The 2018 Eastern Assembly

Summary Report

Metropolitan Partnerships – Eastern Region

VICTORIA State Government | Environment, Land, Water and Planning

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Executive Summary

A community Assembly was held by the Eastern Metropolitan Partnership (the Partnership) on Wednesday 13 June 2018. The Assembly brought together 68 community members, councillors and mayors to continue the conversation started in 2017 for the Eastern Metropolitan Region.

The Metropolitan Assemblies are part of a commitment to give Victorians the opportunity to influence decisions and shape the future of their communities.

In its second year, the Eastern Assembly provided the opportunity for the Partnership to report back to the community on how their input shaped the 2017 advice and how the Victorian Government has responded. It was also an opportunity to further explore the priorities for the region and how community, business and government can work collaboratively to address common challenges.

The program was divided into three parts; reviewing the 2017 priorities, choosing top priorities for 2018, and exploring the priority outcomes in more detail. These activities were preceded by three presentations from:

1. the Deputy Chair of the Eastern Metropolitan Partnership, Phil Murton, who shared the process the Partnership had being going through over the last year;

2. the Minister for Suburban Development, Lily D'Ambrosio, who discussed the government's response to the 2017 advice; and

3. a young person who attended the Youth Forum, Lani Wolfgramm shared her experience and the top priorities for young people in the Eastern Region.

Activity 1 results - Reviewing the 2017 priority outcomes

In the first activity participants were presented with the Partnership's priority outcomes in 2017 and the relevant responses from the 2018-19 Victorian Budget. At tables of six to eight people, participants were asked to share their initial reactions to the existing priority outcomes and the Victorian Government's response, and were given the opportunity to suggest any additional priorities.

Overall, participants supported the 2017 priority outcomes, confirming that they are still relevant in 2018. However, there were consistent comments that 'environment' and 'climate change' issues had

been overlooked. It was also suggested that the 'Social Inclusion' priority be broadened beyond women and sports to include other groups particularly the elderly. Feedback provided suggested it was difficult to understand what the 'Seamless Health and Social Services' priority was about.

Activity 2 results - The Assembly's top priority outcomes for 2018

In the second activity participants were given a list of priorities to review and asked to '*choose the top three priority outcomes you think the Partnership should consider for their 2018 advice to government*'. The list included the Partnership's 2017 priority outcomes, the top priorities from young people at the Youth Forum and two new priorities which emerged during Activity 1.

The top three priorities chosen by participants were: 'Environmental Sustainability', 'Affordable and Social Housing', and 'Social Inclusion'. The top five priorities included three Partnership priorities and two priorities identified at the Youth Forum.

Activity 3 results - Exploring the priority outcomes in more detail

For the final activity participants each chose a priority outcome to discuss in more detail. This included exploring the real issues that can be impacted, what opportunities exist, how everyone can have access, and how we will know we have successfully improved the outcome.

The key messages from the activity were:

Social inclusion: ensure that key people in the neighbourhood (such as GPs and hairdressers) are supported and equipped to notice needs of those suffering from isolation or domestic violence.

Health and social services: provide health services in community spaces.

Mental health: involve young people in designing services that are relevant to them and draw on their knowledge and experience.

Affordable and social housing: improve auditing of unused or underused land; improve boarding house regulations to make it a viable housing option.

Community safety: increase community capacity to volunteer for organisations that build and defend resilience, particularly against natural disaster.

Environmental sustainability: facilitate investment in renewable technologies by communities; subsidise bulk procurement and create community micro-grids.

Supporting an ageing population: maintain and improve community connectedness, especially for the elderly who lack networks; provide regular events with transport support.

Jobs for youth: create more linkages for schools with external community organisations and employers to teach students life and job skills.

Public transport and roads (walking and cycling, regional connectivity): improve investment in active and public transport; incentivise public transport use and improve transport services in under serviced areas.

Economic growth and small business: encourage and facilitate more local jobs and opportunities to co-work locally.

More detail on each of these discussions and suggestions for addressing these challenges can be found on page 13.

