Murrindindi Shire Council

Road Advisory Group Workshop 1
Summary Report

20 October 2023

capire

Overview

Background

This report outlines the Murrindindi Shire Council (MSC) Council Road Advisory Group (CRAG) Workshop 1 findings. The hybrid session was held both online and in-person at Yea Council Chambers on Wednesday 20 September from 5.00 – 8.00pm.

The objectives of the workshop were:

- To meet each other and get to know each other
- To confirm expectations of the group
- To introduce an overview of the Road Asset Management Plan
- To clarify roles of responsibilities of Council
- To share the report findings
- To invite members to discuss what they are seeing and hearing
- To understand how community uses roads and their understanding of the road network.

Workshop Attendance

A total of 14 interested community members registered for the event via an email invitation from the Murrindindi Shire Council (MSC). Of that, 12 people accepted the emailed invitation, 2 declined. 11 CRAG participants attended.

Table 1: List of participants and organisations

Organisation	Attendees
Chair	Ilona Gerencser, Councillor
Capire facilitators	Denise Francisco, Merryn Appleby
MSC team	Livia Bonazzi, Chief Executive Officer Peter Bain, Manager Sustainability & Assets Stuart Russell, Manager Operations & Maintenance
Presenters	Vito Albicini, Director Assets and Development Fiona Marmaras, Asset Management Consultant
CRAG attendees	12 participants attended session one 2 apologies

Key presentation summary and group discussion findings

This section provides an overview of the key findings from the presentations and group discussions during the workshop. Councillor Ilona Gerencser welcomed the CRAG members and shared an Acknowledgement of Country.

Independent facilitator, Denise Francisco from Capire Consulting Group provided an overview of the meeting purpose and agenda.

Workshop 1 objectives

The purpose of Workshop 1 was to provide CRAG members with an opportunity to meet each other and to review of the Road Asset Management Plan (RAMP) Community Engagement Results.

Icebreaker

There was a short icebreaker activity that sought to identify participants' demographic information. Most participants were from households of one to four people. There were no participants who represented households larger than four people. Most members of the group reported as just learning or having some knowledge about Road Asset Management whilst one member had a high level of knowledge.

The suburbs participants represented within the Murrindindi Shire Council (MSC) included:

- Alexandra
- Buxton
- Flowerdale
- Eildon
- Limestone

- Maintongoon
- Snobs Creek
- Strath Creek
- Yea.

Kinglake was noted as not being represented with a community member/participant.

Future sessions

In addition to the facilitators suggestion for members to display respectful behaviour and to allow everyone to have the opportunity to be heard participants discussed how they would like to work together during sessions. This included:

- a preference for in-person sessions
- a preference for a 6pm start during daylight savings
- a preference for Wednesday meetings, keep to the same day each week, as most people were able to attend

- a variety of meeting locations as everyone is travelling from different directions however Yea was later discussed as the most central location for the municipality.

Participants also highlighted information they would like to see in future meetings including:

- the Road Safety Strategy

- a summary of the advocacy MSC team has been doing to access further funding

- additional technical information including car crash statistics and engineering analysis of the safety of each road

- different funding models and how they apply to different scenarios.

Other comments

- Paul has a preference for printed reading material, however Nat Mathieson will liaise with Paul to assist with access to materials

- Some participants will not be able to attend the Wednesday meetings, however, Vito has offered to meet with these participants one-on-one.

Reflections from the discussion

Vito Albicini delivered two context-setting presentations, supported by Fiona Marmaras. The first provided an overview of the Road Asset Management Plan, while the second shared the previous engagement findings. All presentation slides are available in Appendix B.

Participants raised various questions during the question-and-answer time after the presentations, these questions focused on funding.

Funding
- Where does road funding come from (e.g., state versus federal funding, after natural disasters)?
- Has state funding increased post Covid-19 for regional communities? Does Council receive similar amounts of grant funding to other Councils?
- Is MSC advocating for greater funding?
- Has there been any feedback or kickback from other sectors that are not benefiting from the most recent budget?
- Will funding decrease?
- Is there an option for MSC to borrow money to bring roads up to a higher standard, so that they possibly won't need so much maintenance in the future?
- Is there a way to monetise the number of tourists coming to MSC but not paying rates, or contributing to the local economy (e.g., toll gate)?
- Is there the ability to maintain roads at a reduced cost?
- Are the sections of the pie chart (referencing PowerPoint slide Budget Spend per service) self-sustainable?

