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## Community Climate Change Survey Report



## Background

Murrindindi Shire Council has been engaging with community and stakeholders to inform the development of our Climate Action Plan, as part of the Taking Climate Action project. The community engagement tools included a detailed online survey via the Loop, which aimed to get a sense of community attitudes towards the issue, existing climate action, and barriers to further action. We also hosted a series of pop-up kiosks at local events, markets and community spaces across the Shire where community members were invited to fill out the survey and engage in discussion with Councillors and Council staff about their concerns. Community engagement for Stage One of the Taking Climate Action project took place between 25 February and 28 March 2022. Throughout the engagement period, Council sought to inform and engage as many people as possible and to encourage wide participation.

The results of the community survey are presented below.

## List of Climate Change Survey Questions

### 1. What is your relationship to Murrindindi Shire?

- a. Resident
- b. Council staff member
- c. Visitor
- d. Business/landholder
- e. Community Group
- f. Other

### 2. On a scale from one (not familiar at all) to five (very familiar), how familiar are you with the issue of climate change?

### 3. How concerned are you about the impacts of climate change?

- a. Alarmed (I am doing all I can to address climate change, and I wish others would do the same)
- b. Alert (Climate change is really important. I want to do something about it but I'm not sure what I can do)
- c. Concerned (Climate change is important, but most effects will be felt by future generations, not now.)
- d. Cautious (Climate change is important, but I think we are already doing enough)
- e. Neutral (Climate change might be a problem but I'm not too worried about it)
- f. Doubtful (I don't think climate change is a problem really)

### 4. How has climate change impacted you/your business/your work at Council?

- a. Extreme weather (bushfires, heatwaves, floods, storms and drought)
- b. Change in average weather patterns
- c. Impact on physical/mental health
- d. Property damage
- e. Impact on environment/wildlife
- f. Higher living/running costs (e.g. energy bills, water bills, food)
- g. Impact on lifestyle
- h. Future of children
- i. Impact of government policy

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- j. Reduced business productivity (past or future)
- k. Other

**5. What (if any) actions have you taken to address climate change?**

- a. Support a local, national or international organisation working on the issue
- b. Talk to family, friends, and colleagues about climate change
- c. Talk to a mental health professional about climate change
- d. Explore ways to reduce emissions at work (e.g. offering lower emissions products, carbon neutral operations)
- e. Explore ways to adapt your workplace to climate change
- f. Upgrade your home or businesses to be more energy efficient (insulation, lighting, heating/cooling etc.)
- g. Make your home, business or property more water efficient (install water saving devices and appliances, water tanks)
- h. Adapt your garden to be drought tolerant and/or provide habitat and biodiversity
- i. Install rooftop solar or solar battery system
- j. Purchase green power
- k. Walk or ride a bike where possible
- l. Purchase an electric or hybrid vehicle/s
- m. Establish an edible garden and/or compost food waste
- n. Eat a more plant-based diet
- o. Actively separate waste and avoid buying materials that become waste
- p. Diversify your business and/or explore new markets
- q. Other

**6. What are the biggest barriers for you taking climate action?**

- a. Cost of actions
- b. Lack of spare time
- c. Other priorities come first
- d. Not knowing what to do
- e. Feeling overwhelmed

**7. What specific actions can Council take to mitigate, adapt or mobilise for climate action?**

**8. Would you be willing to participate in community-based actions?**

- a. Yes
- b. No

**9. Would you be willing to contribute resources to community climate change projects?**

- a. Yes, as a one-off contribution (insert amount below)
- b. Yes, as a yearly contribution (insert amount below)
- c. No, but can provide in-kind support from business (specify type below)
- d. No - \$0

**10. If yes, what contribution could you provide?**

**11. Is there anything else about climate change that you'd like Council to consider?**



12. Where do you live?

13. What is your age group?

14. What is your gender?

15. Are you happy for us to get in touch with you about climate action at Council?



## The Respondents Summary



. There were more than 400 page-views throughout the campaign. Fourteen people “followed” the project, opting in for any updates about Climate Action. Over 85 people participated in Stage One, providing their thoughts and ideas in the survey

The two most skipped questions were question 6 - what are the biggest barriers for you taking climate action? And question 11 - is there anything else about climate change that you would like Council to consider?

the 85 participants, 77 told us about their relationship to Murrindindi Shire. The majority of participants are local residents who live within the Shire. The age of the respondents was mostly between 40 years and 69 + years. 55% were female, 32% were male, 1% gender diverse and 12% preferred not to say.

## Climate Change Survey Results

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The survey consisted of 16 questions which included demographic questions, multiple choice and long answer questions.

### 1. What is your relationship to Murrindindi Shire?

There were 77 out of 85 respondents that told us about their relationship to Murrindindi Shire.

