

REPORT – Corryong Primary School Site Community Consultation

February 2022

Introduction

The Corryong Primary School site consultation project was initiated in 2021 at the request of the Corryong and Upper Murray Community Recovery Committees (CRCs). The CRCs were keen to have the project independently facilitated by Bushfire Recovery Victoria (BRV). BRV agreed to lead the project with the support of a steering group comprising of representatives from the two CRCs and Towong Shire Council.

This report outlines the results from the consultation project. Completion of the consultation report finalises BRV's involvement in the Corryong Primary School Site project.

Background

Information from the Upper Murray Historical Society Inc provides a picture of the vibrant history of the Corryong Primary School campus. The campus opened in July 1877 and was locally referred to as the Corryong Upper Murray High School. Originally built with just one large classroom and residence, over the next thirty years the number of students increased and additional rooms were added to the site.



By 1953 the campus had become a Higher Elementary School and was split into two campuses with Primary and Secondary school on separate sites. In 1958 the school was recognised as a Consolidated School, this occurred with the closing of all the smaller outlying schools in the Upper Murray and children began to catch a bus to attend school in Corryong. It was around this time that the Nariel School Building was also brought to the site and used as the arts and craft room.

With the arrival of the Snowy Mountain scheme in the 1960s the number of students dramatically increased. In the 1980s the administration building was also added to the site. In April 2002 Corryong Consolidated School and Corryong Secondary College merged to become Corryong College, a P – 12 school. In February 2020, the junior campus closed and a P - 4 building on the senior campus now provides a modern learning environment.

The old primary school building is of high significance to the community both historically and sentimentally. It provides an opportunity for development to enhance the amenity and growth of the Upper Murray.

Before the relocation, Upper Murray Inc and a number of keen community members began to advocate for a determination of the future of the disused site. Following the Black Summer Bushfire, resolution of the future of the site was considered a priority to rebuild community confidence in an optimistic future for the Upper Murray community.

In February 2021, the Corryong and Upper Murray CRCs approached Bushfire Recovery Victoria (BRV) to coordinate a community consultation project to document community aspirations for the site.

BRV agreed to coordinate the consultation project on behalf of the CRCs with both CRCs participating in a project steering group, along with a Towong Shire Council representative. The project aimed to produce a consultation report to be presented to Council as an evidence base of community aspirations for the site.



Context

The disused primary school site covers a substantial area on the corner of Donaldson and Towong Road in Corryong. The site adjoins the main street and includes the original Corryong Primary School building, a construction of significant historical interest. The site also includes a number of other permanent and demountable buildings in varying states of repair. There is a large recreation oval, disused netball courts, a partly covered children's playground and large toilet block.



In early 2021 Towong Shire Council was granted approval from the Victorian Department of Education for use of the site as a Bushfire Recovery Hub. Considerable renovations were undertaken on the former library building and toilet amenity to meet the Recovery Hub needs. A second building was made available to Grocon to coordinate the local bushfire recovery building clean up program. Space was also made available for a community run relief centre, providing space for collection and distribution of donated items.

The site contains the historic Nariel Valley school house which had been relocated to Corryong some years earlier. The Nariel Valley school house was not included in the scope of the project, as the Nariel Valley community are currently investigating the feasibility of relocating the asset back to the Nariel Valley.

Process

In collaboration with the steering group, BRV contracted a consultant in July 2021 to implement a comprehensive community consultation and capacity building project. In September 2021, the consultant advised BRV that it did not have the capacity to deliver the project within required timelines and withdrew from the project. The Steering Group then developed a new project plan, utilising resources available through Towong Shire Council and the BRV Community Recovery Support Panel, aiming to complete the project by December 2021.



The consultation plan was based on three key elements:

1. **Comprehensive survey (online and hard copy)** to determine community connection to the historical school building and identify community aspirations for the future of the site.
2. **Focus groups** to target high interest community cohorts to dive deeper into community aspirations.
3. **A community workshop** to test outcomes from the two consultation activities and ensure analysis outcomes genuinely reflected community sentiment. The workshop also aimed to understand community priorities for future development of the site.

The project was supported through the development of a project website via the BRV Digital Engagement Platform. The platform provided an avenue to collate survey responses, as well as promote images and stories related to the project.

BRV contracted *The Community Entrepreneur* to implement and report on the focus group series. The BRV Digital Engagement Team collaborated with the Steering Group on development, implementation, and analysis of the survey. Towong Shire Council engaged *Susan Benedyka Consulting* to facilitate the community workshop. The BRV Northeast Community Engagement Team developed the final project report on behalf of the Steering Group.

The consultation report finalises BRV involvement in the project. Towong Shire Council and the Upper Murray community will continue planning and advocacy activities towards realising the community's vision for the site.

Consultation outcomes

The overall consultation outcome was clear and consistent – there is a very strong desire for the primary school building to be kept and repurposed for community use. The community strongly supports the site being retained as a multi-disciplinary community space, most strongly suggesting the inclusion of community recreation (41%), early education and services (39%), and tourism attractions/services (24%). Art and Culture (12%) and Higher Education (12%) also received a strong response.

In the community survey, youth recreation was categorised under community recreation space, which came through as a clear priority. Many responses highlighted that there needed to be a space for youth activities like sporting facilities, pump bike track, parks, skate park.

91% of survey respondents indicated that the historic building should be retained, respectfully restored, and used for community benefit. When asked what part of the site should be retained, respondents answered:

- The historically significant building (64%)
- The oval area (44%)
- The buildings along Hanson Street frontage (31%)
- All buildings (28%)



There were some queries associated with this response, raising questions regarding cost, maintenance, and governance arrangements if the building were to remain a community asset. The community workshop raised concepts for respecting the historical significance of the building without

retaining the entire physical building. Further community consultation to gain a deeper understanding of the community's limits in terms of acceptance of financial and volunteer impacts is highly recommended.

The focus groups further reflected the community's vision for retaining the site as a multipurpose asset. There was a clear desire to keep the space for community benefit and not to introduce external retail chains.

Thirty community members participated in the community workshop. As participants moved through the agenda, a sense of shared vision for the site became clear. Negotiables and non-negotiables in relation to the site were agreed. In summary, key negotiables were generally related to the arrangement of services and facilities on the site – if open green space was retained. Clearly non-negotiable to the community was that the site be retained for multi-purpose community use to benefit community across the life span. Respect for the heritage value of the old school building was also vital.

The workshop also identified critical criteria that the community believe should be prioritised regarding future development of the site:

- Community benefit – any development on the site should address an evidence-based community need.
- Sustainable – the costs involved with development and ongoing governance and maintenance should be carefully considered in view of community capacity in terms of financial impact and volunteering needs.
- Multipurpose – the site should be developed for whole of community benefit and consider multi-generational services and attractors.
- Management / maintenance - governance arrangements for any future development should consider community input, while minimising impact on community capacity.
- Supports future growth and planning – developments should add value to the existing culture of the Corryong community and not detract from or replicate existing services or businesses.
- Supports community/people/families – any development should be accessible to all of the community.
- Non-exclusive – available and welcoming to all. Future development should consider existing and future population growth and demographic nature of the community, including physical, cultural and socio-economic accessibility.



Conclusion

The consultation project resulted in a clear and consistent community vision for the site.

The community is strongly attached to the historical school building and request it to be incorporated into future development. There is scope for further consultation to understand financial and volunteer impacts in regard to the retention and ongoing upkeep of the building, and the community's limits in terms of managing these costs.

The community expressed a clear desire for the site to be retained for community use. The community wishes to see multi-purpose services developed on the site that support families and individuals across the life span. The site should retain open green space for passive and active recreation. There was keen interest in retaining the toilet amenity as an important public asset for the eastern end of the main street. Support was also high for inclusion of botanical gardens on the site.

The community proposed a number of service options with significant support for early years health and education. Interest in tertiary education services such as a school for agricultural training gained strong interest. The community would not like to see the site used for retail chain outlets or industrial development, however are open to the inclusion of art and cultural activities and the potential for inclusion of short term business rental spaces and accommodation options for older community members.

The community expressed strong interest in the next steps in achieving their vision for the site. There is a general lack of community understanding of the process and timeframe involved in advocating for the future of the site, providing Council an opportunity to continue engagement with the community and building community capacity to advocate alongside Council toward their vision.

Attachments:

Report #1 – Survey Analysis – Corryong Primary School Site

Report #2 – Focus Groups – Corryong Primary School Site

Report #3 – Community Workshop – Corryong Primary School Site



Report #1

FEBRUARY 7, 2022

Disused Corryong Primary School site

SURVEY ANALYSIS & INSIGHTS

SURVEY DATA RETRIEVED

20 OCTOBER 2021 – 23 NOVEMBER 2021

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Overview

In February 2020 Corryong Primary School closed and a prep to grade four building on the senior campus of Corryong College was established. The site and its attached historical building are a central feature of Upper Murray's history and identity, as recognised through the Upper Murray and Corryong Community Recovery Committees' 2019-2020 Eastern Bushfires recovery priorities



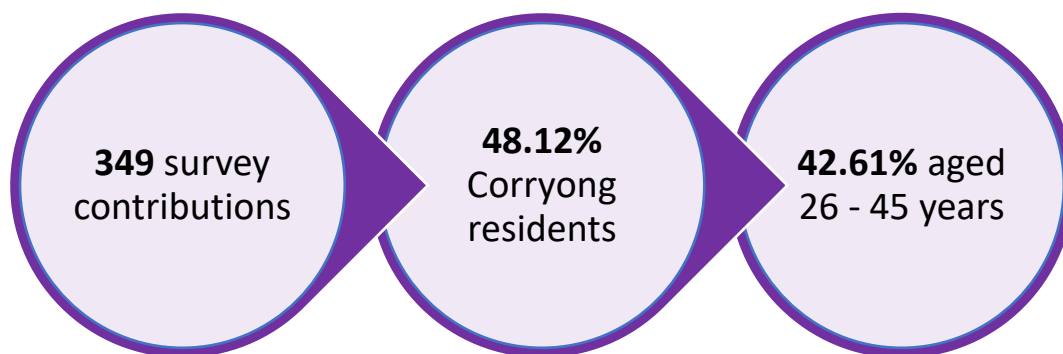
In October 2021 the Upper Murray and Corryong Community Recovery Committees with support of Bushfire Recovery Victoria, launched an online survey to understand community sentiment for the future of the disused Corryong Primary School site. This survey was hosted on ourrecovery.com.au and was just one part of extensive community consultation that occurred concurrently.

The survey was structured to represent two key elements of this consultation:

1. The first component aimed to understand the **importance of the site in general**, and ideas for its future development.
2. The second component aimed to **understand how strongly the community were attached to the old primary school building** and how it could be included in the overall future development of the site.

Other community consultation included five focus groups and one community workshop to explore the findings further. The following report provides analysis and insights for the online survey only.

Overall insights



The old primary school building is of high significance to the community both historically and sentimentally.