Participants were also invited to participate in a group discussion and share their reflections. A few themes emerged through their reflections, these focused on:

Health and Safety

- Driver education needs to be improved through:
  - o behavioural campaigns
  - o improving policing in areas
  - o Teaching drivers *how to avoid getting into an accident, or what happens in an accident and safety regarding fatigue*
- Most accidents tend to be visitors to the Shire as they are unfamiliar with the roads.
- Post Covid-19 participants have noticed more people driving in an unsafe manner on the roads.
  - o Observed post Covid-19 is that there has been an influx of Victorians moving to rural areas to work from home. This has placed greater strain and demand on local amenities, services and infrastructure.
- Shoulders on roads are critical to safety, yet there are not enough shoulders for people to use to allow others to pass.
- Dust from road traffic is having an impact on drinking water.

Funding and the cost of living

- Small shires spend a larger portion of funding on roads compared to larger inner-city municipalities, yet they get less funding. MSC gets less than half compared to other rural councils.
- There is a threshold for funding, so often receiving funding depends on the level of damage. Sometimes council will receive a package for repair, for example after a flood, however there is a 'like for like' system. This means the roads are not improved, and resilience is not built into the solution except in exceptional circumstances.
- Council manages a higher proportion of the roads (80 per cent) but doesn't have as much of the funding.
- Funding is currently decreasing but the maintenance needs are increasing.
- There will need to be conversations about the wider fiscal environment and the trade-offs for MSC spending.
- Residents are already struggling to pay their rates.
- Fuel and diesel costs are increasing.

Survey

- Some participants felt MSC had a good response rate for a long-form survey.
- Others stated that they would like to have seen greater advertising, and response rate to the survey.
- It was clarified that the survey is reflective of a snapshot in time and part of an iterative discussion and will be viewed alongside other data and evidence.
- The survey highlighted the level of importance that roads are placed in MSC as respondents indicated that they were willing to sacrifice things.

Other

- Will we have enough time to cover all of the material across the next three sessions? Will we need to organise more meetings?
- One participant stated that their aspiration is for MSC to be a well-connected Shire. The MSC is defined by valleys and mountain ranges, and they would like residents to be able to travel at a reasonable speed and reasonable distances and reasonably safely.

Empathy Mapping

In groups, participants were asked to consider the MSC community pains and gains related to Road Asset Management. This was done using worksheets, each with a different persona. The four personas Clare (31 years), Alice (25 years), Yash (38 years) and Mike (55 years) reflected MSC demographics and experiences using Murrindindi roads. The empathy mapping worksheets are available in Appendix A. A summary of the responses are outlined in the Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of responses from Empathy Maps

Challenges	- A lack of footpaths (Clare) - Lack of access to public transport (Clare) - Difficult for people with mobility issues to get around using private cars (Clare) - A lack of solid ground for accessibility (Clare) - Safety concerns when driving at night or while fatigued (Alice) - Fear of damage to vehicle and associated costs (Alice) - Lack of experience as a driver (Alice) - Other road users awareness of bikes (Mike) - Cost of damage to the roads (Mike) - Potholes (Yash) - Detritus (branches) and wildlife (deer, wombats) are a higher risk for motorcyclists on the road (Yash)
Opportunities	- Good road surfacing, in a high priority radius for people with higher needs (Clare) - Drains/scoops on the corners to allow transition from the footpath to the road, for wheelchairs, prams and scooters (Clare) - Wheelchair ramps (Clare) - Public toilets (Clare) - Road safety (Alice) - Improved transit times (Alice) - Access to better roads (Mike) - Safety (Yash) - More space between road and trees; this can be achieved by the removal of rubbish and foliage on the side of the road (Yash) This has impacts on - visibility of wildlife - safety of the road via increased fuel load in a bushfire - Improved lighting (Yash)
Say and do	- More likely to take risks such as speed, or drive while fatigued (Alice) - Say that sport is more important for MSC to spend money on than roads; she might desire improved sporting facilities (Alice) - Focused on their own situation (Mike) - Consider how their job impacts others (Mike) - Manage risk level by trying to travel during the day (because the risk at night is high) (Yash)
Think and feel	The aged care residents might feel lonely or disempowered (Clare)

	- The aged care residents might feel isolated by lack of opportunity or independence, as the footpaths are difficult to use with mobility scooters. (Clare) - Restricted from doing her job. As she would have to plan things in advance, unable to do impromptu outings (Clare) - Frustrated as it is harder to do her job here than in other locations (Clare) - Have more age-related needs/wants (Alice) - Concerned with the quality of the roads and transit times (Alice) - Having a job (Mike) - To be able to do his/her job in an efficient manner (Mike) - Wildlife risk is great (Yash) - They are travelling a great distance (Yash)

Next steps

- Next meeting is on Wednesday 6 December at 6.00 pm.
- Participants consider what are the key values (e.g., safety, affordability, long-term sustainability) that could help inform a framework. This will help inform criteria for decision making.
- Read the Road Management Plan to see our current maintenance service levels
- Read the 10-year Asset Plan especially the tables at the back to see Council's current plan
- CRAG members are to input additional questions and reflections via the CRAG portal on The Loop.
- Community members can ask questions of the Advisory Group via the Road Asset Management Plan project page - **theloop.murrindindi.vic.gov.au/ramp**

Appendix A

Empathy mapping worksheets

ALICE – 25 YEARS OLD

Alice is currently studying at RMIT and living in a share house. She often does the household grocery shopping as she is the only one with a car. She works part-time as a sports coach and often needs to cart equipment to and from the sporting matches.

