

Contents

Executive Summary	2
Background.....	2
Methodology	3
Promotion	3
Survey Data	4
Summary	21
Appendix A: Promotional Material	22
<i>Facebook posts (Wingecarribee Shire Council and Southern Highlands Youth)</i>	22
<i>Yoursay Wingecarribee project page</i>	22
<i>Media Release</i>	22
<i>Bookmark promotional art work</i>	22
<i>Letters to schools</i>	23

Executive Summary

Wingecarribee Shire Council is in the process of developing a Shire wide Youth Strategy. The youth survey was an online tool used to gather information about how young people living in the Wingecarribee shire perceived their community. The survey was aimed at young people aged between twelve and twenty four who either live in the Southern Highlands or those that grew up in the Wingecarribee and had moved out of the area.

The youth survey is the initial consulting tool for the development of the Wingecarribee Youth Forum. To guarantee that there was strong commitment from service providers and young people a working group was developed which consisted of both service providers and local young people to advise on all aspects of the survey. The working group met regularly from July 2015 to aid in the development of the survey, assist with promotion and to develop the forum from the information gathered via the survey.

The survey looked at information regarding what is working for young people and what areas could become a focal point for improvement as well as awareness of existing services and opportunities available. While no one survey can provide a complete picture of a community's perception, this data provided a snapshot of how respondents feel about the services available to them and gave ideas for future activities.

A total of 80 young people completed the survey. The first section of the survey was based on respondent characteristics. Thirty eight per cent of respondents were aged 16-17 years although there was representation from all age groups; sixty seven percent of respondents were female. Thirty eight respondents identified as living in the three main towns while a further thirty seven identified as living in the smaller villages of the Wingecarribee Shire.

The second part of the survey focused on improvements for young people. The top four services or activities that young people felt there is a need to increase were:

- Events and festivals
- Unstructured sports
- Improved sporting venues
- Activities and programs

Mental health was identified as being of a great concern to young people. It was also evident that local young people did not have a strong knowledge of services or opportunities that were available to them and that there is a need for a higher level of service promotion.

Insights gained from the youth survey were analysed and then used as the frame work for the Wingecarribee youth forum.

Background

The Wingecarribee Youth Survey was developed to gather information from local young people as well as former residents. The aim of the survey was to gather information from young people on what would make the Southern Highlands a better place for 12–24 year olds. Statistics show that the youth population drops by almost half as young people move out of area. This information could then be used as the basis for the Wingecarribee Youth Forum.

Methodology

To develop the survey as the pre cursor to the Wingecarribee Youth Forum, a working group was developed consisting of service providers specialising in youth service provision comprising of St Vincent de Paul, UnitingCare Burnside, Sector Connect, Youth Solutions, Argyle Housing, Essential Personnel and Barnardos as well as local young people from Bowral High School who had input into the language used and the sequence of questions. The survey was open from 2 September 2015 to 28 September 2015.

The survey was only available on line.

For young people still living in the Wingecarribee the questions were aimed at gathering information on:

- What they would like to see more of in the Southern Highlands
- What services they were aware of
- Major issues/areas of concern

For older young people who had left the area questions were regarding:

- Why they had moved out of the Southern Highlands
- What would bring them back to the Southern Highlands

Promotion

During this time the survey was promoted via Council web site, social media mediums, local papers and radio and directly in schools being announced in daily notices and via word of mouth by the young people on the working group.

The online survey was displayed prominently on the Council website during the survey time period www.yoursaywingecarribee.com.au.

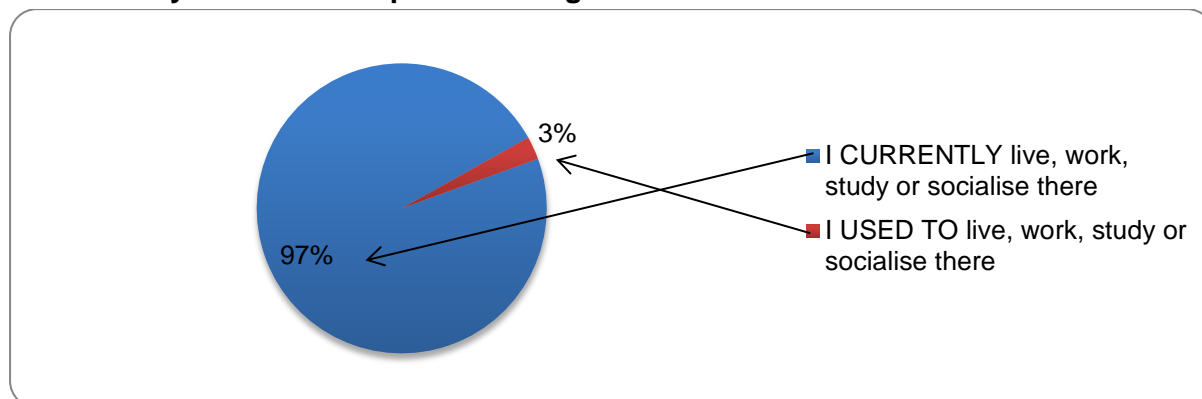
Letters were also sent directly to the Principal of every local high school with a follow up meeting to discuss the vision for the Wingecarribee Youth Strategy and encouraging their school to become involved.

Multiple emails were sent directly via the Wingecarribee Youth Network, Interagency and the Highlands Child, Youth and Family network email groups requesting that services pass information on to young people accessing their service.

Survey Data

RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS QUESTIONS 1 TO 12

Q 1 What's your relationship with the Highlands?



Ninety seven per cent of respondents are currently living in the Wingecarribee Shire.

Respondents that indicated they “used to live, work or study” in the Wingecarribee were directed to only two further questions based around why they had left and what would bring them back to the Shire. There were a total of two responses from people who had moved out of the Shire.

Why did you leave?

No work, not enough transport to get in and out of Penrose.

I went to university in Townsville due to the availability of the course I wanted to study.

What would bring you back to the Highlands?

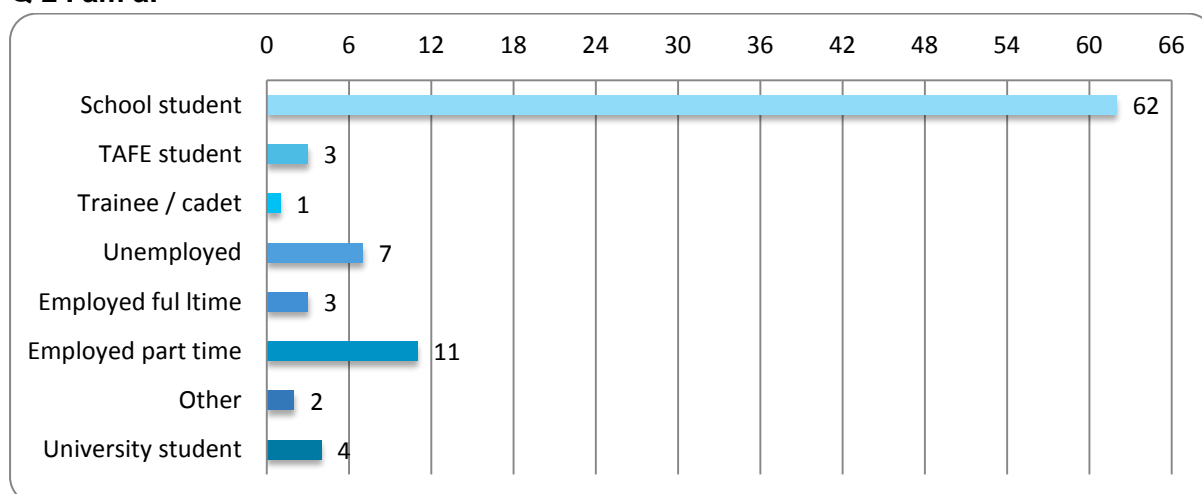
More jobs and more cheap or free things to do

My parents and sister live there so I come home all of the time to see them.

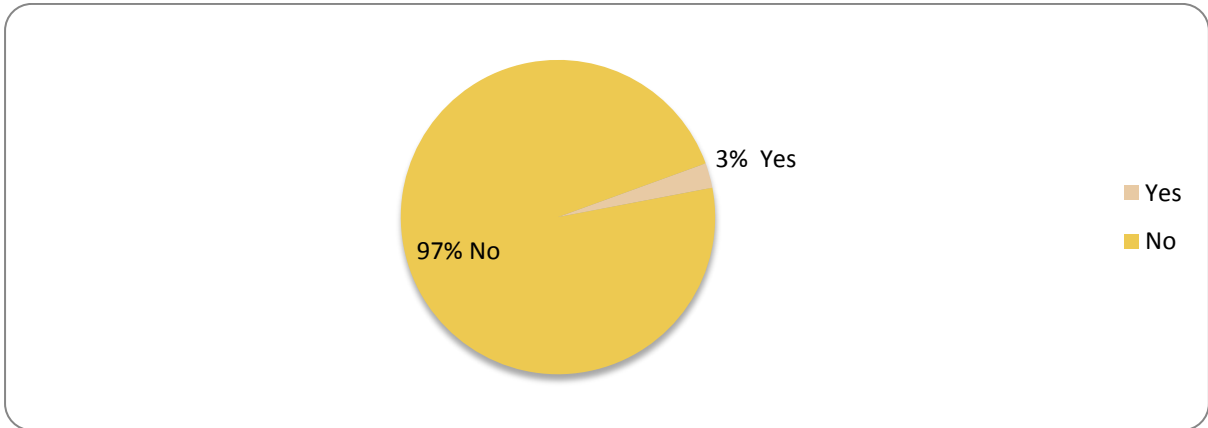
Survey Results

The following graphs show the results given for each question.

