



GREAT OCEAN ROAD
COAST & PARKS AUTHORITY

ANNUAL COMMUNITY SURVEY 2024

WHAT WE HEARD REPORT



OUR COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority (GORCAPA) protects and enhances our region's spectacular coastline and parks on your behalf. We can only succeed with your input and support.

Our promise is simple: we will listen, engage with respect, and ensure your voices are heard. Our Community Engagement Strategy keeps community connection at the heart of our work.

We believe in being open and transparent, building relationships based on trust and genuine partnership. Through conversations, feedback sessions, and engagement opportunities, we invite you to join us in strengthening our shared connection to this special place.

An aerial photograph showing a long, straight wooden pier or boardwalk extending from the left edge into a vast body of water. The water is a vibrant turquoise color with visible ripples and some darker patches. Three people are walking along the pier, their shadows cast onto the wooden planks. The text is positioned in the lower right quadrant of the image.

We acknowledge and respect the separate and distinct Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung Peoples as the Traditional Owners of the Great Ocean Road's land, waters, seas and skies and acknowledge their cultural knowledge that has led to sustainable practices and has cared for Country over tens of thousands of years.

A YEAR OF COMMUNITY CONNECTION

20

In 2024 we spent considerable effort engaging with the community to provide input into planning for works projects and the management of the Great Ocean Road coast and parks.

From drop-in sessions to online surveys, markets, walk and talks to working alongside passionate volunteers, we were out and about (and online!) in 2024 listening, learning and connecting with community members across the Great Ocean Road coast and parks.

32+

PROJECT ENGAGEMENTS
ACROSS THE REGION'S
COAST AND PARKS

3274

SURVEY CONTRIBUTIONS
FROM COMMUNITY MEMBERS



IN-PERSON ACTIVITIES
OUT IN THE COMMUNITY

57



25,391

WEBPAGE VISITS TO OUR
HAVE YOUR SAY PLATFORM

24

ANNUAL COMMUNITY SURVEY

Our first Annual Community Survey (the Survey) was designed with two key goals in mind:

1. Understanding your experience: How did you feel about the ways we connected with the community on our projects in 2024?
2. Learning for the future: What can we do better to improve our project community engagement?

This survey will become an annual tradition, helping us track our progress year-on-year and ensuring we stay responsive to community needs.

174

ONLINE SURVEY
CONTRIBUTIONS



1200+

VISITS TO THE ANNUAL
COMMUNITY SURVEY WEBPAGE

Survey Details:

Survey period: The survey was open from 17 December 2024 to 28 February 2025

Focus areas:

- Your connection to the Great Ocean Road and past experiences with us
- What motivates you to participate in community engagement
- How informed, heard, and valued you feel in your interactions with us
- Any barriers to participation you've experienced
- Your suggestions for what we should stop, start, or continue doing.

We promoted the survey through social media and direct emails to community members, community groups and networks and stakeholders who have previously engaged with us, ensuring we captured diverse voices and experiences from across the Great Ocean Road coast and parks.

WHO WE HEARD FROM

How survey respondents (all 174 of you) connect to the region:



Note: Survey respondents could select more than one way they connect.

We were delighted by the diverse range of voices that contributed to our survey. More than half of respondents (55%) were local residents and homeowners who call the Great Ocean Road home year-round. Another significant portion (28%) were holiday homeowners and ratepayers who maintain strong ties to the region, even when living elsewhere.

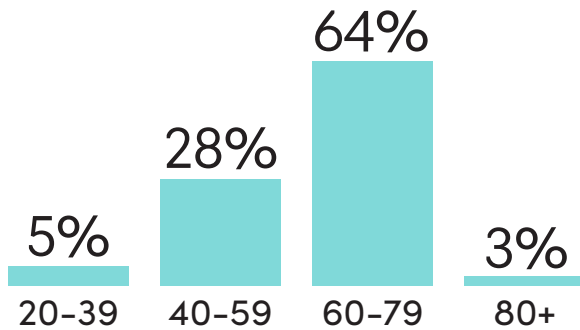
We also welcomed perspectives from people who care deeply about this coastline for many different reasons—whether through work, family connections, environmental interests, or simply a passion for protecting this special place for future generations. Every voice matters in shaping the future of the Great Ocean Road coast and parks, regardless of their connection to the region.

