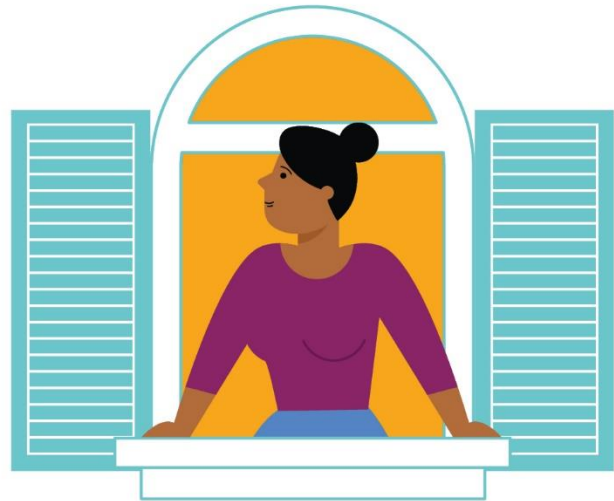


Maroondah COVID-19 Secondary Impact Assessment Community Check-In Report September 2021



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Executive Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in unprecedented challenges and impacts felt across the nation. To update our understanding of the supports needed by the Maroondah community to help recover from the COVID-19 pandemic over the next 12 months, Council engaged with the community to undertake this *Community Check-In Report*, which informs the *Maroondah COVID-19 Secondary Impact Assessment*.

Check-ins with community members were undertaken between June and September 2021, via seven existing Council surveys / engagement activities planned during this period, as well as an Ideas Board on the Your Say Maroondah website. Collecting data at this point in time allowed for an insight into the ongoing impacts felt by the community and subsequent supports needed for recovery.

This Community Check-In Report focuses primarily on understanding the supports needed by the community in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Key Findings

The top **supports needed** by the community over the next 12 months were identified as:

- Community connectedness
- Social connection
- Business aid
- Safety/ health and wellbeing
- Mental Health
- Reduced fees/ financial assistance
- Testing sites/ vaccination
- Outdoor areas/ places to meet people
- Elderly/ disabled people
- Beyond Council's ability/ good work done

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have been nationwide, deep and profound. The Maroondah community, along with the rest of metropolitan Melbourne, have been particularly impacted by an extended series of staged restrictions in response to the number of active positive cases.

To ensure that the needs of the Maroondah community are understood and effectively supported, Council is undertaking a comprehensive and ongoing relief and recovery planning process with a staged community engagement process at its centre.

This report details the methodology and outcomes of the community check-in engagement undertaken between June and September 2021 as part of the third stage of the community engagement process.

Details of previous engagement stages can be found on Council's website.

1.2 Objectives

The key objectives for this stage of the community engagement process were:

- To identify and understand the medium-term impacts and projected long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Maroondah community.
- To identify any new, changed or arising community needs resulting from the pandemic and provide recommendations to address them.
- To inform long-term community recovery planning in Maroondah.

2. Methods

2.1 Community Check-Ins

A general 'check-in' with community members was undertaken between June and September 2021 to inform long-term recovery planning. Check-ins were predominately completed via other existing Council surveys / engagement activities planned during this period by adding one COVID-related question, as well as an Ideas Board on the Your Say Maroondah website.

Engagement Methods	Outcomes
Domestic Animal Management Plan consultation survey	222 responses
Draft Sustainability Strategy consultation survey	28 responses
Draft Liveability Wellbeing and Resilience Strategy consultation survey	13 responses
Children's Services client survey	17 responses
Aged and Disability Services client survey	104 responses
Leisure client phone survey	9 responses
Your Say Maroondah website - Ideas Board (online engagement tool)	20 interactions
Total:	413

2.2 Data Analysis Process

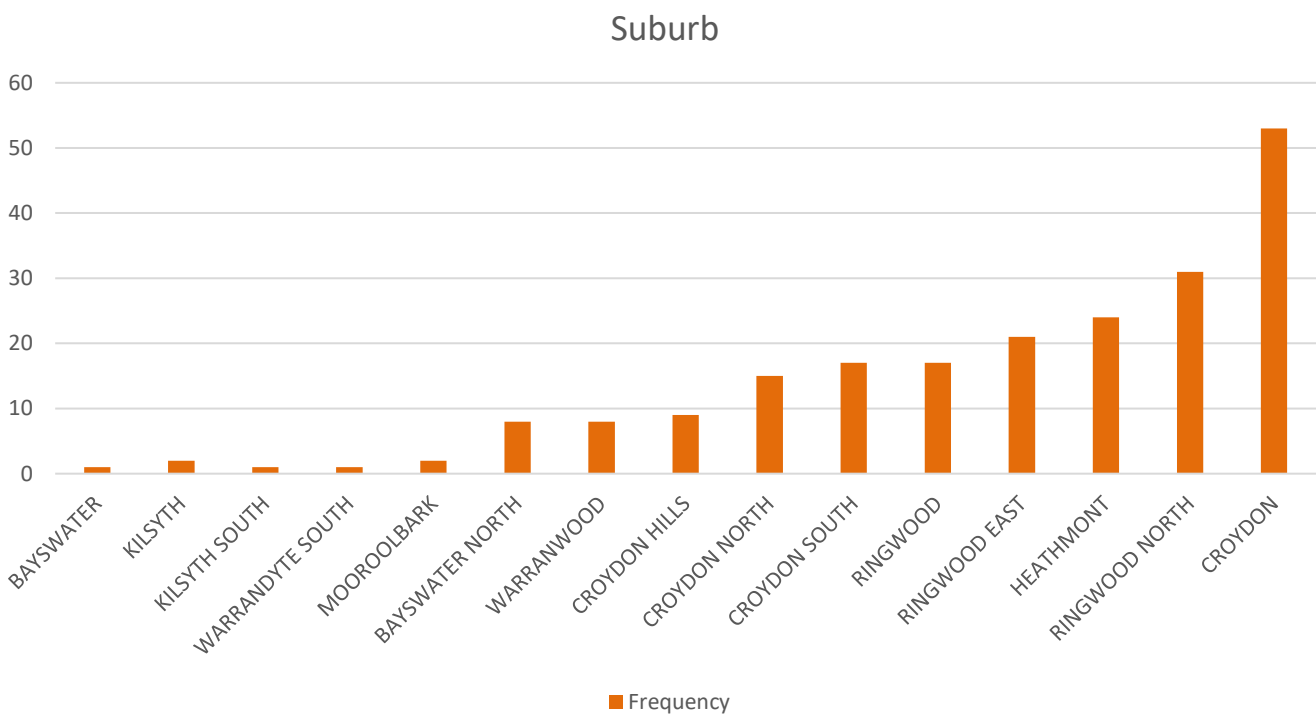
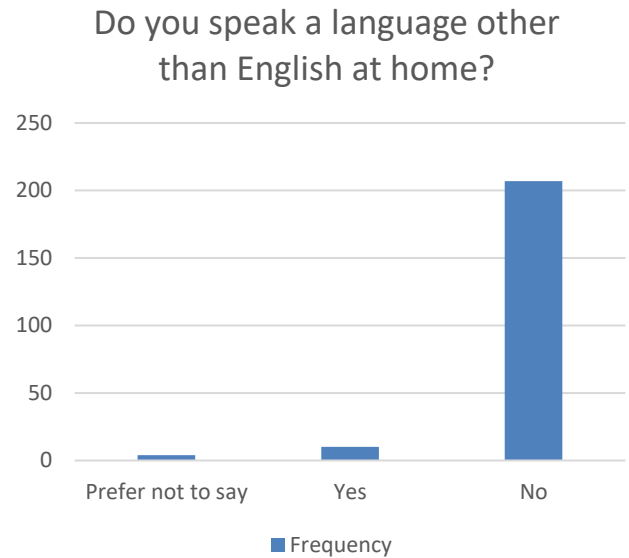
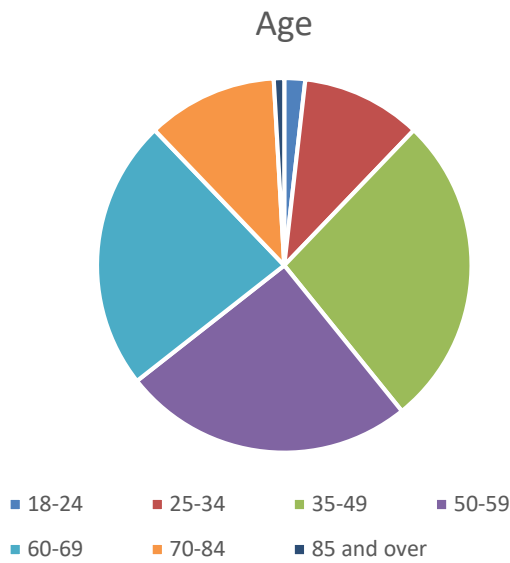
To transform the raw qualitative data received through the consultation into quantitative data that could be analysed, a process of 'coding' the data was applied. The raw data was categorised into a series of overarching themes. Each theme was given a code, and that code was then assigned to the responses that corresponded to that theme. For example, the large number of responses that were identified through the surveys were grouped into overarching themes (e.g. the theme 'community connectedness' includes responses around/ suggestions to hold local and community events, build and increase engagement, foster and strengthen community spirit, support groups and community networks). This process required a degree of interpretation, so some subjectivity was unavoidable in the data analysis.

Frequency data for each theme could then be calculated, based on how many times a theme was identified in the surveys. If a particular response related to two or more themes, it was assigned to each relevant theme. This is due to open-ended questions being posed in consultations which resulted in a wide variety of responses in a singular answer. For example, in response to the question posed, an answer such as 'support is needed for mental health, children and to get the community vaccinated' would be themed into mental health, help for children/ youth/ families and testing sites/ vaccination to capture further richness in the analysis.