There was a very strong response to ensuring this building is kept and repurposed for the community. This sentiment is strongly reinforced by:

- **64%** of people responding that the historically significant building should be retained in response to [question six](#)
- **81%** of people responding ‘yes’ to [question ten](#) that the primary school building should be included in the future development of the site. In [following on from question ten](#) to explain their response and understand respondents’ sentimental and historical attachment to the building:
 - **65%** of people indicated a strong attachment
 - **18%** of people indicated a moderate attachment
- **91%** of people responded that the building should be retained, respectfully restored and used for the community.

The community strongly supports the site being retained as a multi-disciplinary community space, particularly the inclusion of community recreation, early education, services and tourism attractions/services.

- [Question five](#) asked community to score out of five how strongly they supported three proposed statements for the future use of the site. The community most strongly supported that the **site be retained for community use with a score of 4.45/5**.
- [Question seven](#) asked community to score out of five what elements should be included in the future development of the site. The community most strongly supported including **educational services (4.18/5); recreation activities (4.13/5); and community services operating from the site (4.12/5)**.

- To understand from community the number one element to include into the future development of the site, the community voted in [question eight](#) for **educational services (29%); community services operating from the site (22%); and tourism attraction business or services (18%)**.
- The sentiments from question seven and question eight were further validated via written responses to [question nine](#). When asked for any other comments about the site in general, respondents took the opportunity to provide suggestions for the site. These suggestions were analysed and categorised into ten core themes, with community recreation space and early education and services being the most popular:
 - Community recreation space
 - Early education & services
 - Tourism
 - Art & culture
 - Higher education
 - Allied health
 - Independent & assisted living
 - Housing & accommodation
 - Retail & hospitality
 - Public amenities

Youth recreation was a priority to many community members and was categorised under **community recreation space** in question nine.

Youth was a central focus with many responses highlighting that there needed to be a space for the youth like sporting facilities, pump bike track, parks and skate park.

The Man from Snowy River was central to the identity and pride of the Upper Murray region and this came through strongly across multiple survey responses.

Multiple survey responses echoed the pride the community felt for the iconic Man from Snowy River festival and other Man from Snowy River attractions in the area. Many shared that they'd like to see this space used to enhance these existing tourism attractions.

Introduction to the online survey

The online survey comprised 11 questions with two additional questions embedded using survey logic. The survey aimed to understand the cross section of past and present residents responding to the survey, how they felt about the site in general and how strongly attached they were to the old primary school building.

All survey questions were optional and paper-based versions were made available at various high traffic points across the Upper Murray region. Paper based surveys completed were input via OurRecovery Platform to ensure all responses were represented in the data.

The 11 questions and two additional questions varied in type and included:

- Four 'select box' questions that enabled only one response to be selected
- Four 'multi choice' questions that enabled unlimited multiple responses to be selected
- Two 'matrix' questions that enabled respondents to select how strongly they supported an idea or statement.
- Three 'long text' questions that enabled respondents to provide individual written feedback.

Analysis of qualitative data produced by long text question types

The qualitative data produced by the three long text question types was analysed and sorted into categories. High level details of these categories are listed below:

Question 9 – Do you have any other comments about the development of the old primary school site?

- Responses were sorted into ten categories that encompassed the ideas and suggestions community had for the future of the site.

Question 10a – Please explain your response

- Respondents were asked to explain why they selected yes, no or unsure to question 10 that asked if they thought the old primary school building should be included into the future development of the site.
- Responses were categorised on a scale of how strongly the community was attached to the old primary school building.

Question 11 – Do you have any other comments about the old primary school building?

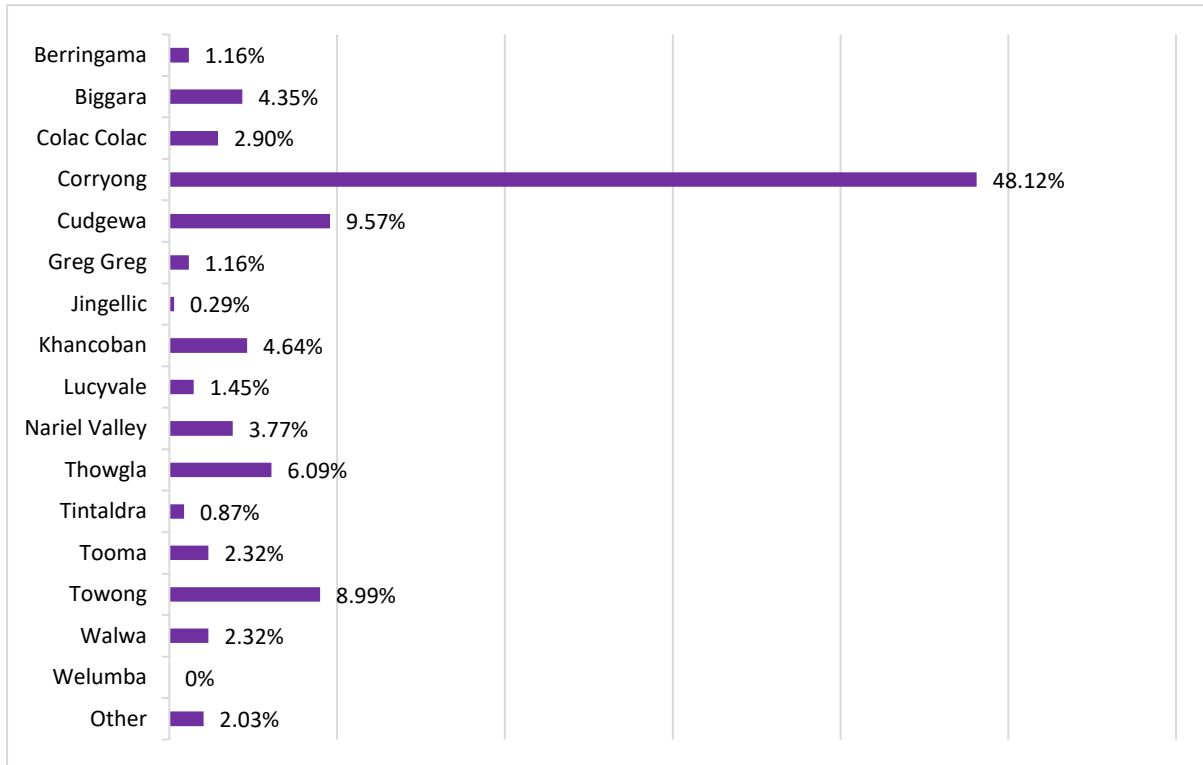
- To capture final sentiments about the old primary school building, responses were categorised into three categories indicating preferences to retain or demolish the building.

More information to contextualise the categories selected can be found in the survey data breakdown in the following pages of this report.

Survey data breakdown

Question 1 - What area of the Upper Murray region are you from?

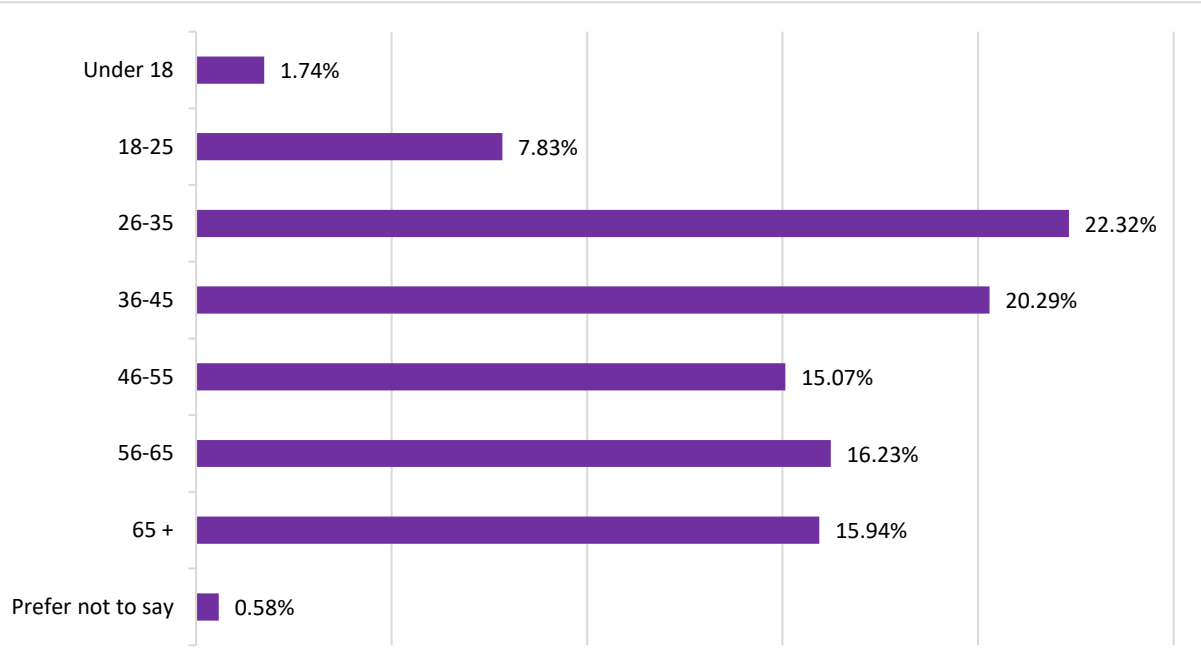
Select Box | Skipped: 4 | Answered: 345 (98.9%)



Answer choices	%	Count
Berringama	1.16%	4
Biggara	4.35%	15
Colac Colac	2.90%	10
Corryong	48.12%	166
Cudgewa	9.57%	33
Greg Greg	1.16%	4
Jingellic	0.29%	1
Khancoban	4.64%	16
Lucyvale	1.45%	5
Nariel Valley	3.77%	13
Thowgla	6.09%	21
Tintaldra	0.87%	3
Tooma	2.32%	8
Towong	8.99%	31
Walwa	2.32%	8
Welumba	0%	0
Other	2.03%	7
Total	100%	345

Question 2 - What age group are you in?

