

# **Mylor Community Survey—findings**

## **Background**

Adelaide Hills Council (AHC) worked with the local Mylor Community to develop a community survey.

The Mylor Oval Committee felt this was an exciting opportunity to understand what it is that local residents value in Mylor, what are the challenges and how could we collaborate to address these and create a future vision. Members of the Oval Committee approached other local community groups requesting input for the survey before submitting and working with AHC to deliver a final draft. Results will help the Mylor Community develop initial steps towards further community-led consultation, with an ultimate aim of developing a future vision for Mylor.

The survey was available to complete between 18 October- 15 November 2019.

The AHC wanted to assess local opinions of the fireworks at the Mylor Bonfire Night.

The survey was conducted online through the AHC 'Hills voice—your say' website, with hard copies also made available to respondents at commercial venues in Mylor as well as the school and post office.

Nearly 200 people responded to the Mylor Community survey, with nearly 70% of respondents either living, working or owning a business in Mylor. 51 visitors to Mylor also responded, with the majority visiting Mylor every day or at least once a week.

Data was collected by AHC before being de-identified and passed on to the Mylor Oval Committee to analyse and review.

Both AHC and the Mylor Oval Committee are thrilled at the number and generosity of responses to this survey: they provide a rich snapshot of our local community.

## **How do we feel about where we live?**

Mylor residents are unanimous in their praise for Mylor: its semi-rural atmosphere, offering safety, peace and tranquility. We show great appreciation for the beautiful natural environment: the parklands, the river and the conservation park, all of which support native wildlife and vegetation. Many residents mentioned the attractions of low density living and Mylor's proximity to both the city, Stirling and Mt Barker.

Above all, residents are delighted with our strong community spirit: we consider ourselves to be friendly, like-minded and, mostly, engaged with one another. Many people participate in a range of community groups, including Mylor Friendship Citizens Club; Mylor Oval Committee; CFS; local history group; Red Cross; bushcare groups, the 4Cs (coffee, cake, craft and chat); the Op Shop; yoga; art and music groups; and sporting organisations.

Our four commercial outlets—Coopers, the General Store, the Post Office and Harvest—were congratulated for supporting the community spirit and in providing services seen as 'essential'.

Nevertheless, a number of challenges were highlighted. There was a strong acknowledgement that living in the bush meant an increase in anxiety during the bushfire season. The importance of bushfire readiness, getting a Place of Last Resort, and developing a community strategy were all mentioned.

Unsurprisingly, the greatest challenge identified by Mylor residents is the lack of public transport—particularly connecting up with buses to the city and Mt Barker. The second major challenge is communications—such as no nbn beyond the immediate township, poor internet and mobile coverage—all of which are considered to be particularly concerning in a bushfire risk area. Many residents also felt challenged by the lack of mains water and the frequency of power outages. Seen together, this also compounds the bushfire risk as, without a power supply we cannot access water.

A number of residents were concerned about the increase in traffic—not only cars, but also cyclists—and felt that speed limits should be lowered well before the entrances to the township. Safety would also be improved by better road maintenance and more and better footpaths and walking tracks, particularly on main roads. Some respondents suggested that AHC should focus on these issues, as well as improving rubbish collection outside the township to include green bins and hard rubbish.

Some residents expressed concern for the fragility of our unique community spirit, pointing out that ‘tree changers’ frequently do not get involved in community activities. Many acknowledged that social events and activities do not cater to the full age range and interests of all residents.

### **Why do visitors come to Mylor?**

Visitors to Mylor come for a variety of reasons: to shop at local businesses; to participate or attend sporting activities; to attend the school; to visit friends and family; and to enjoy the natural surroundings offered by the Oval, the parklands and Mylor reserves. They, together with Mylor residents, also attend community events.

### **Mylor events**

The most popular event is the Bonfire Night, which over half of all respondents attended in 2019. Also popular was the Mylor market (102 visitors in the last 12 months) and ANZAC Day (with 79 respondents participating in the most recent event).