Think and feel?
What do you think really matters to this person?
What aspirations might he/she/they have?

Opportunities
What could this person be hoping to gain?

Challenges
What fears, frustrations and obstacles could they face?

Say and Do
What do you think are her/his/their attitude?
What might this person do?

CLARE – 31 YEARS OLD

Clare works as a nurse for the district hospital in residential aged care. She supports people with a variety of accessibility needs. Clare sometimes organises events for the aged care residents. This often requires transportation to and from event spaces for people in wheelchairs.

Think and feel?
What do you think really matters to this person?
What aspirations might he/she/they have?

Opportunities
What could this person be hoping to gain?

Challenges
What fears, frustrations and obstacles could they face?

Say and Do
What do you think are her/his/their attitude?
What might this person do?

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YASH – 38 YEARS OLD

Yash is an electrician who lives with his family in Eildon. He travels to work on his motorbike but uses the company ute to cart equipment around. He has elderly parents in Kinglake and visits them every couple of weeks using the family car.

Think and feel?
What do you think really matters to this person?
What aspirations might he/she/they have?

Opportunities
What could this person be hoping to gain?

Challenges
What fears, frustrations and obstacles could they face?

Say and Do
What do you think are her/his/their attitude?
What might this person do?

MIKE – 55 YEARS OLD

Mike works as a logger for a native hardwood plantation. He moves large quantities of timber on the road network. Mike also lives with his wife Clare on a farm. They use a truck to transport goods to the farmers market on the weekend.

Think and feel?
What do you think really matters to this person?
What aspirations might he/she/they have?

Opportunities
What could this person be hoping to gain?

Challenges
What fears, frustrations and obstacles could they face?

Say and Do
What do you think are her/his/their attitude?
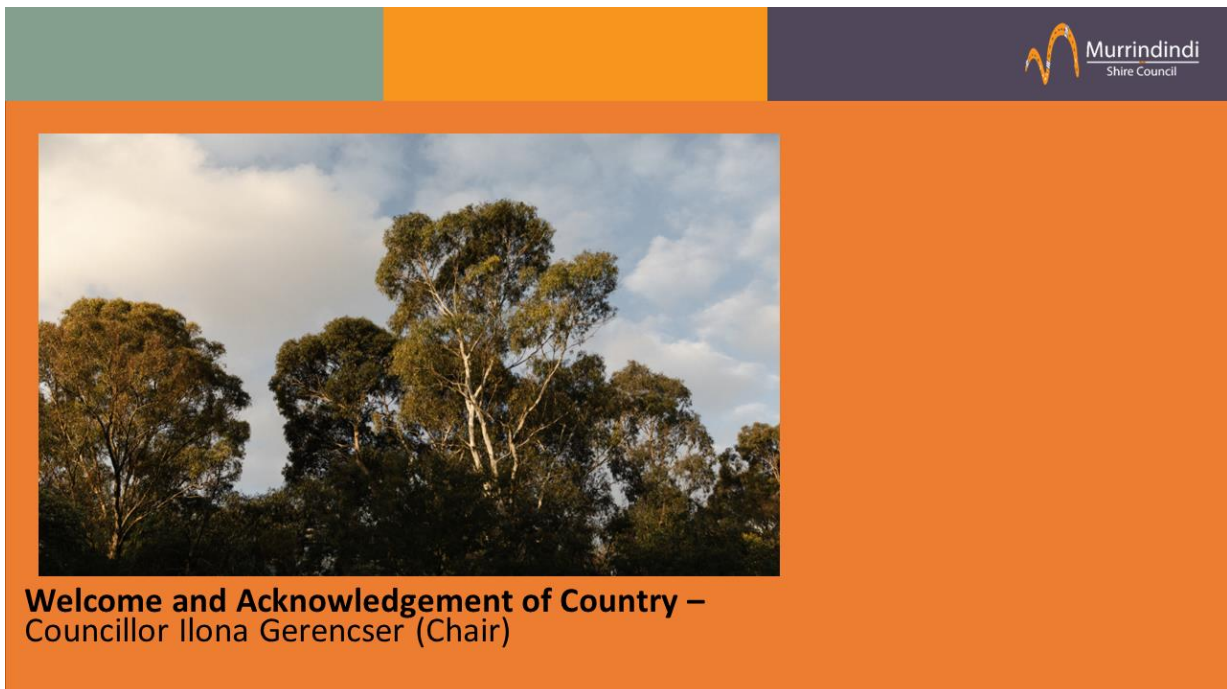What might this person do?