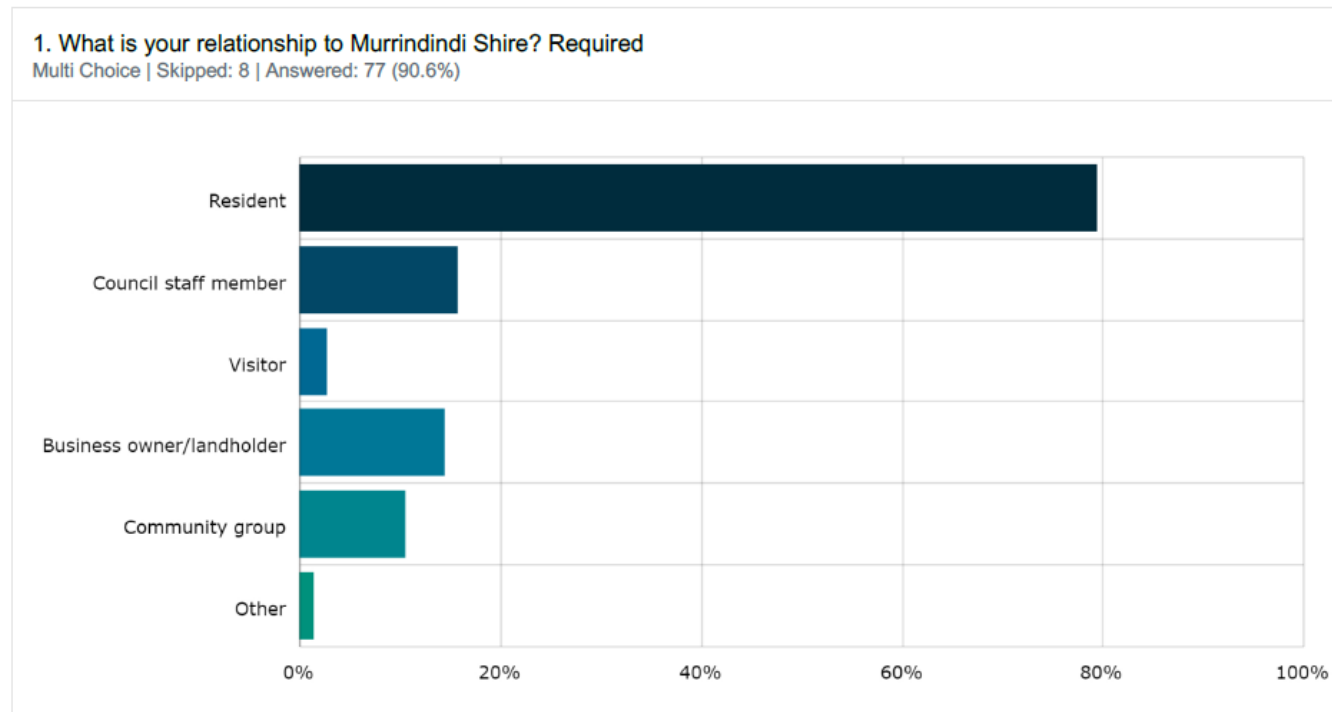
Respondents were able to choose more than one option in the table below and/or specify an “other” response.

*Table 1 what is your relationship to Murrindindi Shire?*

| Answer choices            | Percent | Count |
|---------------------------|---------|-------|
| Resident                  | 79.22%  | 61    |
| Council staff member      | 15.58%  | 12    |
| Visitor                   | 2.60%   | 2     |
| Business owner/landholder | 14.29%  | 11    |
| Community group           | 10.39%  | 8     |
| Other                     | 1.30%   | 1     |

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Figure 1 The Loop data: What is your relationship to Murrindindi Shire?



The most common answer to this question was resident with 79.22%, while council staff member and business owner/landholder occupied second and third position with 15.58% and 14.29% respectively.

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### 2. On a scale from one (not familiar at all) to five (very familiar), how familiar are you with the issue of climate change

Participants were asked to rate how familiar they are with the issue of climate change on a 5 level scale from “very familiar” to “not familiar at all”.

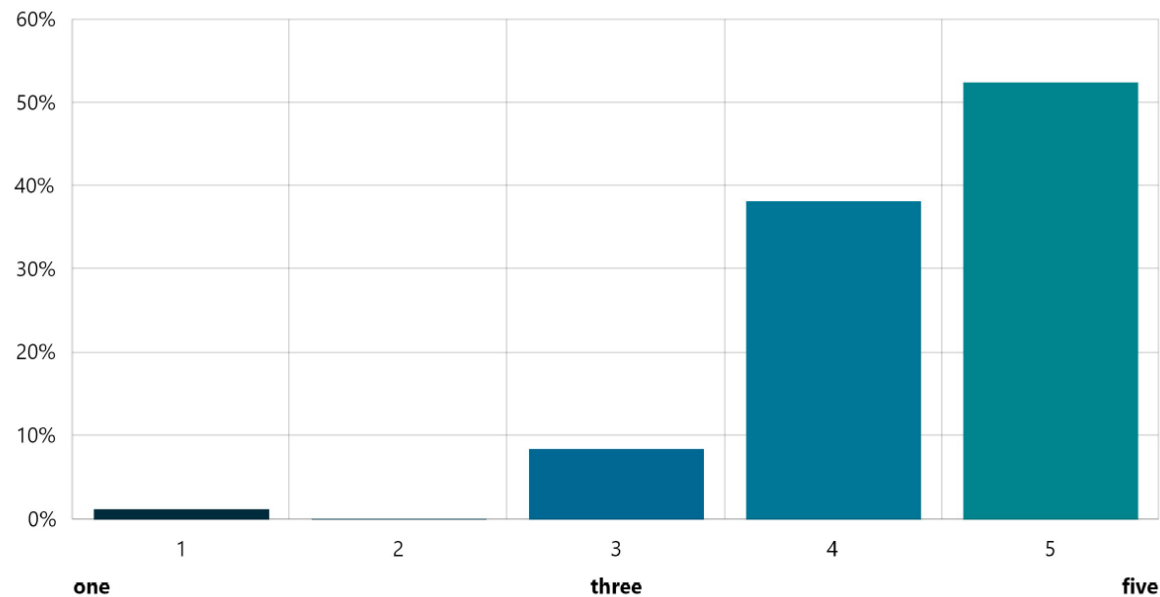
This questions was answered by 84 respondents and skipped by 1.

