



SUNSHINE COAST CITIZENS' PANEL

PLANNING FOR GROWTH

What was said report - Session 5

April 2026



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Together with Council, we will learn, deliberate and advise, to make sure community perspectives are heard on key issues.

- Sunshine Coast Citizens' Panel Overall Purpose

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Sunshine Coast is a popular region that continues to attract people from across Australia and abroad to live, work and visit. Population growth on the Sunshine Coast is not a new trend – the region has been growing steadily since the 1970’s.

The Sunshine Coast Council (the Council) has a long history of planning ahead for this growth, aiming to manage it in a way that protects the environment, lifestyle and community values.

Council has heard from many community members about planning for growth, but not everyone has been part of that conversation. Some voices are still less heard than others and this Citizens’ Panel session provided an opportunity for Council to seek advice on how it can better support the community to understand, discuss and engage with planning for growth, as well as the Panel’s priorities for future growth.

On 1 April 2026, 41 members of the Panel explored and responded to the following questions:



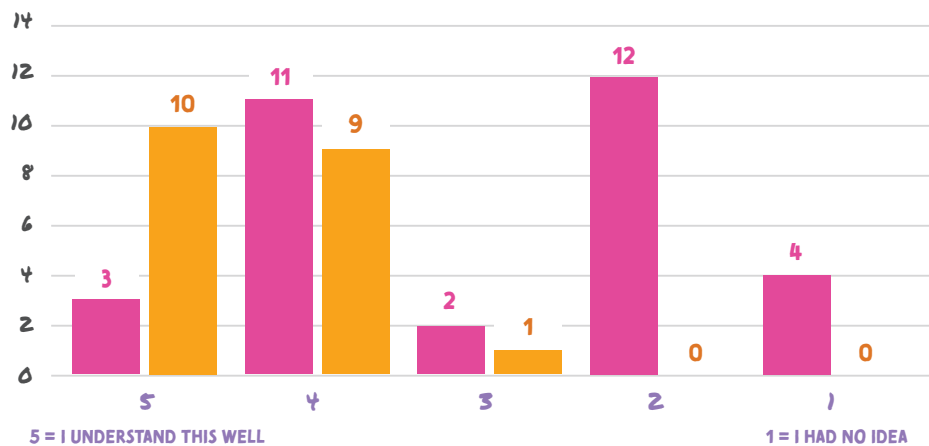
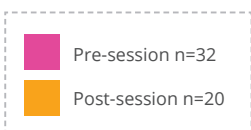
- ◆ *What approaches could Council use to help the community to better understand the scale, impacts and opportunities presented by future population growth?*
- ◆ *How can Council design engagement processes that are more relevant, accessible, and appealing to young people and others who do not usually take part in formal planning consultation?*
- ◆ *What priorities do you have for managing growth on the Sunshine Coast?*

INSIGHTS TO INFORM THE BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Prior to the session, Panel members were invited to complete an eight-question pre-session survey to help Council understand their current level of awareness and involvement in planning related issues, as well as priorities for growth on the Sunshine Coast.

The first question asked respondents to rate *how well they understand why the Sunshine Coast is expected to grow and who decides how much growth has to happen*. This question was also repeated at the end of the session and the results from both the pre- and post- session responses appear in the table below, showing an increase in understanding.

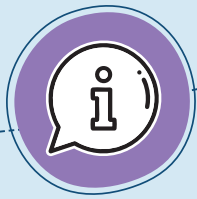
How well do you understand why the Sunshine Coast is expected to grow and who decides how much growth has to happen?



Full results of the pre-session survey appear in Appendix 1.

RESPONDING TO THE REMIT

Panel members were invited to reflect on what they had learned and heard and provide responses to the two remit questions relating to councils' engagement with the community on the topic of planning for growth on the Sunshine Coast. Themes that emerged from the comments received include:



Short, clear information – that is less formal, more concise and easier to absorb.



Communication through the channels people already use – with information shared in the places, platforms and formats people already pay attention to.



Meeting young people where they are – through stronger engagement in schools, universities and other places young people spend time.



Quick and accessible participation – that is easy to take part in, respects people's time and removes barriers to involvement.



A reason to care and a voice to be heard – with growth explained in ways that feel relevant to everyday life and engagement designed so people feel heard, considered and valued.

PANEL PRIORITIES FOR MANAGING GROWTH

Panel members were invited to identify what matters most to them in managing growth on the Sunshine Coast. Themes emerging most strongly from the responses include:



Protection of the environment and green space – including the non-urban and natural assets that people see as central to the Sunshine Coast.



Housing affordability and housing options – with a strong focus on making sure local people can still afford to live on the Coast, with a wider range of housing types in the right locations.



Better public transport and less traffic congestion – with transport repeatedly linked to how well the region will function as it grows.



Retaining local character – including protecting coastal and rural character and making sure new development fits the existing community.



Growth that is well managed and supported by infrastructure – with recognition that growth is happening and needs to be planned carefully so infrastructure, amenity and liveability keep pace.

Enjoy reading the full report below.

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

The Sunshine Coast is a popular region that continues to attract people from across Australia and abroad to live, work and visit. Population growth on the Sunshine Coast is not a new trend - our region has been growing steadily since the 1970's.

Council has a long history of planning ahead for this growth, aiming to manage it in a way that protects our environment, lifestyle and community values.



The Queensland Government sets population and housing targets for the Sunshine Coast through the 'Shaping SEQ' South East Queensland Regional Plan 2023. This regional plan requires Council to plan for an additional 84,800 dwellings and 219,100 people between 2021 and 2046. While the State Government sets the targets, Council is required to plan for them.

On 1 April, 41 Panel members met to learn, understand, discuss and provide their responses to the following questions:



- ◆ *What approaches could Council use to help the community to better understand the scale, impacts and opportunities presented by future population growth?*
- ◆ *How can Council design engagement processes that are more relevant, accessible, and appealing to young people and others who do not usually take part in formal planning consultation?*
- ◆ *Which priorities are most important when planning for growth?*

This report summarises the process of the session, capturing participants' insights and advice to inform Council's planning for growth strategies and engagement processes.

SESSION PURPOSE

The purpose of the session was to:

- ◆ Support the Panel's knowledge about growth on the Sunshine Coast
- ◆ Gather Panel insights about how the Council can have better conversations with a wider cross section of the community to inform decisions about growth
- ◆ Hear from the Panel about the most important priorities to them, when making decisions about growth.

ATTENDANCE

A total of 41 panel members attended the session.

A number of Councillors and Council staff, including representatives from the Planning Department and Executive Leadership Team also attended as subject matter experts and observers.