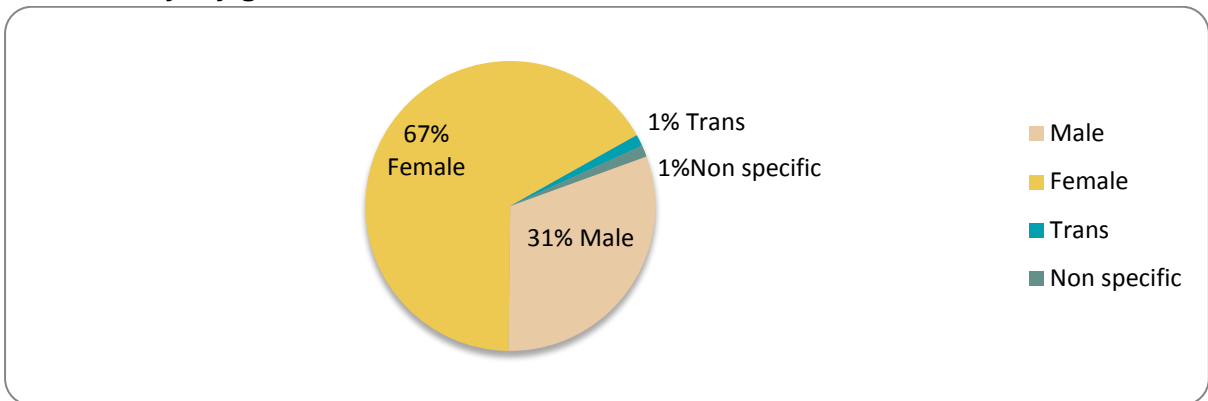
Q 2 I am a:



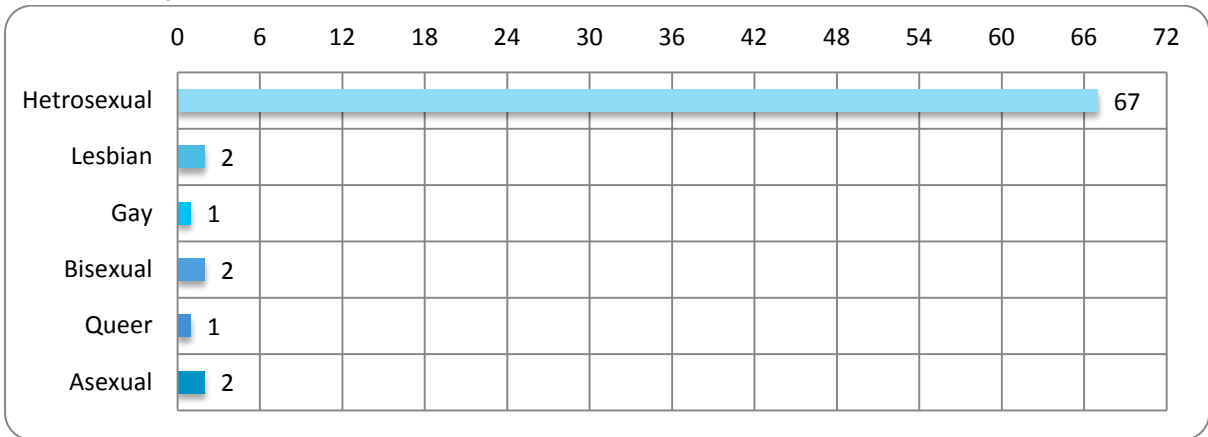
Q 3 I identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander:



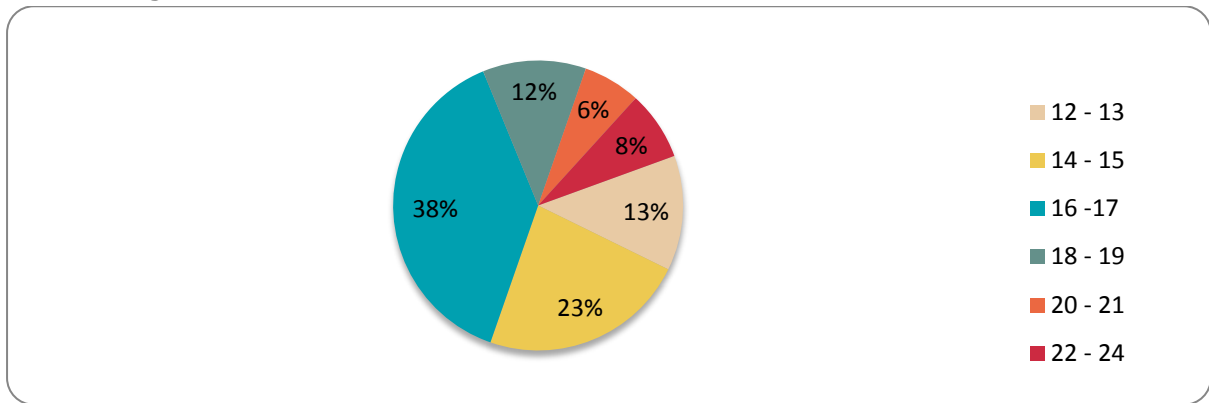
Q 4 I identify my gender as:



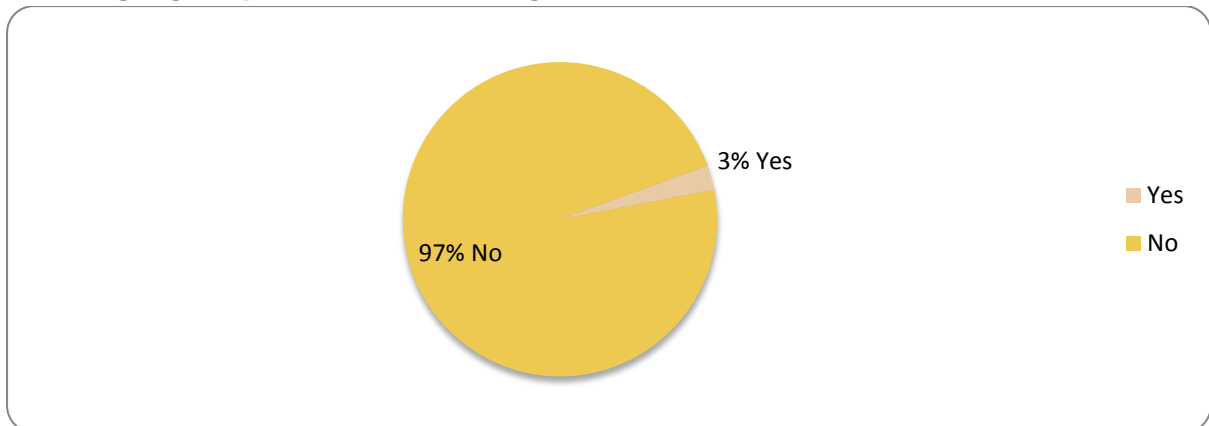
Q 5 I identify as:



Q 6 I am aged:



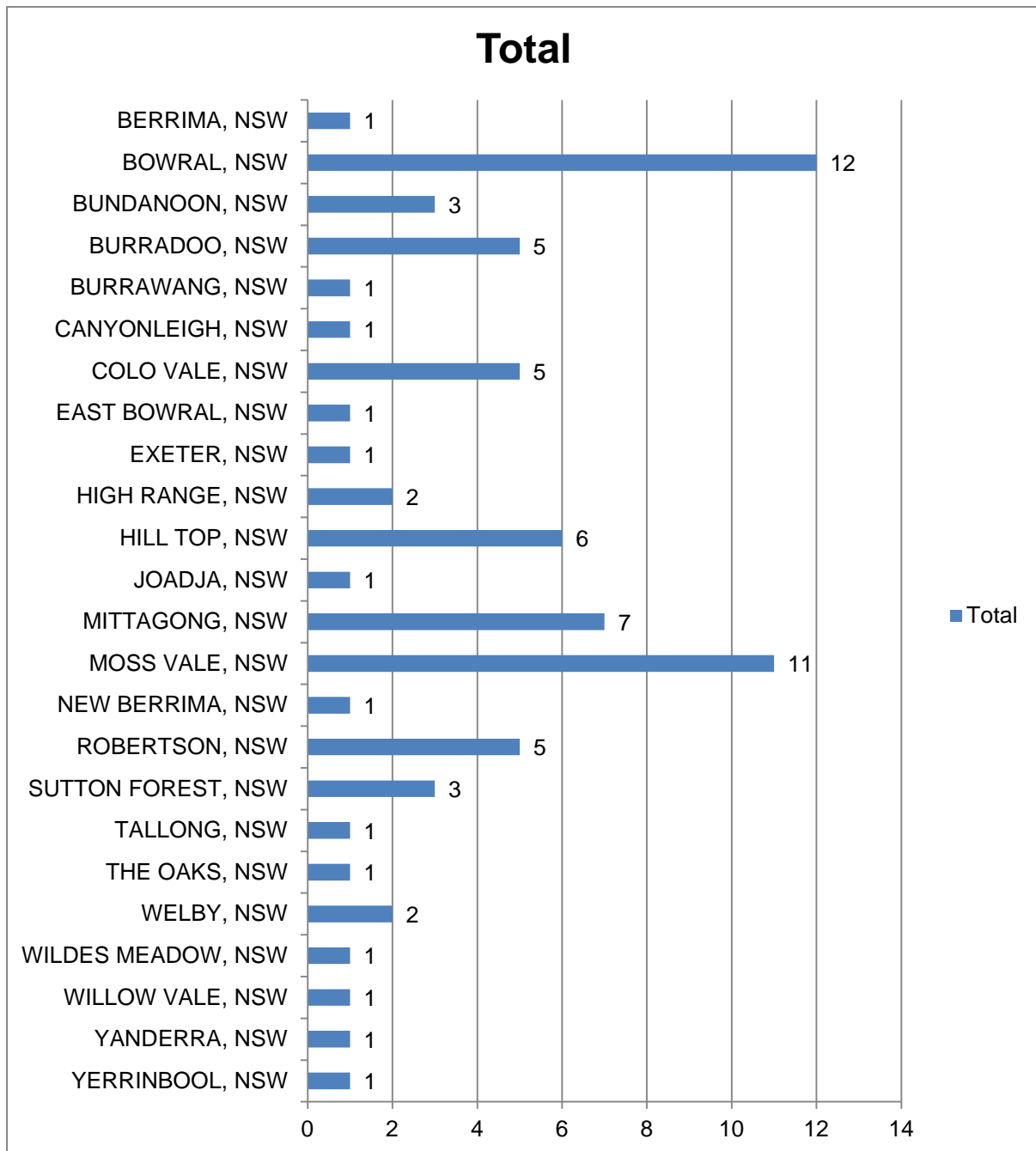
Q 7 Languages spoken other than English at home:



Q 8 Which languages do you speak?

Only two respondents identified speaking another language at home with only one response identifying Italian as their second language.

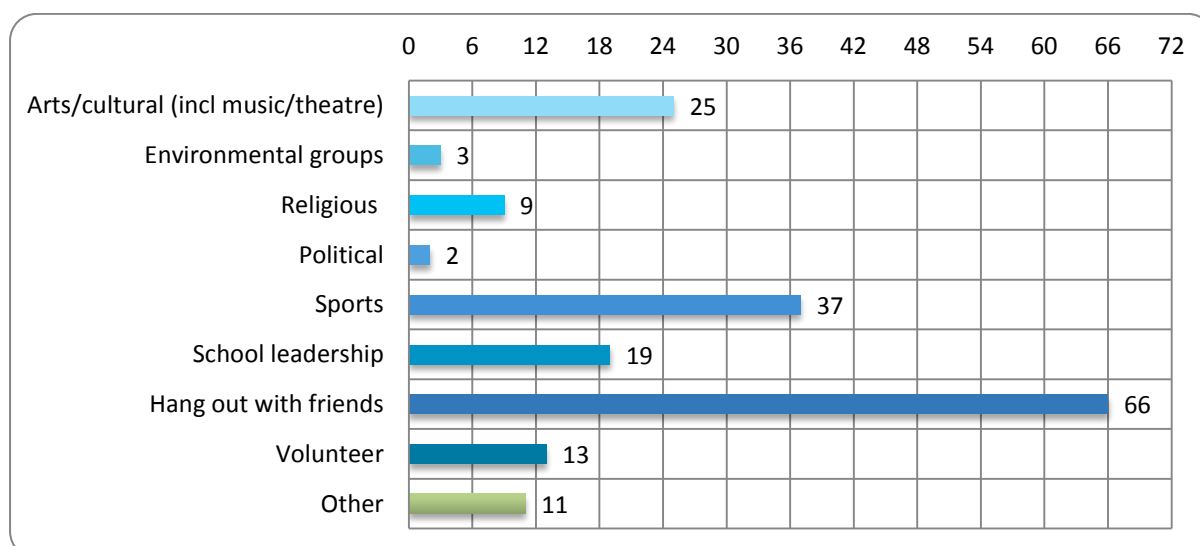
Q 9 I live in:



There were 73 responses and while the highest response rate was from the main towns there was representation from the smaller villages.