The majority of respondents, 76 (90%), expressed a high level of familiarity (score of 4 or 5) with the issue of climate change.

Just one person did not feel familiar with the issue at all.

*Figure 2 The Loop data: How familiar is climate change to people*

2. On a scale from one (not familiar at all) to five (very familiar), how familiar are you with the issue of climate change?  
Slider | Skipped: 1 | Answered: 84 (98.8%)





### 3. How concerned are you about the impacts of climate change?

Participants were asked to rate their concern about the impacts of climate change and they were able to choose one of the six options described in table 2. This question was answered by all 85 respondents.

The majority of respondents, 73 (86%), expressed that climate change is a really important concern (Table 2). 56% of people are 'alarmed' and feel they are doing all what they can to address climate change and they wish others would do the same. 29% of respondents are 'alert'. Whilst they think climate change is really important, they may not know what they can do about it. These groups have a strong appetite for action, and can be supported to act more strategically and effectively.

9% of respondents are 'concerned', 'cautious', or 'neutral'. Whilst these groups accept the reality of climate change, they do not see it as a high priority issue. As an example, here is a quote from this group:

*"Whilst climate change awareness is important, and we all need to make informed decisions, I don't agree with so much of my rates being spent by the Council on a Climate Change Action Plan. Local Council should get road and waste issues in hand first." – Anon*

This demonstrates a need for education targeted to these groups about the level of risk climate change presents to Council and Council's role in addressing it. It is not possible to determine from the survey results what proportion of the population of the Shire sits in this group, but it is likely to be under-represented here – being relatively disengaged from the issue, there is less motivation for this group to fill out the survey.

5% of respondents expressed doubt that climate change is a problem at all. Whilst this is a minority, a couple of these respondents responded extremely passionately, expressing a strong desire for Council not to allocate resources to climate action. It is likely that this group will continue to vocally oppose Council climate action, and while this should not get in the way of meaningful action, it needs to be considered when engaging with the community.

The table and figure below provide more details of the results from this question.

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| Answer choices   | Percent | Count |
|--|---------|-------|
| Alarmed (I am doing all I can to address climate change, and I wish others would do the same)              | 56.47%  | 48    |
| Alert (Climate change is really important. I want to do something about it but I'm not sure what I can do) | 29.41%  | 25    |
| Concerned (Climate change is important, but most effects will be felt by future generations, not now.)     | 5.88%   | 5     |
| Cautious (Climate change is important, but I think we are already doing enough)                            | 2.35%   | 2     |
| Neutral (Climate change might be a problem but I'm not too worried about it)                               | 1.18%   | 1     |
| Doubtful (I don't think climate change is a problem really)  | 4.71%   | 4     |
| Total  | 100.00% | 85    |

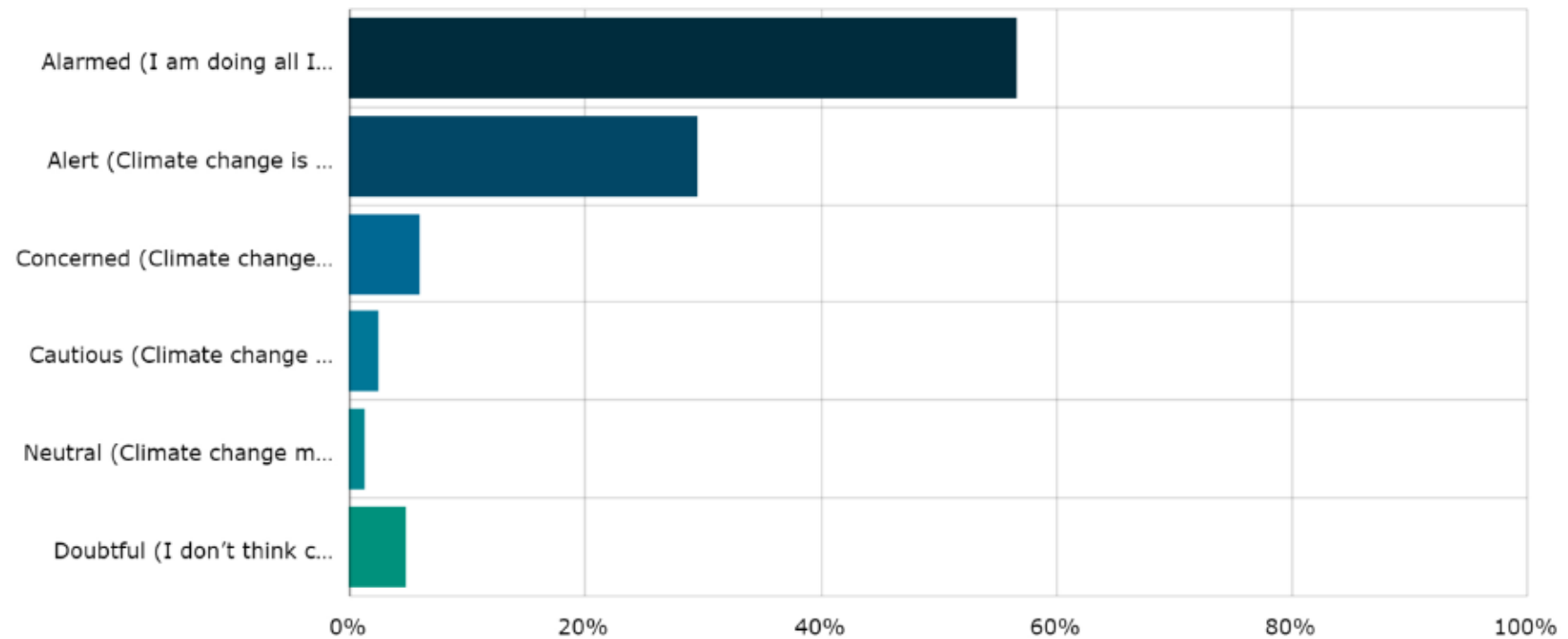
*Table 2 How concerned are you about the impacts of climate change?*

