



Your Budget, Your Choice
Community Budget Information
Consultation Summary Report

Date: April/May 2013

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Executive Summary

The Mayor for Rockhampton Regional Council has been legislated to prepare and deliver a draft budget to the elected representatives of the Council for deliberation. As part of this process Mayor Margaret Strelow has sought to understand the community's views and opinions on potential changes to service delivery with an aim to increase financial sustainability and deliver appropriate services into the future.

The "Your Budget, Your Choice" community engagement was designed to ensure that any person who resides in the remaining Rockhampton Regional Area wanting to participate could do so. A proactive approach was used by the Mayor to speak to local residents across the Region with 18 face to face workshops at different localities; specific sessions inviting key community groups and specific sessions for sector leaders and business groups. Other methods such as an online survey and a mail-based survey were also undertaken with the same context and questions being asked through these mediums as through the workshops.

Total response for the exercise was 624 respondents; this represented a 95% confidence level with an interval of 3.91% (based on the remaining Regional population of approx 80,000). In terms of representivity there was a good cross section of people from across the Region that responded, with all age groups represented. Of the respondents 344 attended workshops, 262 completed the survey online and 18 completed the paper based survey.

Main messages from participants...

Consider placing the Heritage Village in community hands and leasing the Shearing Shed

- 78% of respondents "liked or could be persuaded" by the idea of the Heritage Village operated by the community.
- 79% of respondents "liked or could be persuaded" by leasing out the Shearing Shed to a private operator.
- 52% of respondents "did not like" the idea of the Heritage Village without animals.

Consider selling the Rockhampton Airport but use the money wisely

- 69% of respondents "liked or could be persuaded" by the idea of the selling the Airport on the basis that the funds would be used to bring down the debt.
- 31% of respondents "did not like" the idea, generally 1/3 of the respondents opposed was the average across most localities.
- Various additional statements were provided by respondents to sell the airport including using all of the funds on Council's \$166M debt, leaving Council with close to no debt. Comments to save the airport also expressed.

Consider changing mowing maintenance (35 days to 40 days) for selected Parks

- 86% of respondents "liked or could be persuaded" by the idea of changing the mowing cycle for selected parks.

Consider lowering the temperature of the Southside Pool to save money

- 90% of respondents "liked or could be persuaded" by the idea of lowering the temperature of the Southside Pool.

Keep the animals in the Rockhampton Zoo and place an entry fee between \$2 and \$5

- 60% of respondents "did not like" the idea of progressively reducing the exhibits.
- 88% of respondents were willing to pay entry to the Rockhampton Zoo.
- 80% of respondents willing to pay between \$2-\$5, 8% of respondents more that \$5 and 12% not willing to pay.

Participants polarised for the option of Reducing days for the Art Gallery

- 42% of respondents "liked the idea" of closing the Art Gallery for 2 days a week, whilst 36% of respondents "did not like the idea". Comments were made around closing it for 2 days through the week instead of the weekend.
- 47% of respondents "did not like" the idea of reducing the shown collection.

Participants polarised on whether to keep or close the Technology Centre (COIN)

- 41% of respondents "liked the idea", 39% of respondents "did not like" the idea and 20% "could be persuaded".
- Participants from different age groups were also polarised on whether to keep or close COIN.

Overall Statistical Summary

	Potential saving / income per year	I like it	I could be persuaded	I don't like it
Rockhampton Heritage Village				
Operate without animals – therefore having it as a static display	121K	22%	26%	52%
Operate without animals but keep horses for the stagecoach rides	15K	25%	23%	52%
Lease the Shearing Shed	Overheads	50%	29%	21%
Rockhampton Heritage Village to be community run	735K	50%	28%	22%
Rockhampton Art Gallery				
Reduce the days of opening days from 7 days to 5 weekdays	46.5K	42%	22%	36%
Reduce the shown collection.	400K	32%	21%	47%
Rockhampton Zoo				
Progressively reduce the number of exhibits.	300k by third year	22%	18%	60%
Southside Pool				
Council can save expenditure by reducing the temperature by a couple of degrees	21.5K	76%	14%	10%
Rockhampton Community Technology Centre				
Discontinue the centre and have other service providers deliver service	201K	41%	20%	39%
Mowing Maintenance of Local Parks				
Mowing maintenance would go from 35 days to 40 days across growing seasons	350K	66%	20%	14%
Rockhampton Airport				
Council could sell it, use half to reduce the debt, invest the rest and get to a surplus without impacting rate bills when sold	\$12.5M Note that the components of this includes income and savings	44%	25%	31%

	Potential saving / income per year	Not willing to pay	\$2	\$3	\$5	\$8	\$10 and above
Rockhampton Zoo							
What would you be willing to pay to enter the Zoo if it retained all exhibits? This will help to reduce the overall cost to Council.	Pedant on visitor numbers	12%	26%	14%	40%	6%	2%

Methodology

The “*Your Budget, Your Choice*” community engagement was triggered by the Mayor who wanted to understand the community’s views and opinions on potential service delivery modifications with an aim to increase financial sustainability and deliver appropriate services into the future.

The “*Your Budget, Your Choice*” community engagement was undertaken between the Wednesday 3 April and Monday 6 May and was designed to ensure that any person who resides in the remaining Rockhampton Regional Area wanting to participate could do so. Methods included face to face sessions, an online survey and a mail based survey (requested through customer service) which all had the same context and questions.