Thirty eight respondents were from the three main towns, 37 respondents were from the outer lying villages which is reflective of the population across the Shire.

Q 10 In my spare time I am involved in:



Q 11 Other activities that respondents listed as being involved in:

Motorbike riding
Work at Maccas
Bush bashing in my paddock basher
Work
Video Games
Youtube
work on my own business seeing as i can't find full time employment
Part Time Work
studying
Helping pathways via the Bowral youth refuge with food donations from Harris farm, helping pack boxes to donate to pathways

Q 12 The top three things I like about living in the Highlands

The following common themes were identified

RESPONSE	NUMBER
Community / friendly people	48
Land / environment	34
Sports / facilities / bike tracks	16
Shops / cafes	14
Clean	8
Felt safe / low crime	7
Good schools	7
Climate	5
Open space	4
Libraries	2
Opportunities	2

There were comments regarding location, two simply noted location while there were four further comments on proximity to Sydney or proximity between towns or between towns and villages.

On eight occasions there was reference to “good to live, nice town, quaint towns, small towns, quiet place to grow up” which would indicate that young people enjoy rural living.

IMPROVEMENTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

The second part of the youth survey looked at what young people felt was working in the Shire and what areas they would like to see change.

Q 13 The three services, activities or opportunities that would make the Southern Highlands better for me:

COMMENT	NUMBER
Events and festivals	23
Sports unstructured	19
Sports venues	16
Activities and programs	16
More Transport	15
Employment opportunities	13
More shops for teens	10
Hang out spaces	6
Better variety of TAFE / Uni courses	6
Better promotion of existing opportunities	4
Support groups (1 response was LGBTQI specific)	4

It was evident that organised activities such as live music, festivals, affordable arts programs, school holiday and after school programs as well as alternative sporting programs were areas that young people identified as 'lacking' across the community. These topics will be explored further in the Wingecarribee Youth Forum.

Regarding sports venues references were made to better lighting, a large skate/bike park such as Monster Park in Sydney (<http://www.monsterpark.com.au>) also comments on specific services in the smaller villages "a gym in Robertson" and "a new skate park in Robertson".

While most of the responses were very vague and single word answers except for those relating to Arts and Culture which had 5 responses;

"Increased support of theatre/arts to allow more opportunities (as a volunteer or career) in the Highlands"

"A better influence on theatre with regard to tourism marketing and management - more attraction for the arts to other regions, specifically; Sydney, Canberra and perhaps as far as Melbourne, rather than just our local region"

Other comments included;

"I love the Highlands and don't want to live anywhere else"

"Perfect the way it is"

There were two responses that were more unusual, one from a respondent identified as a 14-15 year old male;

"I don't understand why there has to be so much subdivisions. I think it is a real shame that the developers are allowed to cut prime farming country up in to 450m square blocks. I think this will become a slums area. I have been lucky enough to be bought up on property. This cutting up of our prime farming land is a real loss we will never get this land back as farms and I think this is going to be a social disaster. There is no way that a family living on 450m square block where the house practically takes up the hole block can ever be even a little bit self-sustainable."

The other was from a young person aged 20-21 and identified as female:

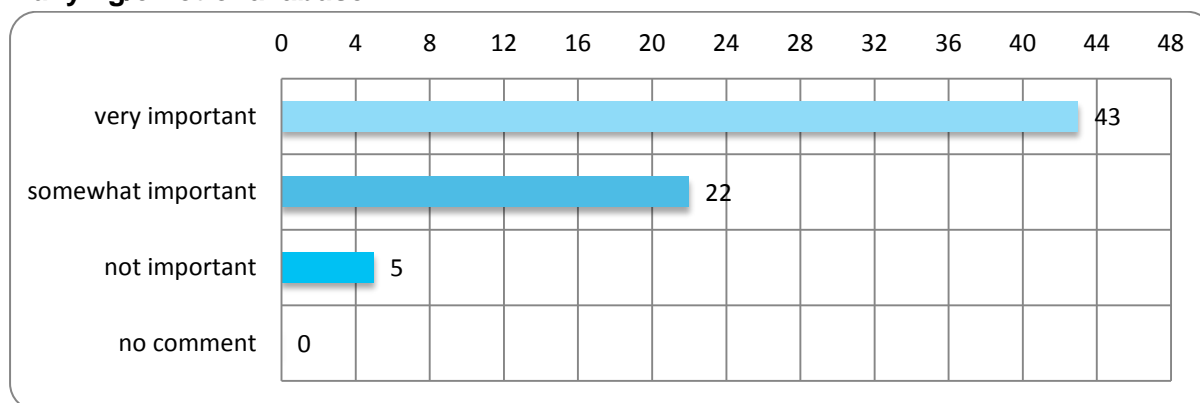
“Better council communication & staff to ensure issues are resolved in a timely manner. Repairs of roads in the local area as the state of some of them are in a horrendous state. Employment opportunities for the younger generation (school leavers) and the older generation (50's and above) as there is a limited supply of jobs and businesses that can provide this opportunity.”

Q 14 THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES THAT IMPACT YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE HIGHLANDS ARE:

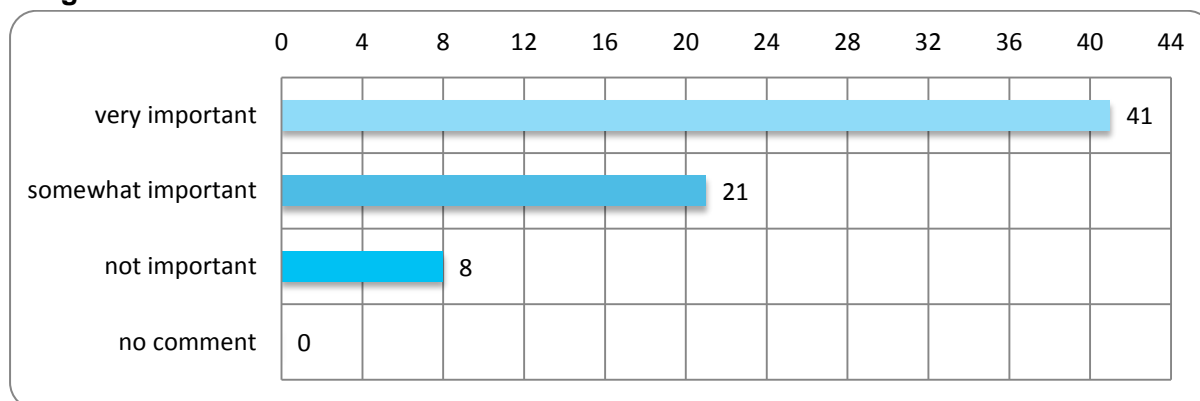
When asked young, people ranked the following issues according to their priority

NB (Please note that not all the response rates are of equal value as the respondents were able to skip answering all of the options listed on the survey.)

