,
- Having compassion for refugees.
- Public transport, encouraging greater and more responsible recycling, addressing the aging population and local health providers, increased hospital beds

Summary of responses from Kitchen-table Discussions:

- Coal Seam Gas – State Govt. hiding from issue. Need information meetings.
- Public transport – performance of train line; Need regular public transport to Shepparton
- More employment needed in town for young people particularly.
- Alternative energy – sustainability needed; encourage people into solar
- Initiatives for growth e.g. saleyards, tourism, encourage businesses to relocate
- Encourage ethanol production
- Public transport
- Increased dollars for rural shires to maintain infrastructure – roads and bridges
- Hours for kinda – lots of work to increase hrs for kinda and have the kinda venues ready, but are they now going to drop the hours from 15 to 10hrs?
- Youth employment – supporting this in rural areas, apprentices etc. Kids get an education and then leave. No wonder we are an ageing population!
- Community Health – public beds for the hospital is a must
- The region needs a youth engagement strategy for employment and education at all levels but importantly for the future, at the post-secondary level.
- The region needs a tourism strategy which promotes its benefits – for example, the environment, the creeks, the wine industry, the horse industry.
- Innovation needs to be encouraged at the small business scale as the town and region is essentially served by the public sector – the schools, hospital, council.
- Strathbogie Voices must outline an agenda and insist on election candidates responding to this agenda.
- Voices must develop a cohesive series of proposals, policy, questions that should be forwarded to the candidates with the clear expectation that they address them at the public meeting. These proposals should be on the website and also forwarded to the press. Everyone agreed that the website facebook and twitter were most important. We should formulate our expectations and recognise we have power.
- Transport – done to death, raise it but don't flog it.
- Other business ideas – sale yards must be retained, horse facilities must be tapped into to acknowledge its importance to the region.
- Tourism – must emphasise special local features such as Gooram Falls, Sevens Creek revegetation development, Strathbogie State Forest.
- Knowledge on how we can get a council that listens and consults?
- Public Transport
- Natural environment, and its protection
- NBN
- Planning
- Health care funding for services
- Public transport
- Public Health in Shire
- Police
- Youth unemployment
- I'm concerned about National Parks
- Increased opportunities for business
- V-line; freight; N-S and E-W transport, trains running on time
- Forestry issues in Strathbogie
- Relationships with local government
- State government is very Melbourne-centric. We need equitable access to all funds.
- Grab the handball
- Strathbogie Forest issue
- Asset maintenance – roads/bridges
- Pressure state government to fund shires properly
- The rail service is a real problem – frequency and reliability
- We need public beds at Euroa hospital
- There needs to be a better strategy for community outreach/aged care services in Strathbogie
- There should be more help to keep Strathbogie old folk in their homes rather than transfer to aged care facilities
- The community nursing service is inadequate and has run-down

- Preventative healthcare services are non-existent
- Some healthcare services that should be provided by community nurses are not available so patient is transferred to hospital
- Economic growth is lacking in Strathbogie
- There needs to be a strategy to support small farms e.g. small scale agriculture/food production
- The demand for electricity is not being met; there is no 3 phase power; Wind farms may be problematic.
- Ambulance
- Trains – shuttle to Seymour?
- School bus issues
- Health issues – hospital beds

Appendix 7: Other state government issues

The full list of responses to the question 'Are there issues beyond the Euroa electorate that you think should be addressed in the run up to the 2014 state election?'