Facilitation was provided by Melinda Jacobsen, Naomi Oosting and Keith Greaves from MosaicLab, who guided discussions and ensured all participants had the opportunity to contribute.



SESSION AGENDA

TIME	AGENDA
6:00PM	Welcome and getting started Acknowledgement of Country, purpose of the session, agenda and reconnecting.
6:20PM	Introduction to Planning for Growth Council presentation to introduce the topic.
6:40PM	Deep dive into the material The Panel reviewed supplied background information and materials, to understand what Council currently provides when engaging with the community on planning issues.
7:30PM	Break
7:50PM	Managing priorities for growth Council presentation on some key considerations relating to planning decisions.
8:00PM	Discussing Panel's priorities The Panel were invited to consider, discuss and share their most important priorities when planning for growth.
8:50PM	Final reminders, next steps and closing remarks.
9:00PM	Close



SESSION OUTPUTS

DEEP DIVE INTO THE TOPIC

PRE-SESSION SURVEY

Prior to the session, Panel members were invited to complete a pre session survey of eight questions:

1 How well do you understand why the Sunshine Coast is expected to grow and who decides how much growth has to happen? (For example, did you know it is the State Government, not Council that sets the population and housing targets?) (scale: 1 = I had no idea; 5 = I understand this well)

2 How well do you understand how Council controls where development happens? (For example, which areas are set aside for housing, which areas are protected and how building types and heights are managed?) (scale: 1 = I had no idea; 5 = I understand this well)

3 Have you ever attended a community event or information session run by Council on housing, development or planning?

4 If you answered no, what is the main reason you haven't attended?

5 Have you ever explored Council's website to find out details about housing, development or planning?

6 Between July and September 2025, Council invited the community to give feedback on its draft planning scheme - the document that guides where and how development happens across the region. Did you send in any feedback at the time?

7 If you answered no: What was the main reason?

8 What priorities do you have for growth on the Sunshine Coast? Of the planning topics listed below, which are most important to you? (select your top 5):

- Supporting housing affordability and providing a range of housing options
- Promoting jobs and economic growth
- Protecting rural areas
- Protecting the natural environment and green spaces
- Improving our region's resilience to climate change
- Providing parks and open space
- Retaining local character
- Maintaining building heights within set limits
- Encouraging better building design
- Protecting scenic amenity and significant views
- Protecting heritage places
- Planning for better public transport
- Addressing traffic congestion
- Being able to easily walk and cycle to places

32 panel members responded and their responses to the survey appear in Appendix 1.

IN-SESSION ACTIVITY

On the night, panel members were split into eight groups and assigned one of eight topic areas. To deepen their understanding of the topic, additional information was supplied by Council and Panel members were invited to explore the information and capture their "Top Insights". The table below provides the Panel's insights verbatim from each topic:

<p>TOPIC 1</p> <p>'Growing sustainably your questions answered' (2021) document and Growing sustainably webpage</p>	<p>Content is text heavy, might want to introduce videos for shorter attention spans.</p> <p>Q&A format is useful in answering general questions.</p>
<p>TOPIC 2</p> <p>Growing responsibly webpage for the proposed planning scheme</p>	<p>Is 65 new dwellings a week a reasonable amount to aim for?</p> <p>The plan itself seems very complicated, it's unlikely that young people (and others) are going to want to keep engaging when hit with something so overwhelming.</p> <p>The section with pictures is very long.</p> <p>The younger generation likes to receive things instantly.</p> <p>What action can we take from this page?</p>
<p>TOPIC 3</p> <p>Growth management videos</p>	<p>Hard to follow sometimes.</p> <p>Major development video had good information.</p> <p>Promotional video that didn't really tell you anything.</p> <p>Too long and people may lose interest.</p>
<p>TOPIC 4</p> <p>Delivering homes webpage for the proposed planning scheme</p>	<p>Air BNB etc - impact on rental costs and reducing dwelling occupancy.</p> <p>Can we have more specific location maps that show exactly where the growth will be and how each area will look in the future.</p> <p>Can't get a clear impression of what's in this for me - can't "see themselves" in this future: how does it relate to me?</p> <p>Create some "personal journeys" that give a picture how the planning scheme might make the future look for e.g.: retiree in dense high-rise, student using public transport, family and how space and lifestyle might change.</p> <p>No information about parking: on-street and parking inside dwellings. Info on car spaces per household in different areas.</p> <p>No specific numbers or examples for https://haveyoursay.sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au/newplanningscheme/transport-and-parking</p> <p>Not sure of the specific location or year that the walk through has been created is based on.</p>

...continued overleaf

<p>TOPIC 5</p> <p>Your local area webpage for the proposed planning scheme</p>	<p>Both over intellectual & too simplified but with limited understanding of what is being explained.</p> <p>Good information but high density to work through.</p> <p>Hard to completely understand.</p> <p>Hard to find specifics.</p> <p>Not clear definitions for terms.</p> <p>Vague and non-specific wording</p>
<p>TOPIC 6</p> <p>My property webpage for the proposed planning scheme</p>	<p>Add a video at the top to educate people how to use the page.</p> <p>Not everyone finds it easy to comment.</p> <p>The more we look at it the more we like it... love how we can see specific proposals to areas.</p> <p>Too much information in one space – overwhelming.</p> <p>We have decided we like it but at first it was overwhelming.</p> <p>We love we can physically put an address in to find more detailed information.</p>
<p>TOPIC 7</p> <p>Engagement events program and consultation materials for the proposed planning scheme</p>	<p>Best to include as much information in rates notices as we are more likely to read then instead of throwing it away.</p> <p>Consultation materials summary for proposed planning scheme.</p>
<p>TOPIC 8</p> <p>Reporting on consultation outcomes from Preliminary consultation in 2022</p>	<p>Good visualisers and diagrams.</p> <p>I think the information was presented in an easy to digest manner.</p>



RESPONDING TO THE REMITS

The second activity for the session gave panel members the opportunity discuss and provide responses to the two remits.

REMIT NO. 1

What approaches could Council use to help the community to better understand the scale, impacts and opportunities presented by future population growth?

Responses provided by the panel have been lightly themed as follows:



1

Go where people are – utilise social media channels that different demographics use, screens in public places and rely less on traditional media



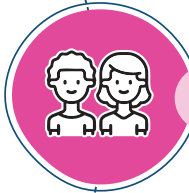
2

Keep it clear and short – use plain language, bite-sized information and consider various formats such as short-form video rather than long documents



3

Make it interactive – maps, webpages, QR codes linking to deeper info and scenario-based tools (“what it means for me”)



4

Involve young people – access this cohort via schools and universities through competitions, debates and class projects.