Summary of overall findings

Participants consistently highlighted the challenge of travelling across the region's large geographic area. Poor transport connectivity was identified as impacting particularly heavily on the well-being of elderly people, creating challenges for them to access specialist and other health services beyond their immediate neighbourhoods. In this light, 'transport connectivity' was discussed as a cross-cutting issue in the East that directly impacts on other outcomes, such as social inclusion and health. The implementation of transport solutions, such as extending the reach of services, was also discussed as a way of addressing other priority outcomes.

The popular theme of 'environmental sustainability' resonated throughout the table discussions. The Assembly prioritised increasing support for access to renewable energy, recognising the opportunities that flow from new technologies (such as solar storage batteries) and community-led action (such as group procurement of green energy).

The Metropolitan Partnerships

The Metropolitan Partnerships are a new and coordinated way for communities to advise government on what matters in their region.

The Victorian Government wants to better understand and respond to the needs of Melbourne's communities. In May 2017, six Metropolitan Partnerships across Melbourne were established because the government recognises that local communities are best placed to advise on issues and priorities for their region.

Each Partnership is made up of eight community and business representatives with varied backgrounds, experiences and networks, the CEO of every local government in that region and a Deputy Secretary from the Victorian State Government.

Working closely with their communities, the Partnerships will identify opportunities for driving improved social, economic and environmental outcomes and advise the government on actions that can make a real difference to the liveability and prosperity of their metropolitan region.

The Partnerships will strengthen relationships and facilitate stronger collaboration across the three tiers of government, businesses and communities. They will also enable the government to respond in a more coordinated and targeted manner to deliver better outcomes for the community.

More information on the six Metropolitan Partnerships can be found at suburbandevelopment.vic.gov.au.

The Eastern Metropolitan Partnership

The Eastern Metropolitan Partnership members are:

- Robin Whyte, Chair
- Phil Murton, Deputy Chair
- Kristian Dauncey, Member
- Susan Maastricht, Member
- Simon O'Callaghan, Member
- David Plunkett, Member
- Fiona Purcell, Member
- Warwick Winn, CEO Manningham City Council
- Steve Kozlowski, CEO Maroondah City Council
- Tony Doyle, CEO Knox City Council
- Glenn Patterson, CEO Yarra Ranges Shire Council
- Noelene Duff, CEO Whitehorse City Council
- Elizabeth Langdon, Victorian Government Representative

Find out more about the Eastern Metropolitan Partnership members at:
https://www.suburbandevelopment.vic.gov.au/partnerships/metropolitan-partnerships/eastern-partnership

The Eastern Region

The Eastern region spans from the research hub of Monash through to the Dandenong Ranges and Yarra Valley, and includes the inner suburban local government areas (LGAs) of Knox, Manningham, Maroondah, Monash, Whitehorse and Yarra Ranges. The region has a population of more than 900,000, or about 20 per cent of Melbourne's total population.

Figure 1: The Eastern Region

Read more about the Eastern Metropolitan Region at:
https://www.suburbandevelopment.vic.gov.au/regions/eastern-region

The 2018 Eastern Assembly

On Wednesday 13 June 2018, 68 community members, businesses, councillors and mayors came together to continue the conversation started in 2017 for the Eastern Metropolitan Region.

In its second year, the Eastern Assembly was a chance to report back to the community what happened to their input from 2017 and how the Partnerships and Government have responded. It was also an opportunity to further explore the priorities for the region and the advice the Partnership can give government about improving the Eastern region.

The ways people could contribute to the conversation in 2018 included pre-engagement online, attending the assembly in person, or online through live-streaming and answering questions on the Engage Victoria website. Young people also had the opportunity to participate by attending a dedicated Youth Forum that was held on 7 May 2018.

The 2017 Priority Outcomes

Jobs for Youth – Reduce youth unemployment and grow apprenticeship, skill development and employment opportunities.

Seamless Health & Social Services – Provide seamless services that are integrated and accessible to those who need the most support.

Social Inclusion – Improve social connectivity and wellbeing.

Affordable & Social Housing – Provide an increase in supply and access to affordable and social housing.

Regional Connectivity – Improve public and active transport connectivity.

What happened on the night

The night was divided into three activities that were preceded by three presentations from:

1. the Deputy Chair of the Eastern Metropolitan Partnership, Phil Murton, who shared the process the Partnership had being going through over the last year.