Appendix B

Presentation slides
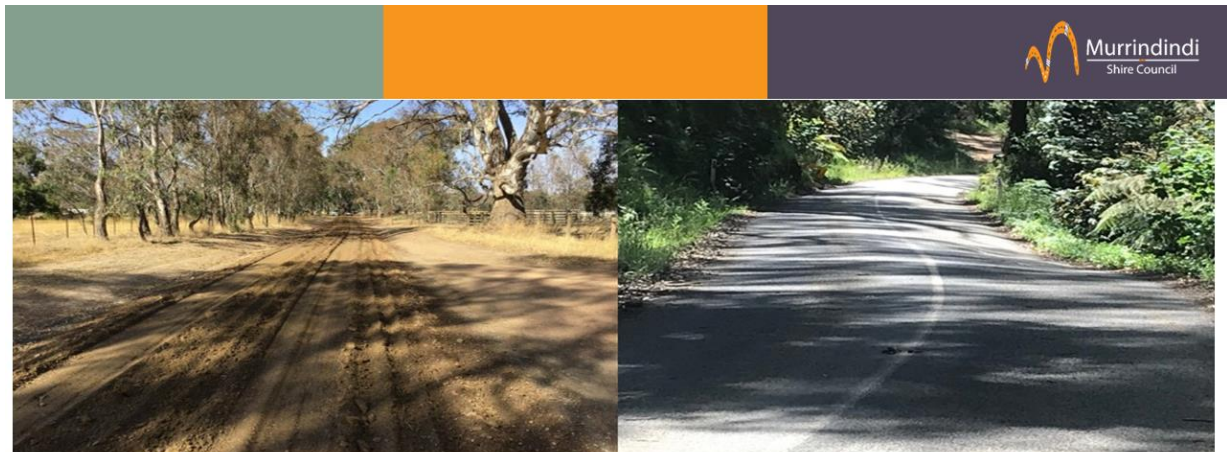
Council's Road Advisory Group (CRAG)
Wednesday 20 September 2023
Murrindindi Shire Council

Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country –
Councillor Ilona Gerencser (Chair)

About us

Capire Facilitators

Denise Francisco

Merryn Appleby

Murrindindi Shire Council Presenters

Vito Albicini

Fiona Marmaras

Council's Road Advisory Group (CRAG)

Workshop 1 Objectives

- To meet and get to know each other
- To confirm expectations of the group
- To introduce an overview of the Road Asset Management Plan
- To clarify the roles of responsibilities of Council
- To share the report findings
- To invite members to discuss what they are seeing and hearing
- To understand how community uses roads and their understanding of the road network

Agenda

Start 5.00pm

- Welcome
- Purpose and objectives
- Icebreaker activity
- Group discussion
- Context setting presentation (MSC team)
- Break
- Q&A
- Empathy mapping activity
- Report back
- Dinner Break
- Previous engagement findings presentation
- Group discussion
- Wrap up and next steps

Finish 8.00pm

Icebreaker

- Which part of the municipality do you live in?

- How big is your household?

- How would you rate your level of knowledge about Road Asset Management?

- How do you prefer to spend your free time?

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Group Discussion

- Terms of reference
- How would you like to work together?
- What would you like to get out of the sessions?

A reminder about loop portal

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Context setting

Gould Memorial Drive
Photo - @avant.visual
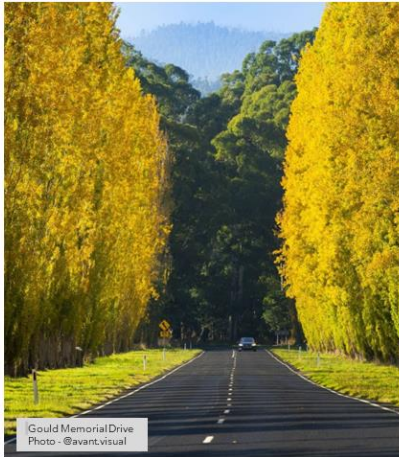
What will be included in Council's Road Asset Management Plan (RAMP) ?

The journey so far

Why does Council need a RAMP review?

The opportunity for this Advisory Group

Why does Council need to review of the RAMP

(that is developed in consultation with the Community) ?

The journey so far

- Our earliest roads were just tracks constructed in the mid 1800s.

- Today, there are some 7,500 dwellings with an average of 2 vehicles each.

- 1 million people visit each year

- Key local industries rely on use of heavy trucks

- Our roads have been upgraded gradually as community needs evolve.