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Figure 3 How concerned are you about the impacts of climate change?

### 3. How concerned are you about the impacts of climate change?

Select Box | Skipped: 0 | Answered: 85 (100%)



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### 4. How has climate change impacted you/your business/your work at Council?

Participants were able to choose more than one option in the table below and/or specify an “other” response. The question was answered by 78 people and skipped by 7.

*Table 3 how has climate change impacted you/your business/your work at Council?*

| Answer choices   | Percent | Count |
|--|---------|-------|
| Extreme weather (bushfires, heatwaves, floods, storms and drought) | 76.92%  | 60    |
| Change in average weather patterns                                 | 74.36%  | 58    |
| Impact on physical/mental health                                   | 35.90%  | 28    |
| Property damage  | 25.64%  | 20    |
| Impact on environment/wildlife                                     | 70.51%  | 55    |
| Higher living/running costs (e.g. energy bills, water bills, food) | 60.26%  | 47    |
| Impact on lifestyle  | 35.90%  | 28    |
| Future of children   | 66.67%  | 52    |
| Impact of government policy  | 39.74%  | 31    |
| Reduced business productivity (past or future)                     | 12.82%  | 10    |
| Other  | 12.82%  | 10    |

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Among the ten different options, respondents indicated that extreme weather (bushfires, heatwaves, floods, storms and drought), change in average weather patterns and impact on environment/wildlife are the most common effects that climate change has on their lives. The top three impacts were reasonably closely scored with between 60 (77%) and 55 (71%) of the participant's votes.

The next most selected options were future of children, and higher living/running costs (e.g. energy bills, water bills, food) with 52 (67%) and 47 (60 %) votes respectively. **Direct impacts on health and property were not common.**

In contrast, those who were concerned, cautious or neutral picked higher cost of living as the most 'felt' impact, followed by future of children. This indicates the need for further education as the groups is not attributing extreme weather and changes to average weather to climate change.

Notably, those residing outside of the Yea and Alexandra areas indicated a greater number of impacts overall.

Some answers in the "other" response option reflect that people are struggling with their emotions around the impacts of climate change. Below you will find a couple of the responses:

- "I am completely and utterly devastated that the planet is being destroyed. I am terrified for my future and the future of generations to come. I am heartbroken by the ongoing damage to planet, wildlife and people and I am terrified that it will only get worse as floods, fires, droughts etc continue to kill innocent people and harm communities. I am only 25 and myself and many of my friends and peers don't even know if we should have children when they will inherit an unsafe, uninhabitable, disaster plagued earth".*

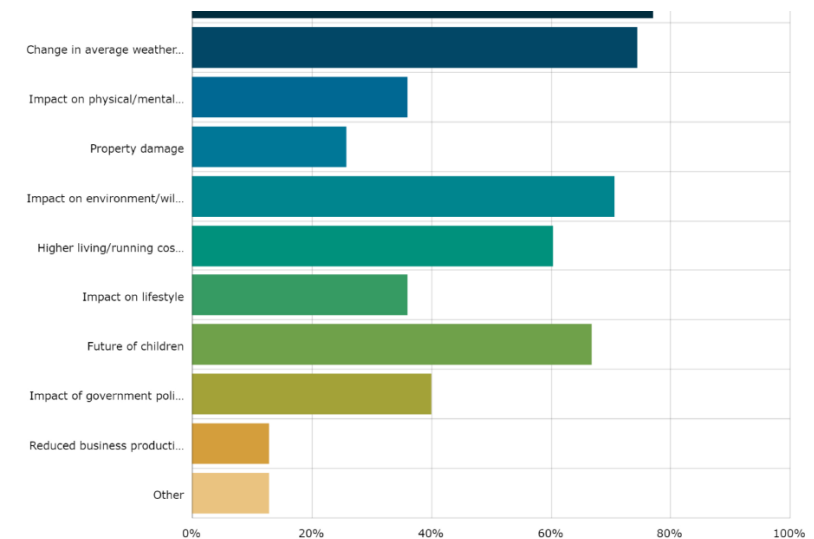
- "Climate change is a big part of my decision not to have children".*