Encouraged to talk more about events in Mylor more generally, respondents praised the commitment of community groups and the many volunteers who contribute to putting on a range of well-run events that are fun and enjoyable. There was strong recognition that events not only enhance and strengthen neighbourhood connection, but that they are a necessity if communities are to survive and maintain local facilities.

Many saw the drawcard of our beautiful oval and acknowledged that the uniqueness of Mylor is recognised by organisers from ‘beyond the township’, such as The English Ale and Archery SA.

Of greatest concern to many was the market, which was seen as having far greater potential if it could be revitalised with an injection of enthusiasm and commitment.

Respondents wondered whether community groups could coordinate better, both in organising events and in applying for funding. Furthermore, some respondents were concerned that community events were mostly organised by the same small group of residents and that wider community involvement should be encouraged, both in attendance and in volunteering to help.

Respondents also wondered if events could be better advertised to encourage greater participation. A few respondents wondered if AHC might be able to lend more support to events, particularly in providing wider promotion.

Whilst there was a great deal of support and enthusiasm for past and current events, some respondents wondered if we could not be more innovative and cater to a wider demographic.

Respondents suggested restoring the community BBQs at the Hall; more Fringe events; more events catering to young children and teens at the weekends; and holding events of a different nature, such as a fair showcasing local artisans and musicians.

Not everyone enjoys events that occur in Mylor, including those events organised beyond the local community groups, such as the Tour Down Under. Others relish the fact that our village is selected as part of the course and wondered if we could encourage similar events, such as car rallies. We need, as a community, to recognise that there are a multitude of voices and that many have chosen a Mylor lifestyle away from 'big events'.

### **Mylor Bonfire Night Fireworks**

An important question in this survey for AHC was assessing the community sentiment towards the use of fireworks at the annual Bonfire Night.

The majority of residents and visitors (over 80%) strongly support the fireworks. Amongst Mylor residents, over 90% supported the continuation of the fireworks. On the whole, the fireworks were seen as a highlight to the year; recognised as being a major event and drawcard to our small community; and praised as occurring during a period of minimal fire risk, as opposed to those that occur in other locations during the summer. Many pointed out that the fireworks were only once a year and for a very short time.

About 10% of respondents were opposed in varying degrees to the continuation of fireworks as part of the Bonfire Night. There is a perception amongst the community that those opposing fireworks don't live in the community: of those who expressed opposition—either strong or moderate—11 live in Mylor, 3 live in other areas of the AHC and 7 live outside the AHC area. Another 10 respondents were either neutral or ambiguous in their responses. All of the concerns related to the environment, in particular, the impact on wildlife, agitated horses and other animals and pollution.

Those in favour of maintaining the fireworks recognised the necessity to forewarn locals to ensure their animals are safe and Mylor Primary School was praised for their efforts in this regard. However, some questioned whether a fireworks display was any more alarming to animals than a thunderstorm.

### **Sports, recreation and activity groups**

Doing things together is at the heart of community cohesion. This can range from sporting events to shared activities in interest groups, such as gardening and bushwalking; or more formal gatherings, such as community BBQs. As with any activity, all require organisers and participants in order to thrive.

Less than 15% of respondents participate in locally organised sports, mostly netball. Bushwalking and gardening were the most popular local group activities and many enjoyed watching archery set-up and walking their dogs on the oval.

Concern was expressed for the future prospects of existing sporting clubs, particularly tennis and netball, when the number of participants is diminishing: some wondered if there is any future for our teams, given the proximity to larger clubs in other townships.

There was concern about the drainage issues on the Oval in winter, rendering it useless as a sporting venue at that time of year. Some residents would like to see the tennis courts maintained and set up for use by families at any time of year.