- Keeping pace with natural deterioration is difficult.

What will be included in the Road Asset Management Plan (RAMP)?
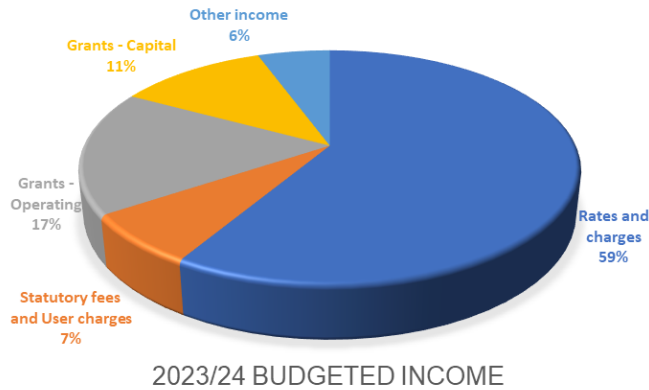
The journey so far

Community input and support is important

Council's road asset management plan **must**:

- Reflect and respond to the diverse needs of the community.

- Be affordable

- Be equitable

- Be deliverable within resource and funding constraints

- Not burden future generations

Operations and capital works are funded from rates and grants revenue. Council carries $0 debt.

Other income
6%

Grants - Capital
11%

Grants -
Operating
17%

Rates and
charges
59%

Statutory fees
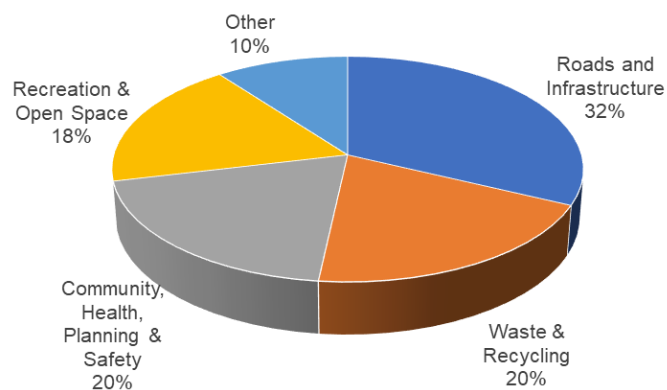and User charges
7%

2023/24 BUDGETED INCOME

Total revenue from rates and charges is projected to be $23.7m

We need to have a strategic approach because…

- Roads are among our most critical assets

- The quality of our road network impacts all members of the community.

- Council roads are expensive to maintain, renew and upgrade.

- Council can't afford to do everything it would like to do.

We spend more on roads than any other service

2023-24 Budget Spend per Service

Total spend to deliver services to the community $18.4M

- Roads and Infrastructure 32%
- Waste & Recycling 20%
- Community, Health, Planning & Safety 20%
- Recreation & Open Space 18%
- Other 10%

Our service delivery is constrained by many factors including available funding, inclement weather, material costs, contractor availability…

Unsealed road re-sheeting program		
Year	Actual Cost	Road Length
2020-21	$1.20M	30.7 km
2021-22	$1.17M	26.5 km
2022-23	$1.14M	28.7 km
Re-sheeting cost per km	$39,000 to $45,000	

Sealed road re-sealing program		
Year	Actual Cost	Road Length
2020-21	$0.69M	22.6 km
2021-22	$0.12M	2.5 km
2022-23	-	-
Resealing cost per km	$30,00 to $50,000	

4% of the unsealed road network re-sheeted each year.

5% of sealed roads resealed over 3 years

Which assets are included?

- Sealed roads
- Unsealed (gravel) roads
- Rural roadside drainage
- Road bridges
- Road furniture (signs, line marking)
- Traffic calming devices
- Kerbs
- Roadside vegetation
- Council carparks

The RAMP document will include…

Where are we now?

- State of our Assets (quantity, condition)
- Current expenditure
- Current Community Satisfaction
- Key Challenges

Where do we want to be?

- Objectives / service level targets (short, medium, long-term)
- Guiding principles for decision making

How will we get there?

Our plan (and priorities) for the next 10 years (including predicted costs and forecasted condition)

- Asset Renewal and Upgrade
- Asset Maintenance
- Business Improvements
- Our approach to developing, implementing and reviewing this Plan

Costs are increasing but Council's revenue is stagnant

- For example, in 2019 one ton of crushed rock cost $16.50 per ton. In 2023 it costs 42% more

- Council's rate revenue is capped at 0.5% below CPI and grant funding is variable.