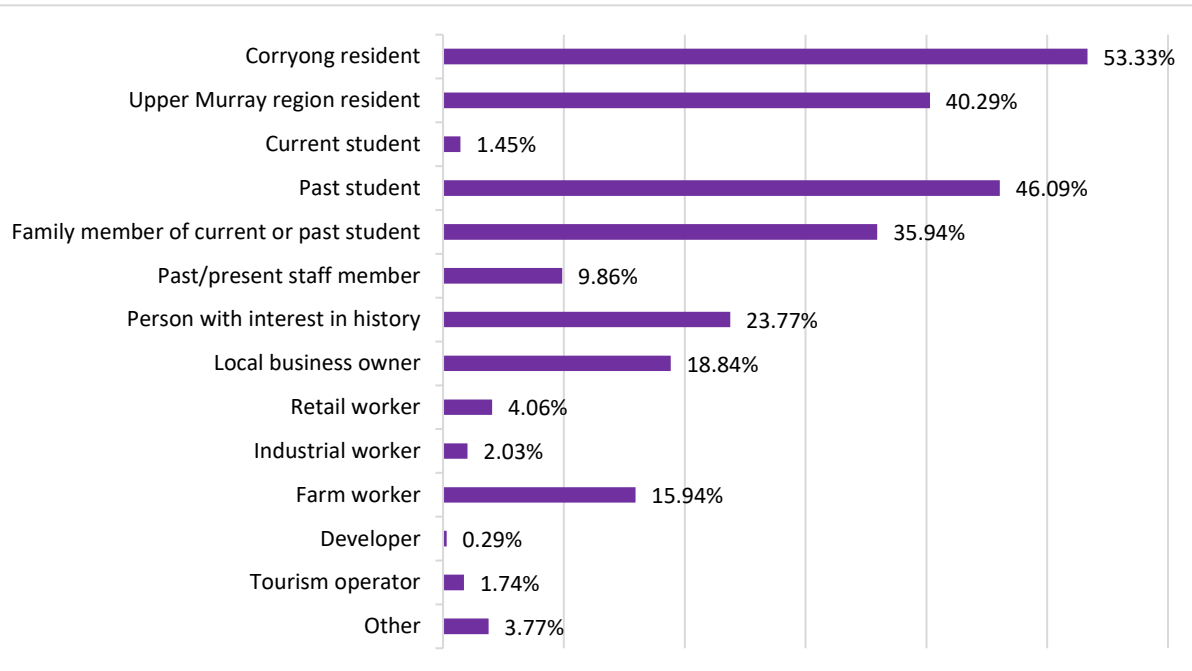
Select Box | Skipped: 4 | Answered: 345 (98.9%)



Answer choices	%	Count
Under 18	1.74%	6
18-25	7.83%	27
26-35	22.32%	77
36-45	20.29%	70
46-55	15.07%	52
56-65	16.23%	56
65	15.94%	55
Prefer not to say	0.58%	2
Total	100%	345

Question 3 - What is your association to the old primary school site?

Multi Choice | Skipped: 4 | Answered: 345 (98.9%)

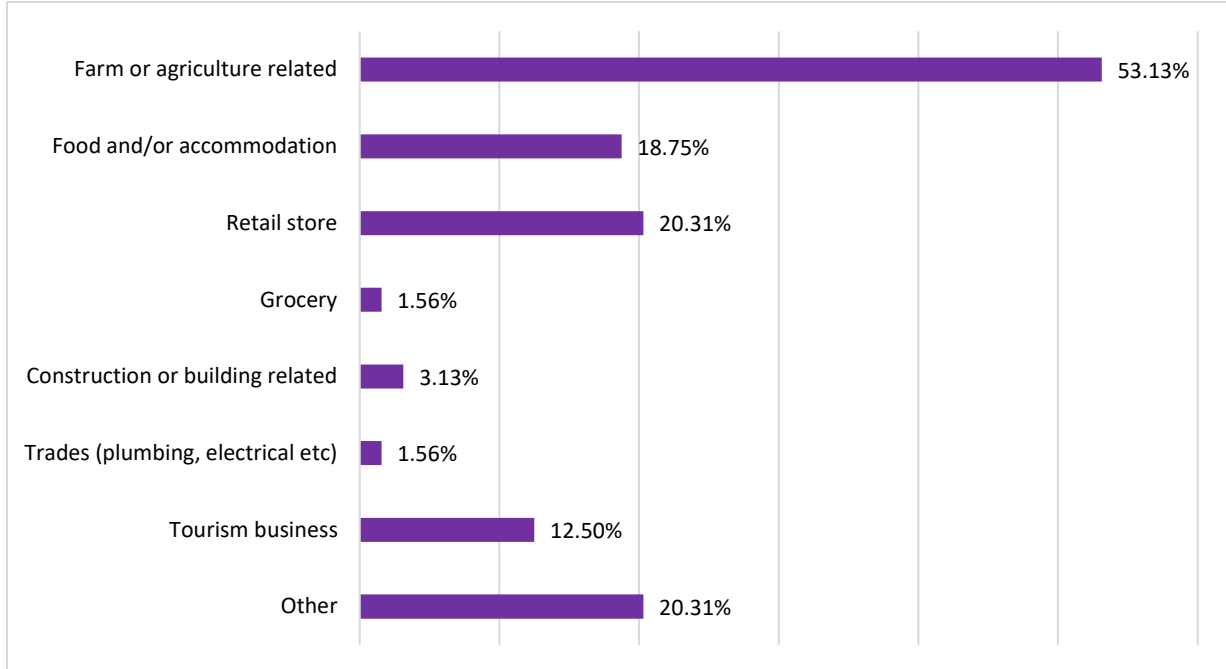


Answer choices	%	Count
Corryong resident	53.33%	184
Upper Murray region resident	40.29%	139
Current student	1.45%	5
Past student	46.09%	159
Family member of current or past student	35.94%	124
Past/present staff member	9.86%	34
Person with interest in history	23.77%	82
Local business owner	18.84%	65
Retail worker	4.06%	14
Industrial worker	2.03%	7
Farm worker	15.94%	55
Developer	0.29%	1
Tourism operator	1.74%	6
Other	3.77%	13
Total	100%	345

Question 3a - What type of business do you own?

Multi Choice | Skipped: 285 | Answered: 64 (18.3%)

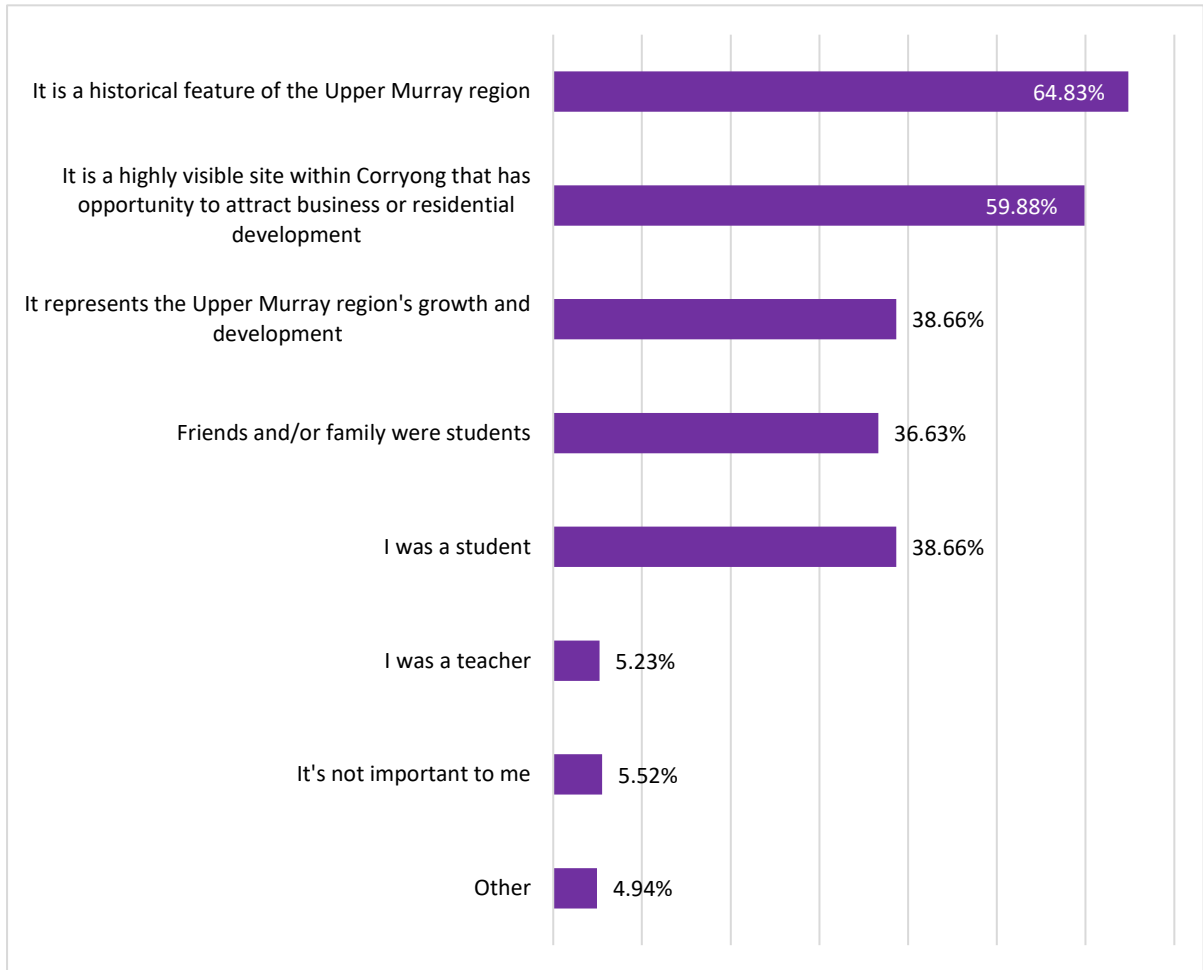
This question had embedded survey logic and was triggered to **only** appear after question three when respondents had selected 'local business owner' as a response.



Answer choices	%	Count
Farm or agriculture related	53.13%	34
Food and/or accommodation	18.75%	12
Retail store	20.31%	13
Grocery	1.56%	1
Construction or building related	3.13%	2
Trades (plumbing, electrical etc)	1.56%	1
Tourism business	12.50%	8
Other	20.31%	13
Total	100%	64

Question 4 - Why is the old primary school site important to you?