- Climate change environment bushfire risk state government planning issues about things like public transport
- Renewable energy development. Protection of State Parks particularly alpine and coastal. Support of farm production to ensure its viability – transport facilities, marketing issues, research.
- Investigating how news tv and radio could become a more active channel for positive stories/ opportunities/community services (to replace existing negative fear-mongering /crime and court coverage.) The current programming of mainstream news media in particular is counterproductive in a culture seeking more volunteers, greater community /civic engagement, faith in its political systems and a positive outlook into the future.
- Regional development.
- Let's concentrate locally first.
- The emergence of the shanghai cooperation organisation comprising bric nations into a rapidly coalescing new world superpower with 5 billion people versus the bankrupt and ailing West (USA, Canada, western Europe, Australia) with only one billion people represents a game changing paradigm shift with huge implications for local governments in a time of scarcity , high unemployment, crumbling infrastructure , population decentralisation...
- Climate change and positioning Victoria for a carbon-restrained economy.
- What policies do parties have to address climate change? ie what will they do to reduce greenhouse gases?
- Funding to protect local environment
- State government is city-centric just like most States.
- Again train service. Green environmental issues including businesses that are noisy and constantly offensive to those living around them.
- Transport and Indigenous recognition
- Sustainable Energy Options, Healthier local environment, Climate Change issues
- Regional infrastructure and vocational training especially to slow departure of youth for post school education and employment
- Aged care and arts funding and public transport statewide, renewable energy.
- Completion of remedial rail works and increased rail services to/from Melbourne;
- Improve efficiency of government spending.
- Sustainable environmental policy, especially in the fields of water and climate change.
- Fracking has been used very successfully in the Simpson Basin. Santos has not had any issues. Why not lobby to introduce fracking in Vict.
- Funding how much? What are the priorities
- North East Rail, Infrastructure solutions to Tullamarine, What extra services are being planned for the residential expansion in the Mitchell Shire
- Health, education, unemployment rate, renewable energy target, climate change response, public transport
- Rail to Tullamarine...governments should not be controlled by minority parties, e.g. Geoff Shaw
- The rail service as above and 2. Tourism be co-ordinated with surrounding towns to establish a great tourism trail.
- Public Health and youth services. Shire amalgamation?
- Yes, but they are outside of the scope for Euroa.
- Catchment health and management, esp the management of public land in the Strathbogie Ranges.
- The lack of commitment by all levels of govt. to climate change, the poor public transport system, the under-funded education system, the continuing waste of money on PPP's (eg. the de-sal plant and public road construction),
- Compassion for Asylum Seekers
- Public transport - train timetables. Encourage car parking in outer areas and public transport into the city for country people. Encourage businesses operators to the country. Land management and crop diversity to ensure the sustainability of agriculture and an aging group of farmers.

Appendix 8: Dealing with the issues

Below is the full list of responses with regards to how the issues raised as responses to the questions or as part of the Kitchen-table Discussions can be effectively dealt with.

Survey (on-line or written) data:

- Through leadership and consultation with the public. Proper policy development processes which are adhered to
- Redirection of funding. A more bipartisan approach to major over-arching needs - no mindless opposition and wasteful undoing of achievements of previous governments.
- Transport: put the service on, promote it, provide incentives. Public needs to be directed on this. News media: direct contact with news editors on radio/tv – commercial and public - to discuss how current programming is corrosive to social capital and community confidence. Create fresh links into the community to facilitate a more positive/democratic news culture in general.
- I'm sorry but solutions are beyond me.
- More support of country areas and issues.
- Continue building resilience within the local community, encouraging public transport, biofuel nodes, farmers markets, wood lots, investigating locally scaled hydroelectric schemes (Polly McQuinn's) moving away from mantras of growth and real estate speculation, depoliticisation of local government (while there seems to be a concerted campaign to politicise it as the big central corporate system struggles to control the narrative), more diversity of local media. Reducing the centralised role of the local shire, empowering community groups to self organise and do much of the heavy lifting, free from outside influence, encourage long term locals to take more of a leading role, harking back to the old "town clerk" who was often a farmer, before the age of "CEO".
- Active lobbying of all candidate and then government representatives once they are elected.
- Could the public transport committee report back to the local people through a regular column in the Euroa Gazette? Could a way be provided for local people to air their grievances, or satisfaction, with public transport.
- Think more about decentralisation but with appropriate infrastructure.
- Discussion, information in our local gazette made to be seen and read; and placing them as priorities in regards to expenditure of shire funds.
- 1 Investigate amalgamation with other shires? And draft up resignation letters for our current C's; 2. Stronger community pressure = political pressure, 3. Where is a sign saying this is Panarang Land like they do in NSW?
- Community Forum
- Good representation by local MP and encourage community participation
- Community consultation and long term planning with environment and longevity in mind!
- More discussion; more updates from those who know what the situation is (no bullshit and PR please, just the truth).
- Political parties need to articulate clear strategies for growth in regional areas like ours.
- Too big a field for brief comments.
- By not voting for minority political groups - their actions are ineffective.
- Open honest transparent discussion and action as to what is truly possible
- Effective use of State taxes to look at infrastructure solutions for the next 50 years no just the election cycle.
- Longer-term thinking at all levels of government, together with imagination, courage, and integrity
- Getting rid of the monkeys. Having politicians who are genuine and truly working for the people and country.
- Public beds, a commitment to fund these. The government doesn't need to make any capital expenditure, the infrastructure is in place. Expenditure on the beds would not be additional to the governments cost, what is spend in Euroa would be saved in the towns that the patients would have otherwise be hospitalised. Rail service, throw a lot of money to fix the line then improvement to rolling stock.
- Public campaign organised by local shire and community representatives.
- Political representatives actually representing the constituents/community and NOT the party system.
- Stop erecting these horrendously much needed money wasting and totally dangerous wire fences along the freeways. if an emergency how the hell do i get myself and my horse to safety now I envisage a multiple crash instead of single car leaving road for whatever reason I tried to get a satisfactory reason from vic. roads they told me to sell my horse/ we are the horse capital of vic.
- By everyone taking greater responsibility for their actions and voting in the Greens ! !
- Acknowledging & Rejoicing in refugees who have done well for Australia already.
- Collaboration between community and government.

- Ensure the right people are elected - this is not an easy job and we often end up with people who have egos rather than the passion to work for the betterment of the community. Elected officers are more worried about appeasing people and being re-elected than making the hard decisions that make a difference.

Kitchen-table discussions summary of responses:

- More meetings like this (the forum)
- More time for public discussion at Council Meetings
- Get people together for discussion
- Shire should use advisory groups to harness expertise in community e.g. tourism, finance, aged care, equestrian
- Support activities in the town – shop local
- Attend meetings and hold discussions
- Look up Council Plan on the website
- Have a two way conversation with Council. This is hard, they did not follow up St Johns with regards to the Euroa Swimming Pool.
- Need a training session in the role of local government
- List of Section 86 committees. Is there one?
- Need a new residents pack.
- Partnerships are promoted by communication and discussion.
- Strathbogie Voices is one way to get the conversation going and council and the state government should actively promote this community development work, respond to the community's issues and deliver outcomes.
- We need to promote and communicate our aspirations and expectations and this needs to be clear and concise and involve the tiers of government and the community.
- Be more involved with council decision-making,
- Establish a schedule of people to attend C meetings
- Conduct a 'Festival of Ideas'
- Create specialist resource groups from local talent, to support Councilors on specific issues (these would be short term, high impact, accurate information)
- Importance of the T intersection of Binney St and Tarcombe St, in funneling people into town, very directive.
- Treasure what we have! Listen to young people.
- Establish a real social contract/agreement between Council and Constituents, good PR? Creative communities succeed
- Setting up local power grids and sell excess. Not having to rely on big, long-term ageing infrastructure
- Decentralisation – Melb is too big, so what can country towns offer? Nothing, because it is all focussed in Melb. We need to attract industries with a future.
- Outsourcing is a good thing. It creates employment.
- Money spent is out of wack with Melbourne
- Unified message to candidate
- Tourism and greater promotion
- We need visionary thinking and creative solutions
- Succession plan for volunteer groups – CFA – we need an Emergency Services Precinct
- International events
- Ageing community
- Good investors in Nagambie. Need stability and long term, collective vision to make the most of this.