The “*Your Budget Your Choice*” sessions and survey were communicated to the public using a variety of methods including, media releases, advertising, use of traditional media, use of Regional Voice and social media. The Mayor undertook some informal lead up communications through local media, and the sessions were officially announced by media release at the end of March. This was followed by fairly extensive coverage by all local newspapers including The Morning Bulletin and the Queensland Telegraph, local radio stations 4RO, ABC Capricornia and Sea Fm/Hot FM and the local television news programs of WIN News and Seven Local News. Paid advertisements were placed in both The Morning Bulletin and The Queensland Telegraph on several occasions. Posts were made to Facebook and Twitter in the lead up to, and throughout the consultation, both advising of upcoming sessions and directing people to the online survey. Images of posters listing the dates on Facebook seemed to be effective. Utilising the bush telegraph (via key contacts) for rural engagements also ensured a quality turnout in these areas.

The Mayor took a proactive approach to speak to as many local residents across the region as possible. In total 18 face to face workshops covering:

- Localities – including Rockhampton (North) and (South), Gracemere, Mount Morgan, Bouldercombe, Alton Downs, Bajool, Wycarbah
- Specific sessions – community groups, including arts|culture|heritage, sporting and seniors
- Specific sessions for sector leaders and persons from the business/economic sector

The sessions, the online survey and the mail based survey provided an overview of the current situation that the Council is in, which included:

- How did we get to where we are?
- What has changed? Our debt position
- The level of Government Grants
- Increased services, infrastructure investment
- Increased expenses
- What have Council already decided to do and considering to more in the future
- De-amalgamation
- Comparison of rates across like Councils
- What are our options?



Keypad used by respondents at workshops/meetings

Then questions were asked of respondents and this was based on Mayor (or delegate) describing the service provision in detail then providing the options for the respondents and asking whether they “liked it”, “could be persuaded” or “didn’t like” the option being placed forward.

A new technology was used in the sessions and this was the Turning Point software which provided in real-time interactive where the Mayor asked questions and the respondent would select the preferred option via the Keypad shown here in the picture above.

Importance of facilities ranked from participants within the Region

Overall Rank	Facility Provided	
1	Pilbeam Theatre	
2	Sporting Fields	
3	Playgrounds	
4	Rockhampton Heritage Village	
5	Pools	
6	The Rockhampton Zoo	
7	Rockhampton Art Gallery	

Rockhampton Heritage Village

Through the *Your Budget, Your Choice* sessions and also the online/mail based survey participants were provided with an overview of the Heritage Village, its social value and its current operating position. The following is the specific overview information provided:

"It costs 735K as this is operating at a financial loss but a social gain

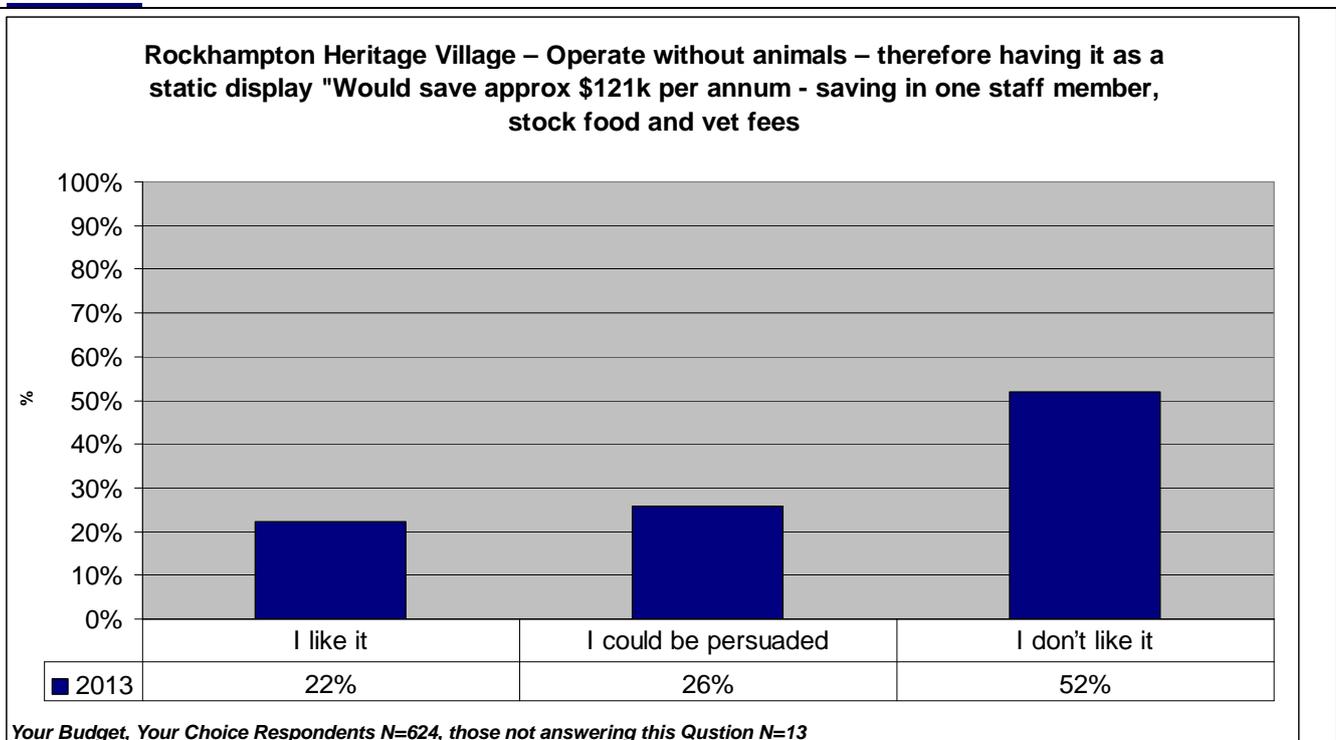
- *We employ 7.63 FTE staff + casual hours as required for functions at the Shearing Shed*
- *Costs \$589,712 cost to Council plus an additional \$146,00 for facilities maintenance*
- *Volunteers donate around 40,000 hours per year*
- *7288 paying visitors for year ended 30 June 2012; income from visitors (excl markets) \$51,000*
- *Total visitation for markets 46,651"*