5

Make it human and relevant – share real-life stories across different groups, offer incentives and reasons to engage by emphasising everyday impacts and opportunities

The table below are the Panel's responses verbatim.

Advertising on TV and radio

As a young person, I do not watch TV ads, or listen to the radio

Clearer information and more time to absorb

Clearer/more concise, but less formally written information accessible

Engaging with schools and universities

Face to face information sessions held in a popular area with an incentive (such as free coffee) to engage with different demographics that may not usually be interested.

For the younger generation have a competition to design a solution for a current problem

Get the message across via video directed differently for different age groups

Give more succinct facts and key pillars of growth plans through mediums like social media (prioritising preserving green space)

Greater social awareness of the Council's website and future projects. More detailed interactive project map.

Keep the educational videos up to date on website and YouTube

Library displays using QR codes for feedback

Mail, news, ads,

More interactive webpage

More social media for youth engagement

Population to be heard

Provide a potential prize for watching a video or completing a survey

QR codes

Schools, School debating - source of students to be engaged in giving feedback.

Sharing the facts we got tonight about growth numbers will help people realise the extent and impact that growth may have on them--> Social media, radio, school buses, posters at schools, letterbox drops, Bus stops, billboards--> QR code to find out more--> QR code leads to council website with AI assistance and 'use-case-scenarios'

Short form content is the way to go, potentially YouTube ads

Shorter, more engaging content on social media, we are the TikTok generation

Social media needs more attention for all age groups

Spotify ads

To have screens at public places to advertise important growth information (shopping centres health centres, library)

University students doing Planning & Environment Classes - Bachelor of Environmental Management, would be ideal participants

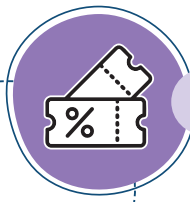
Use a small set of human-centred stories to illustrate what future population growth could mean in everyday life for different kinds of people on the Sunshine Coast. Rather than relying only on figures and forecasts, the stories would help council communicate the real-world impact of growth through relatable examples, such as an older pensioner living in a Caloundra high-rise, a young family in Buderim, a university student seeking affordable housing, and a business owner deciding whether to invest on the Sunshine Coast or the Gold Coast.

We need to create a reason for us to care about what you're saying and deliver ideas in short form content to keep us engaged.

REMIT NO. 2

How can Council design engagement processes that are more relevant, accessible, and appealing to young people and others who do not usually take part in formal planning consultation?

Panel responses to this remit covered how to design engagement that appeals to under-represented groups, and have been lightly themed as follows:



1

Reduce barriers to participation - recognise financial constraints by offering payment/vouchers, recognise time constraints by offering flexible ways to contribute, and consider the consultation environment by offering smaller, local sessions to make participation less intimidating, such as in libraries.



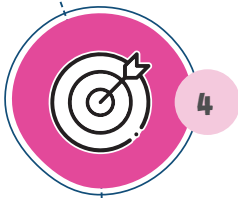
2

Shift from consultation to participation – provide opportunities for youth-led co-design sessions and ongoing involvement in projects through active roles in shaping outcomes.



3

Embed engagement in existing systems – use education settings as existing and structured pathways for involvement, such as integration into schools, universities, and library programs and leveraging community programs, rather than standalone or one-off processes.



4

Personalise the experience – utilise existing technology and tools to help people explore what growth means for their situation, which can be targeted for specific groups, and as a way to inspire contribution.



5

Build trust through visibility and transparency – publicly share how community input influences decisions so people feel “heard” and not just consulted.

The table below are the Panel's responses verbatim.

A quick video with an immediate (short) survey would be preferred to a large amount of information in a pdf

Advertise on School buses

Algorithms can be modified to appear in targeted social feeds

Approach first homeowners as they have more skin in the game

Approaching university students

Council presenting at schools-> Engaging students to do projects, or as extracurricular activities to be involved. Posters and advertising at schools to start talk and engagement of kids and their parent

Create spaces for young people to have our voices heard, make it quick, don't rattle on

Engage with youth where they are hanging out

Explore creative ways to ask younger generation for feedback and input in library programs, school outreach and other community programs. Offer different options and see what they want and don't want.....

Feed growth information through local influencers on social media in creative ways

Flyers, billboards, community gardens, more vouchers, schemes for housing,

For many younger residents, especially students and casual workers, taking part in consultation means giving up paid work. Offering payment, vouchers, or other meaningful incentives can make participation more realistic and more equitable

Give young people a reason to become involved

Give young people a reason to care, at the moment we are just stressed about life

Have a call centre asking for what changes are happening to the Sunny Coast

Have the sessions run by young people

If not schools, then engage in universities where people are a little older and potentially more willing to listen

Introduce some form of gamification - let them play a game with rewards

Library programs

Local community meetings with lower number of people to encourage people to be involved

Make sure getting to the younger generation

Maybe using AI chat bots and AI, so individuals can ask very specific questions and be taken to very specific areas to find the information they are seeking.

More presentations at libraries

Perhaps having some form of incentive

Place short videos at top of webpages to draw attention

Pop-up info tents at events

Push for greater school / university-based engagement with formal planning. More vids on the website. With up vote and down vote options to gauge how the community feels about certain projects

Put up stats and show transparency of outcomes of public voice opinions so we know and can see our thoughts are considered and valid

QR codes everywhere that young people hang out

Run sessions led by young people or with strong youth participation, help younger residents picture what life on the Sunshine Coast could look like for them in the future, and invite feedback through channels they already use, such as social media, short video content, and vox pops.

Short form video through social media

Spotify ads

Use young local influencers that make content about life on the coast to convey key information about growth plans to young people on social media

Utilise "Use case scenarios on council website"--> for example- You can type in "I am a young couple looking to buy a home in a residential area that won't change density, what areas should I look in".

Vox pops asking students at schools?

Your say did this

RESPONDING TO THE FINAL QUESTION

Panel members had several conversations regarding their priorities for managing growth on the Sunshine Coast, and were then asked to consider the range of priorities Council balances when managing growth. In small groups, the Panel identified 2-3 top priorities and were asked to provide more detail in response to their priorities as follows:

- ◆ Why is it important?
- ◆ Which growth priority (or priorities) it relates to, and
- ◆ Did you hear anything tonight that changed/confirmed your view?

The overall priorities of the Panel for managing growth can be distilled into three themes:



A range of housing that is affordable



Appropriate transport and infrastructure, including active travel



Maintaining and protecting the natural environment, as its the reason why many love to live on the Sunshine Coast.