2. Minister for Suburban Development, Lily D'Ambrosio, who discussed the government's response to the 2017 advice.

3. a young person who attended the Youth Forum, Lani Wolfgramm shared her experience and the top priorities for young people in the Eastern region.

Activity 1 – Reviewing the 2017 priority outcomes

Following the presentations, participants reviewed the Partnership's 2017 priority outcomes and the government's response.

At tables of six to eight people, participants were asked to share their initial reactions to the priority outcomes for the region. They also discussed whether anything had been missed. Their discussions were facilitated by a senior government member and recorded by a scribe.

Activity 2 – The Assembly's top priority outcomes for 2018

To understand what remains the most important priorities for the Eastern region for 2018, participants were asked to choose their top three priorities using polling technology. They were able to choose from the 2017 priority outcomes, priorities from young people and any additional priorities raised on the night. The results of this poll were displayed instantly.

Activity 3 – Exploring the priority outcomes in more detail

Participants moved during the break onto tables according to the priority outcomes they wanted to

discuss. Four questions were posed in relation to the priority outcomes they were focused on at each table. The questions were:

- *What is the real issue we can impact?*
- *What are the opportunities?*
- *How can we ensure everyone has access?*
- *How will we know we are successful?*

The night concluded with evaluation questions, asking participants how satisfied they were with the opportunities provided on the night to share and discuss the region's priorities. The result of this poll was displayed on the event screen.

Limitations

There are limitations associated with the Assembly that should be acknowledged. They include:

- Assembly participants were not necessarily a representative sample of the Eastern Region's population. The results from the night are a good indication of the sentiment and ideas in the region but are not a statistically valid reflection of the views of the entire Eastern Region. The Assembly engagement will be complemented with other engagement, which will inform the Partnership's advice to Government.

- Due to multiple registration processes, demographic information was not collected for all participants.

- Participants had a varied understanding of the issues in the region and possible solutions.

- Table hosts have taken care to record participant's feedback. However, we cannot guarantee the accuracy or inclusion of all comments. We are confident that the range of ideas, concerns and views reflect the comments made at the sessions.

Who took part in the conversation?

In total, 68 people attended the Eastern Assembly, including 47 community members, five councillors, two MPs and Ministers, and 11 Partnership members. Between 25 April and 13 June 2018, the Eastern Region website was live on engage.vic.gov.au. The site was visited by 999 people and 125 people completed the pre-engagement questions through the registration form.

There were 20 young people from the Eastern Region who took part in the Youth Forum on May 7, 2018.

The key assembly participant demographic attributes are as follows:

- Attendance was evenly spread between females and males.

- Most participants were between 45 and 65 years of age.

- Eighty-three per cent of participants live in the region, and 68 per cent work in the region.

- The cities of Yarra Ranges, Knox and Whitehorse had the most participants.
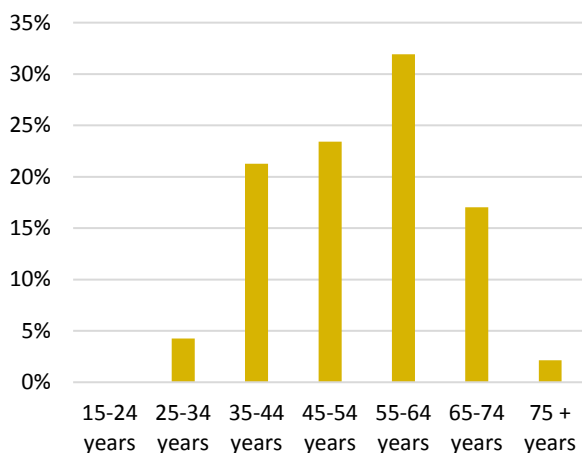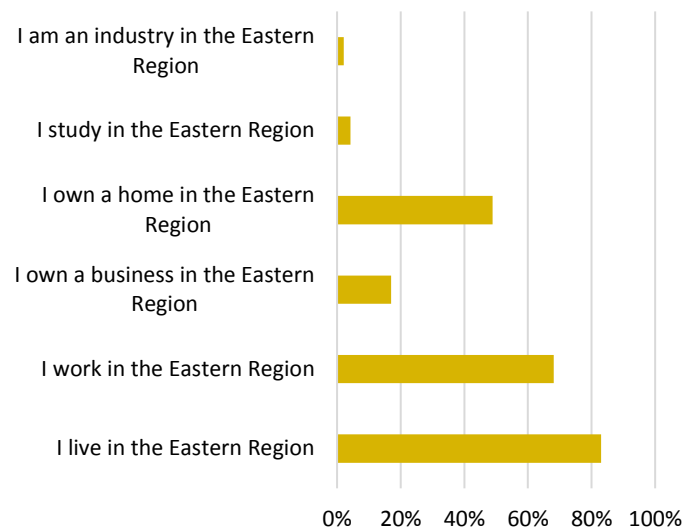