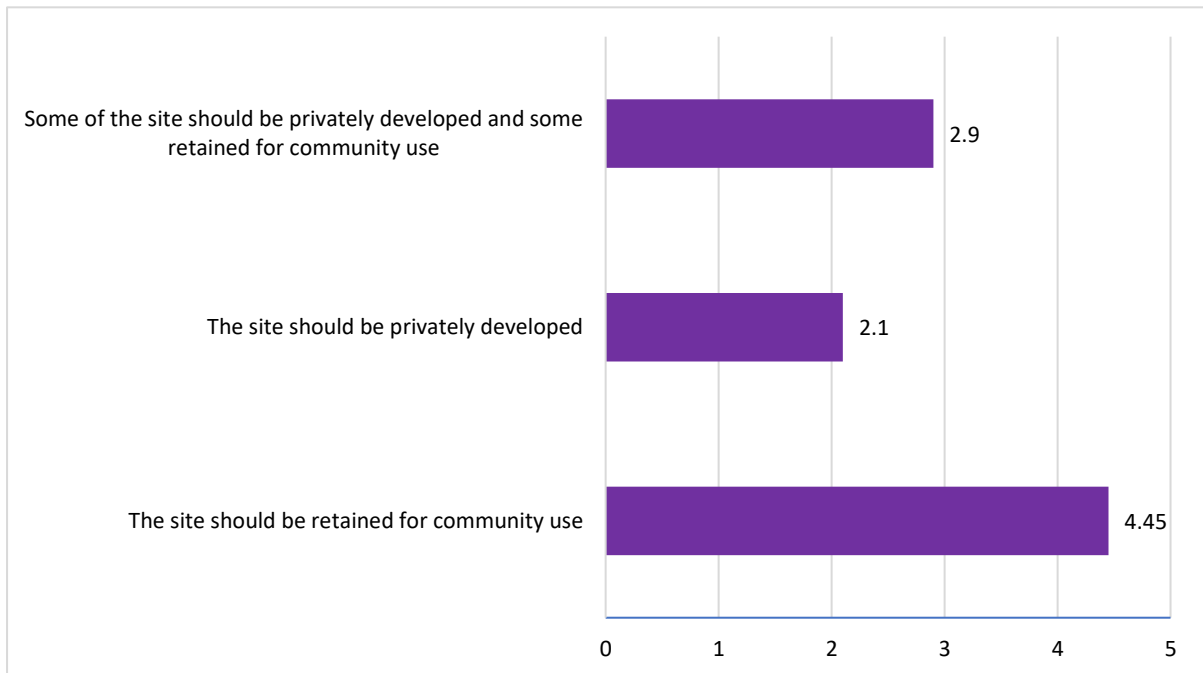
Multi Choice | Skipped: 5 | Answered: 344 (98.6%)



Answer choices	%	Count
It is a historical feature of the Upper Murray region	64.83%	223
It is a highly visible site within Corryong that has opportunity to attract business or residential development	59.88%	206
It represents the Upper Murray region's growth and development	38.66%	133
Friends and/or family were students	36.63%	126
I was a student	38.66%	133
I was a teacher	5.23%	18
It's not important to me	5.52%	19
Other	4.94%	17
Total	100%	344

Question 5 - On a scale of 1-5, how strongly do you support the following?

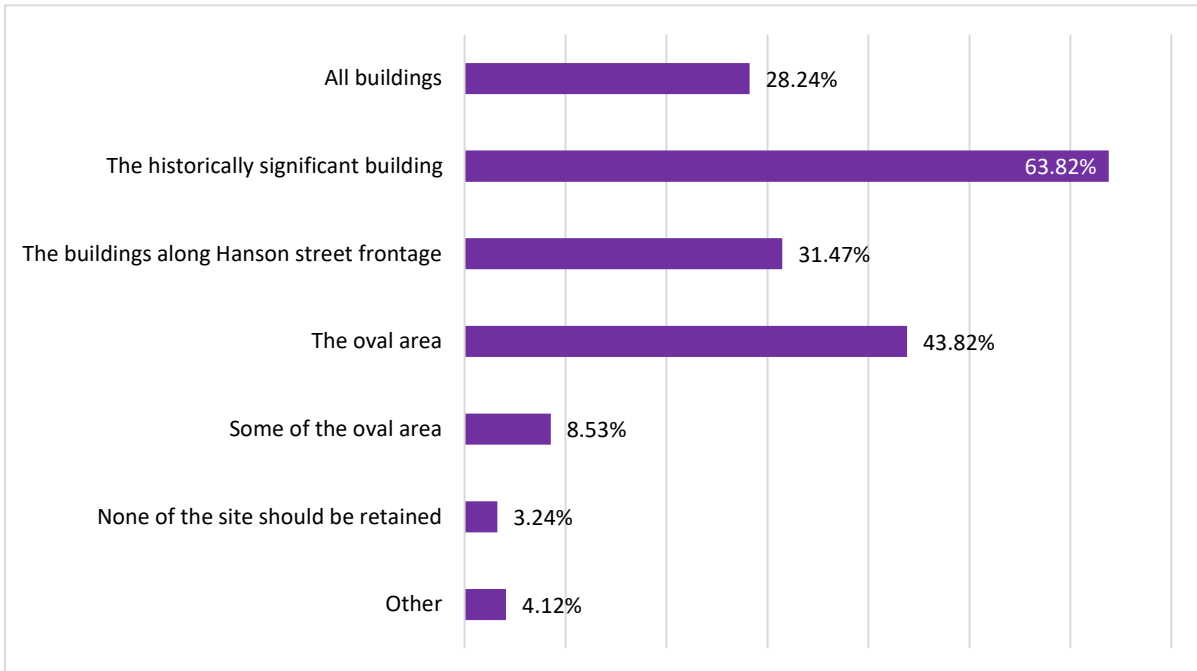
Matrix | Skipped: 5 | Answered: 329 (98.5%)



	1 Do not support	2 Somewhat support	3 Neutral	4 Support	5 Strongly support	Count	Score
The site should be retained for community use	2.08% 7	3.87% 13	8.33% 28	18.15% 61	67.56% 227	336	4.45
The site should be privately developed	42.46% 138	20.92% 68	24.62% 80	8.62% 28	3.38% 11	325	2.10
Some of the site should be privately developed and some retained for community use	23.49% 78	15.96% 53	24.10% 80	20.18% 67	16.27% 54	332	2.90

Question 6 - What part of the site do you think should be retained?

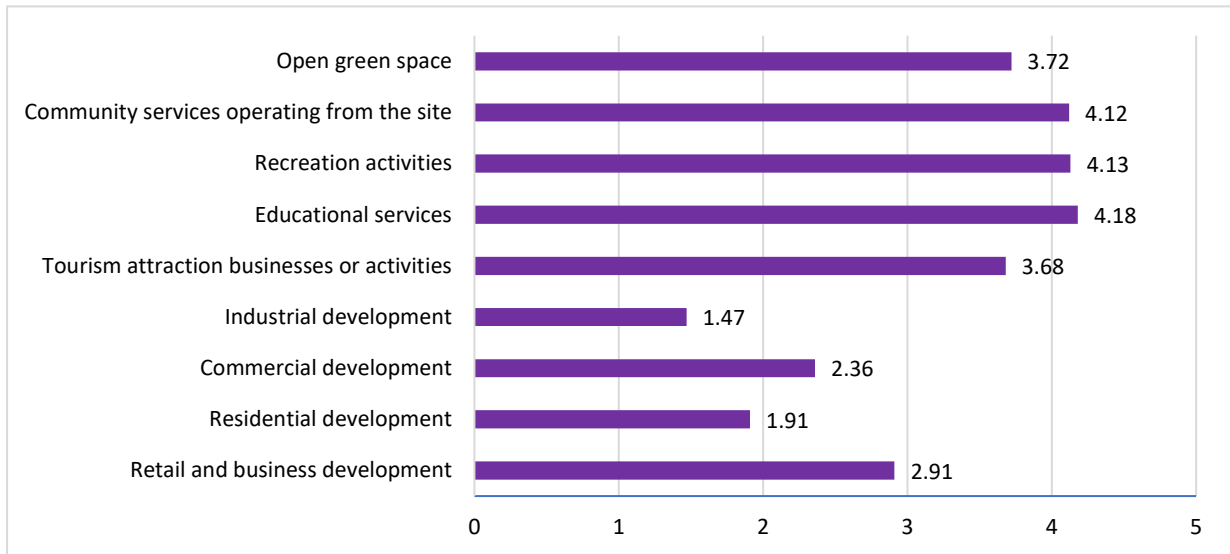
Multi Choice | Skipped: 9 | Answered: 340 (97.4%)



Answer choices	%	Count
All buildings	28.24%	96
The historically significant building	63.82%	217
The buildings along Hanson Street frontage	31.47%	107
The oval area	43.82%	149
Some of the oval area	8.53%	29
None of the site should be retained	3.24%	11
Other	4.12%	14
Total	100%	340

Question 7 - On a scale of 1-5, how strongly do you support including the following elements in the future planning of the site?

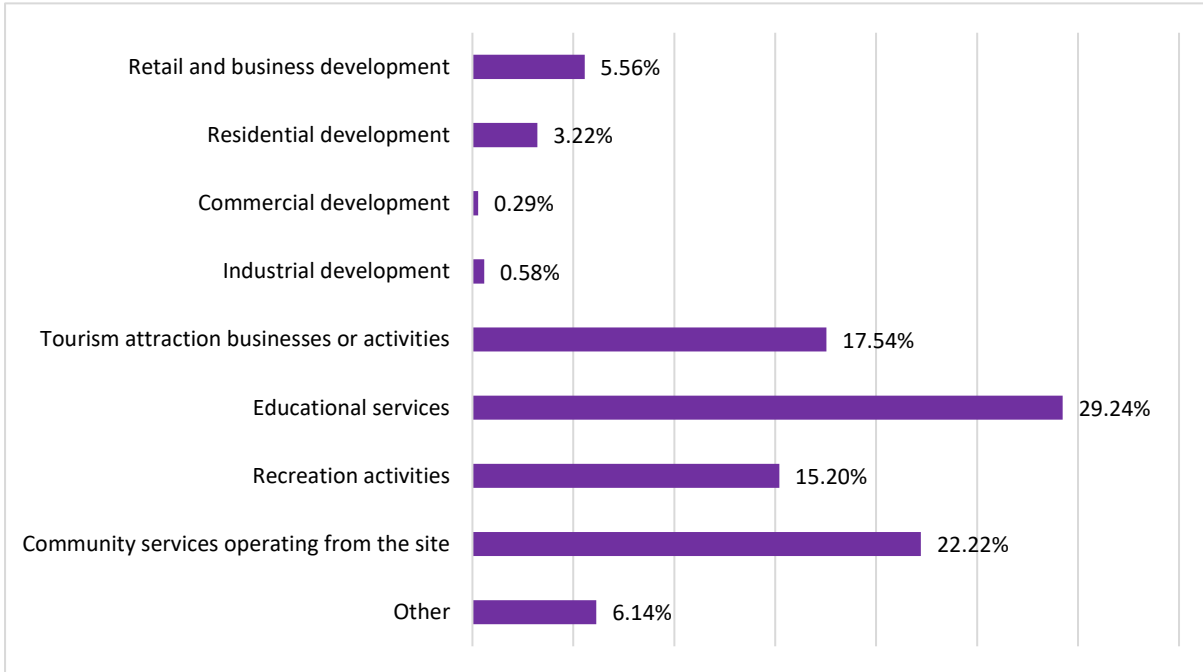
Matrix | Skipped: 3 | Answered: 346 (99.1%)



	1 Do not support	2 Somewhat support	3 Neutral	4 Support	5 Strongly support	Count	Score
Retail and business development	20.25% 66	20.25% 66	19.94% 65	27.30% 89	12.27% 40	326	2.91
Residential development	62.01% 204	10.03% 33	9.73% 32	11.55% 38	6.69% 22	329	1.91
Commercial development	36.56% 117	20.63% 66	18.44% 59	18.75% 60	5.63% 18	320	2.36
Industrial development	76.80% 245	6.90% 22	10.66% 34	3.76% 12	1.88% 6	319	1.47
Tourism attraction businesses or activities	10.03% 34	13.27% 45	11.50% 39	29.20% 99	35.99% 122	339	3.68
Educational services	3.92% 13	7.53% 25	9.64% 32	24.40% 81	54.52% 181	332	4.18
Recreation activities	3.29% 11	8.38% 28	8.38% 28	32.34% 108	47.60% 159	334	4.13
Community services operating from the site	4.15% 14	6.82% 23	10.68% 36	29.08% 98	49.26% 166	337	4.12
Open green space	8.95% 28	9.27% 29	17.89% 56	28.75% 90	35.14% 110	313	3.72

Question 8 - What is the MOST important element you would like to see in any future development of the site?