The table below provides the Panel's response to this final question activity. The comments are verbatim in response to the three dot-point prompts above and blanks denote no content provided by Panel members in session.

PRIORITY	WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?	MANAGING GROWTH PRIORITIES	DID YOU HEAR ANYTHING TONIGHT THAT CHANGED/ CONFIRMED YOUR VIEW?
Housing affordability and a range of housing options	Because we all need a place to live, it's a basic human right. We shouldn't be shoved out of our homes because we don't earn a million dollars.	Housing options	The rate that people are coming and how many new homes are needed, has strengthened the idea that we need more homes and places for us to be able to afford
Creating better public transport options and growth in the employment sector	Because we need money and we need to be able to get places	Better Public Transport Jobs and Economy	
Supporting housing affordability and providing a range of housing options	We want to keep natural green space and environment. So, we need to build more inland (hinterland)--> Nambour, Beerwah, Bli Bli. Mixed houses- duplex, small units. Spread in amongst houses- integrated into the communities there. We don't want big housing estates of single houses like Aura.	Protect Natural Env. Housing options Parks and open space Building design Building heights	Council may need to change planning to allow more subdivisions for more units and duplex style houses--> Esp in the hinterland.
Addressing traffic congestion	Safer if there are less cars parked on the road	Better Public Transport Traffic congestion	Number of cars per dwelling needs to reflect the growth
Maintaining a particular coastal character	Maintaining a quality of life - living in a regional area is a choice	Retain local character Parks and open space Protect rural areas	
Infill development	Look at options for densification for proximity to amenities.	Housing options	Don't buy in Cotton Tree and be upset that there's a duplex next door!
Protect the Environment and better public transport	Because the Environment is the heart of the Sunshine Coast and improving public transport will help to mitigate other issues like car contamination and traffic.	Protect Natural Env. Better Public Transport	Yes, as we grow, the transport will need to improve.
Environment	Need a balance of the region, environment, housing and landscape	Housing options	Need to have limitation with housing heights
Effective growth management	Poorly managed growth adds housing numbers; effectively managed growth creates functioning communities.	Better Public Transport Traffic congestion Housing options	The growth is happening, the state gov has mandated X houses be built. It is just a matter of doing it effectively

...continued overleaf

PRIORITY	WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?	MANAGING GROWTH PRIORITIES	DID YOU HEAR ANYTHING TONIGHT THAT CHANGED/ CONFIRMED YOUR VIEW?
Protecting the natural environment and green spaces	Maintains character, important for mental health, animals and insects		Ensuring new homeowners have affordable access to native plants. voucher system. Council nurseries access
Putting a cap on growth similar to Noosa Shire	Reducing congestion and maintaining local character	Protect Natural Env. Building design Building heights	
Balance between development and environment protection	Slow down development to save our heritage and take the time to plan correctly. More involvement with first nations people Retain employment opportunities for young people affected by AI	Protect Natural Env. Housing options Retain local character Parks and open space Building design Building heights Protect rural areas Protect heritage	The number of people moving to Sunshine coast and the number of dwellings required to be built per week.
Environment, healthy rivers, don't destroy the mangroves			
Cycling and walking lanes	To improve sustainability	Walk and cycle	
New designs to fit the existing community			
Transport infrastructure and affordable housing	Properties for local residents is more important than investment housing. Housing needs connection to transport.	Better Public Transport Traffic congestion Housing options Building design	Confirmed complexity of issue.
Infrastructure that grows with the region	We want to be able to travel/access amenities in the same capacity as we always have as the region grows	Better Public Transport Traffic congestion Retain local character Walk and cycle	Whether we like it or not people are coming we just want to be prepared
Maintaining green spaces	To protect the habitats of local wildlife - join all green corridors in the region if possible	Protect Natural Env. Parks and open space Protect heritage	It is a hot topic and probably the most important issue for the people





NEXT STEPS

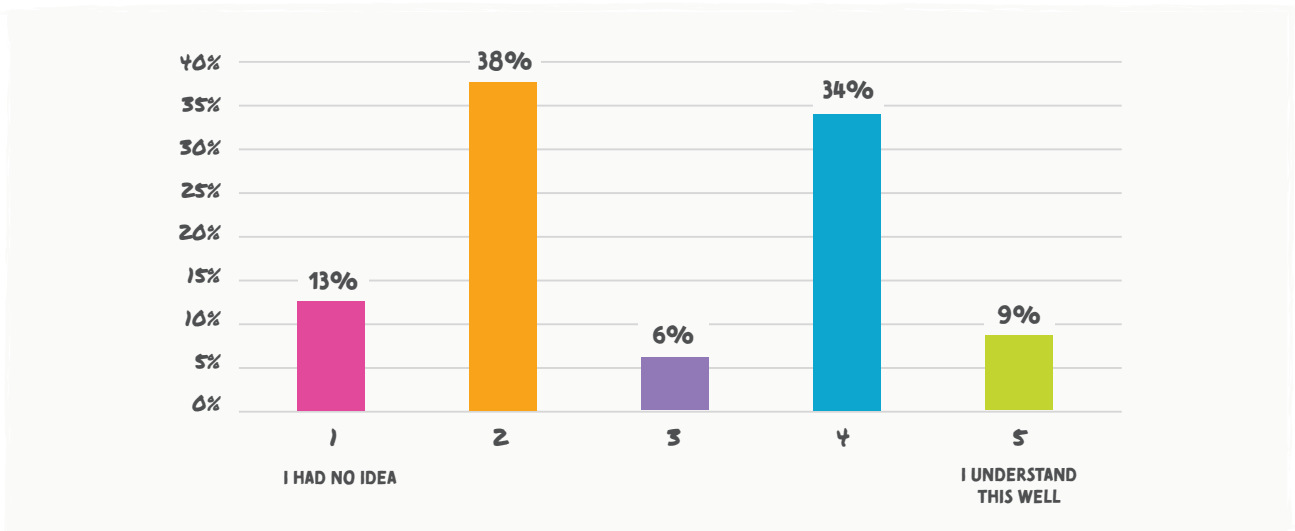
This report records the views and sentiment expressed by Panel members regarding how Council can better communicate and engage the community about the important job of planning for growth in the Sunshine Coast, as well as the panel's views on the most important priorities when managing growth on the Sunshine Coast.

Council staff provided an undertaking to the Panel to report back in future and share how their comments and insights informed their activities and approaches.

