

# Social Infrastructure Strategy

## Community engagement summary



"Social infrastructure is just as vital for economic prosperity as it is for social wellbeing, and that it benefits the entire community and plays a significant role in enhancing the lives of people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities"  
(LMM 25/06/2019)

In 2019, the City of Newcastle Council (CN), acknowledged the importance of having appropriate and quality social infrastructure to support growth.

### Engagement activities

To understand current and future social infrastructure needs, CN partnered with Cred Consulting to engage community members and stakeholders. Engagement with the community and stakeholders including government agencies, University of Newcastle, local social welfare and community service providers, and City of Newcastle teams, and ran between 5 November and 30 November 2020, and included:

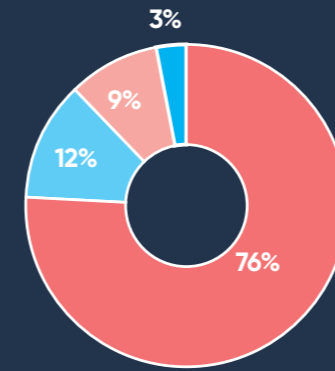
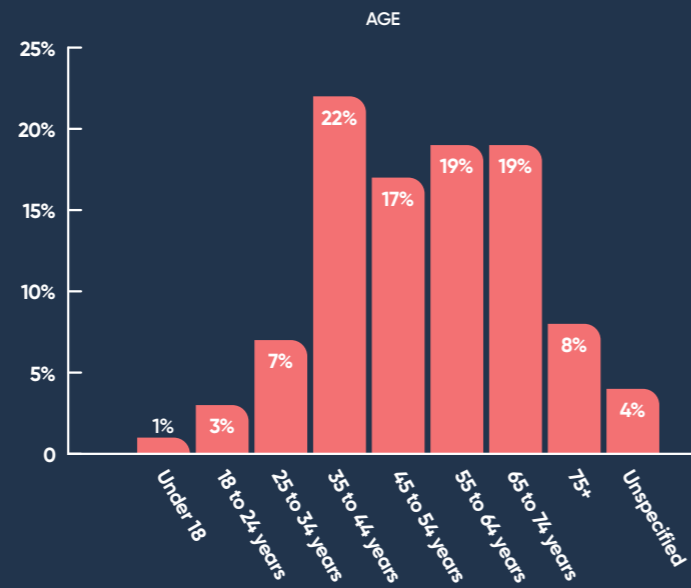
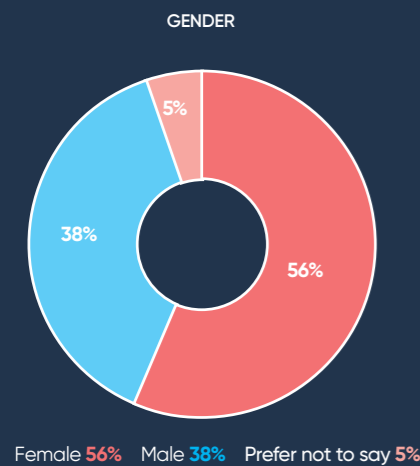
#### Online surveys

via the *Have Your Say* page on the CN website

#### Community survey

- **213** participants
- **91%** live in the Newcastle local government area (LGA)

#### Demographics



#### Service provider survey

##### 34 participants

- Not for profit, for purpose of social enterprise: **76%**
- Commercial: **12%**
- Social group, club or Incorporated body: **9%**
- Other type: **3%**

#### Online interactive map via social pinpoint



**301** pins dropped across City of Newcastle LGA

#### Stakeholder interviews

via video and phone call

#### External stakeholder services meetings

##### 7 meetings

NSW Government Hunter and Central Coast Development Corporation  
NSW Government Department of Communities & Justice  
NSW Government Department of Education  
NSW Government Venues NSW  
University of Newcastle  
The Canopy  
Mercy Services

#### Internal stakeholders

##### 5 meetings

Open Space and Recreation  
Aquatic Services  
Community Planning and Development  
Property and Facilities  
Culture, Civic, Libraries, Child Care



### Key findings

#### Social infrastructure is highly valued and utilised by the community



**97%** of survey respondents agreed that for Newcastle, having access to public open space and recreation facilities is important.