Figure 2: Assembly participants' relationship to the region[2].
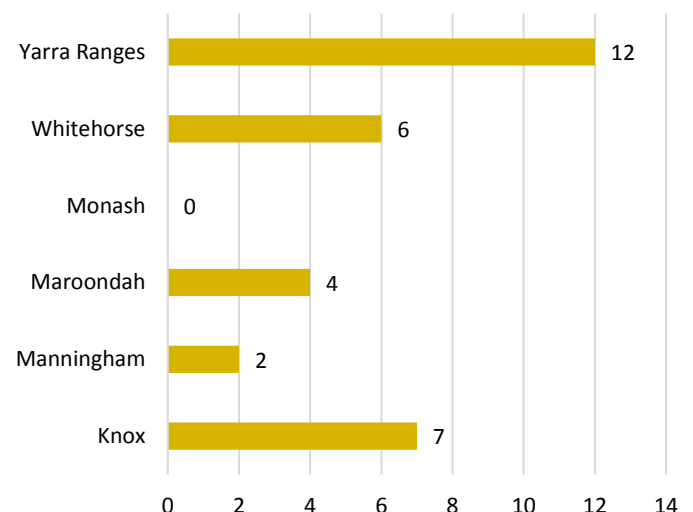
Figure 3: Municipality that Assembly participants live in[3].

Figure 1: Age breakdown of the Assembly community member participants[1].

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[1] Graphs have been calculated for the people who attended the Assembly and do not include demographics of people who completed questions in the registration form but did not attend the Assembly.

[2] Participants could choose more than one option.

[3] Many participants did not provide their suburb.

What we heard…

Reviewing the 2017 priority outcomes

On each table, participants could review the Partnership's priority outcomes in their 2017 advice to government, and the government's response. The participants were asked to discuss what their reflections were on the advice, whether they believed the priority outcomes captured everything that was important to the region, and what they need to do more of.

In the online registration form, people were also shown the priority outcomes from 2017 and asked whether they were still relevant to the region in 2018 and what would be their top priority, if they could add one.

This section presents the findings from both the online and the face-to-face engagement.

Participant's reflections on the 2017 advice?

Overall, participants supported the 2017 priority outcomes, and said that they were still relevant in 2018. However, people consistently commented that 'environment' and 'climate change' were missing. They also wanted to see the 'Social Inclusion' priority broadened beyond women and sports to include other demographics, particularly the elderly. There were several comments that the priority outcome 'Seamless Health and Social Services' was unclear; there was confusion as to what tangible outcomes were sought for this priority.

There were a few comments that much of the government's response consisted of studies, as opposed to more funding commitments, which they would have preferred. However, the government announcement about free TAFE courses was very well received by participants. Another consistent reflection from participants was that the response to the 'Affordable and Social Housing' priority focused on affordable housing. They saw affordable and social housing as different and would have preferred to have seen a direct response to social housing.

What do the Partnerships need to do more work on in 2018?

Participants at both the Assembly and online provided many ideas for additional priorities and work to be progressed by the Partnership.

In addition to the previously mentioned request for a priority on 'environmental sustainability', many participants also wanted to see the region's unique character of leafy green and open natural spaces protected as development continues.

Participants reinforced the importance of connected health services. This included connecting services through 'speaking to each other' face-to-face and connecting more people through public services. A few people also called for more mobile services in the less connected areas of the east. Many focused heavily on mental health, particularly for young people. They thought young people may be unsure or too shy to use services such as Headspace. The arts were suggested by some as an important way to address youth mental health problems. Another repeated theme under the 'Seamless Health & Social Services' theme was the need to address increasing rates of obesity, through healthy eating and increased access to open space.