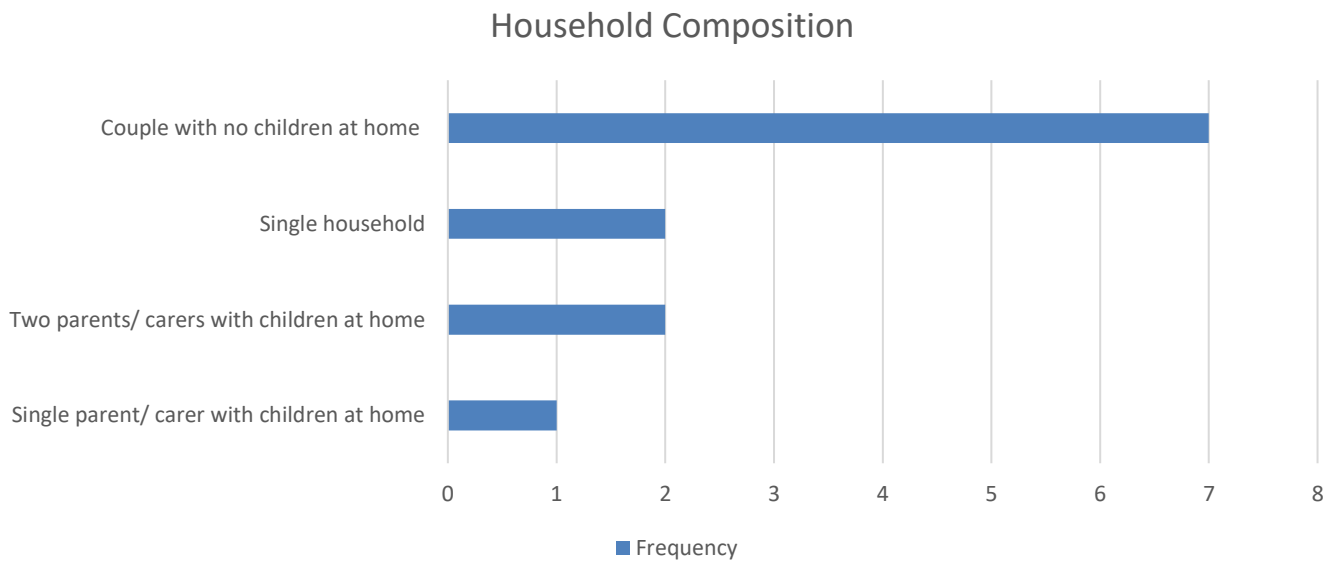
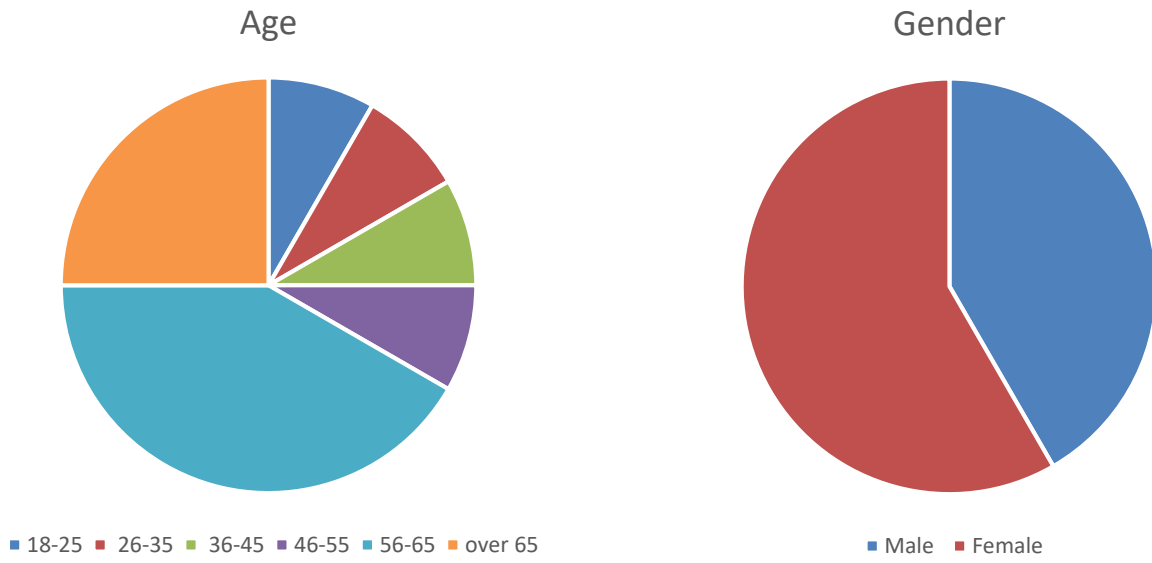
3. Participants

The demographics of survey respondents from each consultation method are varied, with some groups more represented than others. The Aged and Disability Services client survey respondents are represented across a range of ages, including carers responding on behalf of NDIS participants.

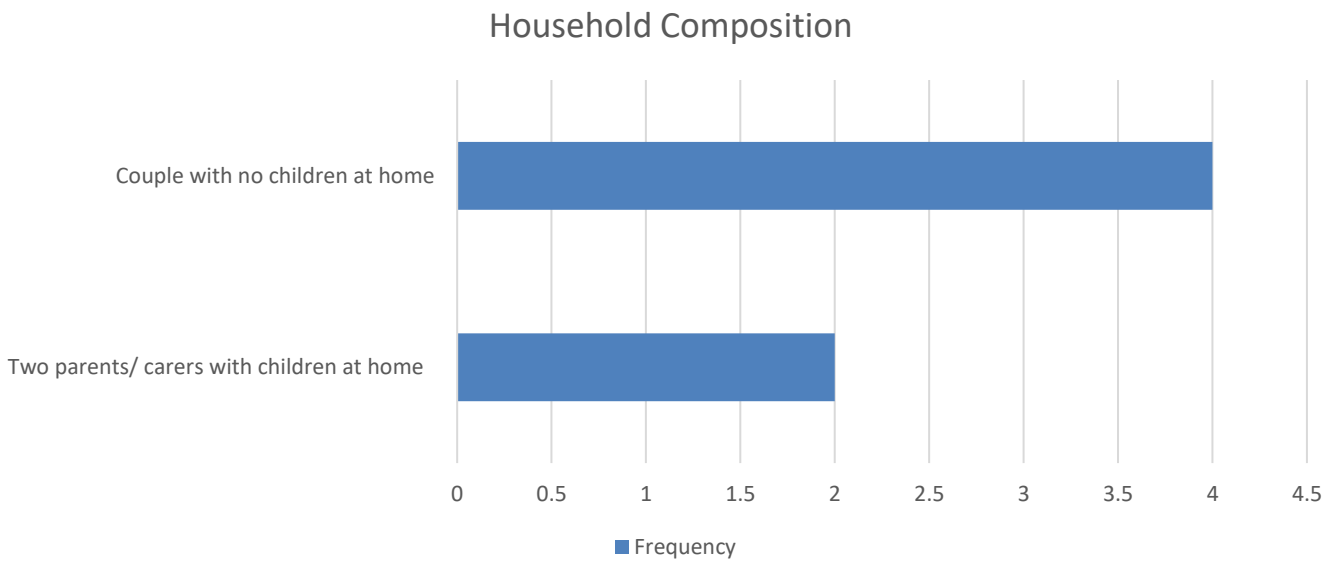
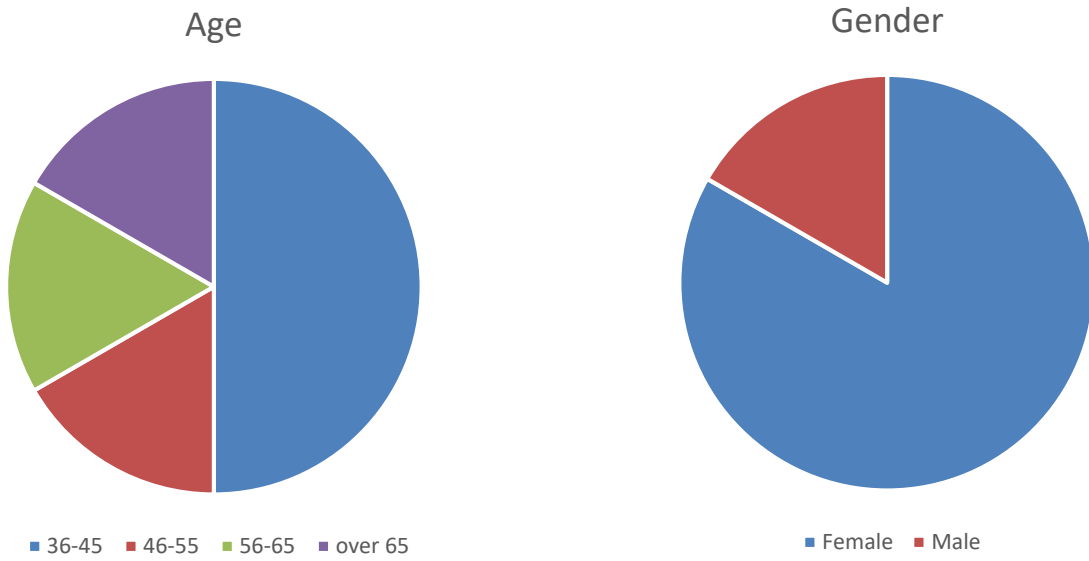
3.1 Domestic Animal Management Plan consultation survey