On the other hand, there are also people who do not believe climate change is real, some of the answers are below:

- "Attribution, with any certainty, of any of the above to climate change is pure fantasy. I assume you mean man made climate change".*
- "The Government manipulates the weather and pretends it is climate change".*

4. How has climate change impacted you/your business/your work at Council  
Multi Choice | Skipped: 7 | Answered: 78 (91.8%)

Figure 4 how has climate change impacted you/your business/your work at council





5. What (if any) actions have you taken to address climate change?

83 participants out of 85 provided an answer to this question.

Actions around **waste management** were the most common: “separating waste and avoiding buying materials that become waste” (81.93% of respondents chose this action).

Actions around **gardening** were also common: “Gardening establish an edible garden and/or compost food waste” (75.90%), “adapt your garden to be drought tolerant and/or provide habitat and biodiversity” (71.08%).

**Energy upgrades** (74.70%) and **water efficiency upgrades** (71%) were also common – and even those in the concerned/cautious/neutral group indicated action in this area.

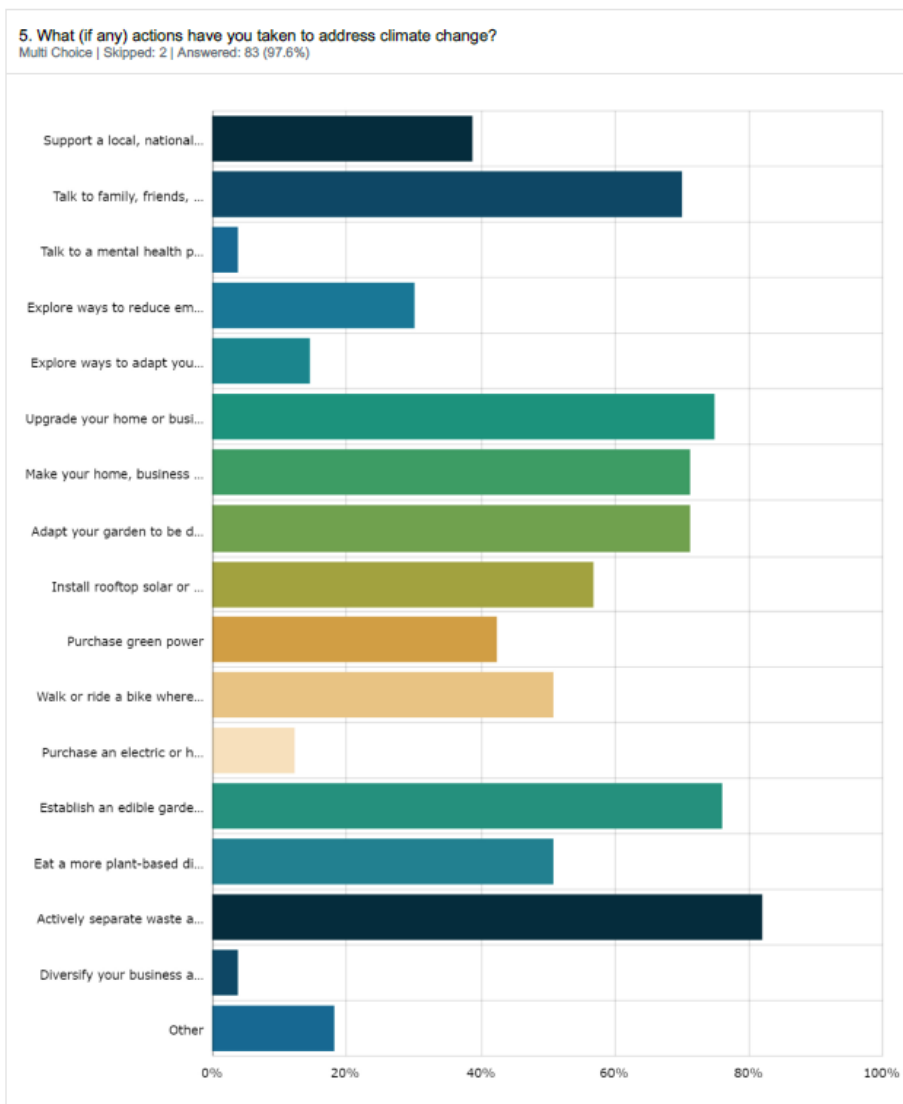
70% of respondents indicated that they **talk to family, friends and colleagues** about the issue. This rate was higher among Council staff and business owners, and significantly lower among less alarmed groups.

Among respondents, **uptake of renewable energy was good**: 75% indicated either purchasing renewable energy, or installing solar. These actions, however, were not as common among the cautious/concerned/doubtful groups. About 50% had installed solar panels but none had purchased renewable energy (perhaps indicating a cost motivation)

With the exception of talking to family/friends, there is a notable lack of collective-based and adaptation actions across all groups, such as exploring climate action at work, and supporting a community group.



Figure 5 what (if any) actions have you taken to address climate change?



## 6. What are the biggest barriers for you taking climate action?

Out of 85 participants 61 people provided an answer to this question.