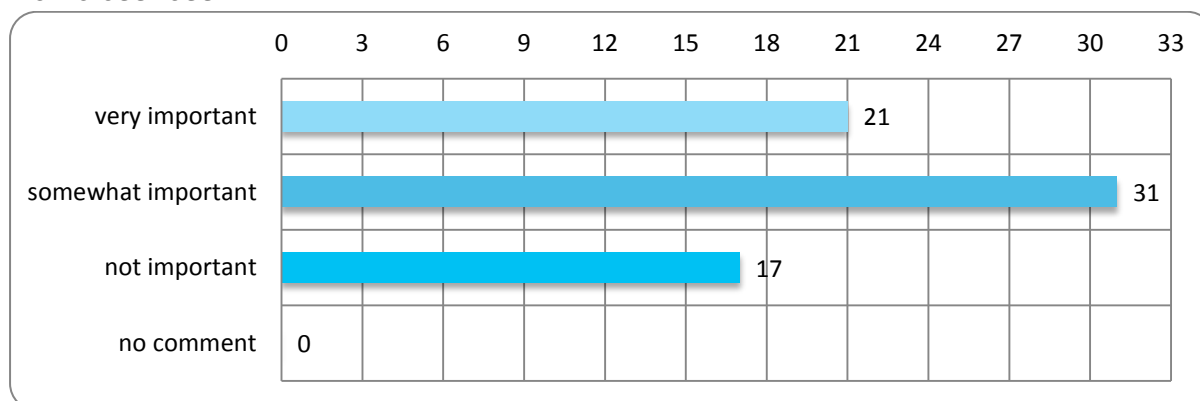
Bullying/emotional abuse



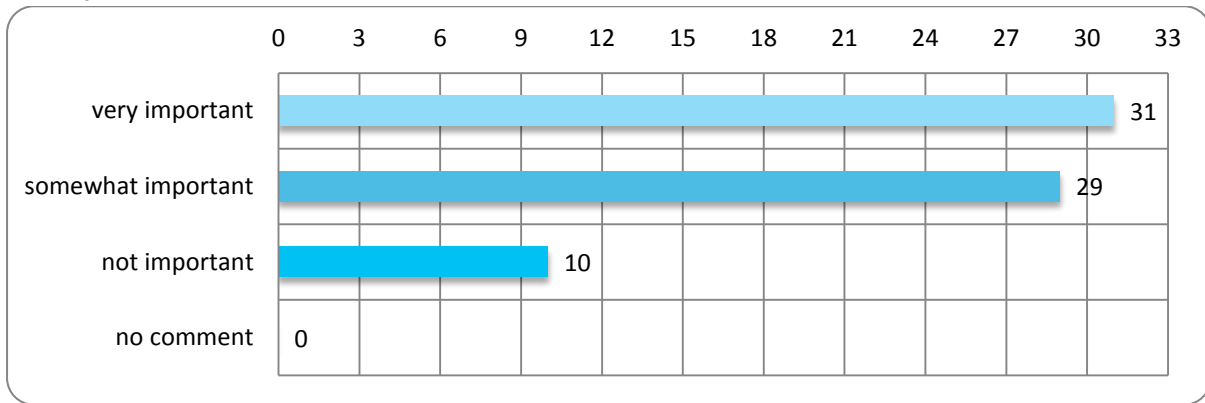
Drugs and alcohol misuse



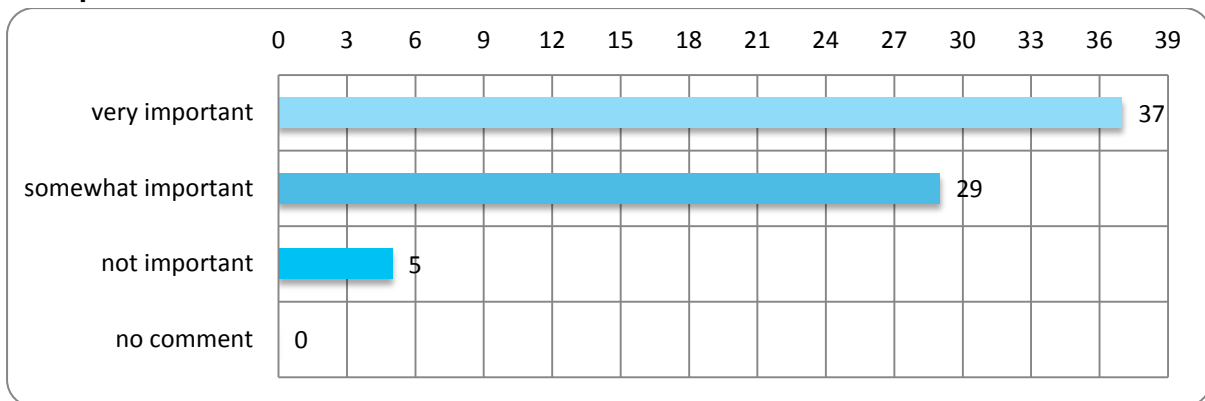
Homelessness



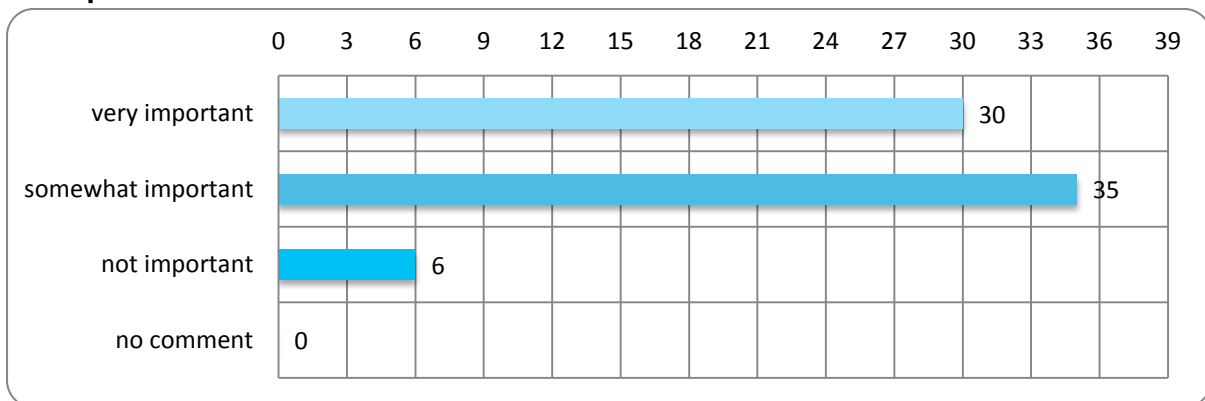
Family conflict



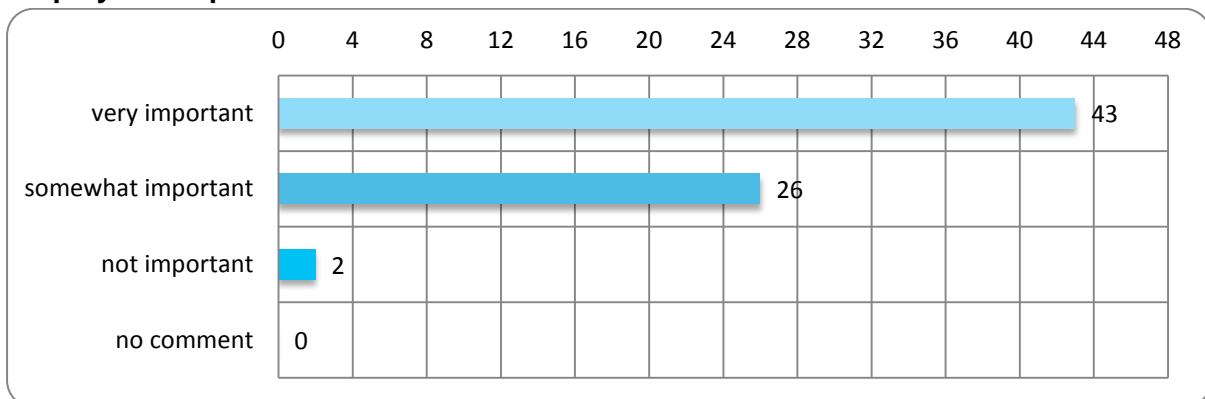
Peer pressure



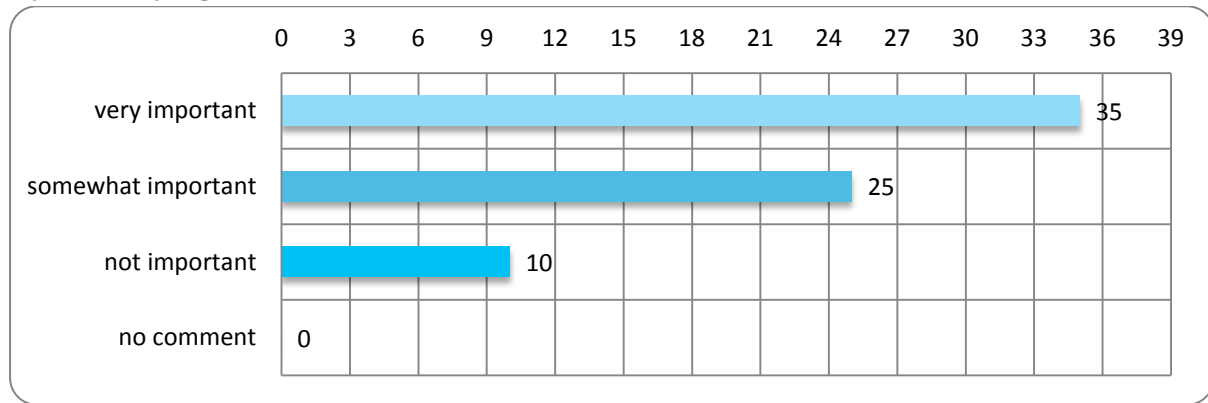
Transport



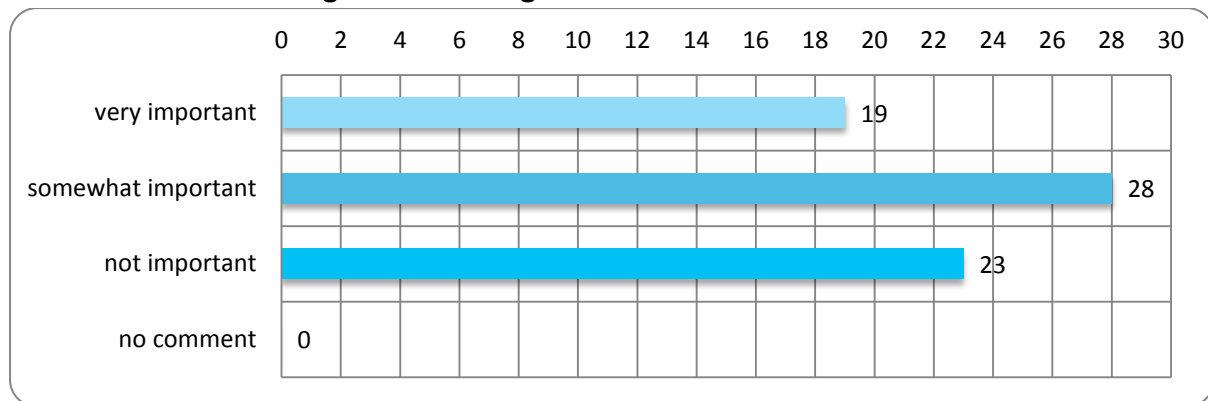
Employment options



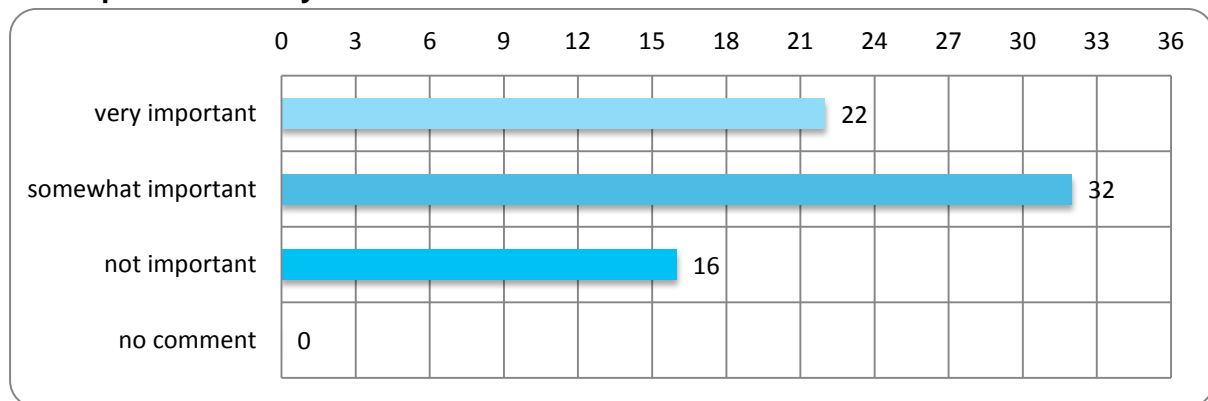
Cyber bullying