Four options were asked of the community:

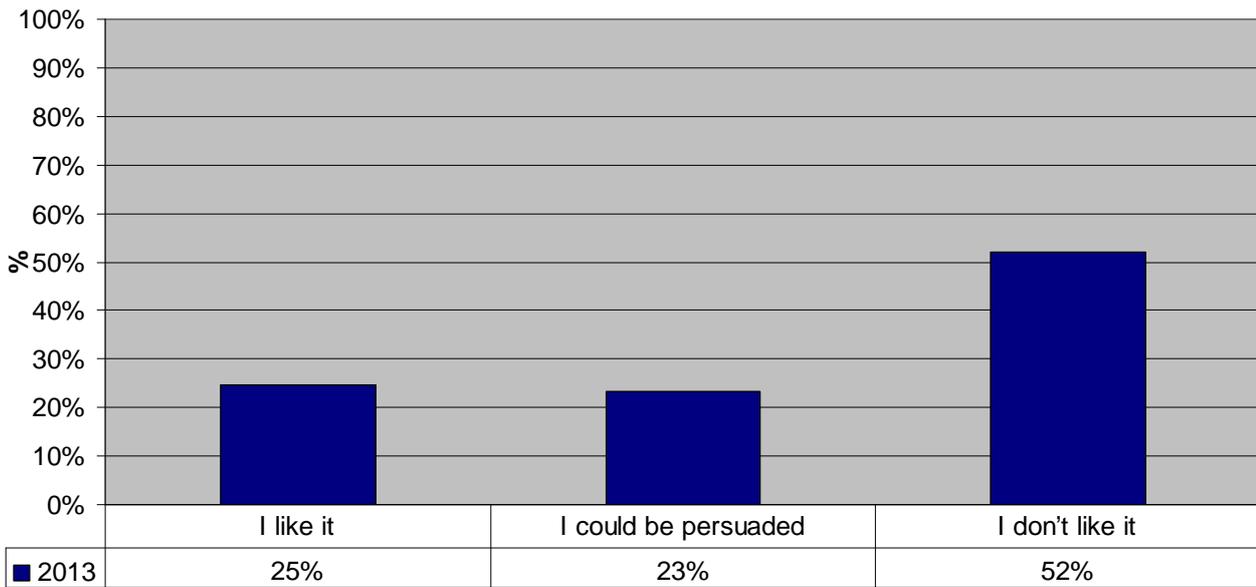
- 1) Operate without animals therefore having it as a static display – *"Would save approx \$121k per annum - saving in one staff member, stock food and vet fees"*
- 2) Operate without animals but keep horses for the stagecoach rides. – *"Would save \$15,000 per annum"*
- 3) Lease the Shearing Shed – *"The Shearing Shed operates close to break even, however still has various overheads. We could lease the Shearing Shed"*
- 4) Heritage Village to be community run – *"Would save a significant amount of money for Council and put this in the hands of the community"*. It was detailed a transition period between Council and an appropriate organisation would need to be completed.

Results



Analysis: As can be seen above, 52% of participants "didn't like" the idea of operating without animals; further analysis suggests that persons of all ages didn't support this idea and those that lived within the region for over 30 years were significant in their opposition. The localities of Bajool and surrounds* (80%), Alton Downs (67%), Wycarbah and surrounds (65%), and North Rockhampton (57%) were the strongest in their opposition.

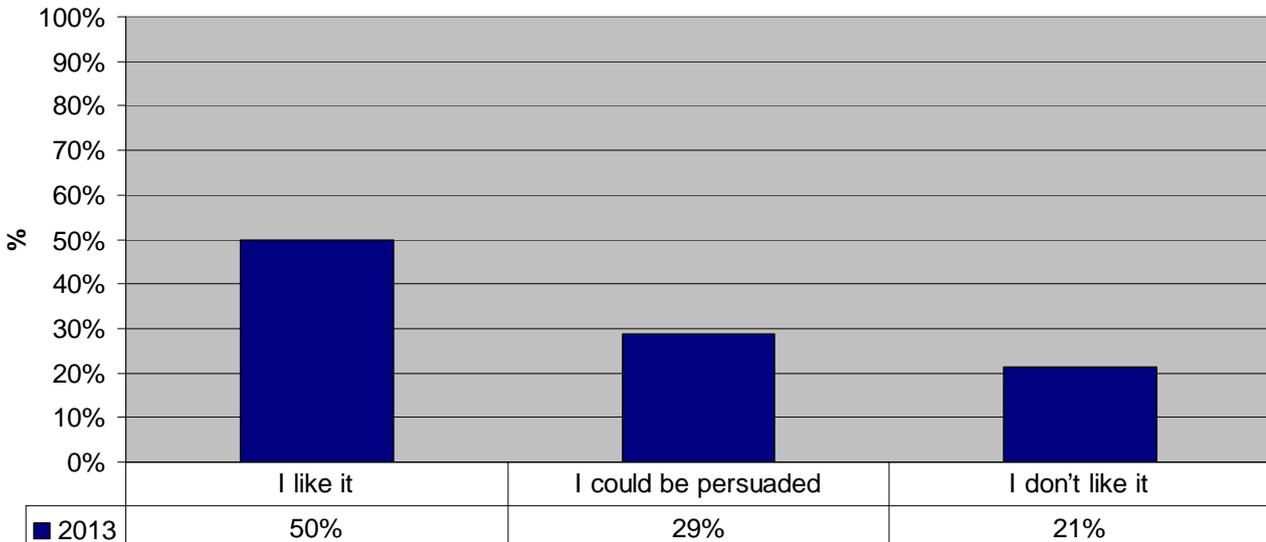
Rockhampton Heritage Village – Operate without animals but keep horses for the stagecoach rides. “Would save \$15,000 per annum”



Your Budget, Your Choice Respondents N=624 ,those not answering this Question N=14

Analysis: The chart above is similar in many respects to the “Operating without animals chart” with those that didn’t support that idea generally thought the same with this option. The exception was the 18-25yr olds where 1/3 of this group “Liked the idea”, 1/3 “Could be persuaded” and 1/3 “Didn’t like the idea”. Those that did not support the idea of the Heritage Village being community run were also strongly opposed to this concept as well.