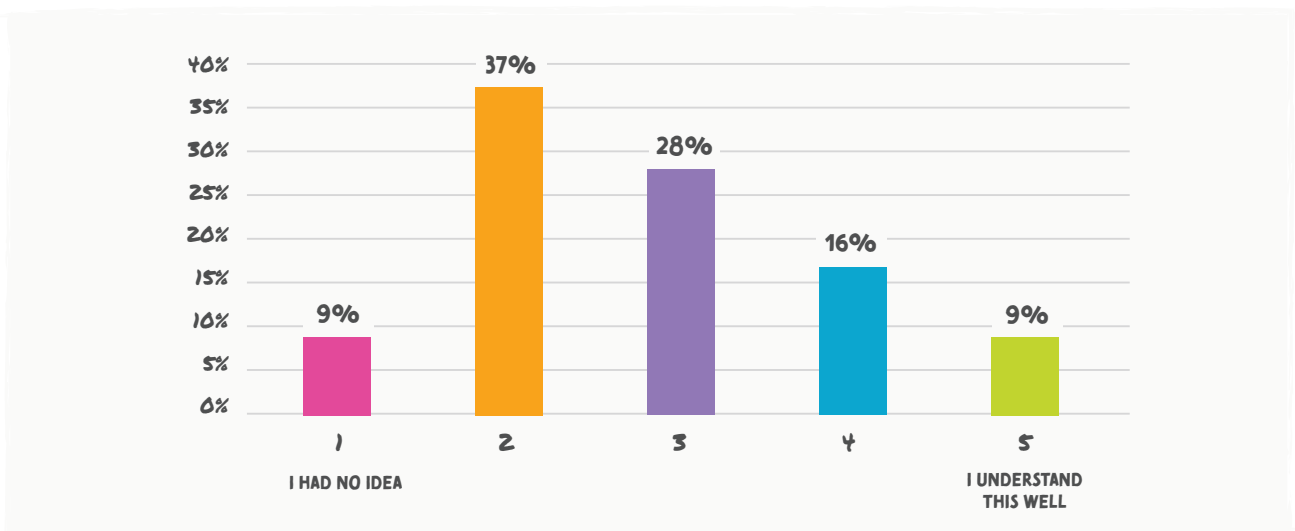
APPENDIX 1

SUNSHINE COAST CITIZENS PANEL – PLANNING FOR GROWTH – PRE-SESSION SURVEY

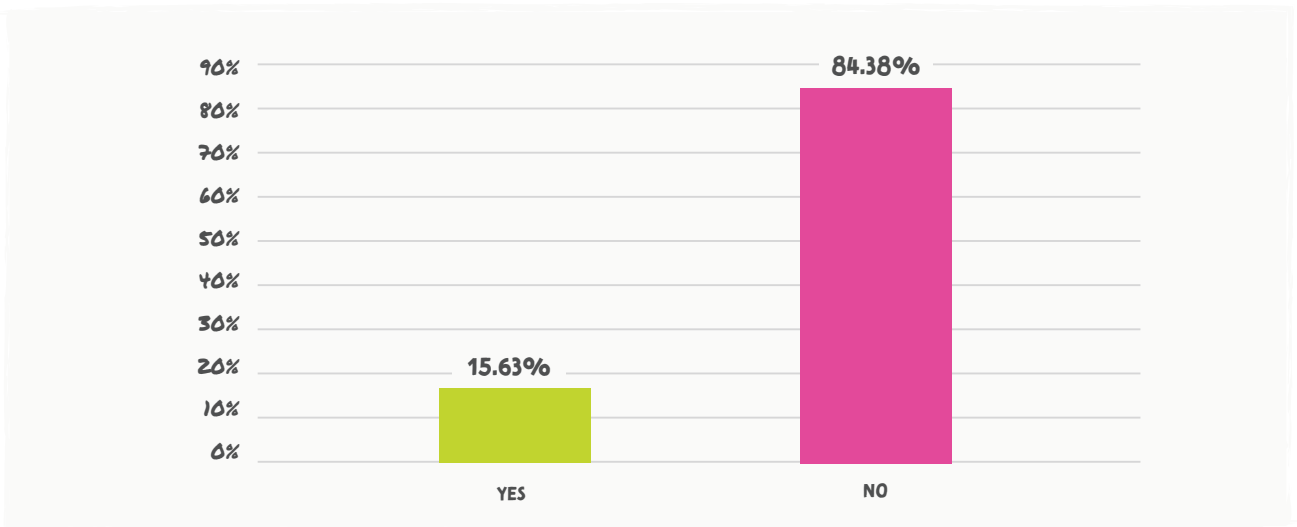
1. How well do you understand why the Sunshine Coast is expected to grow and who decides how much growth has to happen? (For example, did you know it is the State Government, not Council that sets the population and housing?)