30% of our roads are predicted to be in poor condition at some point over the next 10 years


PREDICTED ASSET PERFORMANCE

Our challenge is to maintain our road and carpark surfaces in an acceptable condition. Under projected expenditure, our asset deterioration model suggests the average condition of our road network will drop from Good to Fair. Around 30% or our road network is predicted to be in Poor condition at some point during the next 10 years. 17% of our sealed and 8% of our unsealed surfaces are expected to be in Very Poor condition by 2031-32.
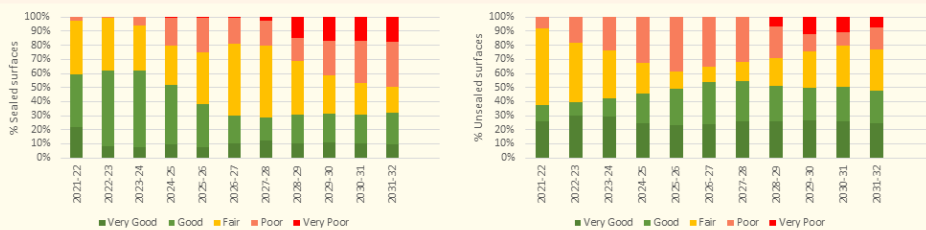
$1.36 M - Average annual predicted renewal gap if we were to intervene and renew the assets when components reach condition Poor

Community satisfaction with roads is declining
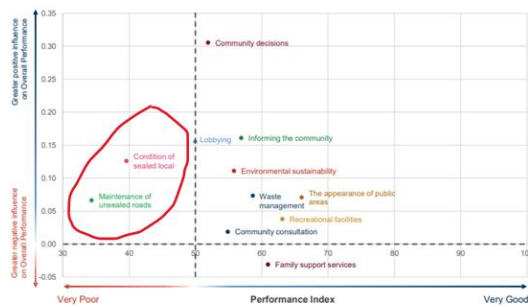
2023 Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey

The dilemma we face

- Community satisfaction with roads is declining
- Council's purchasing power is declining
- Our roads:
  - are ageing
  - were constructed for much lower traffic volumes
  - are adversely impacted by the weather

Short break

Questions & Answers

Empathy mapping
To understand the Murrindindi community pains and gains related to Road Asset Management

Think and feel?
What do you think really matters to this person?
What aspirations might he/she/they have?

Opportunities
What could this person be hoping to gain?

Challenges
What fears, frustrations and obstacles could they face?

Say and Do
What do you think are her/his/their attitude?
What might this person do?
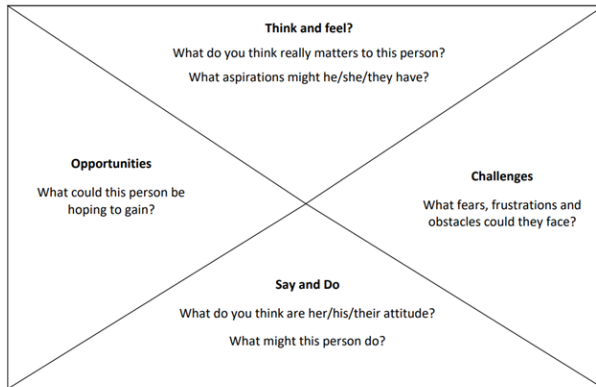
Report Back

Dinner Break

RAMP Review Community Engagement Results
A summary of what we heard

Engagement campaign ran from 07 June – 30 July 2023

We asked community:

To provide feedback on Council's road asset management practices, including sharing thoughts on:

- the condition and quality of our roads
- our maintenance standards
- what we can do to improve
- willingness to trade-off other services or pay a levy for higher service standards.
- issues with our Register of Public Roads

Murrindindi Shire Council

more than **1,300** people viewed our IN THE LOOP page.

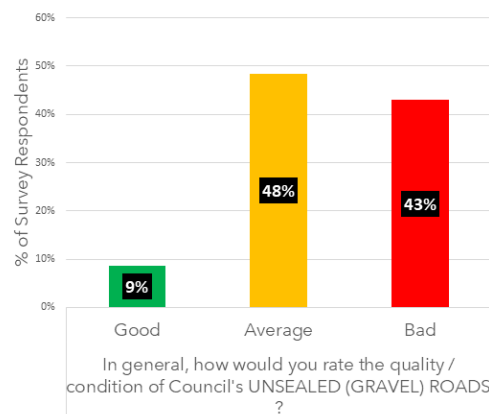**20** people **Dropped a Pin** and told us about issues at specific locations.

16 people answered a **Short Survey.**

100 people answered a **Longer 15 min Survey.**

A majority respondents rated the quality/ condition of our roads as "Average" or "Bad"

Sealed (asphalt) roads chart — Good: 19%, Average: 41%, Bad: 40%

In general, how would you rate the quality / condition of Council's SEALED (ASPHALT) ROADS ?