There was considerable support for a BMX track and/or cycling events for young people, with one resident suggesting a bike skills course for children learning to ride. Many were keen to see more activities catering to a wider age cohort: sporting activities for young children (netball, cricket, soccer) and fitness activities catering specifically to older participants. Some proposed connecting cycle and walking tracks to other local townships, such as Hahndorf and Echunga.

Novel suggestions for further activities include a community garden; annual car boot sale; athletics; lawn bowls/petanque; outdoor movie night; garden weekend with a walking trail connecting local open gardens; and trail running, including a running race between Mylor and Echunga.

Some people wanted to point out that non-sporting activities were equally important in contributing to community cohesion and preventing loneliness and isolation. There are many local interest groups, including bush walking, gardening, bushcare, yoga, as well as art, craft and music groups. However, many residents were unaware of their existence and wondered how they could find out more. Others expressed frustration that most groups meet during the week, precluding those who are then at work.

Given that some activities occur on weekdays, people wondered if a community venue, such as a tavern, might bring more people together, engaging neighbours who commute for work and who are out of the township during the week.

Furthermore, people were keen to point out that any additional facilities, whether sporting or social, should be more inclusive of all ages: adults, teenagers and children. Suggestions included an upgraded playground, picnic area and BBQ facilities, as well as a bike track and outdoor fitness equipment for adults and seniors.

## **Development**

Many residents are adamant that Mylor retains its unique character and should not be built out, subdivided or gentrified. Opinions were divided on whether Mylor should have a tavern: this is not a new issue, but has been debated for decades! The pop-up pub was very popular and some felt that if this could be a regular occurrence, it would provide a happy compromise.

For those who are aware of it, expansion of the oval has been met with mixed reactions. Many people praised the excellent maintenance of the oval, but commented also on the need to improve drainage; build a new playground; provide a wider range of facilities, such a picnic grounds and fitness parks to cater for a range of ages.

And yet some residents are adamantly against expansion, suggesting they are being 'railroaded' and that there is a lack of community consultation.

## **Community forums**

Nearly 40% of respondents were interested in a community forum, with another 40% saying they might be. This would suggest that attendance at community forums may be dependent on the discussion topic.

## **Conclusion**

This survey provides a rich snapshot of who we are, what we value and the challenges and opportunities that face us. There's a lot we can take pride in—our village and ourselves!

However, some residents expressed a fear that Mylor is becoming a 'tree change dormitory town'. Retaining the community spirit—admired and embraced by so many of us—may be our biggest challenge. But this does not just happen: it requires commitment together with community goodwill

to ensure that events and activities are maintained and, through them, our community connection. We will need to garner wider support for and interest in community activities and encourage families and younger community members to step up as both organisers and participants.

This taps into a concern, not limited to Mylor: how do we encourage younger residents to take the baton from current community organisers, many of whom represent the older cohort in our community? A few residents recognised a potential tension, as younger residents, with a different lens, may wish to introduce more innovative activities, rather than supporting existing ones. Simultaneously it was recognised that many families are busy, often commuting to the city, and have little time and energy to contribute to the community at this stage in their lives.

The strong appetite for community forums offers the opportunity to collaborate in addressing concerns highlighted by Mylor residents, for example:

- developing a bushfire community strategy
- community consultation on development
- brainstorming and lobbying for better transport and communications.

Furthermore, we have the potential to discuss how we might foster and encourage future community leaders. This may well involve embracing new ideas that are not part of the traditional mix in order to encourage younger residents and families to step up and provide a different lens. Community forums could also ensure community consultation on any Oval redevelopment and how to broaden a range of events, activities and facilities to cater to a broader cohort of residents.

Community forums also offer an opportunity to lobby for better transport and communications, as well as lower speed limits and better council facilities.

This survey has provided an extraordinary snapshot of who we are and what we hold dear. It has the potential to provide the impetus to ensure our community retains its vibrancy and uniqueness by creating a vision for the future, whilst addressing the challenges we face.

Susanne Koen

On behalf of Mylor Oval Committee

14 December 2019