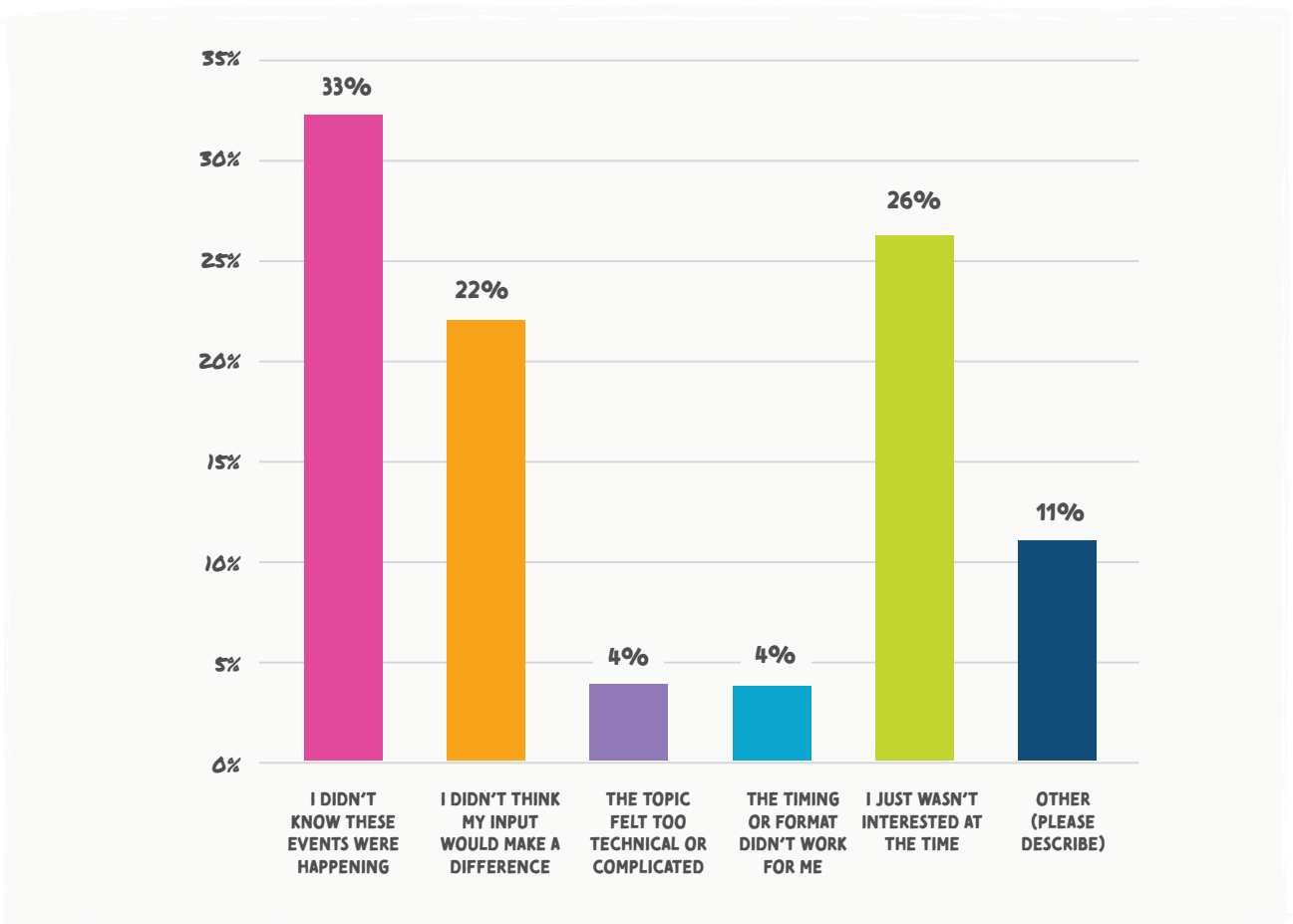
2. How well do you understand how Council controls where development happens? (For example, which areas are set aside for housing, which areas are protected and how building types and heights are managed?)



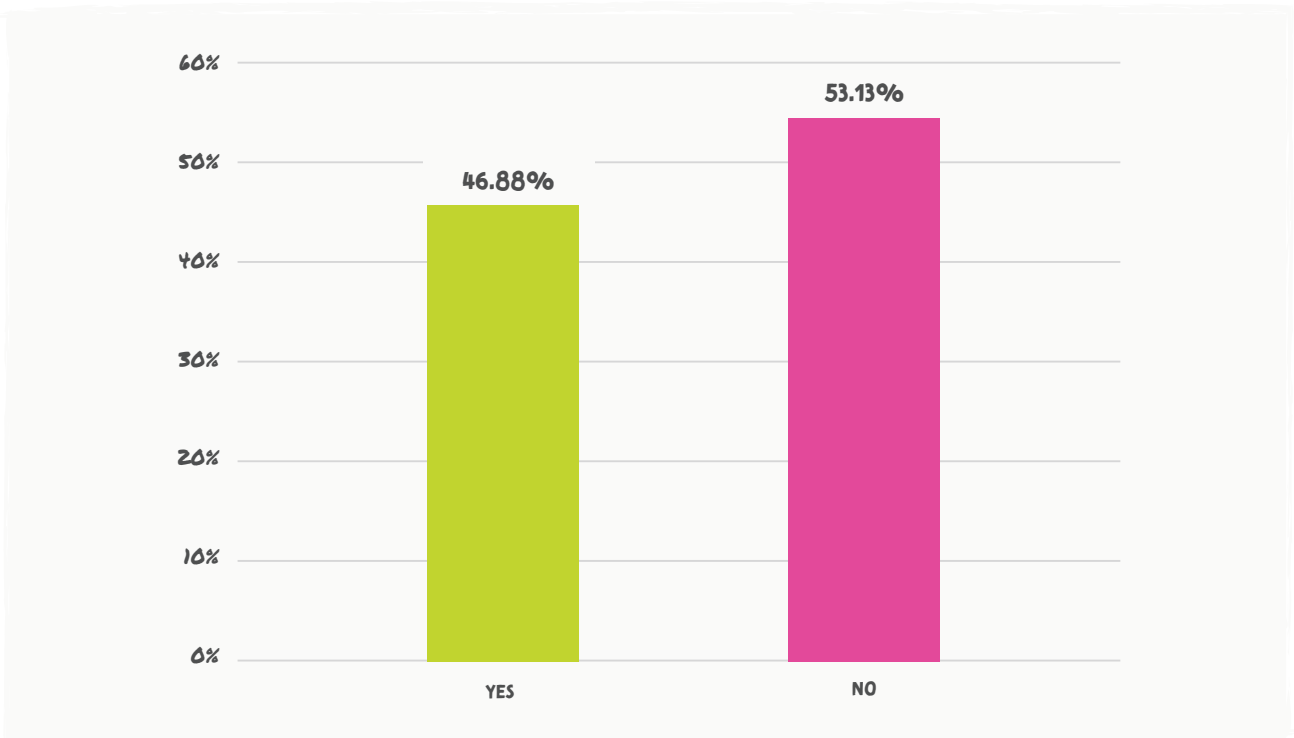
3. Have you ever attended a community event or information session run by Council on housing, development or planning?