Unsealed (gravel) roads chart — Good: 9%, Average: 48%, Bad: 43%

In general, how would you rate the quality / condition of Council's UNSEALED (GRAVEL) ROADS ?
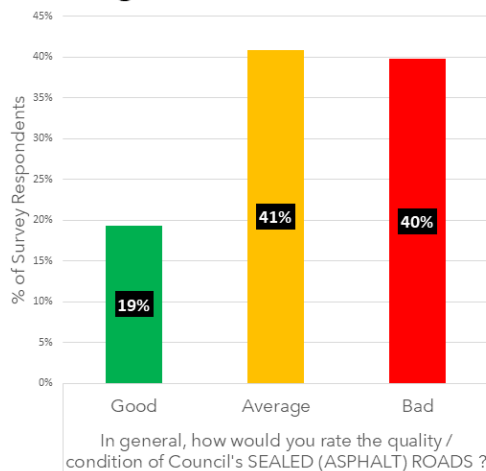
Issues identified as most important to resolve…

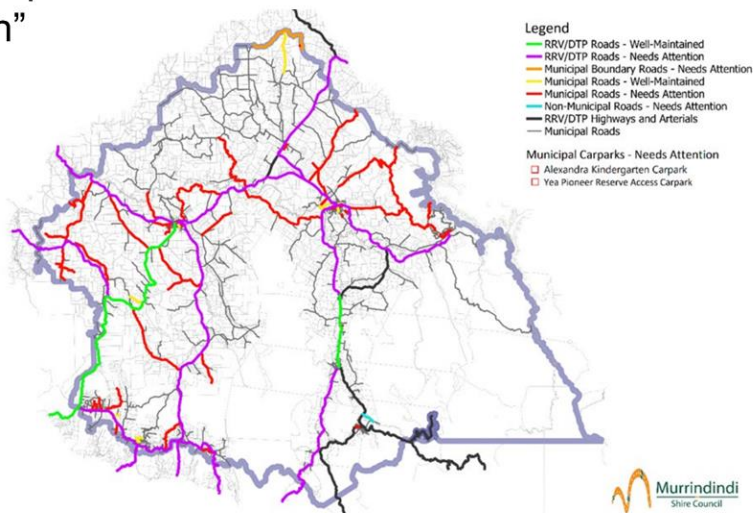|				
POTHOLES and the way they are managed.	**DETERIORATED UNSEALED (GRAVEL) ROAD SURFACES and the frequency and quality of our grading practices.**	**DEFICIENCIES IN ROADSIDE DRAINAGE PROVISION & CLEARING causing water ponding and potholes.**	**POOR QUALITY ARTERIAL ROADS managed by Regional Road Victoria**	**LEGACY OF INADEQUATE ROAD DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION (incl. narrow road widths and low-quality pavement base layers)**
DEFICIENCIES IN TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT CONTROLS (incl. speed, signs, line marking, wildlife protection, visibility, intersection treatments, road geometry)	**INADEQUATE DEBRIS REMOVAL** from open drains, roadsides and sealed road surfaces	**INADEQUATE RESOURCES DIRECTED TOWARDS FIXING ROADS**	**INADEQUATE ROADSIDE VEGETATION MAINTENANCE** (for wildlife visibility and attractiveness of a tourist destination)	**POOR ACCESSIBILITY FOR CYCLISTS & PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES** (incl. deficient carparks, narrow roads and pathways, road shoulder defects)

Have we missed anything?

Assessment of the standard of maintenance that Council provides for the following types of assets:
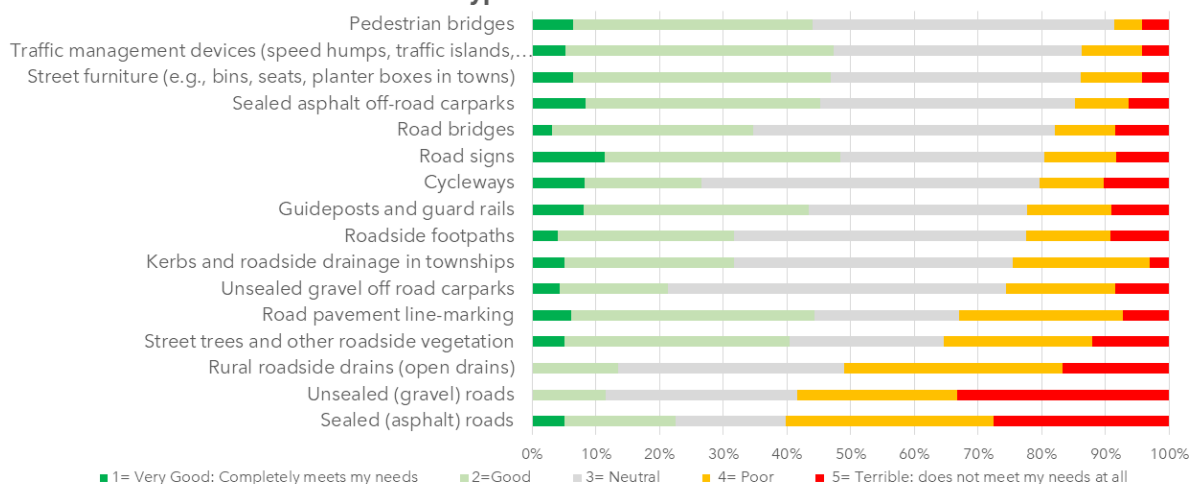
Roads that Survey Respondents indicated were "well- maintained" or "in need of attention"
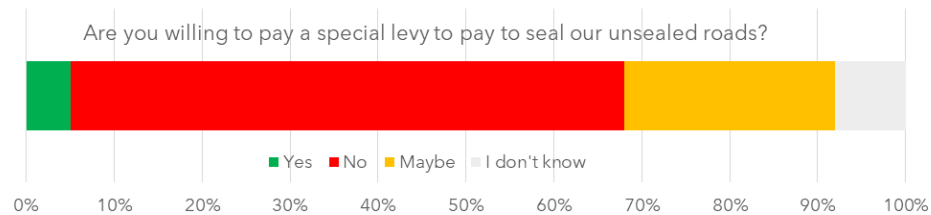