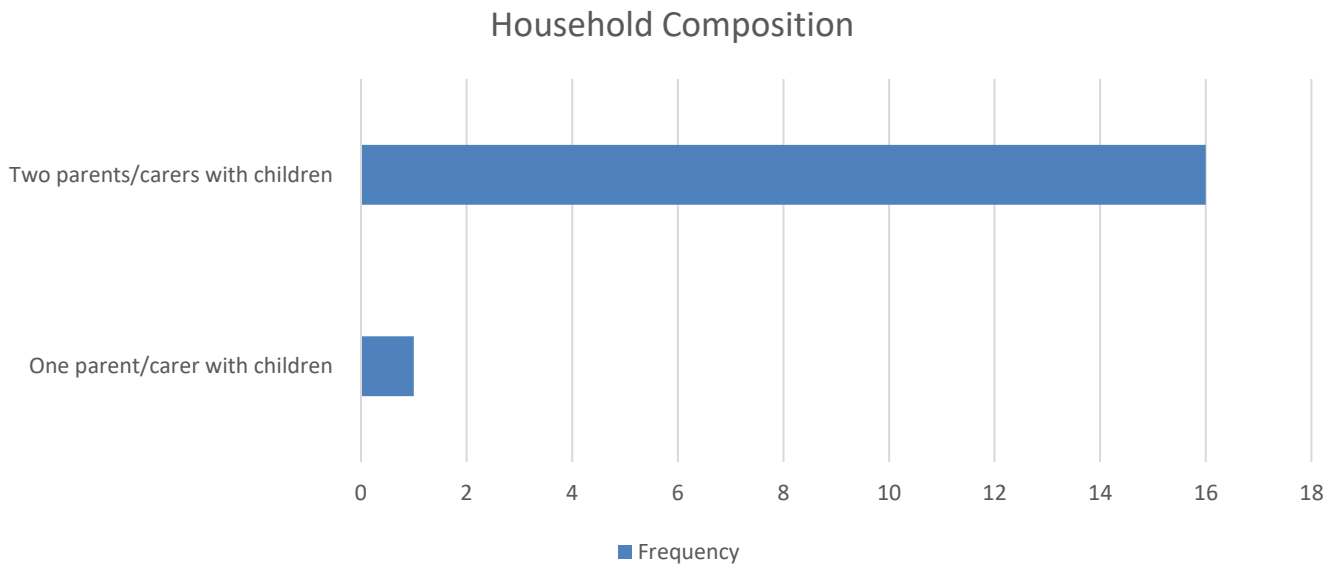
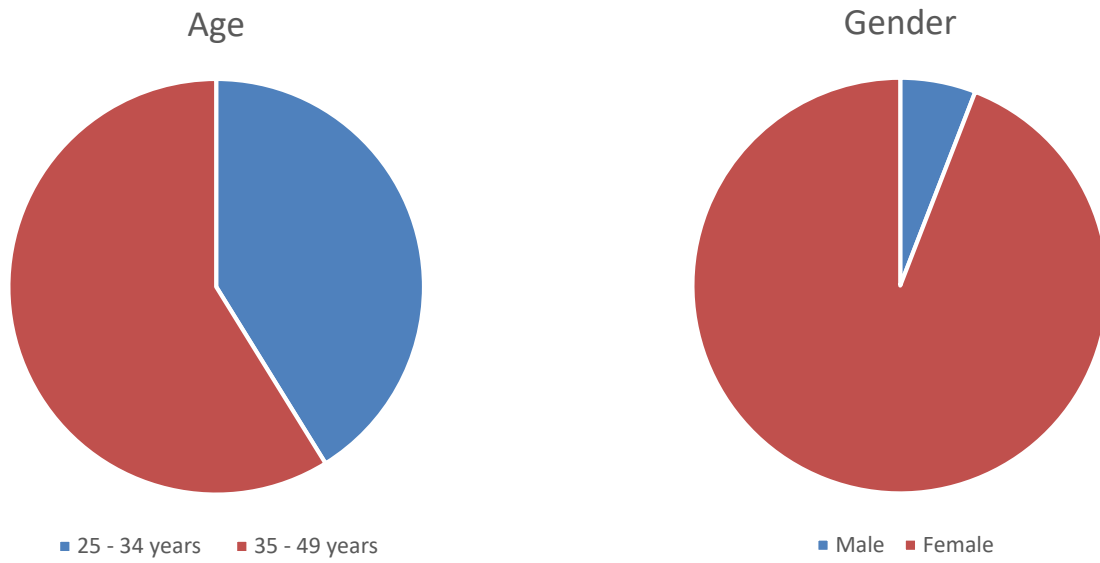
3.2 Draft Sustainability Strategy consultation survey



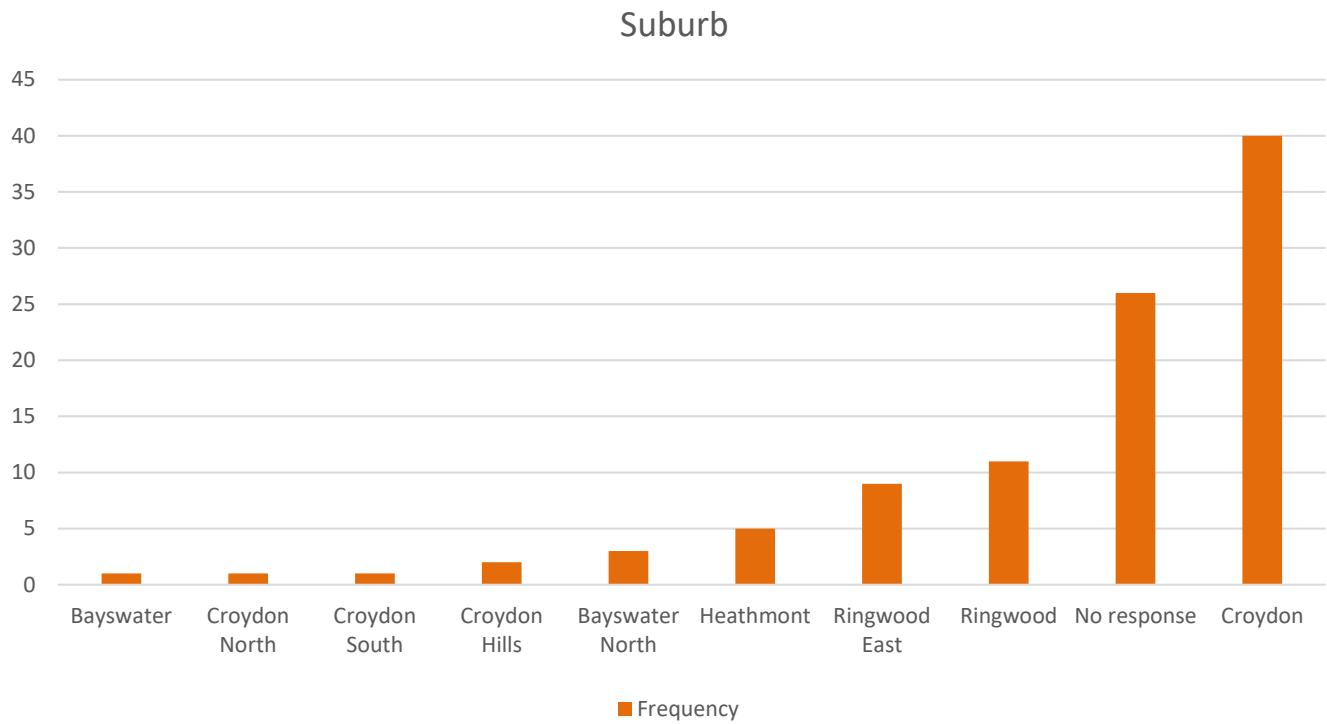
3.3 Draft Liveability, Wellbeing and Resilience Strategy consultation survey