“Cost of actions” was the most chosen barrier representing (67%). The second position was for “lack of spare” time with 16%, while “not knowing what to do” and feeling overwhelmed where the least two chosen barriers.

As expected, ‘other priorities’ was the second biggest barrier to action for the concerned/cautious/neutral/doubtful group. Education about the issue and reasons for concern would address this barrier.

For those living outside the main urban areas of Alexandra and Yea, ‘not knowing what to do’ was the second most common barrier and ‘other priorities’ came last – indicating there is appetite for further action, and working with this group to identify actions may prove fruitful.

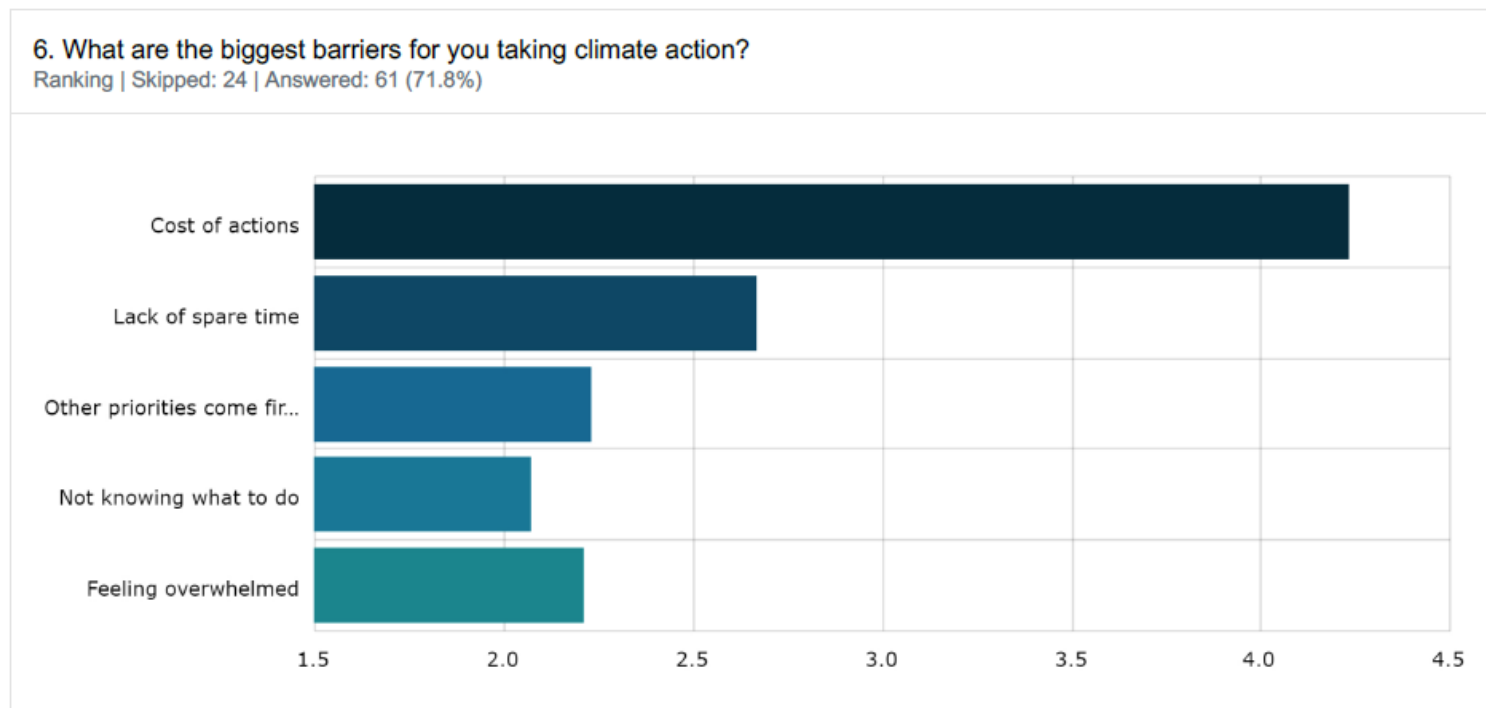


Figure 6 what are the biggest barriers for you taking climate action?

7. What specific actions can Council take to mitigate, adapt or mobilise for climate action?

Top suggestions for action were (in order of popularity):

1. Improving recycling and green waste/FOGO (Note however that as a small proportion of the shire's emissions this area is not high priority)
2. Providing education, advice, and local case studies.
3. Providing grant funding and other access to finance for community groups/businesses
4. Reduce cost of new technologies through subsidies and/or bulk buys.
5. Encourage (and advocate for) public transport and carpooling
6. Lead by example – rather than telling people what they should do.
7. Install public EV chargers
8. Address deforestation and illegal land clearing
9. Support and encourage transition to low emissions agriculture