Legend
— RRV/DTP Roads - Well-Maintained
— RRV/DTP Roads - Needs Attention
— Municipal Boundary Roads - Needs Attention
— Municipal Roads - Well-Maintained
— Municipal Roads - Needs Attention
— Non-Municipal Roads - Needs Attention
— RRV/DTP Highways and Arterials
— Municipal Roads

Municipal Carparks - Needs Attention
☐ Alexandra Kindergarten Carpark
☐ Yea Pioneer Reserve Access Carpark

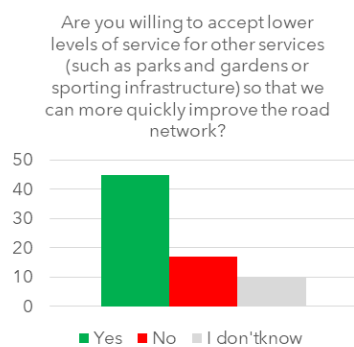## Improvement suggestions offered …

Fix the potholes.	Introduce preventative maintenance programs.
Increase grading frequency and raise the standard.	Introduce renewal programs.
Improve the quality and durability of maintenance and repair works.	Upgrade the assets.
Better manage recreational and heavy vehicle traffic	Improve universal access and provision for cyclists.
Shift spending priorities.	Advocate for more funding for our roads
Invest more equitably across the Shire.	Better manage land development projects.
Communicate better.	Lobby Regional Roads Victoria to repair and upgrade their roads.

Willingness to pay more …

# Most respondents were not willing to pay a levy but were willing to accept lower service levels for other assets.

Are you willing to pay a special levy to pay to seal our unsealed roads?

Legend: ■ Yes ■ No ■ Maybe ▢ I don't know

Willingness to make some compromises ….

Are you willing to accept lower levels of service for other services (such as parks and gardens or sporting infrastructure) so that we can more quickly improve the road network?

Legend: ■ Yes ■ No ▢ I don't know

Rank the different asset types in order of importance	
Roads – Sealed (Asphalt)	1
Roads – Unsealed (Gravel)	2
Drainage	3
Bridges	4
Footpaths and Cycleways	5
Waste Management	6
Public Toilets	7
OpenSpace and Playgrounds	8
Council Facilities (including sports grounds and community centres)	9
Carparks	10
Aquatics	11
Saleyards	12

An optional part of the survey allowed us to gather opinions on our Register of Public Roads

- 5 extra public roads were suggested
- 7 roads were considered not available to the public
- These recommendations need to be reviewed
- There are cost and risk implications when adding roads to the Register of Public Roads

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Register of Public Roads

Issue : 5
Version Updated : September 2021
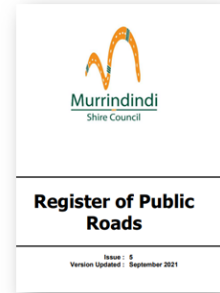
We have an ageing road network deteriorating faster than we can repair it

+ a limited bucket of money

+ Increasing costs

= We need to focus our spending on what is affordable and important to the community (in the short, medium and long-term)

Group Discussion

- What are your aspirations for road infrastructure in Murrindindi?
- Reflecting the Murrindindi demographics what do you value in respect to road infrastructure?
- Given the constraints of Council what are your expectations of how the road network performs? – what does the Murrindindi community value?

Next Steps

- Next meeting
- Questions and reflections

Thank you