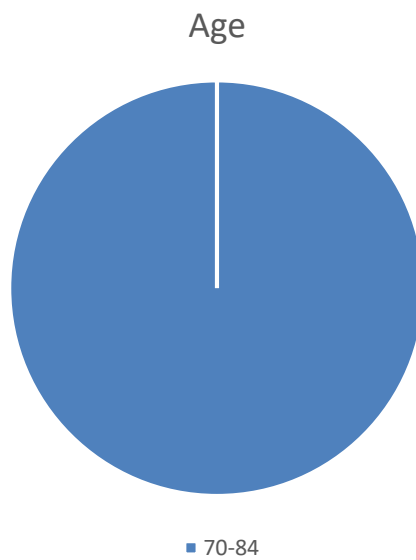
3.4 Children's Services client survey



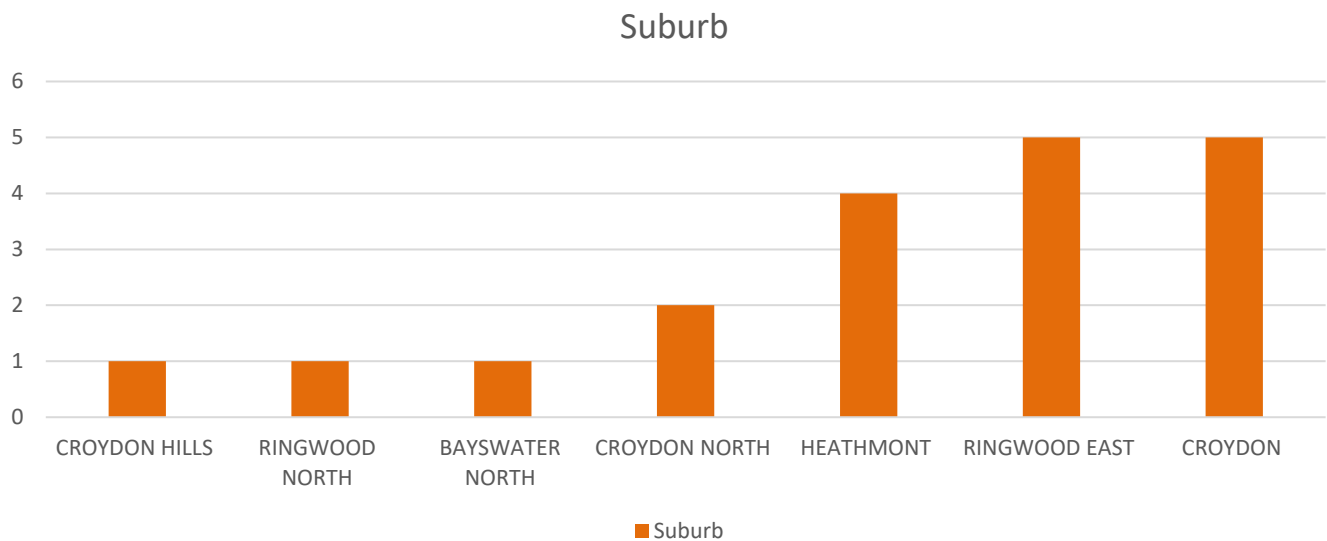
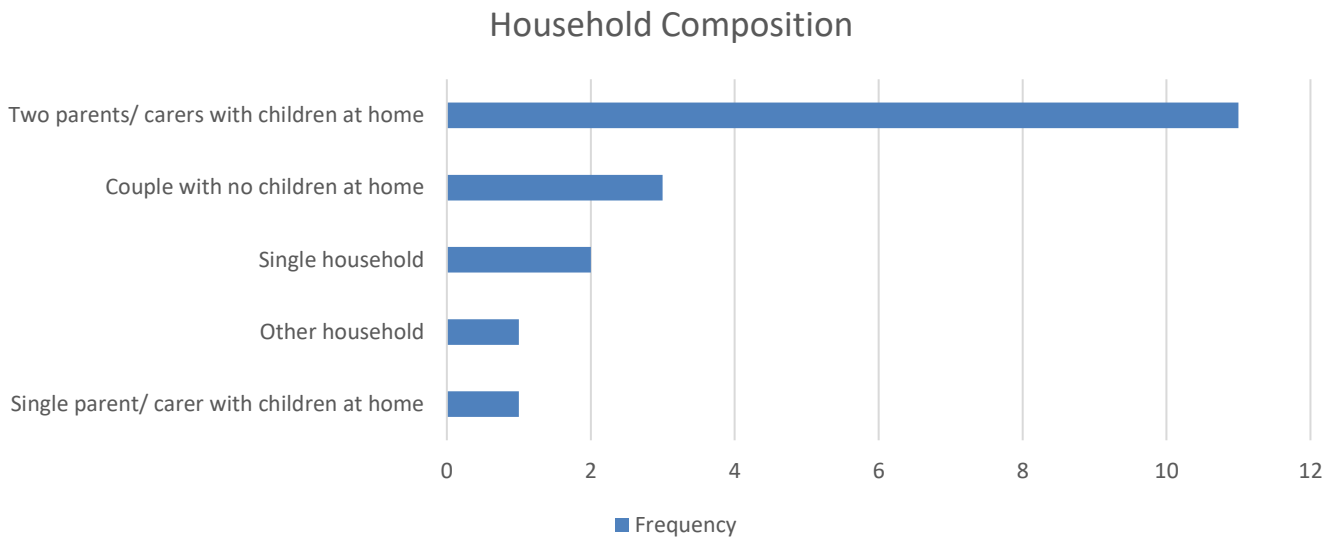
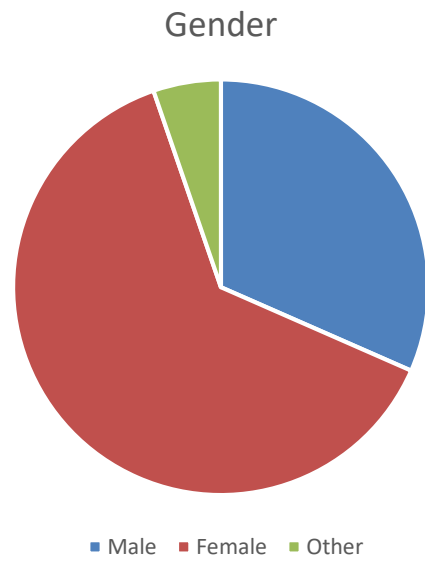
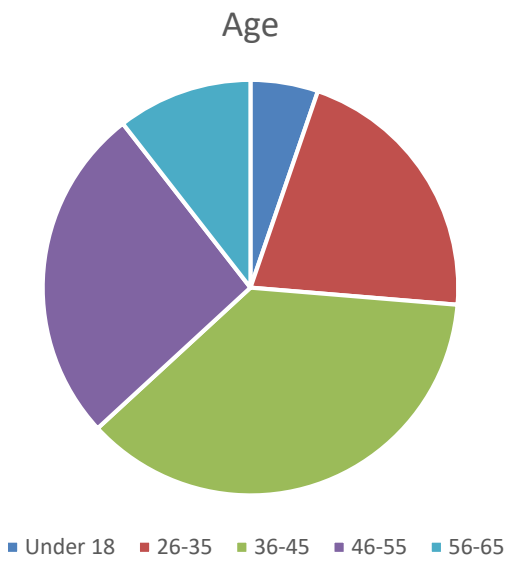
3.5 Aged & Disability Services client survey



3.6 Leisure client phone survey



3.7 Your Say Maroondah website - Ideas Board



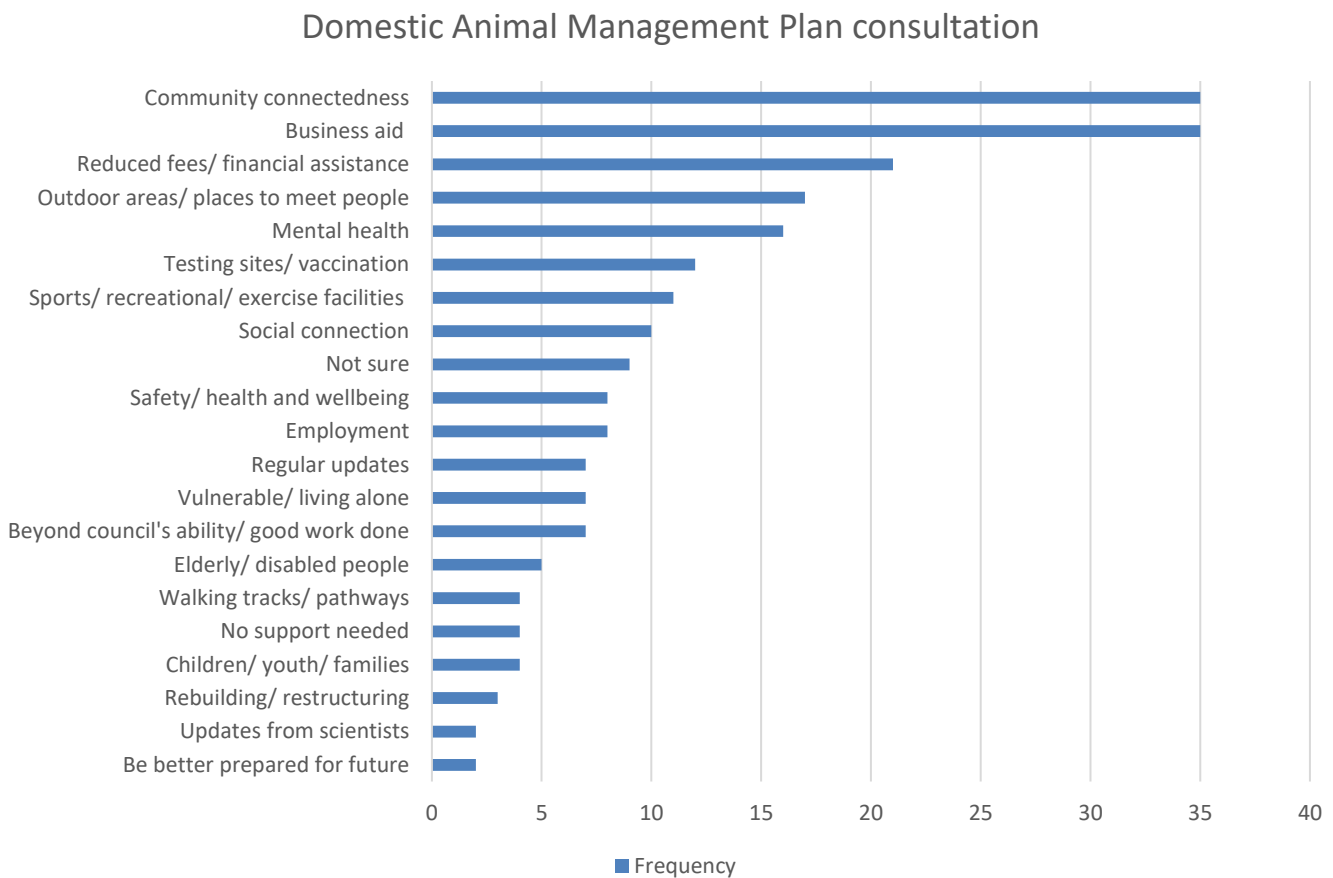
4. Key Findings

4.1 Results from each consultation

Via the **Domestic Animal Management Plan consultation survey**, 222 responses to the following question were collected.