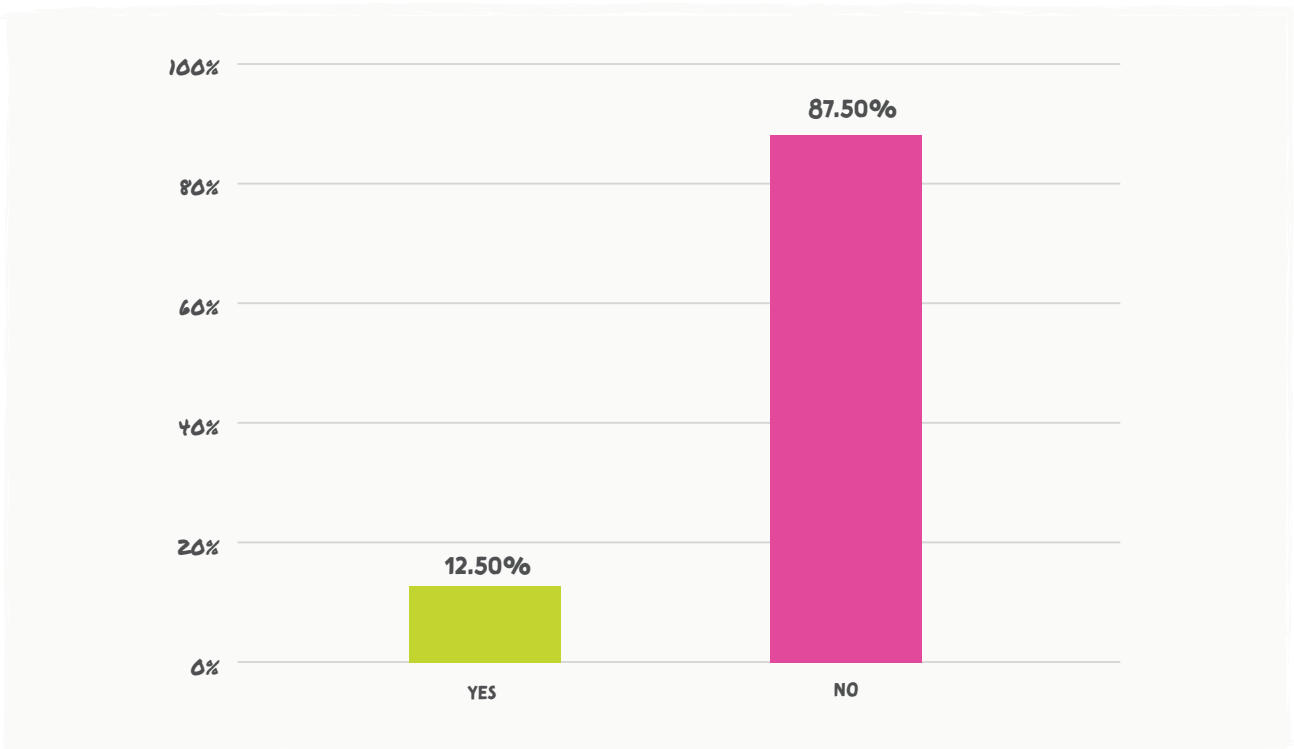
4. If you answered no, what is the main reason you haven't attended?



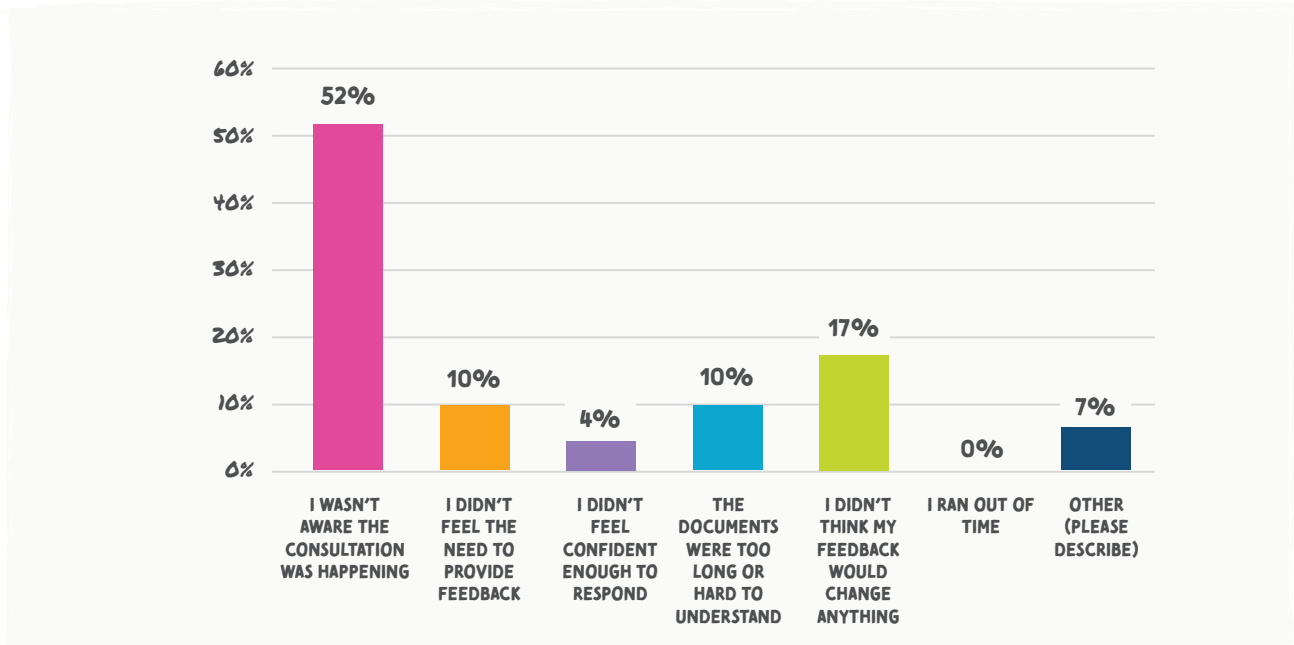
5. Have you ever explored Council's website to find out details about housing, development or planning?