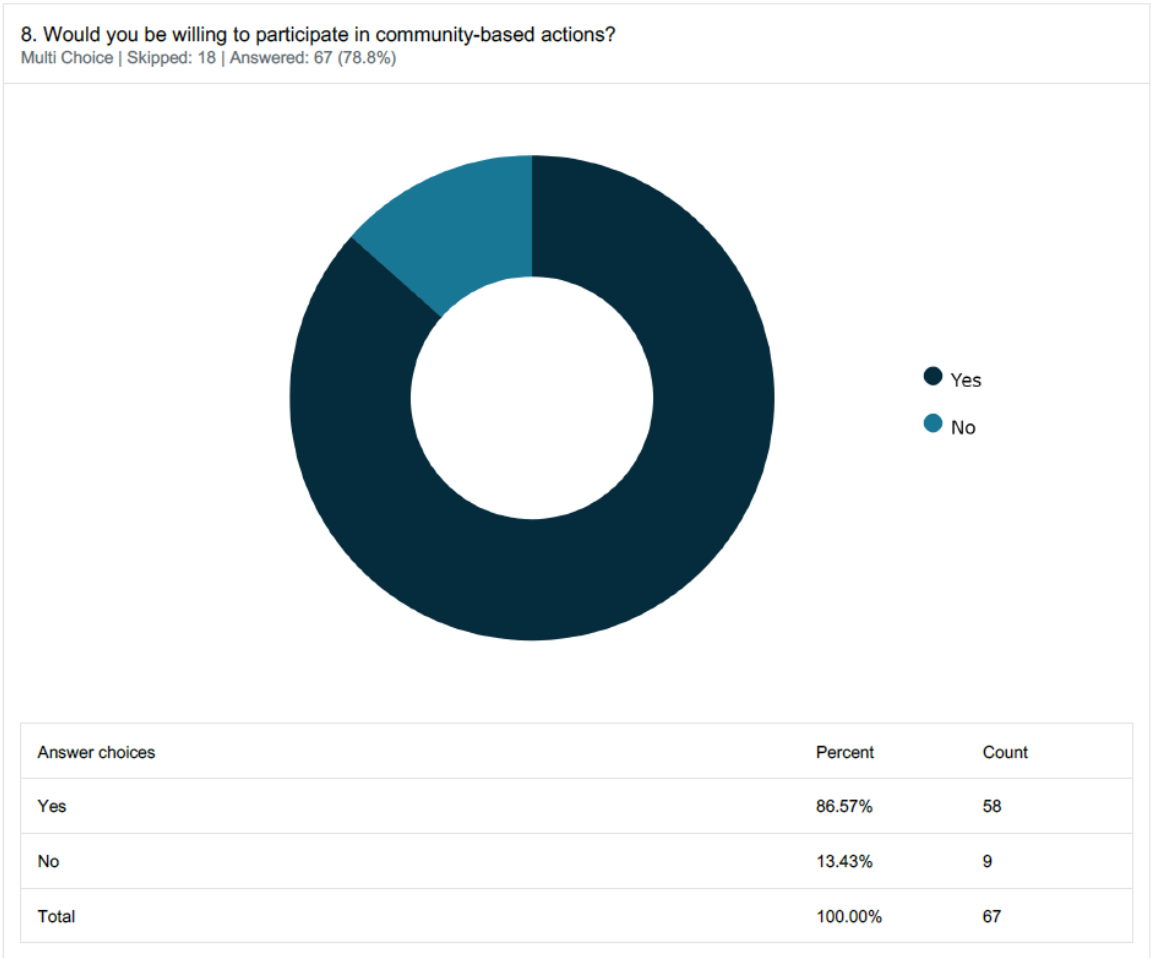
Other interesting ideas and observations:

- Help farmers process and sell produce locally to reduce 'food miles' (the kilometres food travels)
- Reduced rates for farmers who dedicate land to planting of trees
- "Something like a large battery in each town that residents are able to feed their own solar into, and receive back when needed."
- "Encourage local manufacturing industry - local jobs and sense of community."
- Need to consider long term impacts of climate change solutions (e.g. solar panel recycling) as well as safety (e.g. lithium ion batteries)
- "Get serious about asset rationalisation – don't spend money on under-utilised buildings. Look at reducing and consolidating for multi-purpose"
- Adapt planning and building processes to support sustainable house designs, sustainable developments, and add special allocations/provisions for sustainable industries.
- Put renewable energy on all public buildings
- Include indigenous perspectives
- Support community owned renewable energy

Although a couple of residents supported the suggested action of plant-based diets, several others expressed disappointment at its inclusion. One respondent suggested an alternative framing around the benefits of local, ethical, and regeneratively farmed meat (focus on the system of production, not on the product itself).

8. Would you be willing to participate in community-based actions?

Figure 7 would you be willing to participate in community-based actions?