Addressing family violence was repeatedly raised by participants. Some also highlighted the issue of elder abuse, and wanted it included in 'Family Violence' responses.

Lastly, addressed under 'Transport Connectivity' participants wanted to see an increase in the reach of the bus network, and increased public transport services outside of peak times. They also wanted to see the 'Affordable and Social Housing' theme address homelessness; for example, by increasing crisis housing.

The top priorities for 2018

After a tea break, participants were given a list of priorities to review and asked to '*choose the top three priority outcomes you think the Partnership should consider for their 2018 advice to government*'. These included the Partnership's 2017 priority outcomes, the young people's priorities and two new priorities which emerged on the night.

Partnerships priority outcomes from 2017:

1. Jobs for Youth
2. Integrated Health and Social Service
3. Social Inclusion
4. Affordable & Social Housing
5. Regional Connectivity

Priorities from the Youth Forum:

6. Environmental Sustainability
7. Life Skills in the Curriculum
8. Mental Health
9. Community Safety

Additional priorities submitted at the Assembly:

10. Supporting an Aging Population
11. Economic Growth (Small business)

THE RESULTS, DISPLAYED IN FIGURE 5, SHOW THAT THE TOP THREE PRIORITIES CHOSEN BY PARTICIPANTS WERE 'ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY', 'AFFORDABLE AND SOCIAL HOUSING', AND 'SOCIAL INCLUSION'.

Of the top five priorities, three were Partnership priorities and two were youth priorities. 'Environmental Sustainability' was the top priority at both the Youth Forum and at the Assembly. This shows that is an issue that resonates with all age groups. This is the same for 'Affordable and Social Housing', and 'Social Inclusion'. In contrast, 'Life Skills in the Curriculum' was a strong priority from the Youth Forum, but not as high at the Assembly. This indicates that it may be a key issue for young people, but not for all age groups.

Environmental sustainability — 24
Affordable & Social Housing — 22
Social inclusion — 21
Mental Health — 20
Regional Connectivity — 19
Supporting an aging population — 14
Jobs for youth — 13
Integrated health and social service — 12
Community safety — 9
Economic growth (Small business) — 5
Life skills in the curriculum — 4

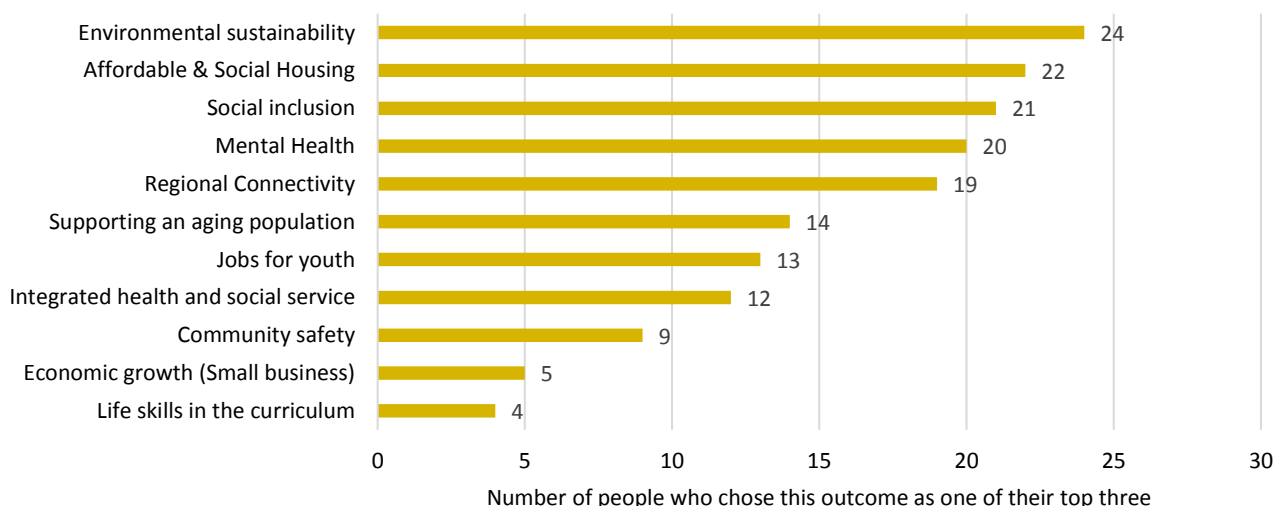Number of people who chose this outcome as one of their top three