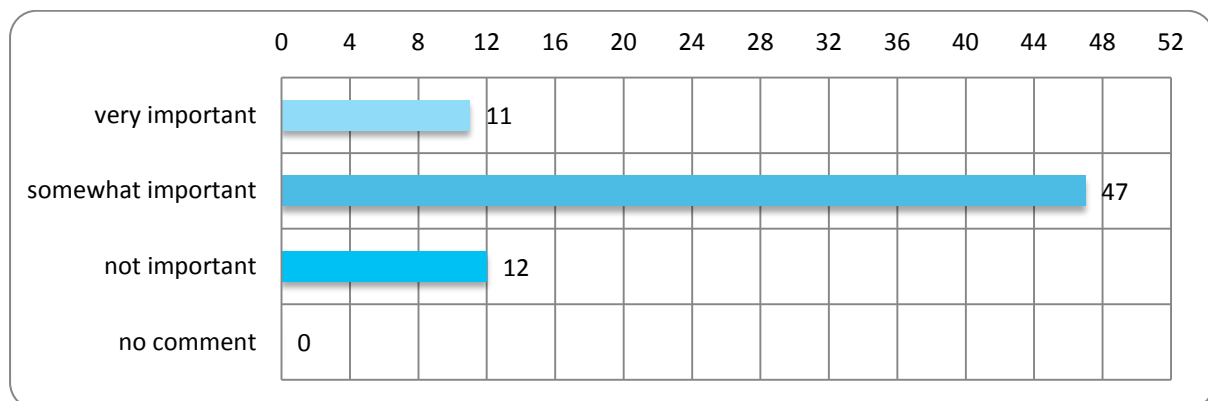
Environmental issues/global warming



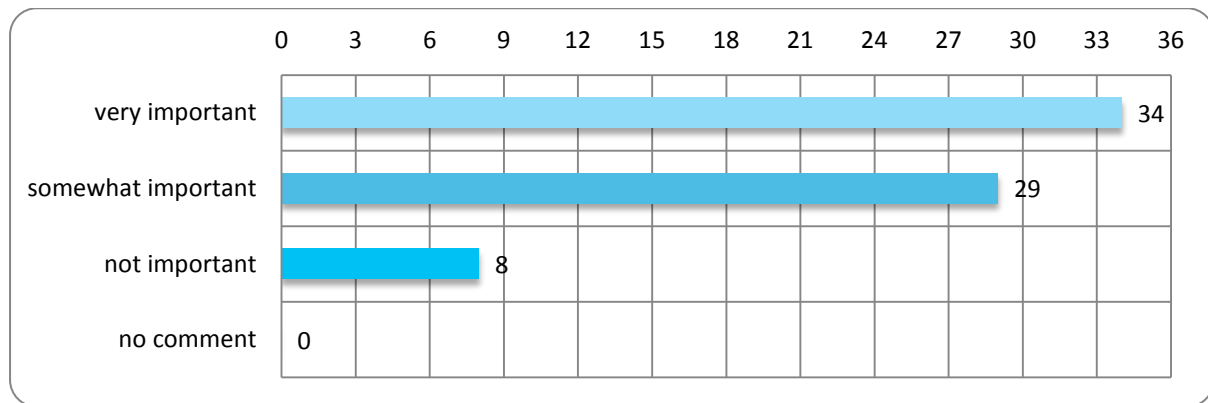
Crime/personal safety



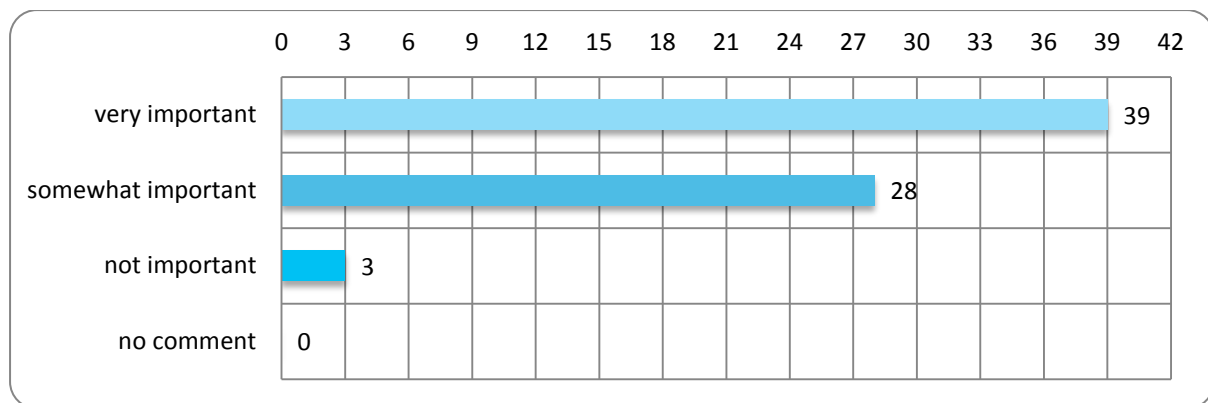
Access to information



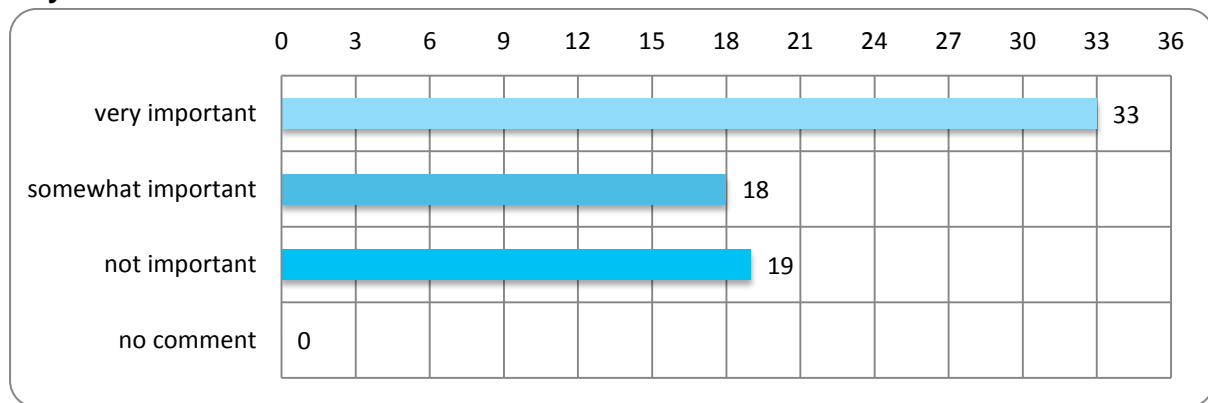
Access to facilities



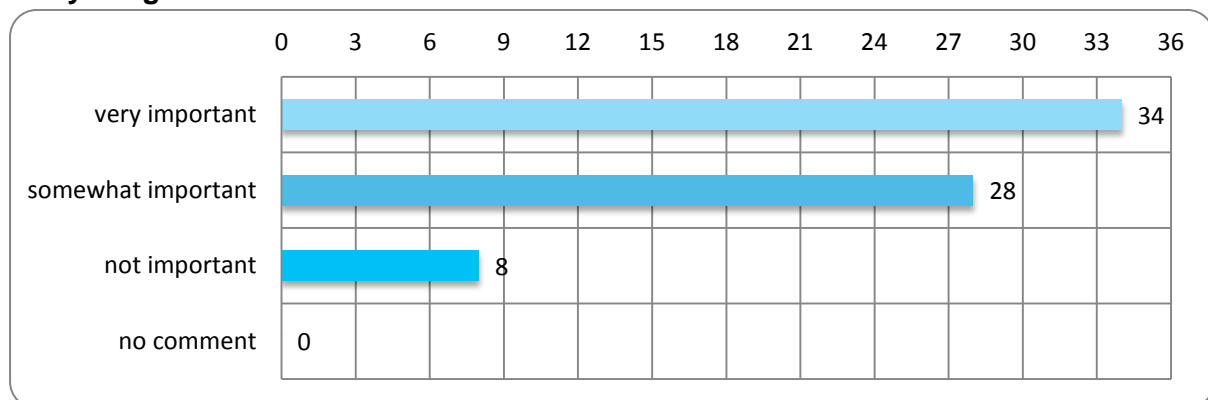
Lack of activities and events



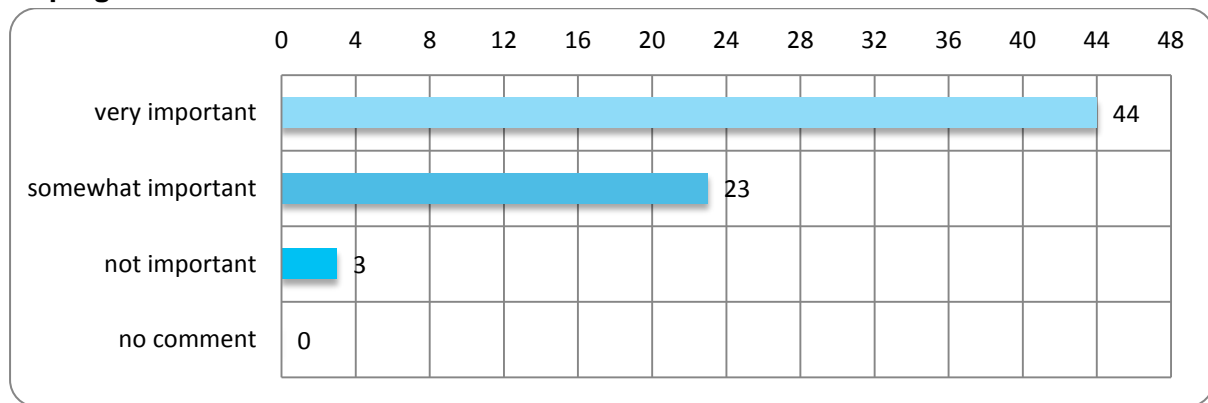
Physical/sexual abuse



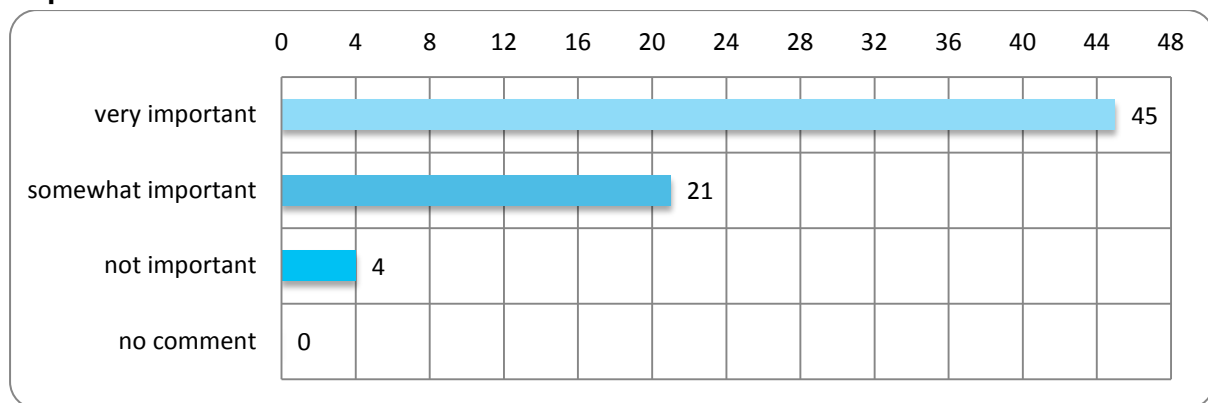
Body image