Select Box | Skipped: 7 | Answered: 342 (98%)



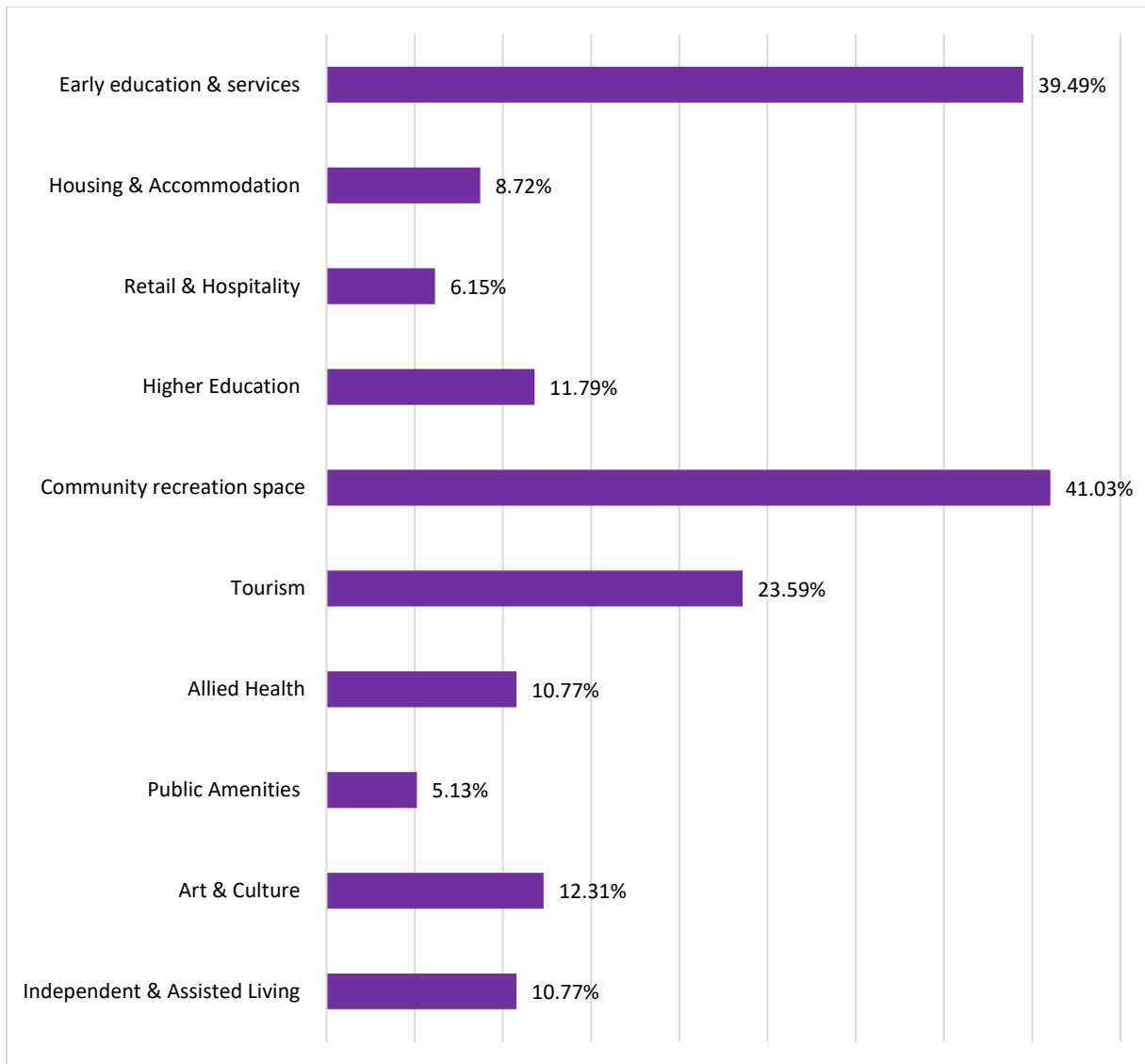
Answer choices	%	Count
Retail and business development	5.56%	19
Residential development	3.22%	11
Commercial development	0.29%	1
Industrial development	0.58%	2
Tourism attraction businesses or activities	17.54%	60
Educational services	29.24%	100
Recreation activities	15.20%	52
Community services operating from the site	22.22%	76
Other	6.14%	21
Total	100%	342

Question 9 - Do you have any other comments about the development of the old primary school site?

Long Text | Skipped: 154 | Answered: 195 (56%)

Based on the responses that emerged, 10 common categories were identified. The categories are listed below. Examples of the types of suggestions assigned to each category are provided to get a sense how responses have been categorised. Many responses had multiple categories assigned to them during the analysis of the data.

Category	Examples referenced
Early education & services	multi-disciplinary early years learning centre; before/after school care; kinder/playgroup; holiday programs; maternal child health services
Housing & Accommodation	Rentable space; short term accommodation; residential housing
Retail & Hospitality	Retail; food & hospitality; local café; brewery
Higher Education	Adult education; outdoor education & training camp; agriculture school
Community recreation space	Youth recreation*; exercise equipment; gardens; community gathering space; sport; green space; maze; sculptures; summer BBQs; library; park; nursery <i>*Youth recreation was a strong theme. Examples for youth recreation included: kids BMX track, bike pump track, skatepark, basketball, cricket nets</i>
Tourism	Tourism services; tourism attraction; caravan/RV park; camp site; Man from Snowy River attraction; hall of fame
Allied Health	Disability services; mental health services; youth services; osteopaths/occupational therapy services etc
Public Amenities	Parking; restrooms
Art & Culture	Markets; festival/event space; art classes; workshops; arts centre; theatre; studios
Independent & Assisted Living	Independent living facility; aged care housing; aged care services; respite services



Category	%	Count
Early education & services	39.49%	77
Housing & Accommodation	8.72%	17
Retail & Hospitality	6.15%	12
Higher Education	11.79%	23
Community recreation space	41.03%	80
Tourism	23.59%	46
Allied Health	10.77%	21
Public Amenities	5.13%	10
Art & Culture	12.31%	24
Independent & Assisted Living	10.77%	21

Featured comments

“Great space for a childcare centre. Lack of childcare means we are less likely to attract people to the area.”

(early education & services)

“An overall childcare centre including maternal and child health, play groups, day care, before and after school care, holiday care and programs. Recreation and sporting activities on the oval including development of a proper track and field running track, playground, bike pump track, outdoor gym...all able to be utilised by anyone within the community at any time.”

(early education & services; community recreation space)

Corryong lacks the support for families and children needing services like after school care, long day care, speech therapist and OTs. This creates the perfect space for our community to build a support system for future generations to be able to stay in Corryong.

As a working mum of 2 who grew up in foster care and has no support team around me, this is something that is important.

(early education & services; allied health)

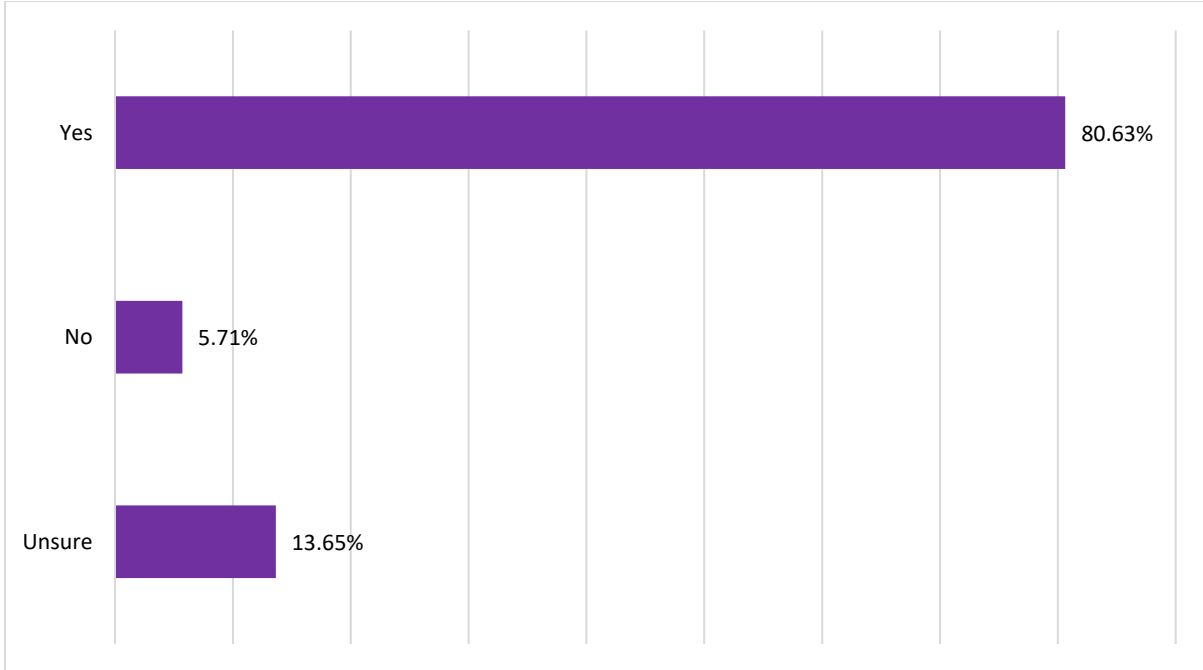
“Early childhood Education & Training is in crisis and this is a chance to help address the issue, including maternal child health, childcare, kindergarten and teacher training.”

(early education & services; community recreation space; higher education)

Question 10 - Do you think the old primary school building should be included in the future development of the site?

Select Box | Skipped: 34 | Answered: 315 (90.3%)

Respondents **strongly indicated** that they considered the old primary school building should be included into the future development of the site.