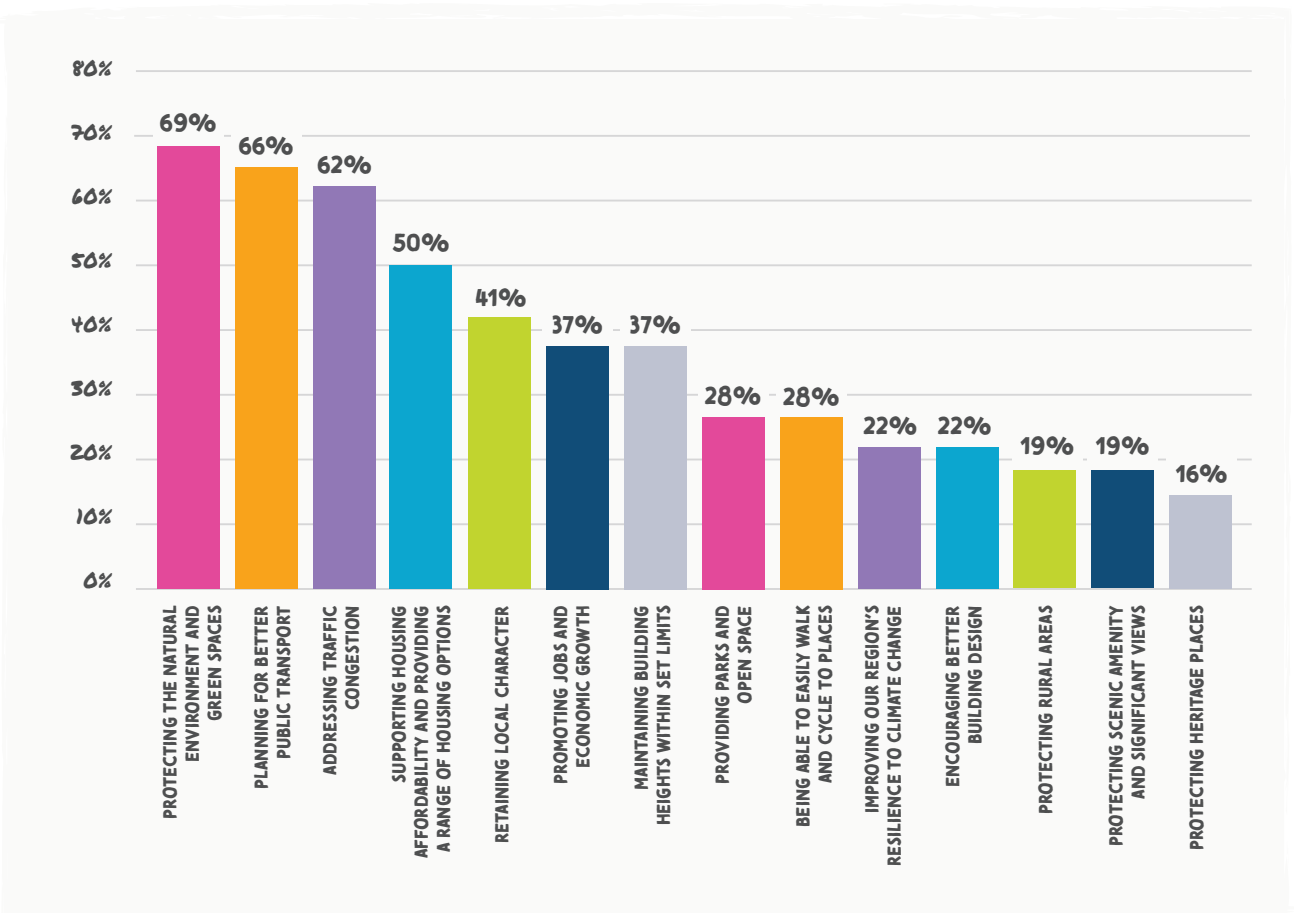
6. Between July and September 2025, Council invited the community to give feedback on its draft planning scheme - the document that guides where and how development happens across the region. Did you send in any feedback at the time?

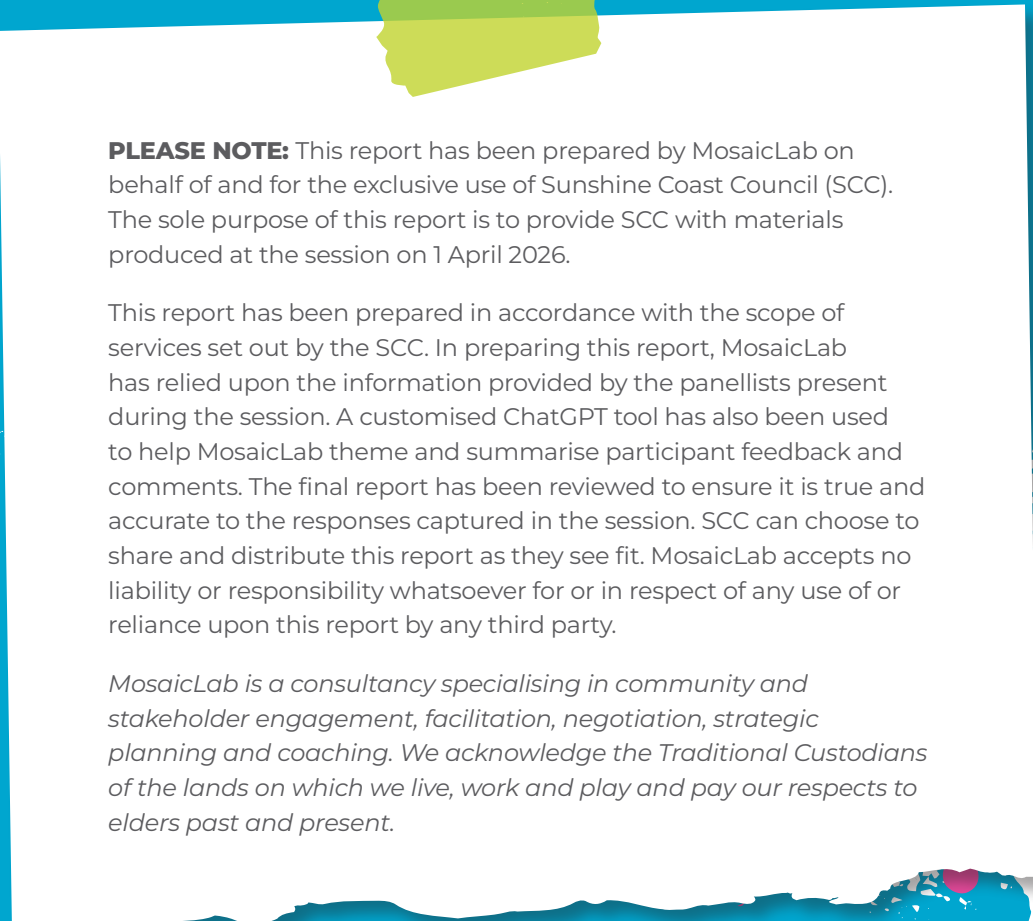


7. If you answered no, what was the main reason?



8. What priorities do you have for growth on the Sunshine Coast? Of the planning topics listed below, which are most important to you? (select your top 5):





PLEASE NOTE: This report has been prepared by MosaicLab on behalf of and for the exclusive use of Sunshine Coast Council (SCC). The sole purpose of this report is to provide SCC with materials produced at the session on 1 April 2026.

This report has been prepared in accordance with the scope of services set out by the SCC. In preparing this report, MosaicLab has relied upon the information provided by the panellists present during the session. A customised ChatGPT tool has also been used to help MosaicLab theme and summarise participant feedback and comments. The final report has been reviewed to ensure it is true and accurate to the responses captured in the session. SCC can choose to share and distribute this report as they see fit. MosaicLab accepts no liability or responsibility whatsoever for or in respect of any use of or reliance upon this report by any third party.

MosaicLab is a consultancy specialising in community and stakeholder engagement, facilitation, negotiation, strategic planning and coaching. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we live, work and play and pay our respects to elders past and present.



REPORT PREPARED BY:
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