Figure 4: Results of the poll 'choose the top three priority outcomes you think the Partnership should consider for their 2018 advice to government'

Exploring the priority outcomes in more detail

In the third activity participants sat at theme-based tables, and explored four questions:

1. *What is the real issue we can impact?*
2. *What are the opportunities?*
3. *How can we ensure everyone has access?*
4. *How will we know we are successful?*

Their responses have been summarised under each theme in the following section. The themes are not presented in order of weighting or priority.

Environmental Sustainability

The real issue that can be impacted:

- The need to transition to renewable and alternative technologies.

The opportunities are:

- Facilitation of investment in renewable technologies by communities; subsidised bulk procurement, creating community micro-grids.

We can ensure everyone has access by:

- Creating opportunities for people to invest in places other than their own homes (possibly supporting renters and older home owners) and to buy power from each other.

We will know we are successful when:

- There are less emissions and the proportion of regional renewable energy increases. When there are fairer prices.

Affordable and Social Housing

The real issue that can be impacted:

- That many alternate and affordable housing options, such as boarding houses or second dwellings, are not currently viable.

The opportunities are:

- Deregulation to allow dual occupancy through second dwellings and smaller-scale homes.
- Land auditing of unused or underused land; improving boarding house regulation to make it a viable housing option.

We can ensure everyone has access by:

- Looking at a wider range of options to suit different housing needs.

We will know we are successful when:

- There are more government partnerships with NGOs and other housing service providers who have the funding and large-scale ability to make a difference in this area.

Social Inclusion

The real issue that can be impacted:

- Cultural barriers and social stigma that arise from a lack of understanding of other cultures and languages.

The opportunities are:

- Providing more mobile hubs that offer opportunities and resources to connect people and promote interaction; open days and community events; for example, ensuring that key people in the neighbourhood (such as GPs and hairdressers) are equipped to notice needs of those suffering from isolation or domestic violence.

We can ensure everyone has access by:

- Providing the right information in various languages.

We will know we are successful when:

- There are more community hubs and contexts for people to meet and share stories.

Mental Health

The real issue that can be impacted:

- That young people do not know how, or fear accessing mental health and suicide prevention services.

The opportunities are:

- Involve young people in designing services that are relevant to them and draw on their knowledge and experience.

We can ensure everyone has access by:

- Providing systems that talk to each other more, including data systems. Traditional boundaries can be barriers.

- Ensuring service providers communicate and integrate information better, and while those with acute needs are assisted, those 'in the middle' or at the other end of the spectrum still receive the support they need.

We will know we are successful when:

- There is a decrease in suicide and increases in youth mental health understanding and school completion rates.

Public Transport and Roads (walking and cycling, regional connectivity)

The real issue that can be impacted:

- A lack of services in the outer regions.

The opportunities are:

- Improved investment in active and public transport; greater incentives to take public transport, and better transport planning in underserviced areas.

We can ensure everyone has access by:

- Extending service reach; improving transport connectivity to make interchanges from all forms of transport easier at community and transport centres.

We will know we are successful when:

- People do not have to wait longer than 15 minutes for public transport.

Supporting an Ageing Population

The real issue that can be impacted:

- Poor physical and social infrastructure that supports older people, including accessible housing and transport, and opportunities to meet and network with people.

The opportunities are:

- Maintaining and improving community connectedness, especially for the elderly that lack networks; providing regular events with transport; supporting more socially-connected and independent living; continuing to improve men's mental health through Men's Sheds.

- Having well designed infrastructure for seniors that is marked and explained by clear signage and information.

- Increasing public knowledge of elder abuse and exploitation.

We can ensure everyone has access by:

- Making more services and language learning accessible to non-English speakers; teaching the elderly to use services.

We will know we are successful when:

- There is a large reduction in social isolation.

Jobs for Youth

The real issue that can be impacted:

- Schools not identifying difficulties early and not preparing young people for transition to work.