We were encouraged to discover that most respondents (69.5%) had previously taken part in GORCAPA engagement activities, while 16% were new to our processes and 14% weren't sure about their past involvement. Among those who had engaged with us before, over half (57%) had participated in two or three activities during the past year. Nearly a quarter (23%) had joined us once, while a dedicated group of around 9% had been involved four or more times.

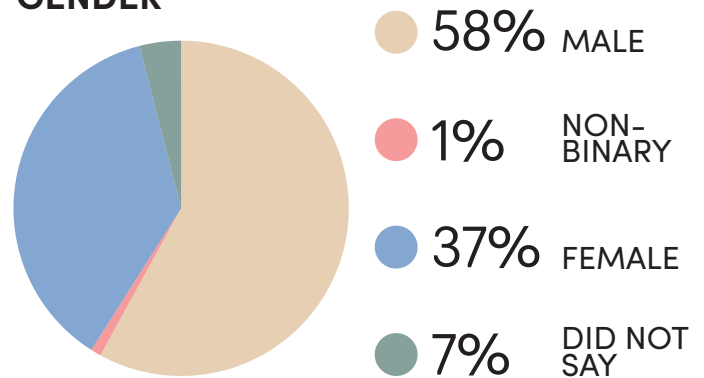
This mix of experienced participants and fresh voices creates a rich foundation for meaningful insights which we share here.

DEMOGRAPHICS

AGE



GENDER



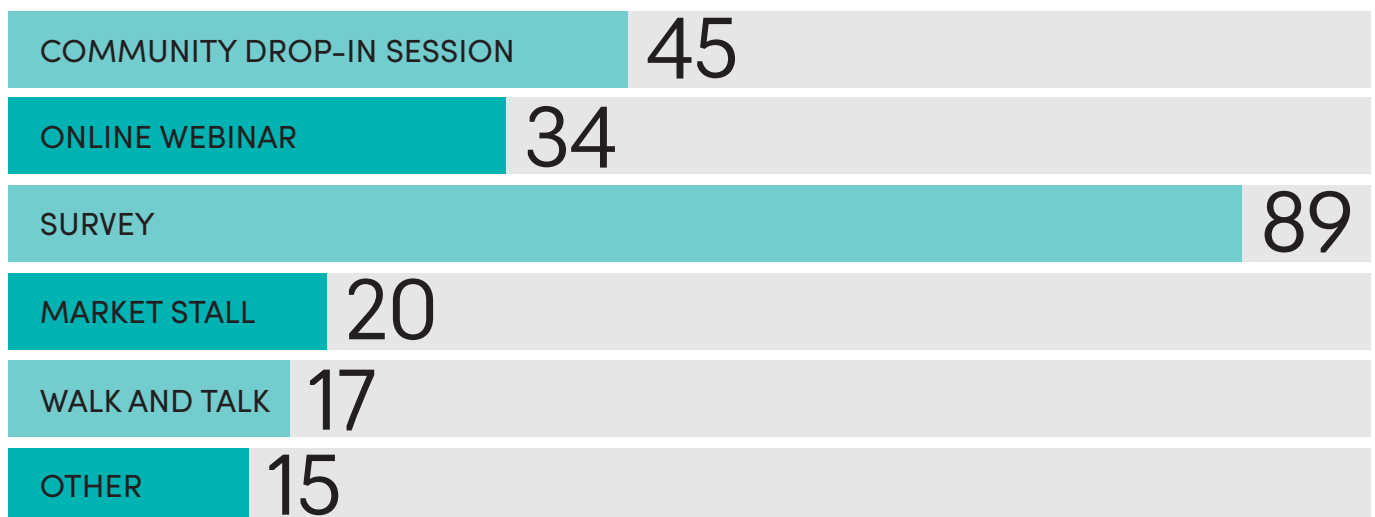
DEMOGRAPHIC IDENTITY



Note: Survey respondents could select more than one demographic identity.