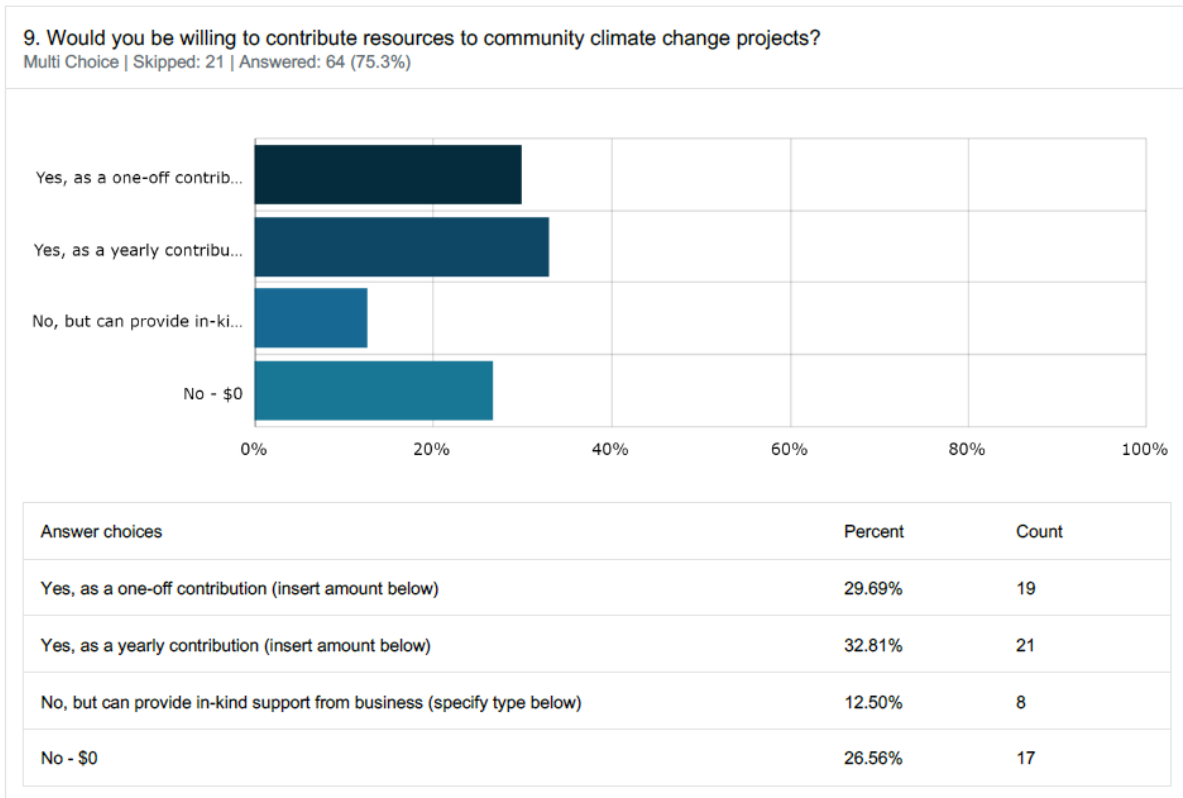


Out of 85 participants 67 people provided an answer to this question. Overall, there was a high percentage of respondents who were willing to contribute (87%) whereas only a small part (13%) expressed they would not participate in community-based actions.



### 9. Would you be willing to contribute resources to community climate change projects?

Figure 8 would you be willing to contribute resources to community climate change projects?



Although 21 people skipped this question, the number of people who are willing to contribute still high. The most chosen option was as a yearly contribution (33%) with value range between \$30 and \$500, followed by the option as a one-off contribution (30%) with value range between \$100 and \$1000, 17 respondents are no willing to contribute in any aspect at all, while some of the in-kind support options mentioned by people were:

- Resources to workshops
- Expertise, knowledge and sector consultation
- Labour to plant trees
- Marketing/ communications

As expected, those in the concerned/cautious/neutral/doubtful group were not generally willing to contribute. Three respondents (40%) indicated a desire for Council not to spend rate payers' funds on the climate action plan, preferring Council to focus on basic services ('rubbish and roads').

9 out of the 11 business owners who responded were willing to participate in actions; 6 were willing to provide financial or in-kind support. There is the potential to connect this group with local community groups. All except one of the staff respondents were willing to support action personally. In the broader community, residents of Alex and Yea were more likely than those residing outside urban centres to participate or provide financial support for actions.

11. Is there anything else about climate change that you would like Council to consider?

Only 52 people provided an answer to this question while 33 skipped it.

Key themes from this question are:

- The need for ongoing engagement with the community and businesses.
- Provision of direct funding support to farmers to reduce agricultural emissions
- Scope for inclusion of indigenous perspectives
- Support community groups working on this issue
- Maintain view of the bigger picture and advocate for all stakeholders and levels of government to take action.
- Educating and communicating with the community about Council's position on climate change and why
- Recycling and circular economy
- Acting and leading by example
- The need to include the rural community – not just residents of townships – in climate action projects.

Several respondents indicated a desire for Council not to resource climate action:

*"The council should consider working for Murrindindi, as it will never make an impression in saving the planet, which actually doesnt need councils help"*

*"Stop wasting our rates. As before, Nothing. Your job is to provide services to ratepayers. Roads, rubbish, parks etc"*

However, the vast majority of respondents were pleased to see Council is acting on climate change and supportive of future action:

*"I'm really proud of the council taking a stand on this, despite some opinions within the community. Murrindindi is as much, if not more affected by climate change than many regions, and by simply ignoring the facts, it will not improve. History will always tell the truth, so at least, even if there are naysayers, the council has taken action and that is on the record. There's so much to be done, but little steps is a great start."*



## **Conclusion**

The survey results indicate that participants consider themselves to be very familiar with the issue of climate change, and the majority are concerned about its potential impacts within the Shire. Most respondents are already taking steps to reduce emissions, but there is significant scope to support adaptation, business and collective-based actions, empower those who are already very concerned to act more strategically, and engage with and educate other around the severity of the risk and its impacts on Council's ability to deliver essential services.