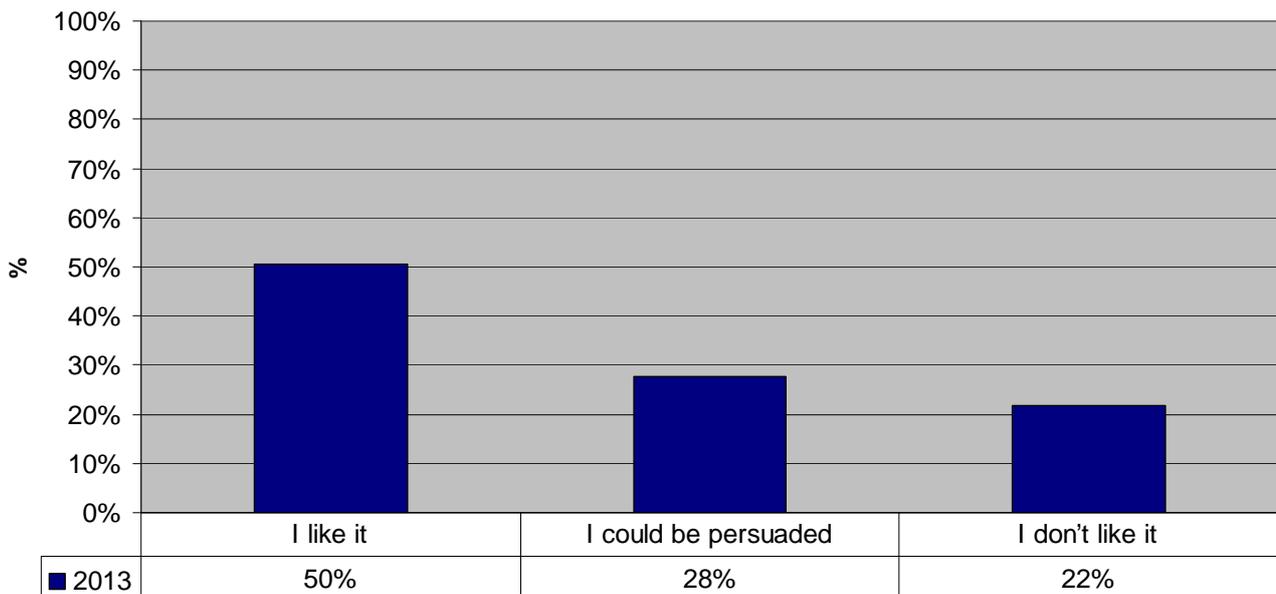
Rockhampton Heritage Village Lease the Shearing Shed “The Shearing Shed operates close to break even, however still has various overheads. We could lease the Shearing Shed”



Your Budget, Your Choice Respondents N=631, those not answering this Question N=13

Analysis: As can be seen above leasing the Shearing Shed had half of all respondents liking the concept. This was strongly supported by 18-25yr olds (63% support), 26-40yr (53% support) and 41-55yr olds (55% support each). 60% of all participants at the business session also supported this concept. Those that were supportive of the Heritage Village being community run were also highly supportive of this idea.

Rockhampton Heritage Village - The Village to be community run

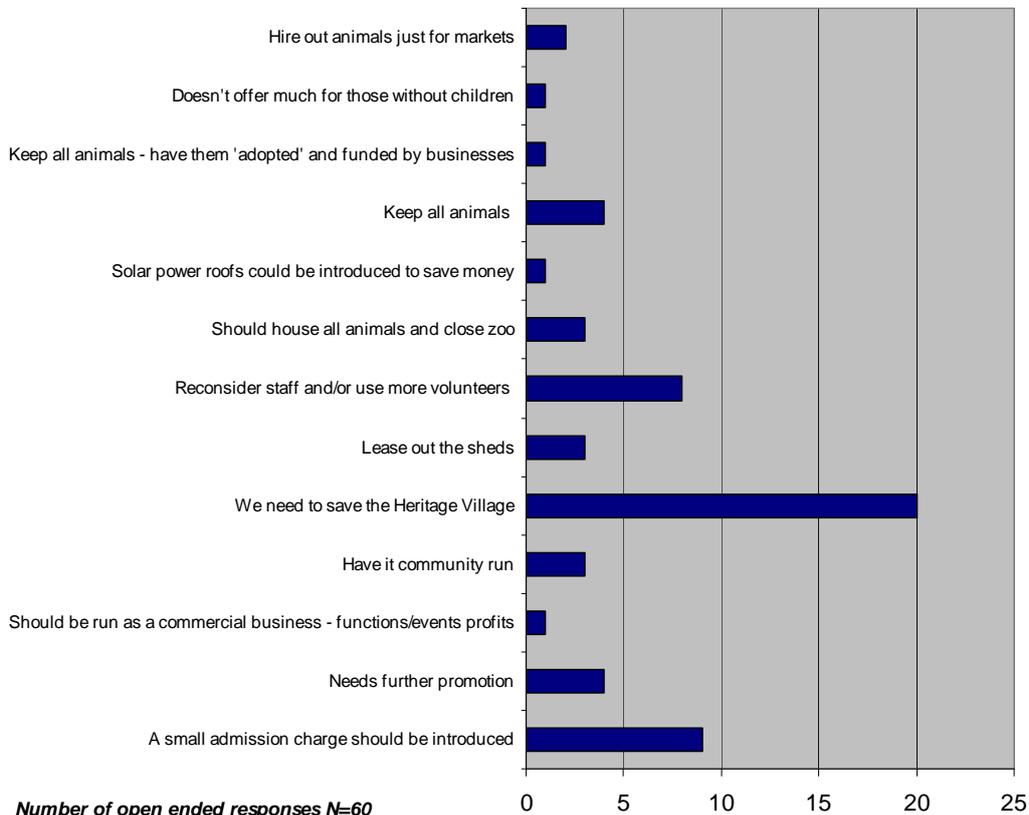


Your Budget, Your Choice Respondents N=631, those not answering this Question N=13

Analysis: The Rockhampton Heritage Village to be community run option had very strong support from Sporting and Seniors groups with both groups having 67% of participants that liked this idea. In terms of a person's age and their support the age groups of 56-59 had the least amount of support of any group with 26% of this group not liking this option.