The opportunities are:

- Creating more linkages for schools with external community organisations and employers to teach students life and job skills.

We can ensure everyone has access by:

- Improving communication strategies to students from junior high school onwards; ensuring support and communication to their parents and carers as well.

We will know we are successful when:

- More young people make a successful transition to the work force through apprenticeships and other opportunities, while less young people enter the youth justice system.

Health and Social Services

The real issue that can be impacted:

- The lack of transport options for people who do not live near hospitals or have mobility issues.

The opportunities are:

- Providing more health services in community spaces.

We can ensure everyone has access by:

- Ensuring more services are provided locally; using home visits and uptake of 'Nurse-on-call' services.

We will know we are successful when:

- The community has greater access to and knowledge of services, and when there are more local service providers.

Community Safety

The real issue that can be impacted:

- A lack of community resilience and social capital particularly in new communities that currently lack a sense of place. Recognising that this takes time and greater community involvement. Partners in education and local commerce are also needed.

The opportunities are:

- Increasing community capacity to volunteer in organisations that build and defend resilience, particularly against natural disasters.

We can ensure everyone has access by:

- Building knowledge of community resilience and protection, especially for new residents.

We will know we are successful when:

- Communities feel well organised, trained and prepared; when they have high levels of community identity and participation.

Economic growth and small business

The real issue that can be impacted:

- Not enough job opportunities for young people.

The opportunities are:

- Encouraging and facilitating more local jobs closer to people's workplaces; incentives for businesses to invest in staff training.

We can ensure everyone has access by:

- Creating pathways into jobs for all demographics and abilities.

We will know we are successful when:

- There is less unemployment and more local opportunities to work in co-working spaces.

Evaluation

Participants were asked to evaluate the success of the Assembly by answering the question: '*How satisfied are you with the opportunities provided tonight to share and discuss the priorities for your region?*', with possible responses ranging from 'very dissatisfied' to 'very satisfied'.

The overall feedback for the assembly was positive, with 36 and 47 per cent of respondents stating that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the opportunities provided at the assembly.
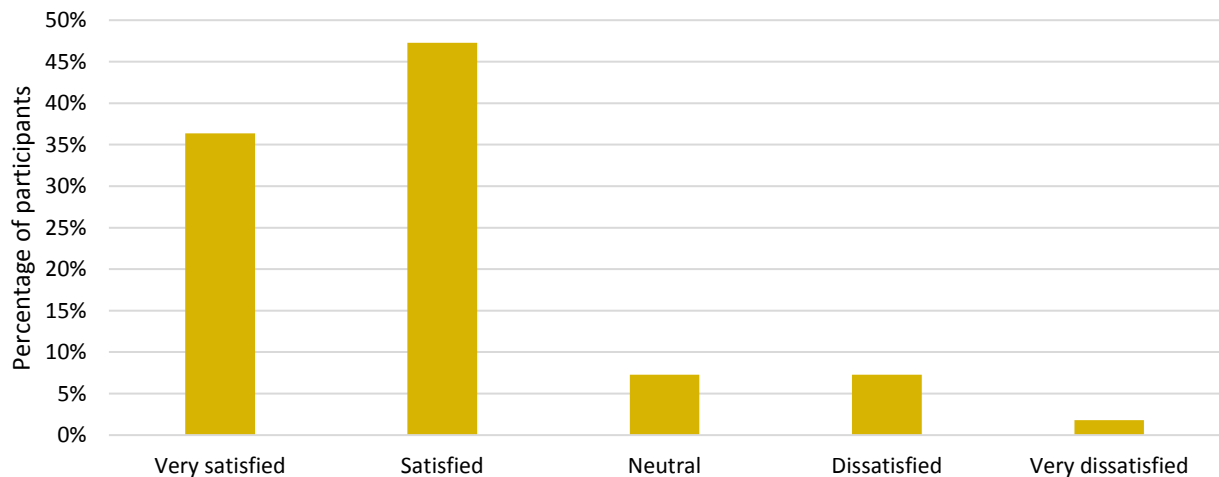

Figure 5: Participant's responses to the question: 'How satisfied are you with the opportunities provided tonight to share and discuss the priorities for your region?'