Libraries (**65%**), cultural and arts spaces (**63%**), and community health centres (**41%**) were the most utilised community facilities among survey respondents, and in terms of public open space respondents are more likely to utilise footpaths (**85%**), parks (**82%**) and walking trails (**67%**) in Newcastle LGA.



**94%** of survey respondents agreed that having access to community facilities, and the services and networks offered in them is important.

Participants highlighted that community facilities and public open spaces will continue to play an important role as the population grows and changes, and to support community health and wellbeing outcomes.

'Keeping things pleasant, functional, and affordable are the big three. These are vital spaces for the community and our services'

Engagement respondent feedback

Social infrastructure should be affordable for everyone to use and hire

- Across engagement activities, participants indicated free or affordable spaces are a key outcome for great community facilities and open spaces and would like to see more services, activities and programs that are free or affordable for the community to participate in.
- Service providers suggested affordable spaces and facilities are highly important to continue to deliver programs and services to the community.
- Service provider survey respondents would like to see more spaces that are easily hireable, and in particular, Council-owned facilities available for hire at a subsidised or community rate.

'Really need to be affordable. COVID-19 has highlighted the equity issues across the city and some places are just too expensive for groups to use, particularly groups from lower socioeconomic areas'.

Engagement respondent feedback

Improving access to social infrastructure that is equitably distributed is a high priority

'Programs need to be as inclusive as possible, and provide comfortable and easy activities'

Engagement respondent feedback

- A range of social infrastructure that is accessible, inclusive, and welcoming to all members of the community including age, abilities, and cultures is a key priority.
- Survey respondents indicated they were more likely to travel to community facilities and open space and public recreation facilities by car, commenting there is a lack of frequent, reliable, and connected public transport options to travel across the LGA, and few accessible public parking at facilities.
- 30% of respondents indicated they would like to see community facilities and open space and public recreation facilities fairly distributed across Newcastle, with consideration given for areas or people in need and particularly further distributed outside of Ward 1 (Newcastle CBD). Services also highlighted the need for increased access to social infrastructure in the growing Western Corridor where there is also increasing social disadvantage.

Increasing capacity and flexibility of Newcastle's social infrastructure

- Multipurpose, flexible, and adaptable community facilities and public open spaces that accommodate for a wide range of activities and interests was a top priority for participants.
- Contributors to the interactive map indicated there is a growing demand for flexible multi-purpose spaces, expressing a need for co-located community and recreational spaces that supports the increase in young families in some areas across the LGA.
- Opportunities to better improve public open spaces (streets, beaches, parks) for social and recreational and informal participation, including internet connectivity, improved amenity, and intergenerational spaces.



Improve the quality of what we already have to increase use and activation

- Participants would like to see improvements to existing social infrastructure to increase community use and activation.
- Across all engagement activities, respondents expressed a strong need for additional and improved amenities across community facilities and open spaces and public recreation facilities, with priorities focussing on accessible public toilets, change rooms, bubblers, more trees, shaded seating and table areas, lighting at night to activate spaces, increasing bins and waste facilities to reduce littering, and improved surfacing of pathways to support active transport and recreation links across the LGA.
- Increased maintenance of open spaces, particularly surfacing of footpaths and pathways to improve safety, accessibility and create connected networks across the LGA for active transport and recreational use. Similarly, survey respondents and contributors indicated parks, sports fields and courts are a priority, acknowledging increasing participation trends in formal sport, particularly in female memberships.

'Spaces need to be multipurpose and managed not purely as venues, but understanding the role they play in wellbeing driven by community development'

Engagement respondent feedback



'CN needs to build trust with local community groups and the community and recognise the benefits these groups provide. This can be achieved through low-cost spaces'.

Engagement respondent feedback

Partnership, collaboration and sharing

- Stakeholders suggested that there are opportunities for CN to work in partnership with the large number of services, government agencies and major institutions to plan for and deliver great social infrastructure to meet future demand. This includes in growth areas such as the Western Corridor, Newcastle CBD, and Hunter Park; through sharing social infrastructure with schools and universities; and working with services to improve access to spaces to deliver outreach services and programs in planning catchments disconnected from transport or social infrastructure provision.