HOW YOU PARTICIPATED

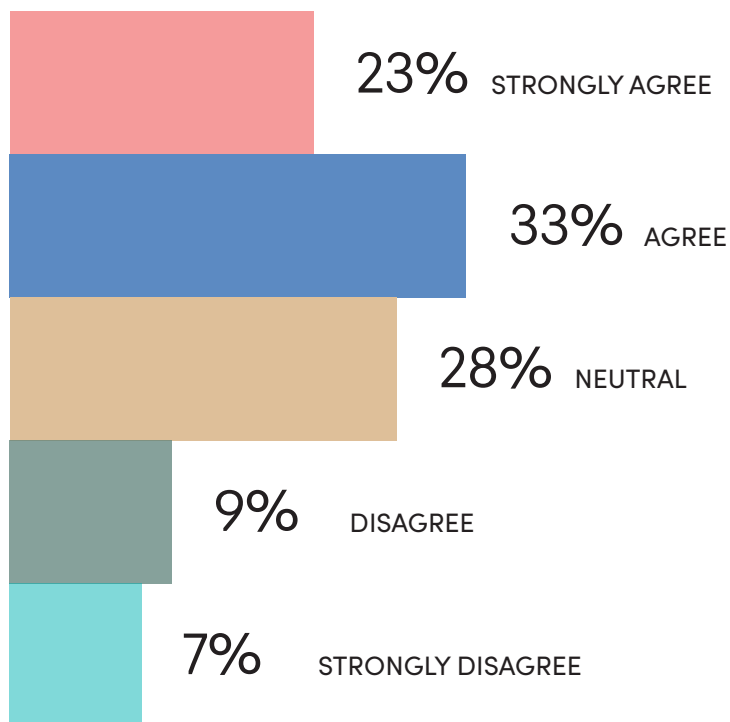
Surveys were our most popular way to participate this year.



WHY YOU ENGAGE

People are primarily motivated to engage when they have a specific interest in a project (74%), value the opportunity to contribute to decisions that impact their local area (56%) or are directly affected by an issue or project (49%).

Your experience: Was project engagement worth your time?



Your thoughts:

- “ Any decisions need to consider all voices and information.
- “ Communities know best about what is needed in their local neighbourhood.
- “ I deeply love this region and care about what happens to it.
- “ Being a contributing community member is always a worthwhile use of my time.
- “ I want to have the opportunity to be involved, but I don't always feel like it ultimately makes a difference.

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

When asked about your experience engaging with us on projects, three key priorities were highlighted.

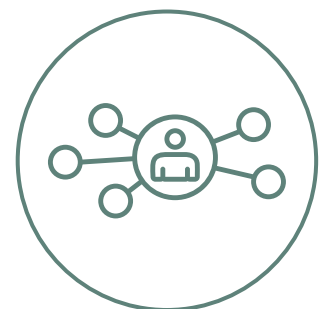
The next section (pages 10 - 13) takes a deeper dive into these three priorities.



YOU WANT
CONFIDENCE IN
YOUR INFLUENCE ON
DECISION MAKING



YOU WANT TO
BE INFORMED

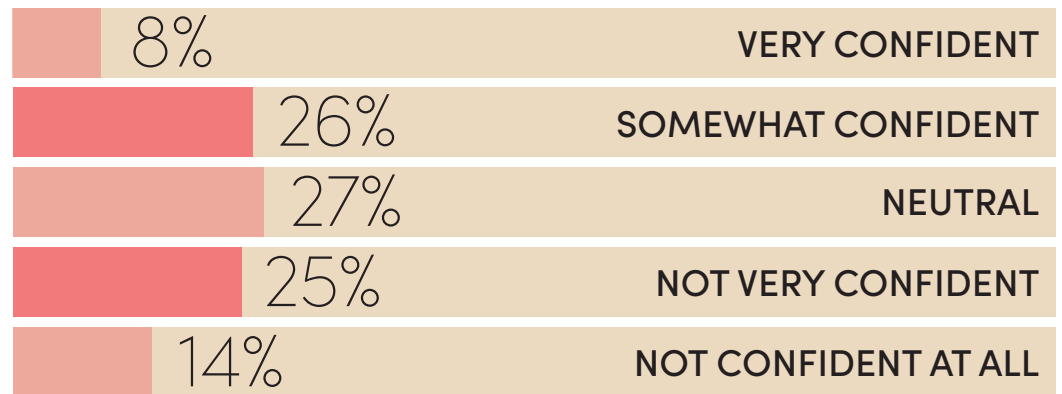


YOU WANT
COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT TO BE
ACCESSIBLE TO ALL