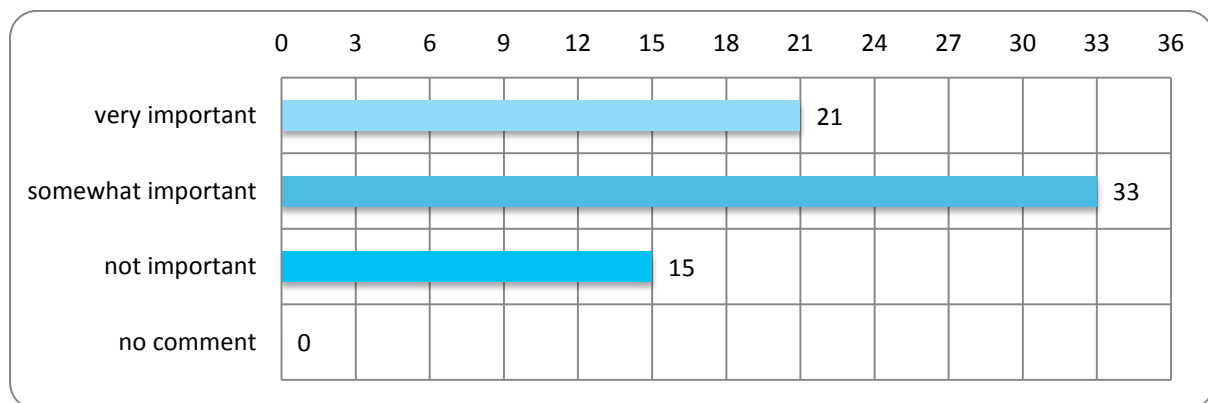
Coping with stress



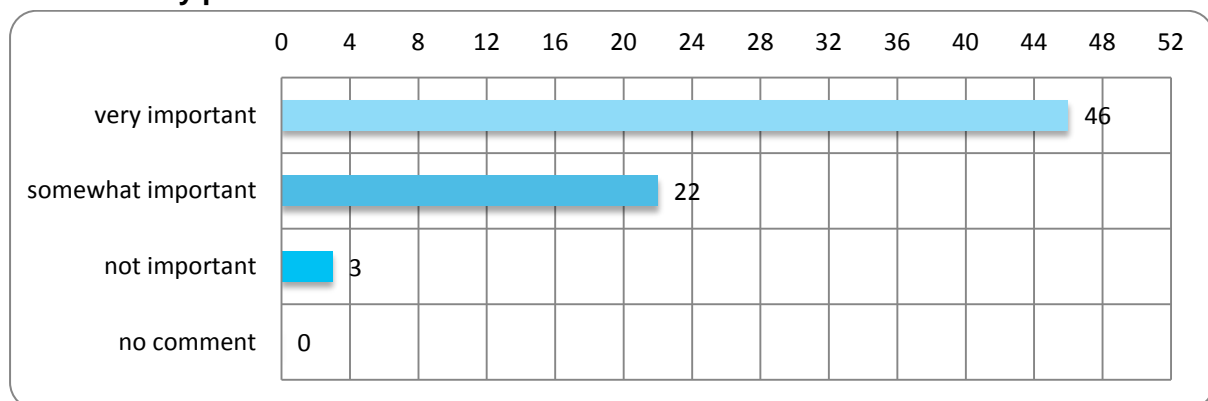
Depression



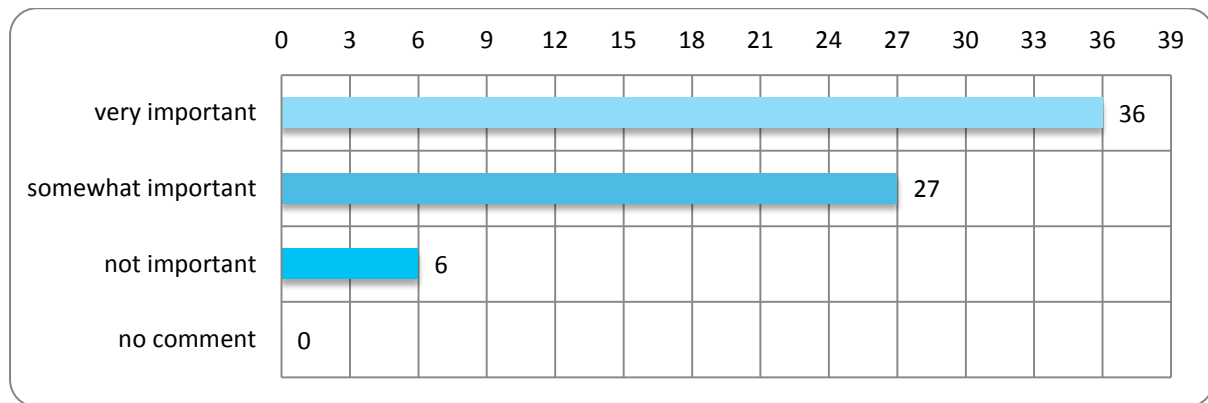
Discrimination



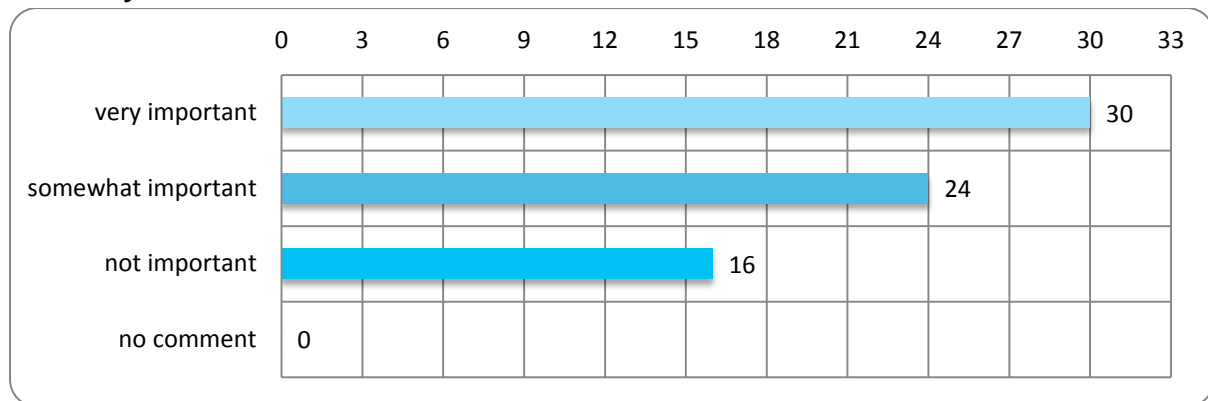
School/study problems



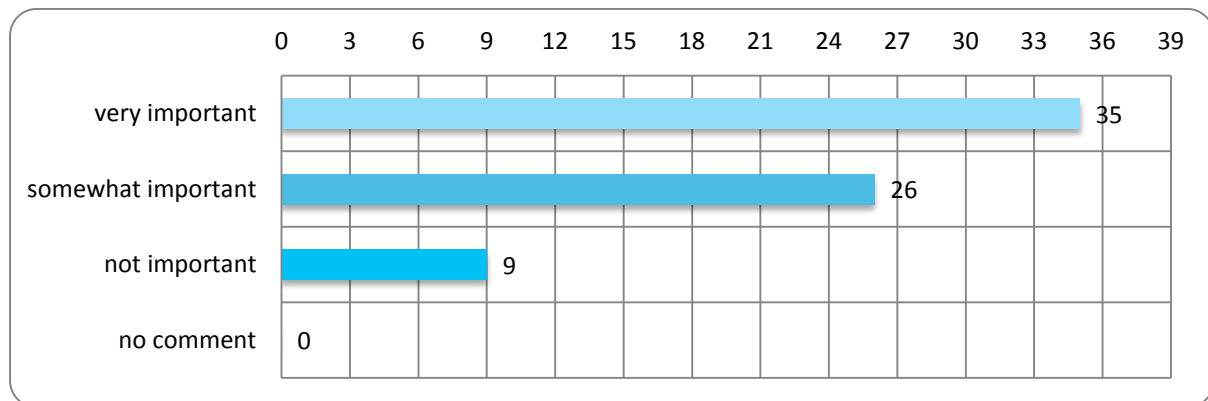
Self-harm



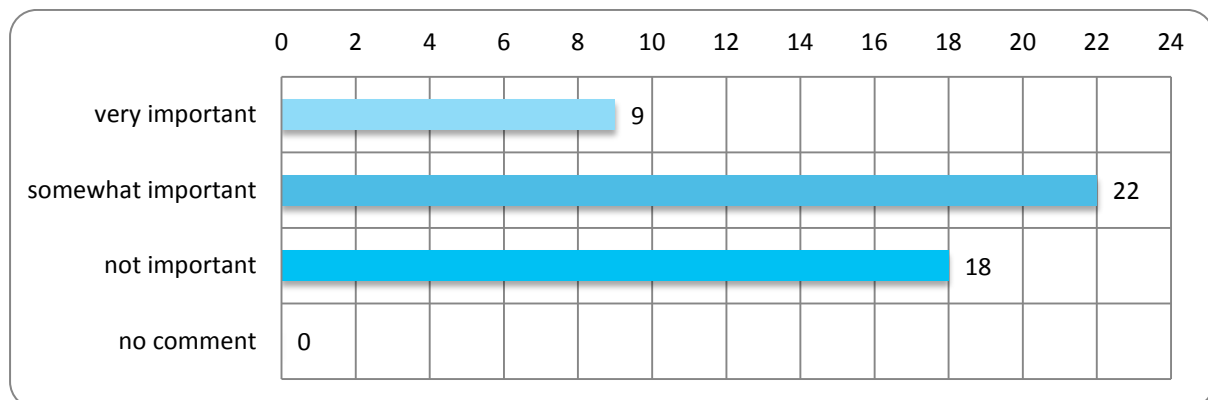
Sexuality



Suicide



Other

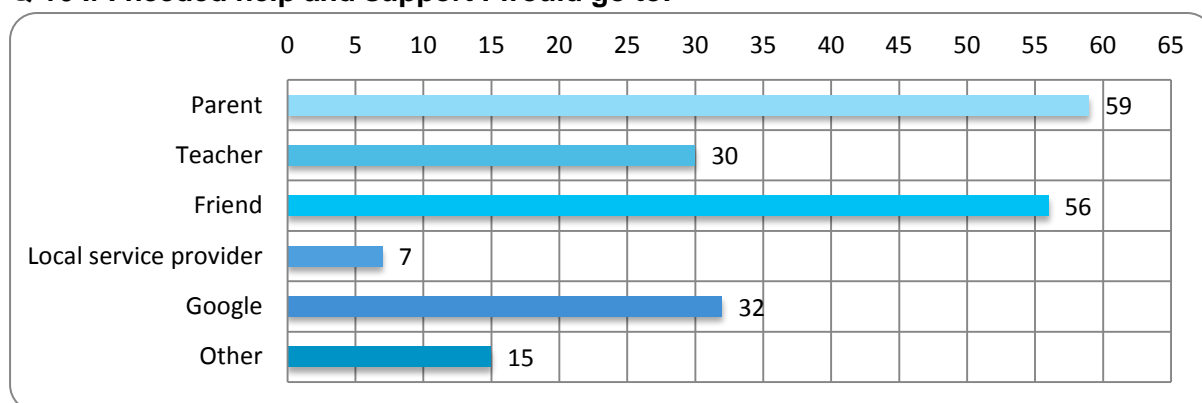


Q 15 Of the topics listed above what would you like to know more about?