Answer choices	%	Count
Yes	80.63%	254
No	5.71%	18
Unsure	13.65%	43
Total	100%	315

Question 10a – Please explain your response

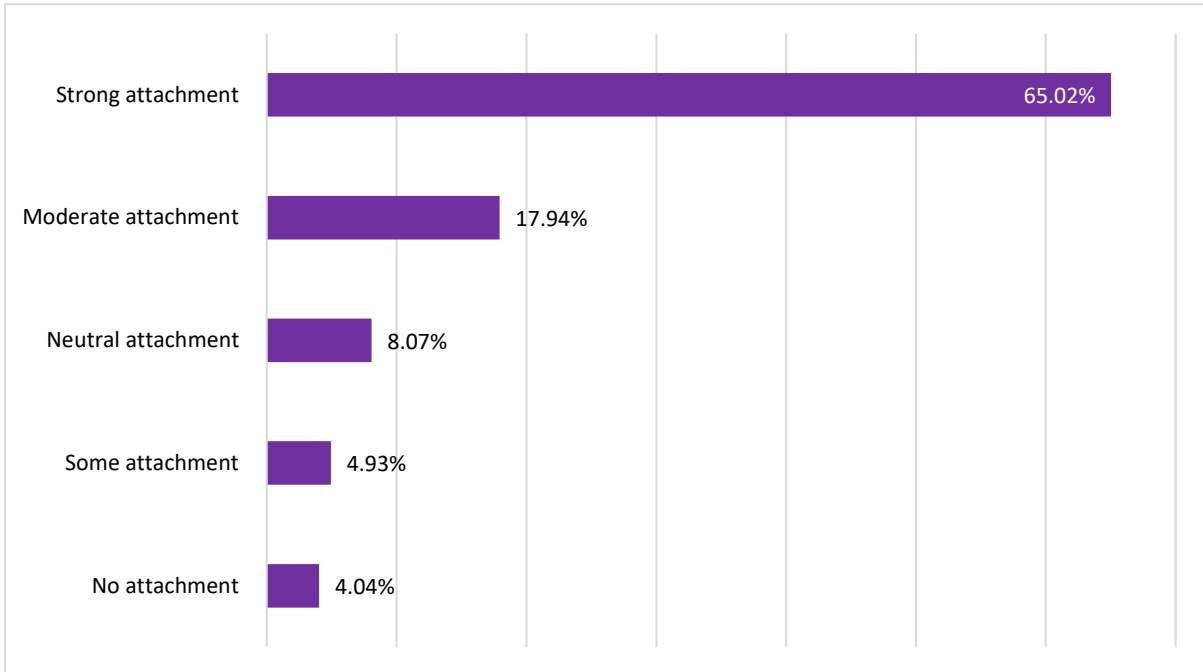
Short Text | Skipped: 126 | Answered: 223 (64%)

This question had embedded survey logic to prompt a follow up question linked to question 10. This aimed to discover how strongly attached respondents were to the old primary school building.

Responses were categorised into five categories to quantify the **sentimental attachment to the building**. These categories and the rationale for assigning responses to them is listed below.

Strong attachment	respondents who strongly referenced the historical significance of the building and generally used emotive language.
Moderate attachment	respondents who opted to restore and repurpose the building, with no strong reference to its history or use of emotive language.
Neutral attachment	respondents who recognised the historical significance but accepted that restoration and maintenance of the building may be cost prohibitive.

Some attachment	respondents who had a preference to keep the building, but their language was passive and no reference to its historical significance was made.
No attachment	respondents who either did not care what happened to the building or opted for it to be demolished.



Category	%	Count
Strong attachment	65.02%	145
Moderate attachment	17.94%	40
Neutral attachment	8.07%	18
Some attachment	4.93%	11
No attachment	4.04%	9
Total	100%	223

Featured comments

“This is part of our history, a beautiful building which can be repurposed. I think it would have a detrimental impact on existing community to see it torn down.”

(strong attachment)

“It is a local building rich in history, that could lend itself to some very clever architecture to at least maintain the façade”

(strong attachment)

“This is a part of our community history and retaining the building will strengthen feelings of connection.”

(strong attachment)

“This area is the heart and blood of the site and should be repaired to original state. It represents the heart of the Upper Murray, the fight for schooling in the area, the determination and commitment of residents to support their community betterment.”

(strong attachment)

“Very little historical buildings have been retained. This building is significant for the majority of residents in and surrounding Corryong. Support following the bushfires was located here. Comfort and hope in this familiar old place.”

(strong attachment)

“It is history, so it is hard to say knock it down but it’s such a good area to build the town and really upgrade the community.”

(neutral attachment)

“I am aware of the historical significance of the 'old building' and the attachment that many people have to it, but I am also aware that the cost of restoration and refurbishment of the building would be astronomical”

(neutral attachment)

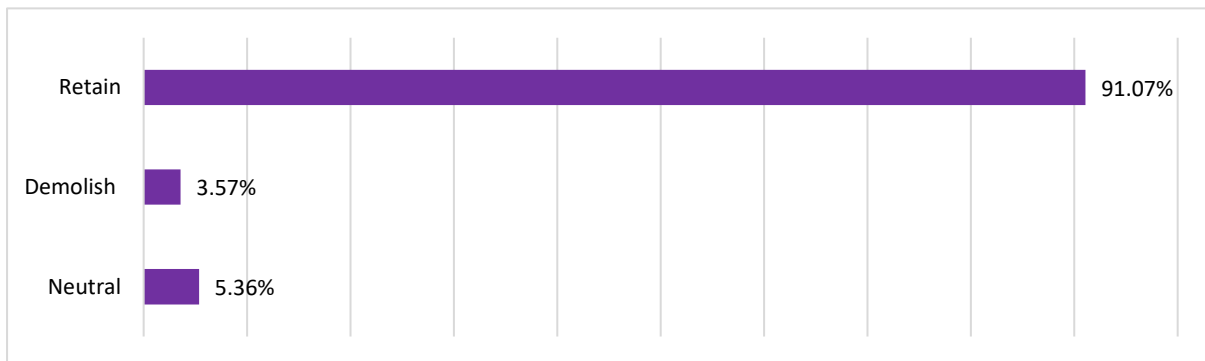
Question 11 – Do you have any other comments about the old primary school building?

Long Text | Skipped: 237 | Answered: 112 (32%)

When asked if respondents had any other comments, many took the opportunity to reiterate that the old primary school building should be included into the future development of the site.

Responses were categorised into **retain**, **demolish** or **neutral**. These categories and the rationale for assigning responses to them is listed below.

Retain	respondents who referenced ideas for future uses and next steps for the building. Commentary reinforced the ten themes that emerged from question nine. Additional commentary included the need to restore the building internally whilst respectfully maintaining its original façade.
Demolish	respondents who were concerned the building was unsafe and would be too costly to the community to restore.
Neutral	respondents who acknowledged that the building was significant value to the community but also that keeping it could be costly due to asbestos concerns, white ants and general upkeep associated with an old building.



Category	%	Count
Retain	91.07%	102
Demolish	3.57%	4
Neutral	5.36%	6
Total	100%	112

Featured comments

I think the historical/heritage features of the building (particularly the facade) should be kept, whilst the interior could be renovated/improved to cater for a variety of uses

(Retain)

It's an incredible space and could be the heart of the area if done right. It really seems to suit artist / craft / maker space. It should be accessible by everyone.

(Retain)

Would be excellent opportunity to make into a childcare centre incorporating before and after school care. Much needed in this community.

(Retain)

Asbestos concerns I have heard. May be best to get rid of but can be pricey to do so

(Demolish)

Needs a lot of work but things like this don't get built anymore. It could become a tourist destination with the right plan.

(Neutral)

Summary

The data displayed in this report shows clear community sentiment for the future of the disused Corryong Primary School site and its attached historical building. The survey data amongst additional data obtained through the consultation process will inform the next steps of this project.

What the **survey data** said

- The old primary school building is of historical significance and importance to the Upper Murray community. It should be included into the future development of the site.
- The future use of the site should be multi use in its function to meet the diverse needs of the community.
- The site should be retained mostly for community use. The most prominent responses embodied using the site for:
 - Community recreation
 - Early education and services
 - Community services operating from the site
 - Enhancing local tourism

Next steps

- This report will be shared with Towong Shire Council along with the deidentified raw qualitative data. The Council will also be provided with outcomes from the focus group conversations and community workshop.
- Towong Shire Council will lead the next phases of this project. This will include reviewing the community consultation outcomes and commencing conversations with the state government to input into future plans for the site on behalf of the community.

2021

Corryong Primary School Site



Focus Groups Report

Patricia Grosse

The Community Entrepreneur

25 November 2021

Disused Corryong Primary School Site

Focus Groups – November 2021

In November 2021, five focus groups were held to support community consultation about the future use of the disused Corryong Primary school Site. Below is a report of the feedback from the community based on the four questions:

1. What would you like to see the old Corryong Primary School site used for?
2. Would you like to keep the old primary school building and what would you like to see it used for?
3. Looking at the site from its prime location in town, what would be a good use of the site?
This question was used to capture outside-the-box thinking.
4. If you are living in Towong Shire in 10 years' time, what would you like to see the site used for to support your lifestyle/your community?

The Focus Groups

The focus groups comprised:

1. Six women attended a session at the Maternal and Child Health Centre in Harris Street (4 November). Overall this group expressed strong support for an integrated early childhood hub on the disused site, alongside a rural university campus and consulting rooms.
2. Twelve young people from 13 through to 20 attended a face-to-face session at the Youth Space (4 November). The young participants had a lot of ideas ranging from outdoor education related activities to art and a cycle repair shop.
3. Online community focus group held on 16 November with two attendees. The attendees were long term Corryong locals and had attended the school as children.
4. Online community focus group held on 18 November with four attendees. This group had a diverse range of interests and included support for an integrated education hub, as well as facilities for retirees.
5. Online community with five representatives of Towong Shire Council.

Most participants live in and around the Corryong township.

Each focus group session took up to an hour, with participants introduced to the questions and actively engaged in putting forward ideas. All participants were given opportunities to speak.

The following is a report of thoughts and ideas relating to each question.

Question 1 - What would you like to see the old Corryong Primary School site used for?

Integrated Education Centre

The theme of an integrated education centre was mentioned by four of the five groups. The urgency was demonstrated by:

- references to 50 births alone in the past 12 months
- feedback that lack of childcare is preventing growth and families (such as Snowy Hydro employees and medical staff) are not staying as a consequence
- lack of day care is preventing mothers from returning to work (with a couple of directly affected mothers amongst the attendees)

The Integrated Education Centre concept is a multi-use facility, with people introducing ideas including:

- maternal health and childcare
- before and after school care
- kindergarten
- rooms for allied health professionals (so people don't need to drive 1.5 hours to Albury Wodonga)
- indoor play space
- agricultural education training school / TAFE
- University campus
- Special education needs facility
- Adult education programs
- First aid and other courses
- Toy library

Outdoor Spaces

Recreation

The outdoor space attracted sporty activities (mainly from the youth), such as:

- Road safety track (suggested by the mothers' group)
- Pump/bike track (mothers' and youth groups)
- Skatepark
- Jump line
- Water slide
- Outdoor play and adventure space for visitors

Tourism

Ideas came forward from groups to resolve current perceived issues such as:

- Markets – having one dedicated space for regular markets to grow in comparison to Violet Town, generating visitors to Corryong. A dedicated space for markets will also allow the three markets for the Man from Snowy River Festival to take place in the same venue.
- Field Days – the oval would be a good place to host farm machinery expos and the Man from Snowy River Festival (which needs more space)

Other

- Botanical garden (mentioned in four groups)
- Hub for botanical species
- Additional car parking
- Tourist bus parking

Internal Spaces

Although the participants in each group were not attached to ancillary buildings on the site, they did envision buildings on the site, to be used for:

- Music
- Bookable space for clubs and businesses to meet
- Art gallery and studio
- Gift shop connected to the gallery
- Arts workshops
- Space for mental health and family planning
- Tourism accommodation

Retirement Village

The idea of a retirement village was discussed in Focus Group 4, building on examples of inter-generational programs between seniors in nursing homes and pre-school children through to teenagers. This could be a commercial enterprise and is in proximity to the Bowls Club and other amenities.