Over the next 12 months, what supports do you think the Maroondah community will need to help recover from the COVID-19 pandemic?

Results:



Quotes:

“I think there will be raised levels of stress and anxiety so I think maintenance of local parks, shared paths and the like will be imperative”

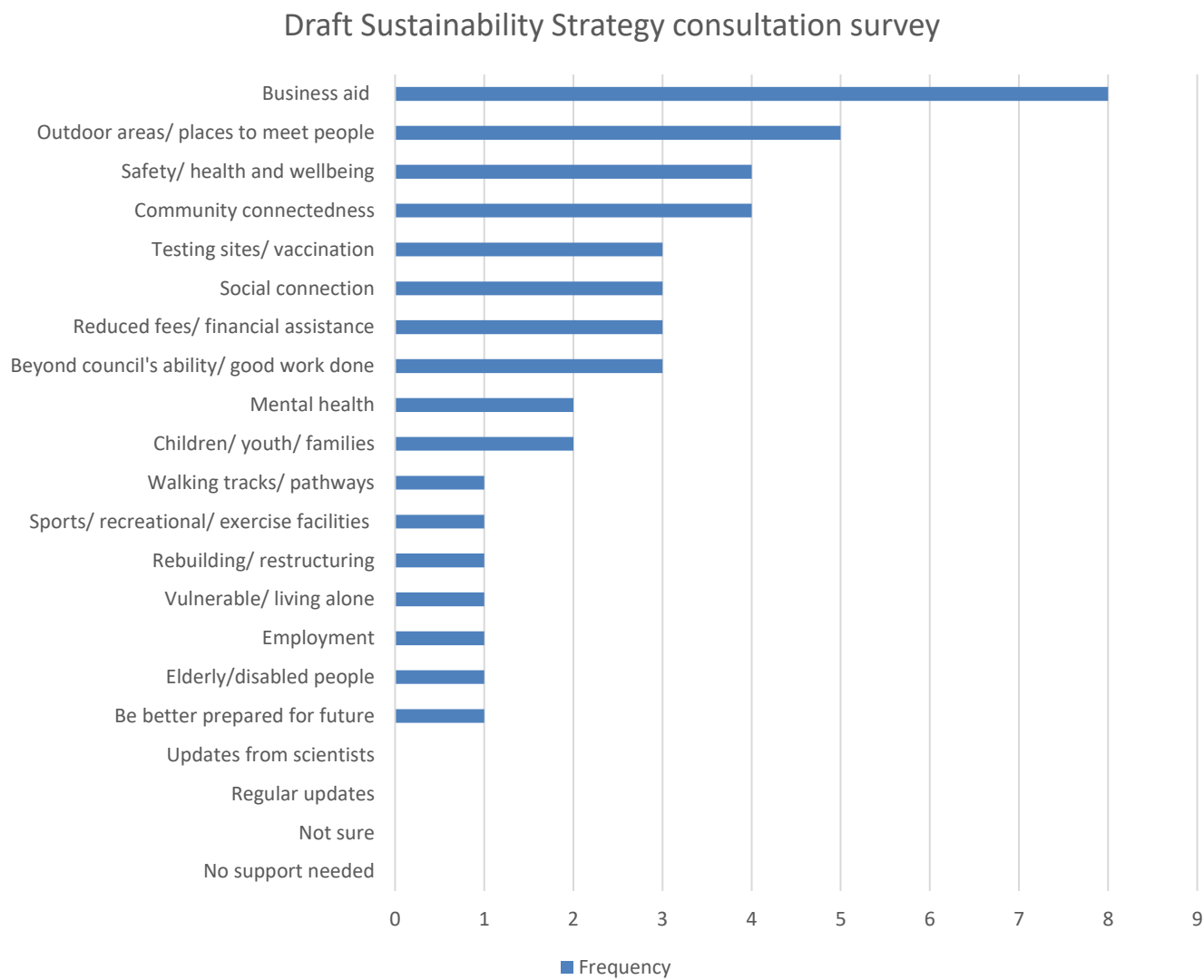
“Community sport promotion and family days. I know my teenagers had so many opportunities cancelled during COVID and each shut down has caused additional stress and uncertainty and they would benefit from some activities that get them out and active”

“Youth mental health services - teenagers are really struggling. Schools have noticed a huge increase in students presenting with significant problems”

Via the **Draft Sustainability Strategy consultation survey**, 28 responses to the following question were collected.

Over the next 12 months, what supports do you think the Maroondah community will need to help recover from the COVID-19 pandemic?

Results:

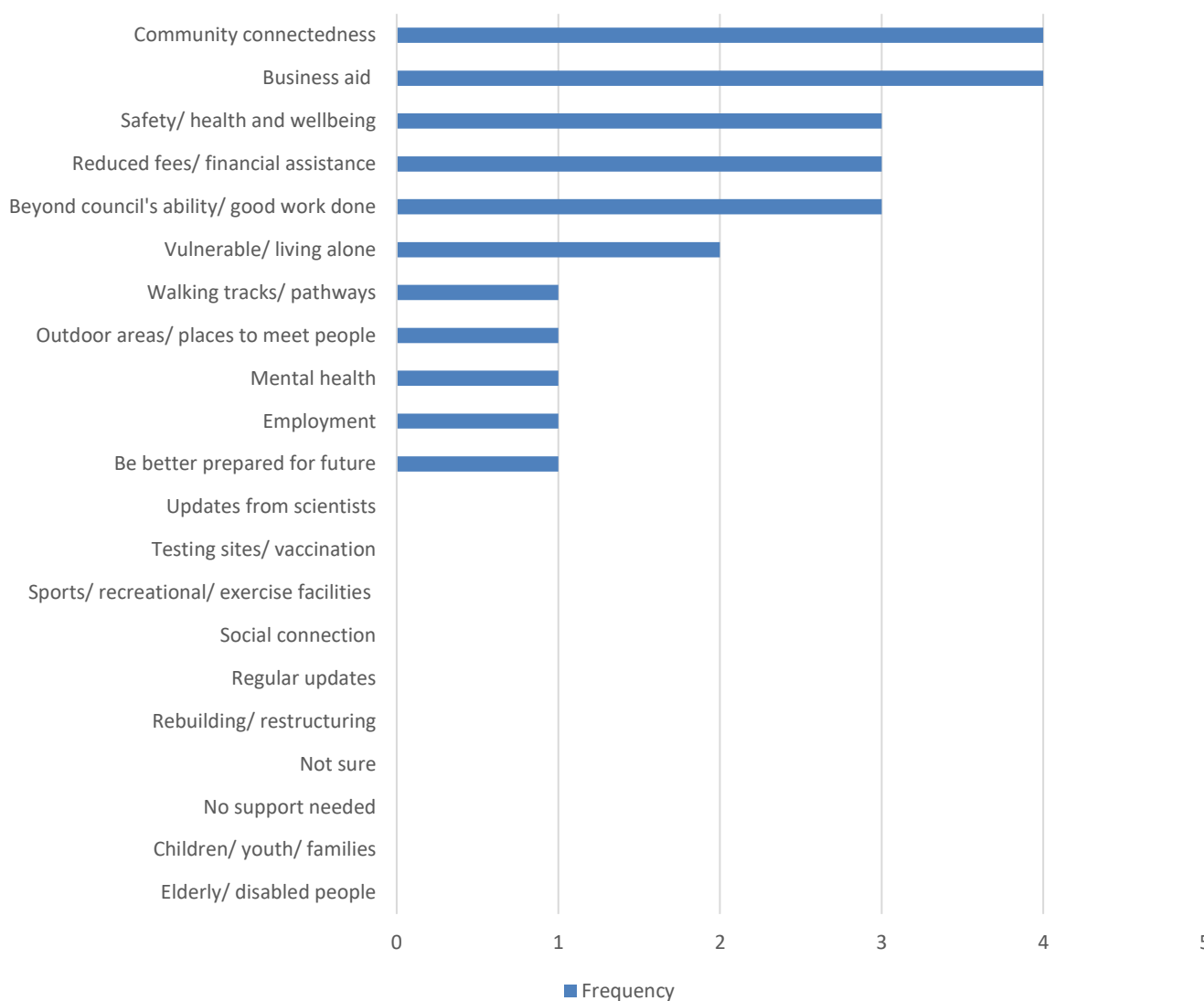


Via the **Draft Liveability, Wellbeing and Resilience Strategy consultation survey**, 13 responses to the following question were collected.

Over the next 12 months, what supports do you think the Maroondah community will need to help recover from the COVID-19 pandemic?