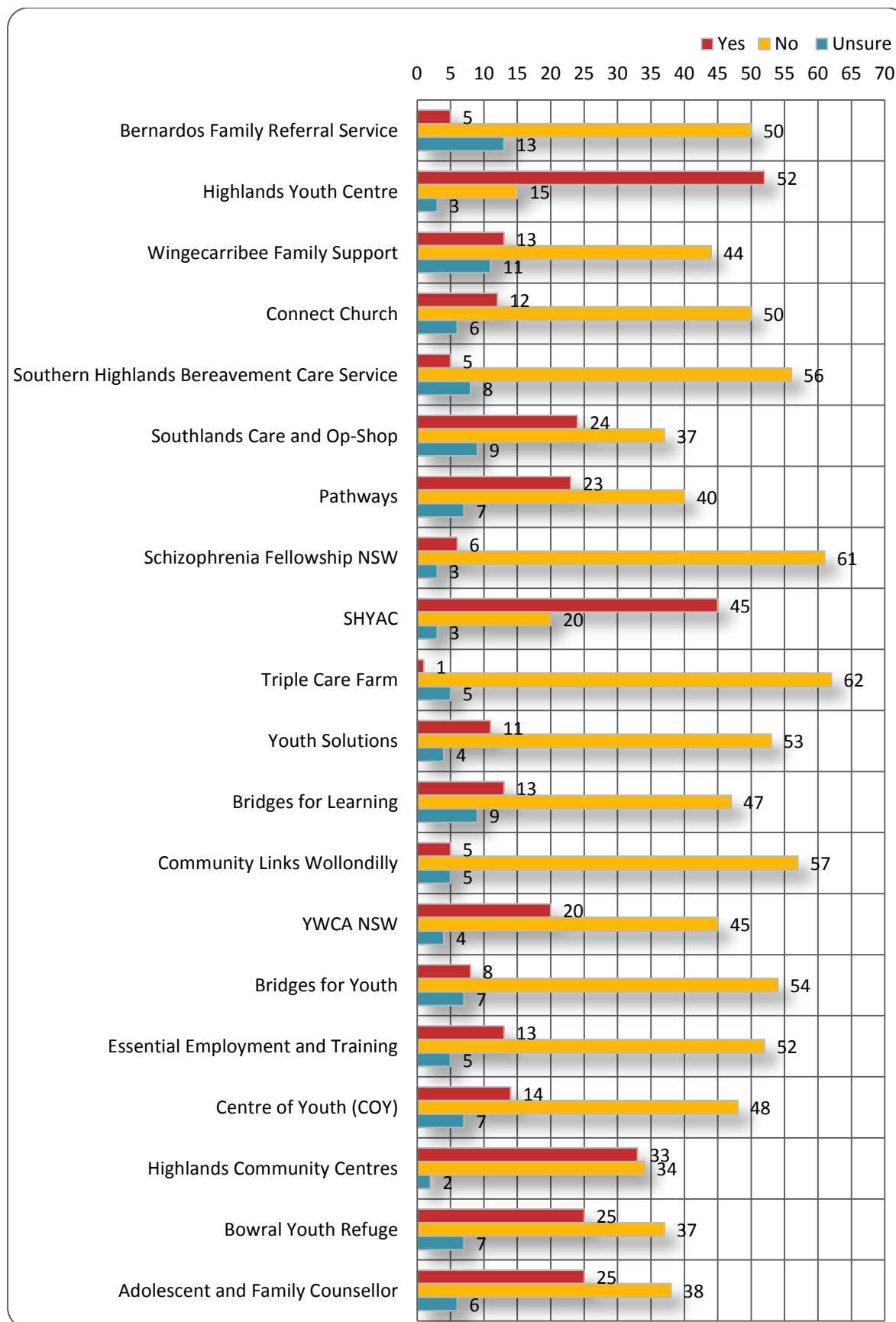
COMMENT	NUMBER
Mental Health (which grouped depression, stress, self-harm and suicide)	21
Education and Employment	12
Personal Safety (bullying, conflict/family conflict, abuse)	10
Activities	9
Body Image	8
Access to services or information	6
Homelessness	4
Sexuality	3
Alcohol and other drugs	2
Global warming	1

Information gathered on what young people would like to know more about has been used to develop relevant workshops at the Wingecarribee Youth Forum. Specialist service providers will run one hour workshops on the priority areas

Q 16 If I needed help and support I would go to:



Q 17 Local services I know of are:



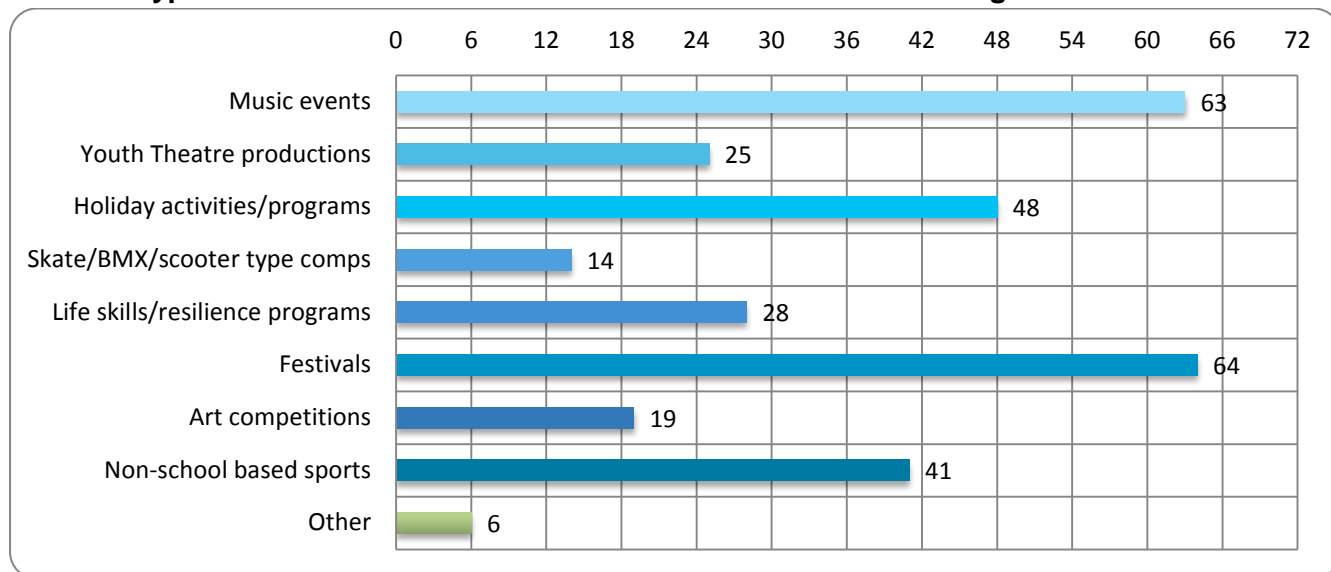
It is evident that more service promotion is required.

Q 18 Is there anything that would stop you from seeking assistance? (direct quotes)

Being afraid or scared of what may happen if you do	Unable to express self because of what people might think
Small community, word gets around. Awkwardness.	The feeling of weakness, not trusting others, accessing help
Not knowing where to find it or where to go	Most of the help centres are in Bowral
Not needing it	Fear
Having no money for transport.	Age restrictions
No. I believe that we are given the tools to seek and accept help, its just a matter of personal opinion of whether they believe they need it.	It can be quite off-putting or difficult talking to someone that you don't know, but some people find it talking to people they do know.
Mostly 18embarrassment. I generally do not like to seek help when required as it shows weakness.	I find it very hard to talk to people I don't know well.
Not being able to find any, fear/social anxiety	lack of service providers
Someone stopping you in any way. If your worried or just unsure.	The lack or easily accessible information regarding these local services.
Things that would stop me from seeking help or assistance are if it is private and embarrassing or maybe there is someone telling me not to	If I don't have the knowledge of it. Being embarrassed or scared to talk about it. Not knowing who to seek assistance form.
Personally there is nothing stopping me from seeking help or assistance.	Didn't know these services where available, depends on cost as well.
A lot do not actually help	People judging me
unsure where to go	The lack of trust in someone
I think embarrassment is a huge issue.	Small community everybody knows everyone
I think confidentiality can play a part in whether you seek help or who you seek it from. When you are younger I think you always feel more comfortable talking to a friend but then some people find the urge to gossip too overpowering and think that using the "don't tell anyone but.. blah blah blah" line makes it ok... which doesn't necessarily change when you get older either!! So that then affects your trust of people	The list below are possible factors that may stop me from seeking help/assistance: -Stigma and embarrassment -Not having the ability to identify and recognise the symptoms -Preference for self-reliance -Confidentiality and trust -Hopelessness
Yes, I don't think the general public cares about all the subdivisions therefore I don't think the council is to bothered and besides I think they are happy with small blocks as they end up with more rates. It is just a vicious cycle.	Embarrassment and I would feel that if my school thought I had a disadvantage they would not give me the opportunities that needed strength and full commitment such as school captain
Being afraid or ashamed of what others would think of me	getting judged money
Judgement/discrimination about the place I'm going to	Knowing how many facilities are out there to assist teenagers with many issues.
The fear of being seen as inadequate or silly for having an issue with something. I feel that having a problem would translate to others as me not trying hard enough or wasting opportunities.	If we didn't want to open up then we may not tell anyone Or some people may be worried if opening up as the could get in trouble or judged or bullied it's not good everyone should be able to open up
Wanting to not be an imposition.	Lack of information about the services available

These are the comments taken directly from the survey on how young people feel about seeking assistance. The comments “No” to any barriers seeking assistance were removed. There were a total of 18 respondents that replied No while 20 did not leave a comment

Q 19 The types of events/activities I would like to see more of in the Highlands are:



Q 20 Use this space to describe other events you’d like to see more of in the Highlands:

Off road driving courses where there was no wasted money on insurance. Maybe a reserve or crown land etc. where young people can let of some steam, to try and prevent it being done on the road.