Gourmet Precinct

Positioning Corryong to attract tourism traffic, the idea of a distillery was put forward. This would align with the Destination Management Plan and enhance the Mt Elliot adventure playground development. The site could become a gourmet precinct with external investment. The site could become a destination in its own right.

Social enterprise

The youth group also introduced the idea of a social enterprise such as a bike rental and repair shop.

Accommodation

Accommodation had a mixed response. Whilst in at least one group the consensus was not to use the site for housing development, other ideas included overflow accommodation for the golf club and accommodation for nurses and teachers. The location is not suitable for tiny homes.

Question 2 - Would you like to keep the old primary school building and what would you like to see it used for?

The overall response was that the community would like to keep the old Corryong Primary School building if possible. People were aware of an assessment being carried out on the building and believed the outcome would depend on the report.

Questions were raised about the environmental sustainability of the building, with concerns about energy bills and costs of maintenance in the future.

In the event of the CPS building remaining, ideas put forward for how the building could be used included:

Integrated Education Hub

- Administration space
- Day care
- Early learning admin hub
- University hub (refer to Grafton model)
- Childcare and kinder

Tourism/Economic Activities

- Guest house/bed and breakfast
- Shops
- Art studios
- Commercial art collective
- Youth Hostel
- Homeless shelter
- High Country Hall of Fame (refer to Bill Tilley, MP)
- Something to promote Upper Murray products and brand

Two groups acknowledged the need for a sustainable enterprise, and came up with specific ideas:

- Commercial crafts
- Gallery/gift shop
- Use corridors for exhibiting art
- Café
- Move Man from Snowy River Festival office from the main street and use that space for Shire workers
- Club style facility for people to get meals (pokie free)
- Rent out studio space

The thinking was to have a private enterprise involved will make the building economically viable (leasing to community with peppercorn rent will increase pressure on rate payers). It was thought the space would not be good for retail because of the design of the building/

- Use for Shire staff
- Museum
- Meeting rooms for hire – run by a cooperative

Entertainment

- Laser tag and intensity arcade
- Indoor skate park

Question 3 - Looking at the site from its prime location in town, what would be a good use of the site?

This question opened up the thinking of participants and produced new ideas such as:

Accommodation

- A guest house in the main building to maintain the heritage
- Accommodation/hostel for bus groups
- Accommodation for nurses/medical staff and teachers
- Car Parking (on site of tennis courts suggested)
- Corryong has almost no approved government housing
- Disability accommodation

Education

- Facility to attract students and researchers – attract professionals to town

Recreation

- Indoor pool
- Sports (non-football/tennis) – such as hockey, boxing, gymnastics
- Youth space (reduce suicide risks)
- Safe after-school space for youth
- Music venue
- Move Youth Space to the site so young people can have their 'own' space (currently shared)
- Communal park

Tourism and retail

- McDonalds, Country Target and/or Kmart (minority and dismissed by many in preference to supporting local businesses)
- Gift shop in the CPS building
- High Country Hall of Fame
- Snowy Hydro Tourist Info Centre (short – medium term)
- Arts and crafts

Other

- Office for local government staff

Not wanted

- Large retail and food chains
- Shops
- Industrial units
- Mechanics shops
- Residential
- A bespoke emergency relief centre that would be used once in 20 years

Other Considerations

The participants responses demonstrated the understanding of a multi-use site, with considered matches of site users. This is apparent throughout the responses to all questions. One group suggested that the site be offered to Expression of Interest for innovators to come forward, such as with other sites such as Beechworth Prison and May Day Hills Asylum (also in Beechworth).

One group considered the location of the site and its proximity to the school across the main road. The use of the site would need to take into consideration the school, local amenity and street scape.

The participants preferred not to see the primary school building demolished and one group stated demolition would leave a gaping hole in the main street.

Although there is a need for disability and retirement housing, is this the best use of this space?

Council staff indicated there are already enough community halls and commercial kitchens in Corryong.

Question 4 - If you are living in Towong Shire in 10 years' time, what would you like to see the site used for to support your lifestyle/your community?

Integrated Education Hub

The integrated early years hub concept was reinforced with additional focus on a safe after-school space and youth activities. The mothers group members stressed that they didn't want to see another generation of mums still lobbying for better childcare facilities. The rationale for a successful integrated education hub would be a growing and thriving community.

Lifestyle

Participants from two groups compared Corryong with Bright without the tourism attractions that Bright has. Both area accessible to ski fields and are of a comparable size. Bright has attractions such as a brewery, splash park, dee farm and a fish farm. Participants wanted to see Corryong evolve into a similar experience.

Ideas generated included:

- Brewery and somewhere for people to have lunch/dine – there are pubs but no outdoor eating venue
- Somewhere for farmers to retire to (not necessarily this space)
- Car parking – including a multistorey car park down by Mildren and Coysh (suggested that landscape of site lends itself to a multi-story building)
- Tourism and accommodation – hand in hand – a Gourmet Precinct that leads to employment, housing and more younger families, leading to more youth services
- Rather than putting resources in one basket – divide the site with each element supporting the others

Today's Youth

Youth group participants gave the message that they would stay if they had a reason to stay, including facilities such as:

- Tertiary education
- Rural university
- More accommodation
- Arts
- Multiple sport choices
- Movie theatre and film festivals
- Public outdoor arts space

Their message was “what’s not available in town contributes to why people leave”.

Conclusion

Participants have definite ideas about potential use of the site. They identify the site as being large enough for multipurpose use. The strong desire is to keep the space for community benefit and not to introduce external retail chains. An integrated education hub is the main example of a multiuse approach, to meet the needs of parents, children, medical services, and local youth now and in the future.

An alternative approach is for tourism, arts and crafts, as income generation activities for a financially sustainable site in the long term.

The preferred state is to keep the old primary school building, although there are concerns about how it could be used and maintained.

Focus Groups Facilitation and Report
Pat Grosse, The Community Entrepreneur



Report- Community Workshop

16 February 2022

Corryong Primary School Site - Community Aspirations

Summary

The Corryong Primary School community workshop was attended by 31 community members from across the Corryong district. The event was led by professional facilitator, Susan Benedyka, supported by BRV Community Engagement Facilitator (Tracey Farrant), BRV Community Liaison Officer (Janelle Gibson), and Towong Shire Council Manager Recovery and Relief (Jenelle Williamson).

The workshop strongly confirmed the community desire for the site to be retained for multi-purpose use to benefit community across the life span. Maintaining green space and respecting the heritage value of the old school building was also vital.



Outcomes from the workshop, along with the results of other consultation activities, will be collated into a report to be presented to Towong Shire Council by June 2022. Completion of the consultation report finalises BRV's involvement in the Corryong Primary School Site project.

Introduction

In February 2021, the Corryong Community Recovery Committee (CRC) approached Bushfire Recovery Victoria (BRV) to coordinate a community consultation project to ascertain community aspirations for the site. A consultation program was co-designed with the Corryong CRC, Upper Murray CRC, and Towong Shire Council. The consultation project was based on 3 key phases:

1. A comprehensive community survey: online and hardcopy to identify general community aspirations for the site.
2. A series of 5 focus groups to identify the aspirations of cohorts with a high interest in the site.
3. A community workshop to check the validity of survey and workshop outcomes and prioritise aspirations.

The community workshop was widely promoted in print and social media and through community networks.

The workshop aimed to test results of the previous community survey and focus series to ensure that interpretation of the results resonated with the community.

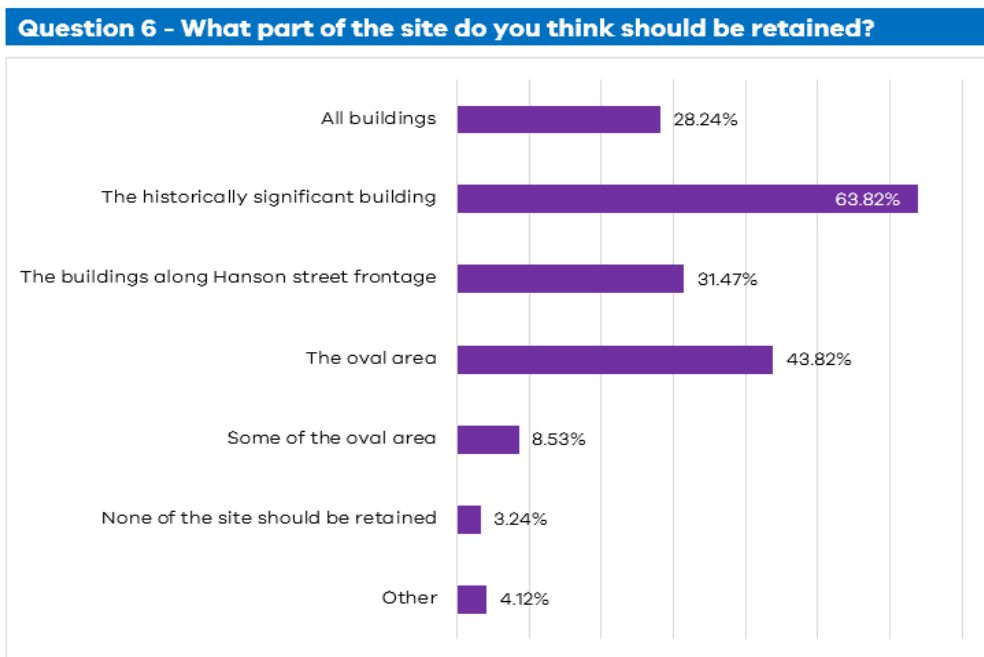
Context

The community workshop was the final element in a three-phase consultation approach. An extensive community survey and series of targeted focus groups were held over October to November 2021. The community workshop was originally planned for December 2021. COVID-19 impacts led to postponement of the event until February 2022. The workshop was widely promoted during the postponement, resulting in strong attendance.

The community survey provided the key foundation for ascertaining community ideas and preferences for the site. Focus group outcomes reflected the survey results and provided more nuanced information from specific cohorts.

Key survey outcomes

The survey strongly indicated community interest in retaining the site and preserving the historically significant original school building.



Analysis identified 10 clear themes that the community was interested in for the site.