Results:

Draft Liveability, Wellbeing and Resilience Strategy consultation survey



Quotes:

“Enhancing connection to community through community led initiatives”

“Supporting people to access education and employment opportunities”

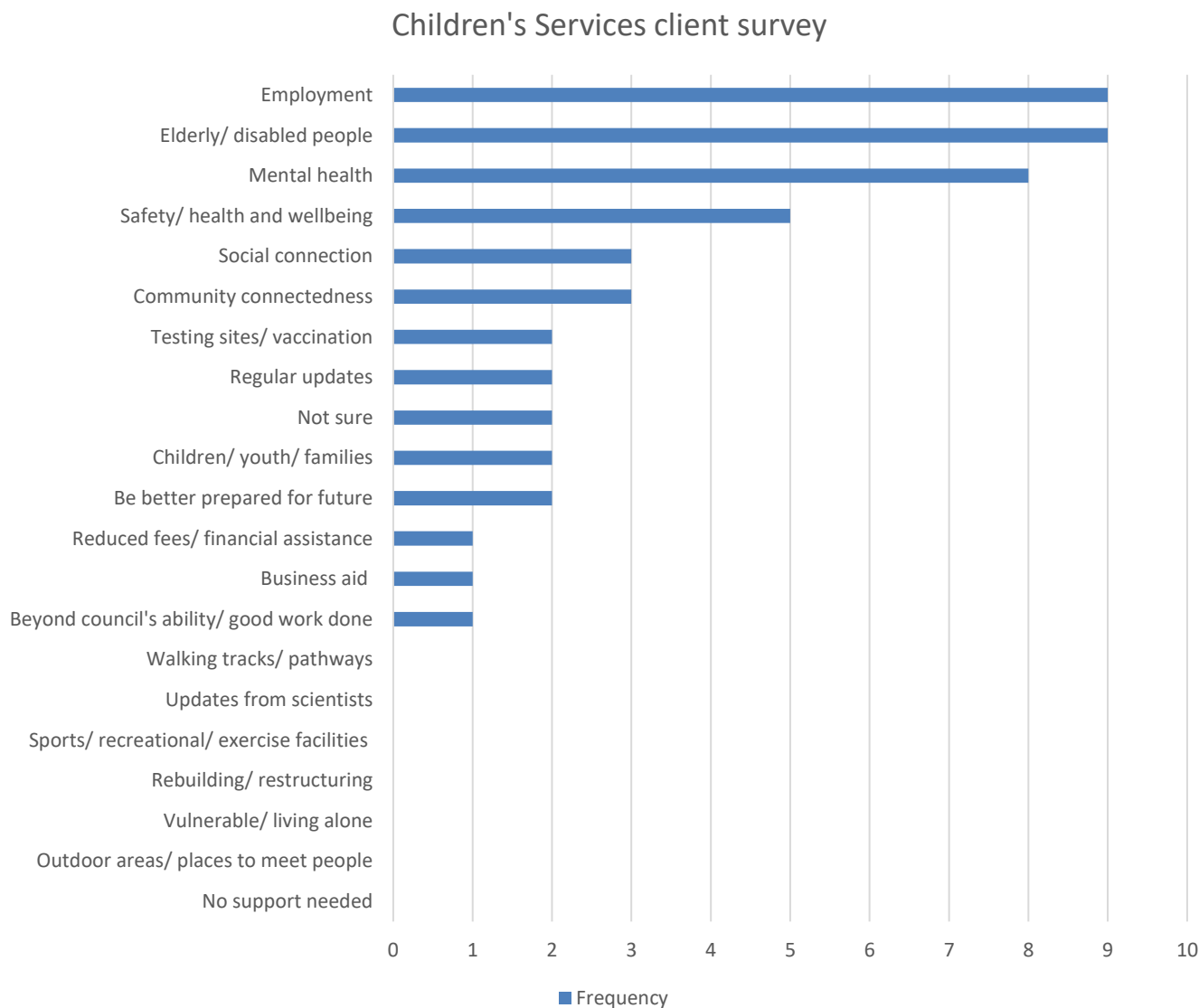
“Providing for vulnerable residents' basic needs such as food relief”

“To rebuild social cohesion, wellbeing and social confidence”

Via the **Children's Services client survey**, 17 responses to the following question were collected.

Over the next 12 months, what supports do you think the Maroondah community will need to help recover from the COVID-19 pandemic?

Results:



Quotes:

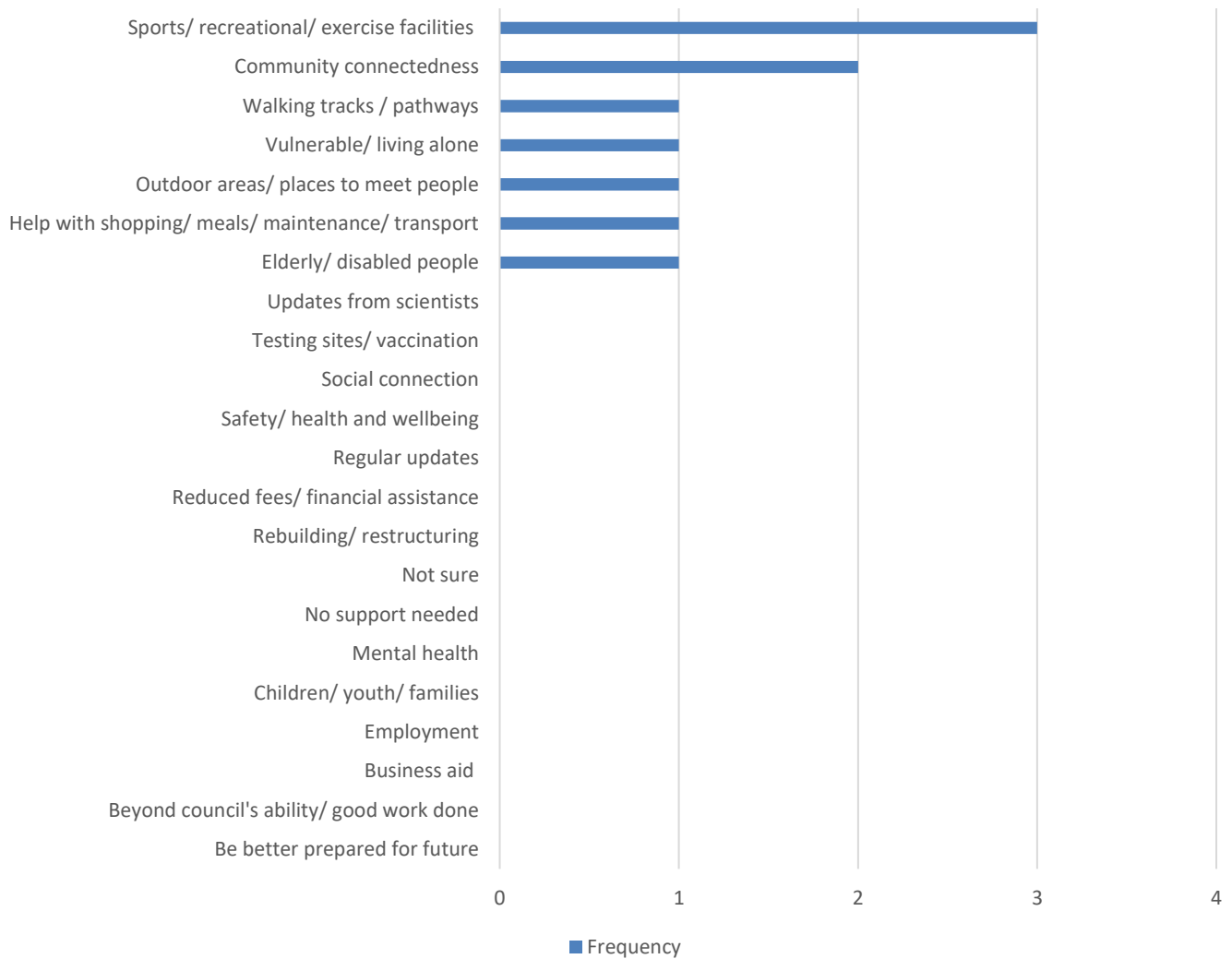
“It will be important to understand the impacts of COVID restrictions and remote learning on this cohort of kids. Not being able to attend school for such long periods of time may or may not impact kids in regard to social participation, physical activity and unhealthy eating as well as other mental health issues. All their sporting activities which instils some of these traits have been so disrupted”

Via the **Leisure client phone survey**, 9 responses to the following question were collected.

Over the next 12 months, what supports do you think the Maroondah community will need to help recover from the COVID-19 pandemic?

Results:

Leisure client phone survey

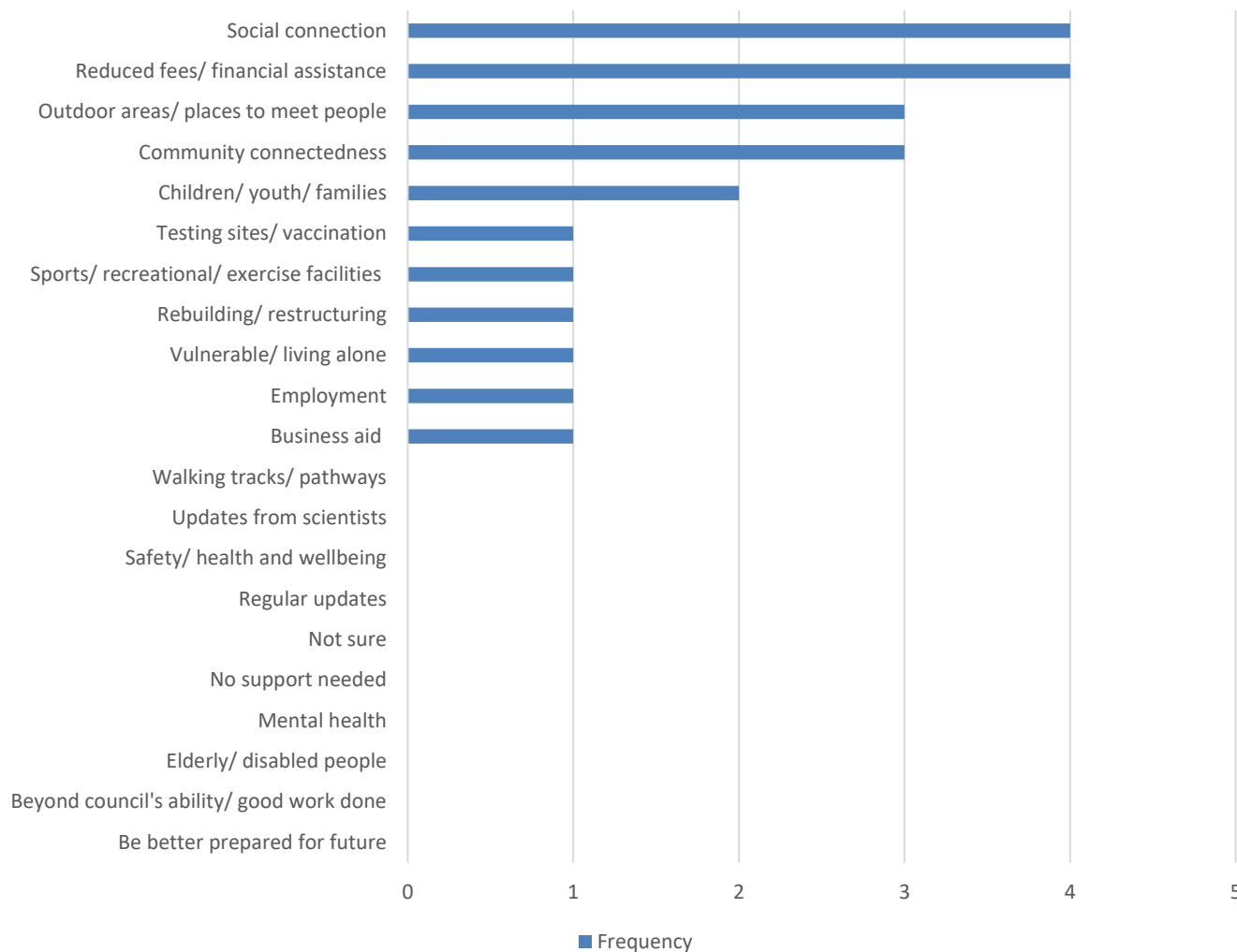


Via the **Your Say Maroondah website Ideas Board**, 20 responses to the following question were collected.

Over the next 12 months, what supports do you think the Maroondah community will need to help recover from the COVID-19 pandemic?

Results:

Your Say Maroondah website - Ideas Board



Quotes:

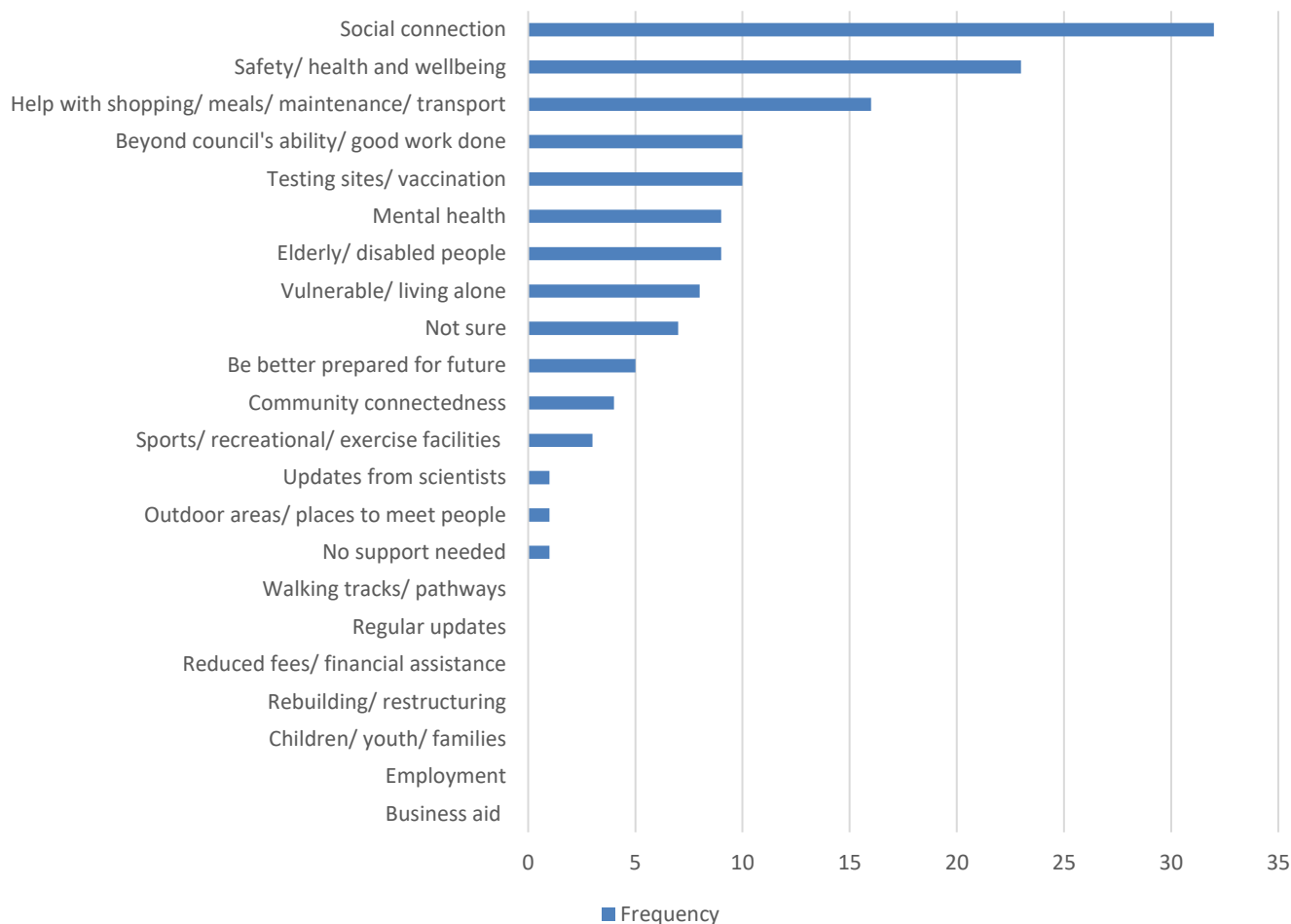
“With many areas doing massive play complexes, and the need for more outdoor gathering space (with ongoing restrictions), it would be good to see something for the community. Something with picnic areas and bench’s, spacious play equipment ... that can cater for young and older children for hours”

Via the **Aged and Disability Services client survey**, 104 responses to the following adapted question were collected.

COVID-19 continues to impact our lives. Council are interested in your thoughts. Where do you think COVID-19 related support will be needed by our Maroondah Seniors in the future?

Results:

Aged and Disability Services client survey



Quotes:

“I appreciated calls from Kerrabee and Council. Some regular contact - being on your own is difficult to process what is going on and leads to anxiety and worry”

“Make sure everyone is listened to and understood”

“This is a tough one. Support may be needed getting medical care if we do contract COVID-19, if hospitalised, or even if not meals, personal care and some home help would be possibly needed. Just someone ringing how you are and to ask if you need anything”

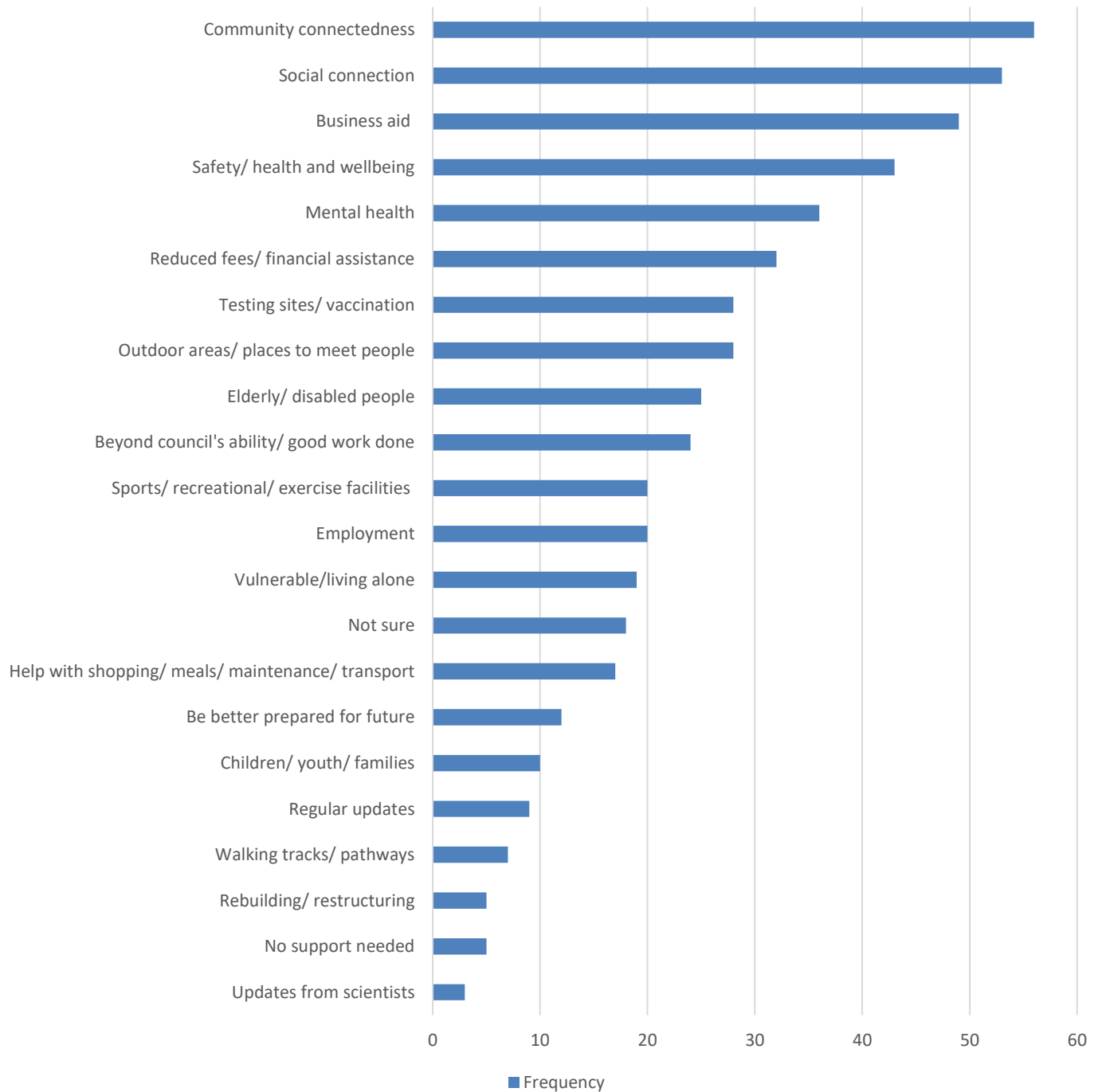
“I hope the majority of people will be vaccinated and possible booster shots where needed or required and we can go back to Kerrabee”

4.2 Overall results

Consultation responses were categorised into a series of overarching themes as per the analysis method outlined in section 2.2.