Nite club

Clubs

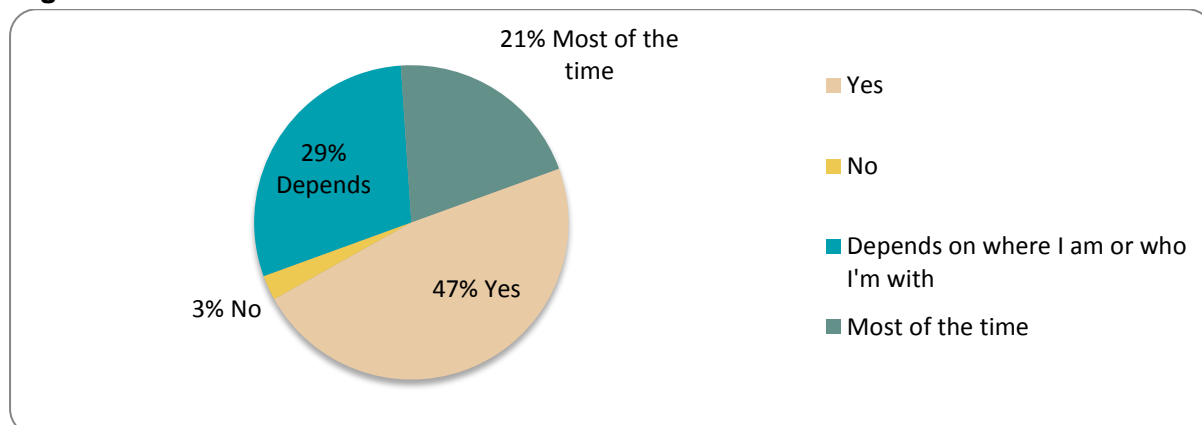
Large social events

Sport events
shops
single guys

Better shopping centre and cinema

Writing festivals, or book clubs, study groups for those kids who want to do that and have a passion for reading and writing

Q 21 Do you agree with the statements “I feel safe when out and about in the Highlands”?

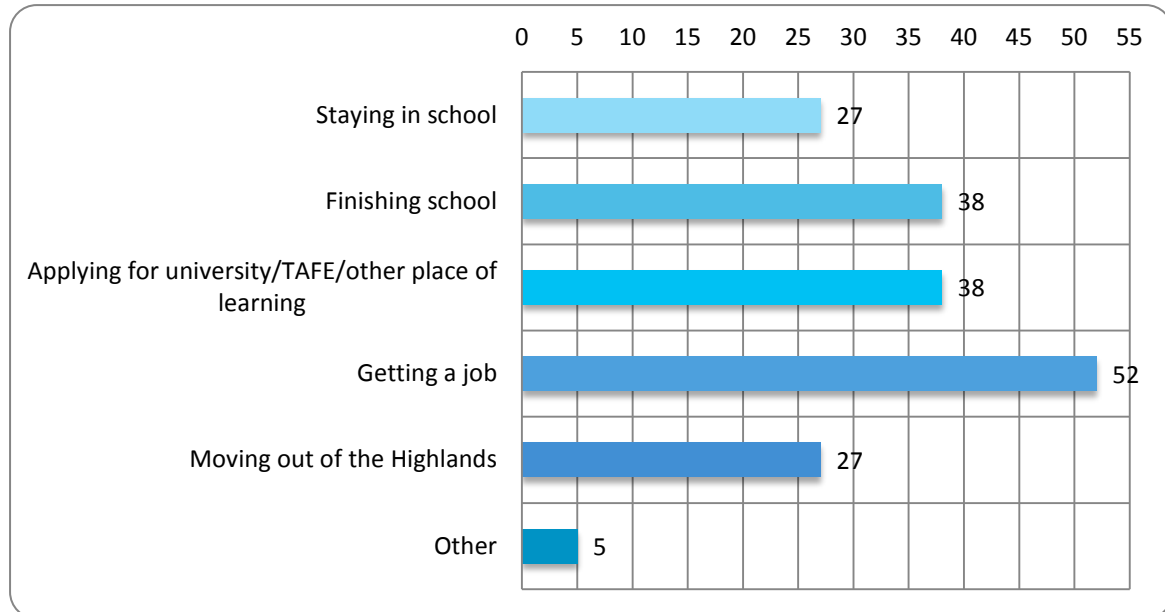


Q 22 I feel unsafe during the...

Respondents who identified that they did not feel safe when out and about in the Highlands were asked to identify if they felt less safe during the day or night. Of the two responses for feeling unsafe the respondents identified they felt unsafe during both times of day.

Responses to would indicate that young people generally feel safe in their local community.

Q 23 In the next three years I plan on:



Responses for “other” included:

Marry someone rich

“If stuck in the Highlands I will attempt to find somewhere affordable to live”

“Playing a lot of football and cricket”

“Graduating university”

“Pursuing my musical and theatrical career”

Summary

From the survey the following key findings were noted:

The top four services or activities that young people felt there is a need to increase were:

- Events and festivals
- Unstructured sports
- Improved sporting venues
- Activities and programs

Activities such as live music, festivals, affordable arts programs, school holiday and after school programs as well as alternative sporting programs were identified as 'lacking' across the community. Mental health was identified as being of a great concern to young people. It was also evident that local young people did not have a strong knowledge of services or opportunities that were available to them and that there is a need for a higher level of service promotion.

This information will be used to develop the frame work for the Wingecarribee Youth Forum to be held on 12 November 2015. An advisory group 8 of young people from Bowral High and the forum working group made up of service providers assessed the information for topic allocations at the forum.

The youth forum will gather further information from young people in the areas they have identified as projects or activities that would improve the experience of growing up in the Wingecarribee and provide information to young people on the topics that are of highest concern.

Appendix A: Promotional Material

Facebook posts (Wingecarribee Shire Council and Southern Highlands Youth)

Southern Highlands Youth
Published by Wingecarribee Yac [?] · 2 September 2015 ·

If you're aged under 25 years, tell us about your life in the Southern Highlands and help make it a better place for young people to live, work and socialise in the future.

<http://yoursaywingecarribee.com.au/youth>

YOUTH: have your say

If you're aged under 25 years, tell us about your life in the Southern Highlands and help make it a better place for young people to live, work and socialise in the future. Wingecarribee Shire Council is developing a Youth Strategy to help plan better outcomes for young people.

YOURSAYWINGECARRIBEE.COM.AU

720 people reached Boost Post

Southern Highlands Youth
Published by Wingecarribee Yac [?] · 9 October 2015 ·

Save the date! Wingecarribee Youth Forum open to all young people living in the Southern Highlands who are aged between 12 & 24 as well as those who work with young people in this age group

Wingecarribee Youth Forum

Save The Date

Full program to follow

12th November 2015
9:00am-2:45pm
Mittagong RSL Club

Free lunch included



115 people reached Boost Post

Like Comment Share

Mat Hill, Triana Priestly, Youth Week NSW and 4 others like this.

Yoursay Wingecarribee project page



WE ARE LISTENING - HAVE YOUR SAY - YOUTH: have your say

YOUTH: have your say

If you're aged under 25 years, tell us about your life in the Southern Highlands and help make it a better place for young people to live, work and socialise in the future.

Wingecarribee Shire Council is developing a Youth Strategy to help plan better outcomes for young people living in the community. We don't want it to be a boring document or a task list for you to tick off. We need your help. We're listening. And hoping to hear from you via a survey before Monday 23 September 2015 and then later at a Youth Forum in November 2015 (to explore themes and topics from the survey).

To get involved or learn more contact Michelle Williams, Youth Liaison Officer on 4555 2050 or michelle.williams@wsc.nsw.gov.au.

Program confirmed for Youth Forum

We're hosting a forum which aims to:

- allow young people to express their opinions
- provide an opportunity for young people participate and identify priority issues
- strengthen existing partnerships between youth service providers
- develop links for support and referral
- gather info which will be used to advise the development of a Youth Strategy

Join us on 12 November 2015 between 9am and 2:45pm at Mittagong RSL Club. Check out the program. RSVP required - register by Tuesday 10 November 2015.

Survey closing date extended

We want to hear from as many young people as possible so we are extending the survey. Please tell your friends and family about it... and the chance to win great prizes!

The survey will now close on Monday 23 September 2015.

News | **Surveys** | **Ask a Question**

Document Library

- Wingecarribee Youth Forum Program (0.24 MB) (PDF)
- Registration form for young people (0.7 KB) (DOC)

Who's Listening

Michelle Williams
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SEARCH RESULTS: YOUTH FORUM

COUNCIL TO HOST WINGECARRIBEE YOUTH FORUM
November 12, 2015 | Posted in: News



Issues affecting the Shire's youth will take centre stage at this month's Wingecarribee Youth Forum to be held on the 12 November at the Mittagong RSL Club.

Wingecarribee Shire Council's Youth Liaison Officer Michelle Williams explained the concept of the forum.

"It's really, it's easy to get caught up in your own life and things that you're interested in, but it's really important to step back and think about the wider community and what we can do to help young people in our community. It's a chance for them to tell us what they think and we can use that to help us make decisions about the future."

Her focus to be discussed at the forum include education and employment concerns, body image, mental health and personal safety.

"The idea of the day, is to have open and honest conversations with our young people and to discuss the issues that they're interested in and what they think we can do to help them. It's a chance for them to tell us what they think and we can use that to help us make decisions about the future."

The forum will also feature group workshops, skills to guest speakers and a free morning tea and lunch.

"Importantly, the forum's agenda and discussion points have been chosen by our Shire's youth and they'll get all the chance to have their say."

"It really is a great opportunity to tell us what matters to them and how we can help improve services and support them."

"And at the end of the day, we plan on having a bit of fun along the way."

The Wingecarribee Youth Forum will be held on the 12 November from 9:00am to 2:45pm at the Mittagong RSL Club and is open to all young people aged 12 to 24 years old.

Entry is free with lunch and morning tea provided free of charge.

Staff from local youth service providers will also be on hand at the forum.

The Wingecarribee Youth Forum is hosted by Wingecarribee Shire Council and is proudly supported by the Forum's hosting group partners including Argyle Community Housing, Essential Employment and Training, Armidale Australia, Wingecarribee Shire Council, Youth Services, St Vincent de Paul Society and the Mittagong RSL Club.

For more information, including enquiries, from service providers, contact Council's Youth Liaison Officer at michelle.williams@wsc.nsw.gov.au or phone 4555 2050.

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Letters to schools

Our reference: 1670/3
Contact: Michelle Williams

Dear Principal,

Wingecarribee Shire Council is currently in the process of developing a Youth Strategy to address the needs of young people in our community. The Youth Strategy will document how the shire aims to provide healthy spaces, places and infrastructure for young people. It will identify priority areas and ways to develop a whole of community approach to improve outcomes for young people living, working and learning in the Wingecarribee.

To assist with the development of the Youth Strategy information will be sought from young people in two separate formats; Firstly a youth survey which will be completed online with Your Say Wingecarribee, followed by a Youth Forum which will be held in November 2015.

I would like to request your support in encouraging young people to participate in the youth survey, information gathered from the survey will then be used to develop the full program for the forum to ensure that it is reflective of local youth concerns.

I am hoping for strong representation from both young people and service providers to attend the forum which will be held in November 2015. I would like to request a meeting with you to discuss the Wingecarribee Youth Forum and how I can support your schools participation.

Kind regards

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