Category	Examples referenced
Early education & services	Multi-disciplinary early years learning centre; before/after school care; kinder/playgroup; holiday programs; maternal child health services
Housing & Accommodation	Rentable space; short term accommodation; residential housing
Retail & Hospitality	Retail; food & hospitality; local café; brewery
Higher Education	Adult education; outdoor education & training camp; agriculture school
Community recreation space	Youth recreation*; exercise equipment; gardens; community gathering space; sport; green space; maze; sculptures; summer BBQs; library; park; nursery *Youth recreation was a strong theme. Examples for youth recreation included: kids BMX track, bike pump track, skatepark, basketball, cricket nets
Tourism	Tourism services; tourism attraction; caravan/RV park; camp site; Man from Snowy River attraction; hall of fame
Allied Health	Disability services; mental health services; youth services; osteopaths/occupational therapy services etc
Public Amenities	Parking; restrooms
Art & Culture	Markets; festival/event space; art classes; workshops; arts centre; theatre; studios
Independent & Assisted Living	Independent living facility; aged care housing; aged care services; respite services

Key focus group outcomes

Five focus groups were held to discuss the future use of the disused Corryong Primary School site.

The focus groups comprised:

1. Young families - Six women who attend the Maternal and Child Health Centre in Corryong.
2. Youth - Twelve young people from 13 through to 20 who are regular attendees of the Corryong Youth Space.
3. Past school students - The attendees were long term Corryong locals and had attended the school as children.
4. Community leaders - This group of four had a diverse range of interests and are well recognised as local community leaders.
5. Towong Shire Council - Five representatives from Towong Shire Council, from a range of business areas.

Participants expressed definite ideas about potential use of the site. They viewed the site as being large enough for multipurpose use. There was a clear desire to keep the space for community benefit and not to introduce external retail chains. An integrated education hub was the most popular example of a multiuse approach to meet the needs of parents, children, medical services, and local youth, now and into the future.

Alternative ideas included tourism, arts and crafts, to create income generation activities for a future sustainability of the site.

Overall, there was a preference to keep the old primary school building, although there were concerns about how it could be used and maintained.

Workshop approach

The goal of the community workshop was to test results from the previous consultation activities and ensure that interpretation of the results resonated with the community, as well as to identify the criteria the community felt important to making decision about the site in the future.

The workshop was based on the [World Café model](#) – creating an environment to encourage and support conversation, urging the sharing of broad perspectives and ideas, while capturing insights and shared learning and understanding.

Six worktables were organised across the broad space of the venue, creating an easy flow between tables and allowing conversations to be heard without disturbing adjacent tables. Each table was resourced with note paper, pens, two version of World Café etiquette, and key data from the previous consultations.

The session began with an overview of the consultation scope, process and a summary of consultation outcomes to date. Participants were encouraged to reflect on what they had heard from the introduction to assist focus on community outcomes before individual ideas.

The World Café was held in three segments with table participants being mixed with each round. This ensured that participants were exposed to a broad range of perspectives and given multiple



opportunities to refine their thinking. This segment of the workshop was based on three key questions:

Round 1: What really matters about this site and must be retained? What is negotiable?

Round 2: What criteria will help us make a clear decision and recommendation from this meeting?

Round 3: What options should be explored against the criteria?

Participants were strongly encouraged to discuss each question before composing notes to share with the rest of the participants. Conversation was lively and respectful with a strong sense of collaboration and searching for win/win ideas rather than one idea over another.

At the conclusion of the World Café exercise, participants were asked to reflect on the options raised against the decision criteria they had collectively developed to prioritise ideas to take forward into a community vision for the site.

The event concluded with a presentation from Towong Shire Council explaining the next steps for the consultation outcomes and the process for advocating to influence future planning for the site.



Workshop outcomes

A number of passionate community members attended the workshop, and the world café model was successful in ensuring everyone had a chance to be heard. It also provided space to find alignment on key issues.

Discussion following a summary of outcomes from the survey and focus groups confirmed general confidence in the consultation undertaken to date, and appreciation that the consultation was led by a bipartisan organisation such as BRV.

Two distinct interest cohorts began the evening with a sense of opposition – those who identified the need for early childhood services and supports and those who represented the needs of aging community members. The initial survey outcomes discussion and world café activities resulted in a merging of ideas and agreement that not only was the site large enough to address both needs, but also that merging the two interest areas to create intergenerational services and activities would create even more community benefit.

As participants moved through the agenda, a sense of shared vision for the site became clear. Negotiables and non-negotiables in relation to the site were agreed. In summary, key negotiables were generally related to the arrangement of services and facilities on the site – as long as open green space was retained. Clearly non-negotiable to the community was that the site be retained for multi-purpose community use to benefit community across the life span. Respect for the heritage value of the old school building was also vital.

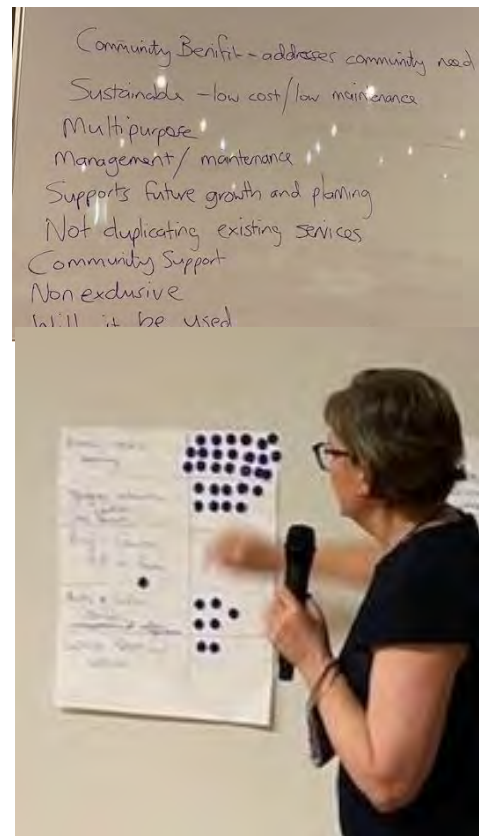
Following the world café exercise, participants agreed on a set of criteria against which to evaluate and prioritise ideas for the site. Agreed criteria:

- Community benefit – address a genuine community need

- Sustainable – realistic cost and ongoing maintenance requirements
- Multipurpose
- Management / maintenance
- Supports future growth and planning
- Does not duplicate existing services
- Supports community/people/families
- Non-exclusive – available and welcoming to all
- Practical and realistic

The workshop concluded with an exercise to identify priority aspirations for the site. Participants were asked to consider all they had seen and heard over the evening including the prioritisation criteria and use one sticky dot to indicate the idea that they believed best met community ambitions for the site.

The workshop outcomes were summarised for participants by the facilitator who then invited Towong Shire Council to outline the next steps in taking the community vision for the site forward.



Future consultation

A number of questions were raised throughout the workshop which were outside the scope of discussion but relevant to ongoing planning. These included:

- Is the heritage building sound and able to be renovated successfully and within reasonable cost?
- Who would oversee the administration of the site?
- Who would be responsible for upkeep of the site?
- Who would own the site?
- Would the site be 100% community run or allow commercial business to be included?

It is recommended that these questions be addressed during future consultation as negotiations for the site progress.

Conclusion

The community workshop strongly confirmed that the Upper Murray community desires the disused Corryong Primary School site to be retained for multi-purpose community benefit, including community open green space with passive or active recreation and space for youth activities. The workshop also confirmed that the inclusion of early years' service provision and higher education opportunities was highly desired by the community. The concept of including botanical garden aspects to the site were also strongly supported.

It was also clear that the community highly values the historical original school building on the site and would prefer the building to be retained. Further consultation is required to ascertain how much the community is prepared to surrender in terms of funding, volunteer time, and community responsibility to retain the building.

Feedback from the workshop indicates that the community feel heard in terms of their aspirations for the site to date. The community highly valued the impartiality of the workshop facilitation and expressed a strong desire to continue to be informed and involved in determining the future of the site.

Appendix - World Café Raw Data

Round 1 – What really matters about this site and must be retained? What is negotiable?

Must retain / Non Negotiable	Negotiable
Heritage buildings	Buildings other than the old school building, toilets and Hub
Green oval	Portable buildings/demountable
Corner green (quiet space)	What goes where
Hub	Old Nariel School building
Toilets	Everything but the old school building
Don't want to lose any of the area	Use of some of the oval
Open space	Access points
School building façade	Fence
Open green corner diagonal to Memorial Hall	The bank
Be inviting to people from the main street	Basketball courts
Parking areas	Toilet block location
Community minded	Who is going to pay to retain the building?
Old building	Roadside stops for the oval – that will pay for the school
Compatibility with heritage building	
Allied health services to be for all generations	
Community access	
New buildings for child care	
Upgrade the toilets	
Basketball court	
Donaldson Street parking	
Bulldoze site other than Heritage building to accommodate many users	
Indigenous Peoples – construct with Elders	
Not another Uni	
Lack of representation by Govt	
Housing would degrade the site	
Push for culture but local representation	
Compliment existing offering	
Economic viability	
Multi use	
Recommend / advocate vision for the site	
Green space for walking, gardens and art work	
At least 50% open space	
Trees	

Round 2: What criteria will help us make a clear decision and recommendation from this meeting?

What most or majority of people want

Consensus

Community benefit

What benefits the community the most

Fills an area of need

Overarching community run board to coordinate and provide oversight

Heritage value

Multipurpose

Cost

Sustainability

Not cost – the sky is the limit

Community survey has broadest consultation

Self sustaining, low cost, low maintenance

Will it be used?

Non-discriminatory (accessible and of benefit to all)

Not duplicate existing services

Supports future planning and growth

Long term benefits to community as a whole



Round 3: What options should be explored against the criteria?

Heritage building

Art and culture

Oval – use as overnight location for caravanners – maximum 2 nights stay

Buildings/spaces for start ups to lease

Maternal Health and Child Care

Youth activities

Walking/bike path

Skate park

Passive outdoor setting – botanical garden, therapeutic garden

Community recreation space for all ages

Early education and after school care

Education centre for water catchment, learn about the Upper Murray,

Combined early years and seniors centre

Quiet area and child friend area

Accessible public amenities

Use service road for long vehicle parking

Space for visiting agencies

Community gathering space

Higher education

High Country Hall of Fame

Agricultural college – tertiary level

One room museum for local education

Outdoor exercise equipment

Running tracks

Childhood special needs eg speech therapy

Mini children's fun park

Informal sports centre e.g. backyard cricket

Get interior of old school to create user friendly space



Prioritisation exercise

Option	Number of votes (sticky dots)
Community open space – passive or active recreation	11
Youth activities space including a skate park	11
Multi use space - Community gathering - Agencies	10
Early years learning	9
Higher education centre – Agriculture tertiary education	9
Botanical garden	8
Arts and Culture building - Interpretation of water importance	5
Accessible public amenities	5
Short term caravan accommodation space	4
Local start up space	2
Independent Living	2
Use service road for long vehicle parking	1
High Country Hall of Fame	1