Open ended responses – Heritage Village

Heritage Comments - Workshop and Survey combined



Number of open ended responses N=60

Rockhampton Art Gallery

Through the *Your Budget, Your Choice* sessions and also the online/mail based survey participants were provided with an overview of the Rockhampton Art Gallery and it being one of best regional art collections in Australia. The following is the specific overview information provided:

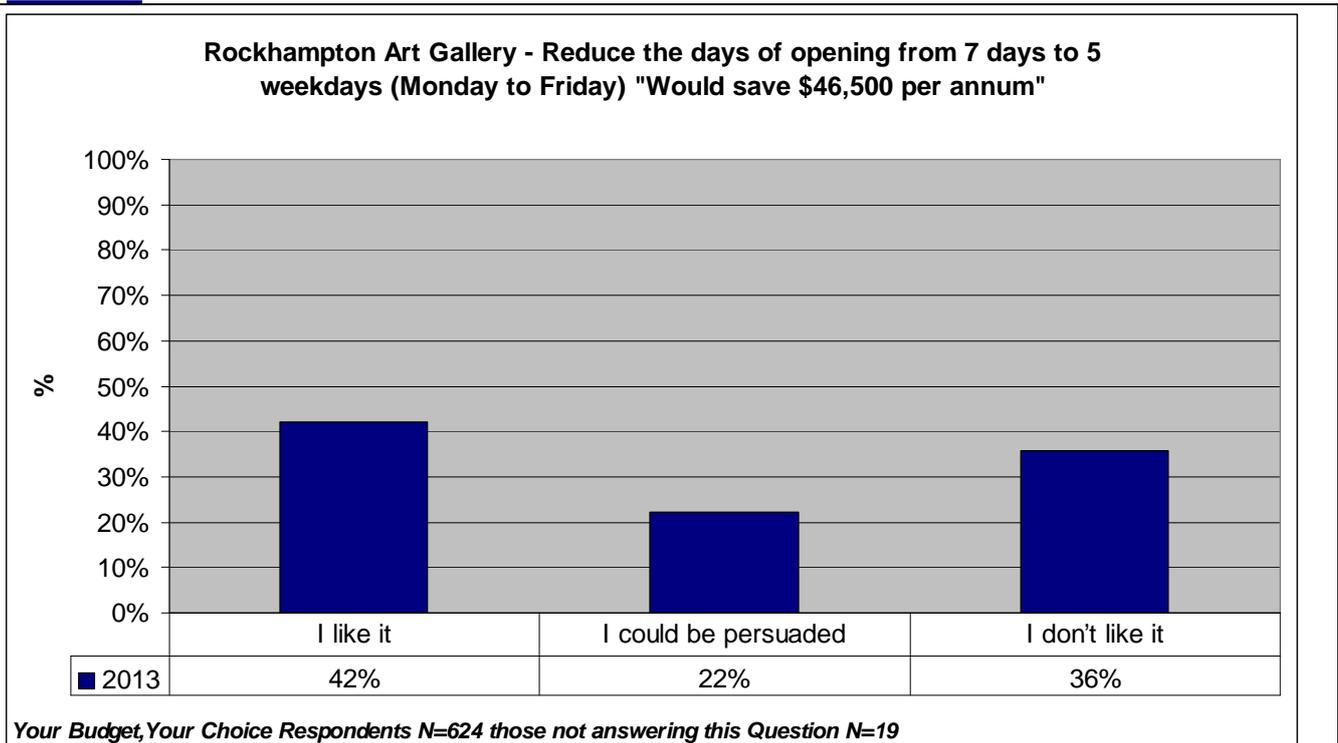


- “Costs \$ 747,918 per annum
- Last valued at \$14 million
- 5.37 Full Time Staff Equivalent
- 16733 visitors per annum - for year ended 30 June 2012
- 2088 volunteer hours for period from 1/7/12 - 28/2/13 - figures not previously kept”

Two options were asked of the community:

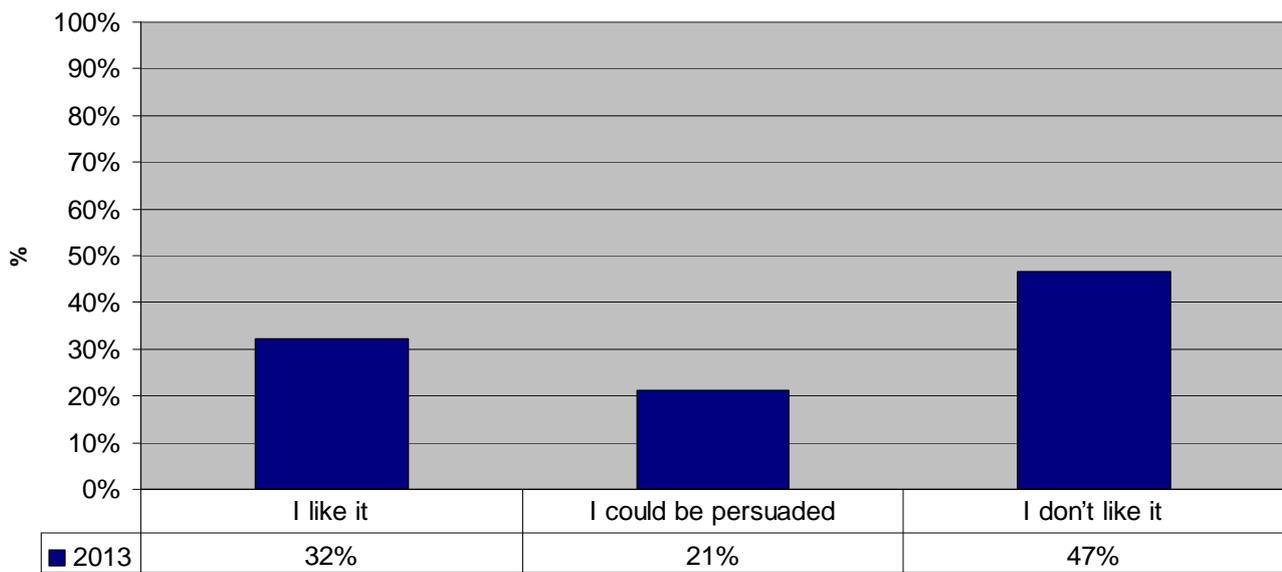
- 1) Reduce the days of opening days from 7 days to 5 days a week (weekdays) “Savings of approx \$46,500 could be expected.”
- 2) Council could mothball the major collection and revert to being a much smaller ‘local’ gallery “Savings of approx \$400,000 could be expected.”

Results



Analysis: While overall this option is polarised when all responses are combined, an age of a person provides a different perspective. On average the older a person gets the more likely they are to like this as option, for example only 29% of 18-24yr olds like this concept, then results ranged upwards for older age groups.

Rockhampton Art Gallery - Reduce the shown collection "Would save approx \$400,000 but an alternative location would need to be found"

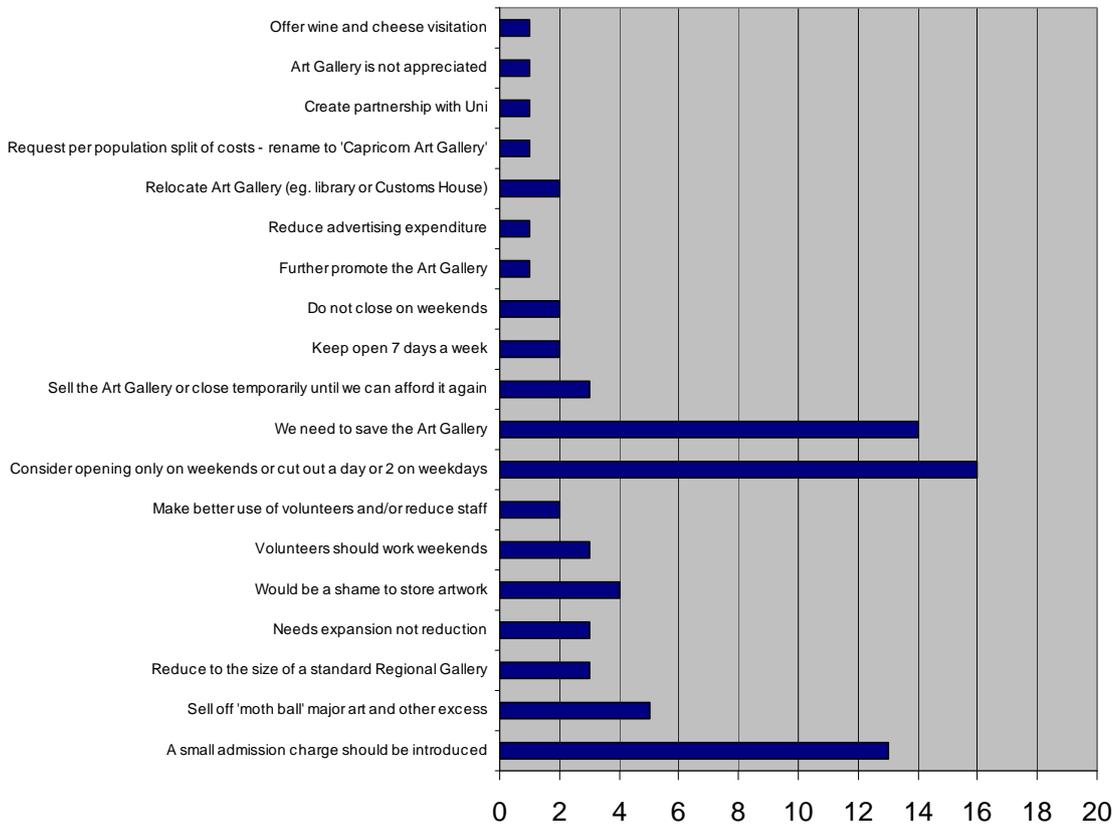


Your Budget, Your Choice Respondents N=624, those not answering this Question N=21

Analysis: As can be seen by the chart above this was not a well supported option. The main groups of participants that did not like this concept were 18-24yr olds (54%), 70+ yr olds (58%) and the Business|Community Leaders|Education sector (67%).