The below graph shows the combined results from across all consultation methods, noting that this includes results from the Aged & Disability client survey where the question was worded differently.

Results across all consultation methods



5. Key Themes

The themes listed below are in order of results from highest to lowest frequency across all consultation methods.

Within each theme below, the most significant or common responses across all methods of consultation are highlighted and summarised, with the most common response placed first.

1. Community connectedness

Community responses and suggestions around ways to support community connection include:

- holding local and community events, with significant mention of markets, festivals and free music events;
- community spirit needs to be fostered and enhanced;
- providing social support and group activities, particularly for vulnerable people;
- opportunities to build community engagement in local neighbourhoods;
- building community communication networks;
- running community-led initiatives; and
- re-engagement with sporting groups.

“Community events such as local markets should be supported to encourage community participation”

2. Social connection

Lack of social connection is connected to feelings of isolation and loneliness for many survey respondents. The community’s key responses on social connection include:

- social connection via online or face-to-face interaction is important for all demographics and age groups but particularly for people living alone and older residents; and
- social activities and social support are highly valued.

“Community activities need to be resumed - activities that encourage social interaction to help remove the isolation feelings and support mental health improvement”

“Weekly phone calls and a quick chat and a laugh works wonders”

“We are missing friends and activities”

3. Business aid

Community suggestions around ways to support businesses include:

- providing support for local and small businesses, including grants;
- promoting local businesses and encouraging residents to shop locally;
- holding festivals and markets for local traders;
- enhancing strip-shopping locations;
- reducing or removing fees for small business; and
- providing tailored support to businesses most affected by the pandemic.

“Support to local small businesses and organisations will be vital to the recovery. Financial support is needed, but also increased support from Council in regards to offering promotional and partnership opportunities”

4. Safety/ health and wellbeing

Maintaining overall health, wellbeing and increasing social confidence (i.e., feeling safe to go out into the community and to socialise) is important for many survey respondents. Suggestions to support positive outcomes in these areas include:

- wellbeing activities (welfare check-ins mentioned specifically by Aged and Disability Services client survey respondents);
- opportunities for people to increase physical activity;
- safe avenues to report domestic violence and abuse;
- support to ensure food security;
- more education and enforcement of mask wearing, QR check-ins and hygiene; and
- education sessions/ information on healthy lifestyles.

5. Mental health

The impacts of the pandemic on mental health has been raised as a concern by many survey respondents. Key community responses around mental health include:

- the need for affordable and easily accessible mental health services;
- increased feelings of stress, anxiety and depression;
- increased feelings of isolation, loneliness and hopelessness;
- child and adolescent mental health services; and
- mental health education sessions.

“Mental health support for families. It has affected not only adults but so many children. Mental health and wellbeing programs to support the community are desperately needed”

6. Reduced fees/ financial assistance

Survey respondents noted that financial hardship and instability have been experienced by members of the community, and suggest:

- no rate increases;
- reduced fees;
- rate relief for small business; and
- financial relief and assistance.

7. Outdoor areas/ places to meet people

Many survey respondents valued open places and spaces to meet, connect and spend time. Key community responses surrounding this include:

- more outdoor areas and undercover areas to sit and socialise including benches, picnic tables and barbeques;
- more outdoor dining areas for coffee shops and restaurants;
- more off-leash dog parks;
- well-maintained open and green spaces for people to enjoy; and
- outdoor social activities in local parks.

“I think that the amount of time people spent outside was amazing. It would be lovely to see more of that - BBQ’s and under cover areas would be amazing”

8. Testing sites/ vaccination

To support community recovery, a number of respondents noted a desire for the following:

- the majority of residents receiving the vaccine;
- easy access to vaccination (including boosters) and testing;
- vaccination appointments to be easily accessible; and
- a strong vaccination publicity drive.

“We will need to live with this virus in the future. Support which can help with this would be good - increasing vaccinations is the main need right now and for people to be vaccinated”

9. Elderly/ disabled people

Supports and concerns raised for the elderly or people with a disability include:

- ensuring infrastructure such as carparks are available and located close to facilities attended by older residents or those with disability;
- investigate and support specific initiatives for over 50's who have been forced out of the work force due to the pandemic;
- more support for the over 80's age group;
- undertaking community engagement to address the current needs of the community; and
- support for people who are not computer literate.

"For me the worst effect of the COVID-19 event is the need for the wearing of facemasks in public. Because of hearing problems I need to rely on some lip reading - not everyone speaks clearly."

"This virus will be here longer than can be imagined, we'll all have to learn to live with it and treat each other with respect, consideration etc, maybe advertise telephone numbers which seniors can call for some sort of help, not many have internet"

"Connection is needed! Isolation for the elderly can be debilitating"

10. Beyond Council's ability/ good work done

Many survey respondents commended Council's work, with particular initiatives or support services receiving praise. There were several suggestions for Council to advocate for lockdowns to cease or for restrictions to be lifted within the municipality, which fell under 'beyond Council's ability'.

"I'm impressed what has been done so far. I like the signage such as "Be Kind" in local strip shopping precincts"

11. Sports/ recreational/ exercise facilities

Key comments raised by survey respondents around facilities include:

- well-maintained outdoor facilities including dog parks and playgrounds are important; and
- looking forward to resuming recreational and group sporting activities.

"The library throughout last year was a life line for a lot of people - for me it was books, for mum it was DVD's - for my friend's kids online story time"

12. Employment

Supports mentioned to assist the community in employment included:

- providing more jobs or supports for job seekers to access opportunities;
- re-engaging volunteers and promoting new volunteering opportunities; and
- support for artists and the creative industry.

13. Vulnerable/ living alone

To support more vulnerable community members, a number of survey respondents suggested the following:

- support for vulnerable residents including through food relief, material aid, social support and welfare checks;
- support for organisations providing assistance to vulnerable community members; and
- support for people sleeping rough or experiencing homelessness.

14. Help with shopping/ meals/ maintenance/ transport

A number of respondents of the Aged and Disability Services client survey and Leisure client phone survey highlighted the need for support in day-to-day activities including:

- assistance with shopping and groceries;
- home maintenance such as gardening and cleaning;
- delivered meals;
- transport; and
- personal care.

“Preferably a scheme where our shopping could be done for us because that takes a lot of time when you are old and is the most likely place for any contact with this transmission of the virus to take place”

15. Be better prepared for future

Survey respondents provided suggestions to support the community to be better prepared for the future including:

- opportunities for flexible events and activities that can quickly adapt to the changing circumstances;
- rebuilding wellbeing, social cohesion and social confidence;
- opportunities to promote small business;
- information and support around how to live with COVID-19 in the community; and
- preparedness and support once Melbourne opens up and cases increase in Maroondah.

16. Children/ youth/ families

A number of survey respondents provided suggestions around ways to support children, youth and families, including through:

- more local events and workshops for children, youth and families;
- children's play groups and social support for new parents/ carers;
- greater support for teenagers, particularly in mental health; and
- academic support for students.

"Teens need a lot of support at this time, they have loss of regular activities, disrupted school and social lives, and parents who are stressed by changed work conditions, home schooling requirements and ongoing pandemic concerns"

"New parents' groups for parents who missed out/ only offered online groups. A lot of new parents [are] feeling isolated right now"

17. Regular updates

Having access to information is noted as important by a number of survey respondents and suggestions surrounding this include:

- accessible public information about what is available locally;
- information around outreach and support services;
- more community information via newsletters and other hard copy formats;
- faster response and greater support when disaster strikes; and
- centralised resource for support or information from Council about COVID-19.

18. Walking tracks/ pathways

A number of survey respondents noted a desire to see:

- well-maintained, safe and improved nature trails, footpaths and active transport options.

19. Rebuilding/ restructuring

Suggestions relating to rebuilding/ restructuring include:

- grants to improve local strip shopping locations; and
- more consideration of the impacts of new developments in local neighbourhoods.

"Bring forward major infrastructure projects so that the economy is encouraged as the vaccination rates reach targets"

20. Updates from scientists

A number of survey respondents valued and follow advice given by experts.

To contact Council





- phone 1300 88 22 33 or (03) 9298 4598
- SMS 0480 020 200
- visit our website at www.maroondah.vic.gov.au
- email maroondah@maroondah.vic.gov.au

Translating and Interpreter Service

13 14 50

National Relay Service (NRS)

13 36 77

-  MaroondahCityCouncil
-  maroondahcitycouncil
-  Maroondah City Council
-  CityofMaroondah
-  Maroondah City Council