YOU WANT CONFIDENCE IN YOUR INFLUENCE ON DECISION MAKING

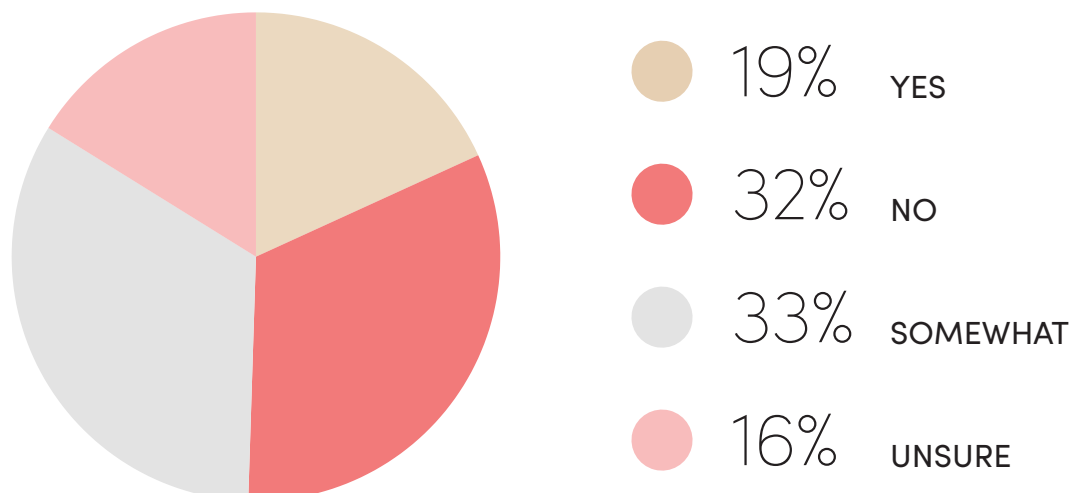
Your confidence in our use of feedback in decision-making:



WHAT'S WORKING WELL

Many of you found engagement with GORCAPA genuinely meaningful, valuing opportunities to contribute your knowledge while being informed, consulted, and respected. Face-to-face interactions stood out as particularly valuable, along with transparency and confidence that your input was considered alongside other community voices and expert advice. The priority we place on environmental and cultural heritage values is appreciated.

Do we clearly explain how we use your feedback?



WHERE WE NEED TO IMPROVE

Community confidence in our decision-making is mixed.

- **Disconnect between engagement and outcomes** – It's not always clear how community feedback influences final decisions. While some trust the process, many doubt their feedback meaningfully influences outcomes.
- **Predetermined outcomes** – There is frustration when engagement feels like box-ticking, especially when community sentiment contradicts the final direction. A recurring concern was that decisions feel predetermined or too complex, with engagement possibly serving to justify rather than shape results.
- **Unequal influence** – There are concerns that only certain voices truly shape decisions, often those who are more vocal, organised, or frequently engaged. Some acknowledged that competing interests make decision-making complex but want clearer explanations of how community views are balanced with other considerations, to build trust. Some feedback also asked GORCAPA to stop prioritising economic and tourism outcomes over local community needs and environmental values.

Despite some challenges, your desire to participate remains strong.

“ I want to see how you are listening to the people and communities who live in the affected areas.

“ The response and feedback I received showed a genuine willingness to take my concerns seriously and where possible address them.

“ I like to think that my input is looked at and not just a paper exercise.

“ I trust the Authority to fulfil its mission in the best way.

“ You don't always agree with me but I respect your processes.

“ I haven't seen much action as a result of surveys.

“ I want to have the opportunity to be involved, but I don't always feel like it ultimately makes a difference.

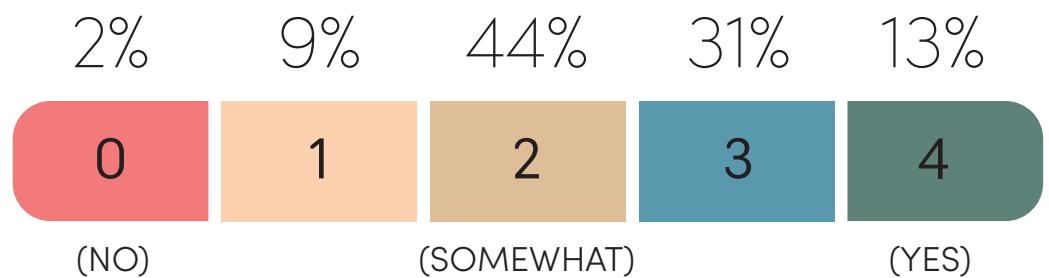


YOU WANT TO BE INFORMED

WHAT'S WORKING WELL

People feel reasonably informed about engagement opportunities and project updates, particularly those who regularly receive newsletters, emails, community notices, follow online channels, or attend local engagement sessions. Face-to-face conversations and clear signage were also mentioned as effective.

Are you adequately informed about projects or issues?



WHERE WE NEED TO IMPROVE

Some community members shared that they had missed opportunities to engage due to unclear communication, limited promotion visibility, or the volume of information coming from different sources.

Some people highlighted that at times we use technical or inaccessible language that creates confusion or mistrust, and we should not spend money on polished communication materials or consultants without a clearly communicated community benefit.

A common suggestion was to have consistent, timely updates and plain language summaries of project progress, decisions and outcomes.

“ I want to see wider opportunities for community consultation and public forums.

“ Be forthcoming on projects before they start.

WHAT'S WORKING WELL

People appreciate having different ways to engage, particularly the mix of online and face-to-face activities. This flexibility helps more people get involved and was seen as a key strength of our approach.

Offering a mix of engagement formats (e.g. drop-in sessions, webinars, surveys and walk and talks) and being present in local communities and visible in places where we are the land managers is appreciated. We are also acknowledged for supporting staff to be approachable, knowledgeable and respectful in their engagement.



WHERE WE NEED TO IMPROVE

Practical challenges limit participation for some. Common barriers include event timing, physical or digital access issues, work and caring responsibilities, and simply not knowing when or how to get involved. These challenges particularly affect those living outside the region or with additional accessibility needs.

- “ I live in Melbourne, so I am unable to attend face-to-face engagements.
- “ With prior commitments and busy with work, but also the cost of living, price of petrol to travel to the engagement activities is a barrier.
- “ I sometimes find it difficult to find time between work and family commitments.
- “ I'm worried that these engagements might be a waste of my time.
- “ I have a busy life, but I try to attend as many engagements as possible.

YOU WANT ENGAGEMENT TO BE
ACCESSIBLE TO ALL

MAKING IT EASIER TO ENGAGE IN

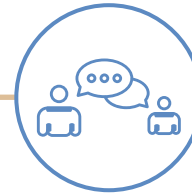
In line with our commitment to community engagement, we will undertake the following actions in response to the community priorities highlighted in survey feedback.



Transparent Planning Processes

We'll involve the community as early as possible in our planning processes.

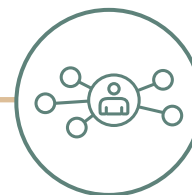
We'll also be more transparent about which aspects of projects can genuinely be influenced by your input, ensuring your engagement has real impact on our decisions.



Expanding our reach beyond the coast

We want to hear from people who live in our coastal communities, as well as those who have strong connections to and care deeply about the Great Ocean Road region but live elsewhere. We'll look at options to run more face-to-face activities and connect with community groups in neighbouring inland towns and places like Geelong, Melbourne and Colac.

We'll also promote these activities more widely through local newsletters, community networks, and social media.



2025/26



Introduce a 'Join the Discussion': A Guide to Engaging with Us

We're developing a clear, user-friendly guide that explains how to engage with us on our projects, what to expect from the process, and how your feedback is considered and contributes to the decision-making process.

This will also outline our engagement cycle, helping people understand where their input fits into planning, design, and decision-making.

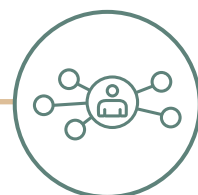


Tackling unequal influence

We'll continue to work to hear from everyone, not just the loudest voices.

We'll work harder to reach out to people who don't usually get involved and look to work with communities to create ways to participate that work for them and others within their community.

We'll offer different ways to get involved including online options such as webinars, quick surveys, and online drop-in sessions.



THANKYOU

We'd like to thank everyone who took the time to complete the 2024 Annual Community Survey. Your insights and reflections are essential to helping us understand what's working, what could be improved, and how we can better support meaningful engagement with communities across the Great Ocean Road region.

GET IN TOUCH

If you have further questions about the project, please visit the [Have Your Say](#) webpage.

For additional questions or to request accessible formats, contact the project team at: haveyoursay@GreatOceanRoadAuthority.vic.gov.au.