Open ended responses – Art Gallery

Art Gallery - Workshop and Survey combined



Number of open ended response N=78

Rockhampton Zoo

Through the *Your Budget, Your Choice* sessions and also the online/mail based survey participants were provided with an overview of the Rockhampton Zoo, that it has a variety of exhibits and that it is one of few Council owned Zoos in Australia. The following is the specific overview information provided:

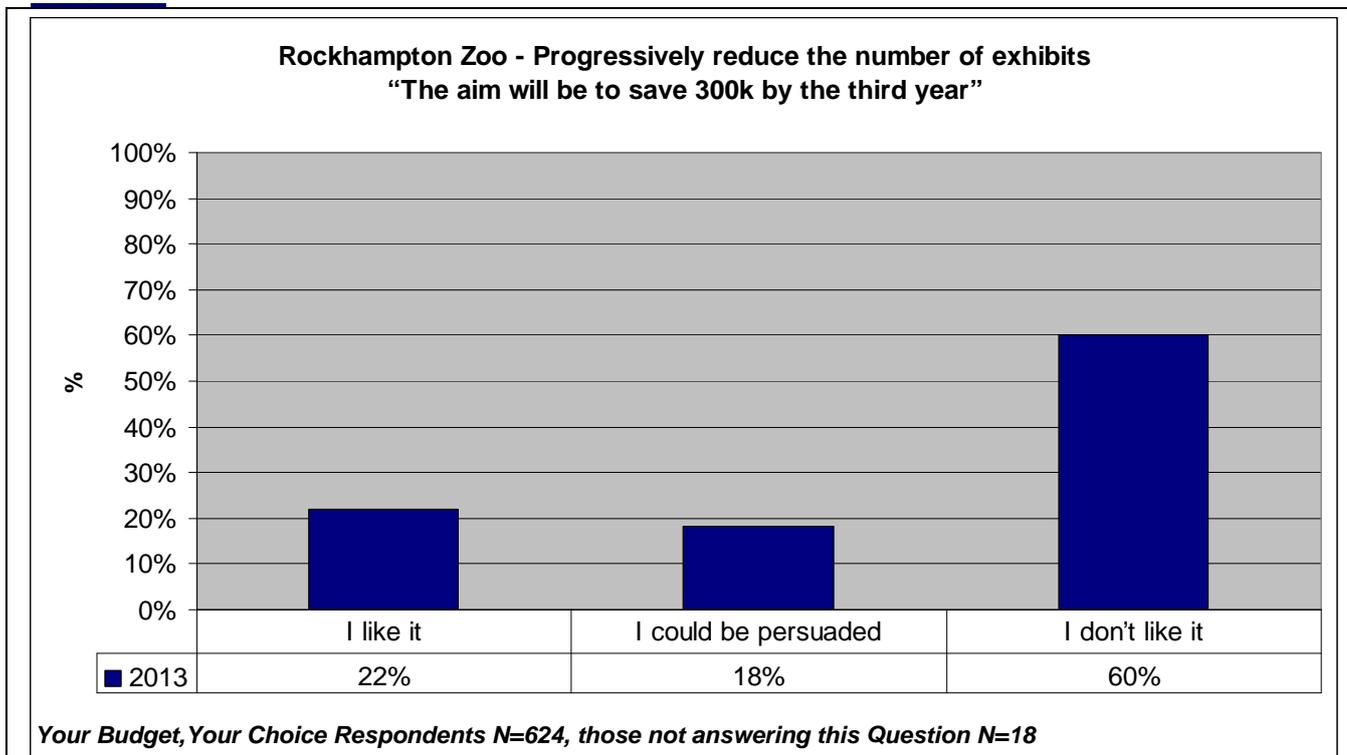


- *“We have 9 staff members*
- *An attraction for locals/tourists/visitors*
- *We have 5 active volunteers*
- *Costs \$955,524 per year to operate*
- *Iconic displays such as the Chimp enclosure and also the Bird Aviary*
- *Volunteers donate around 1800 hours per year*
- *No specific charge for admission”*

Two options were asked of the community:

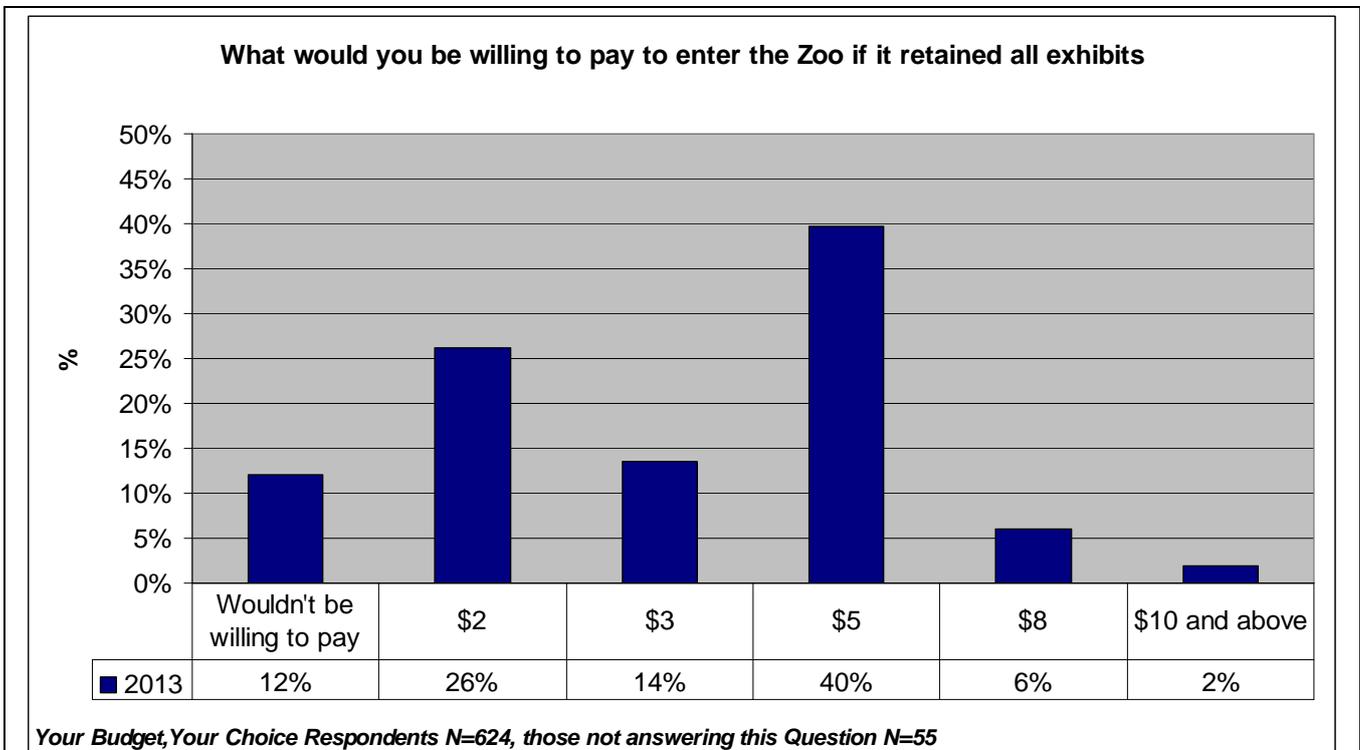
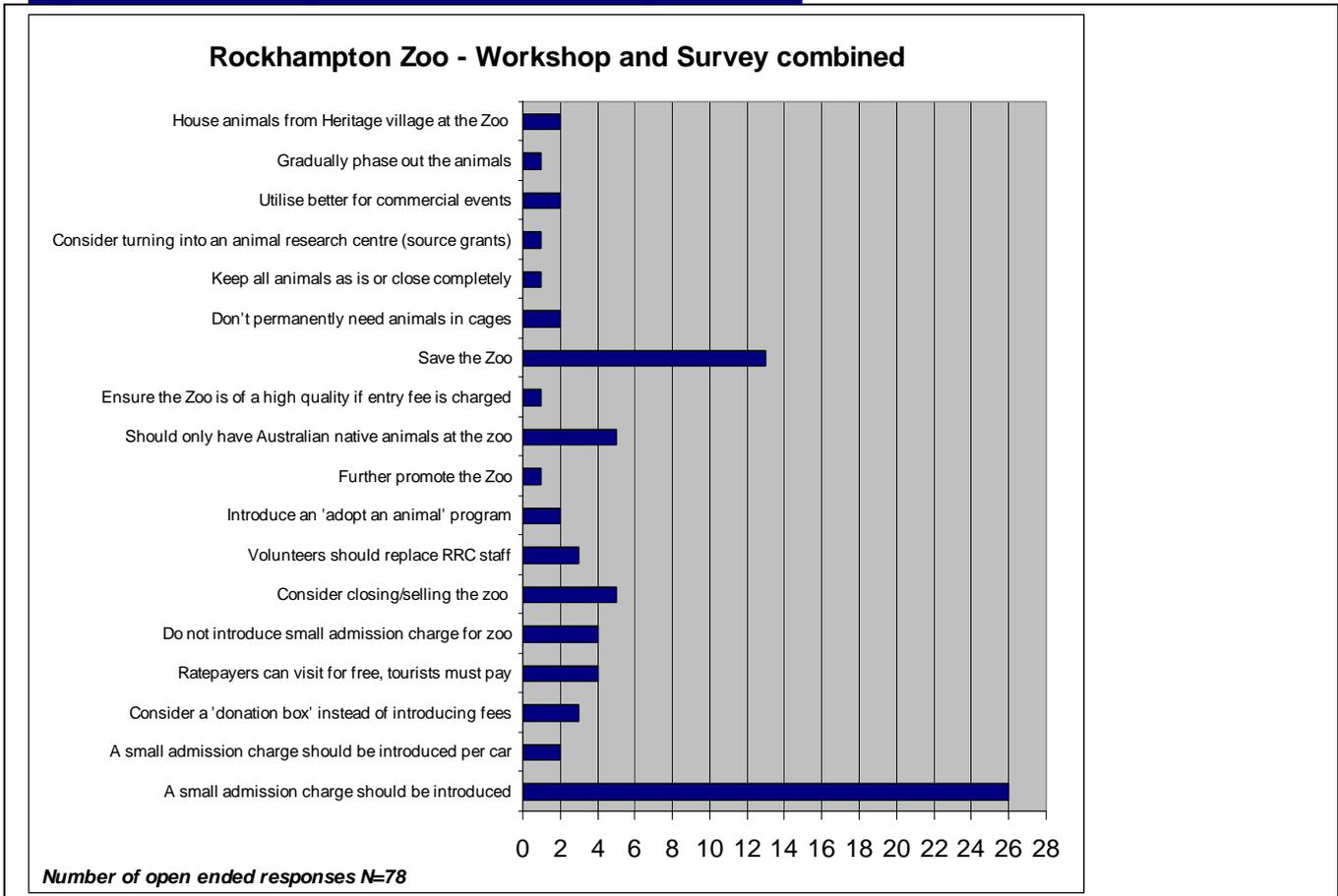
- 1) *Progressively reduce the number of exhibits, “The aim will be to save 300k by the third year*
- 2) *What would you be willing to pay to enter the Zoo if it retained all exhibits?*

Results



Analysis: This option was not well supported; the more significant groups that opposed this idea were 18-25yr olds (68%) and 26-40yr olds (78%). North and South Rockhampton participants were both in strong opposition each with 65% of participants that did not support this concept.

Open ended responses – Rockhampton Zoo



Analysis: Those of older age groups were the main drivers of those that wouldn't be willing to pay with 41-55yr olds (14%), 56-69 (13%) and 70+ (12%) stating as such. Participants that strongly supported \$5 came predominantly from the Arts|Culture|Heritage sector, sporting sector, localities of Mount Morgan and Gracemere.

Southside Pool

Through the *Your Budget, Your Choice* sessions and also the online/mail based survey participants were provided with an overview of the Southside Pool, that it is in the process of being built and will be up to Olympic standards. The following is the specific overview information provided:

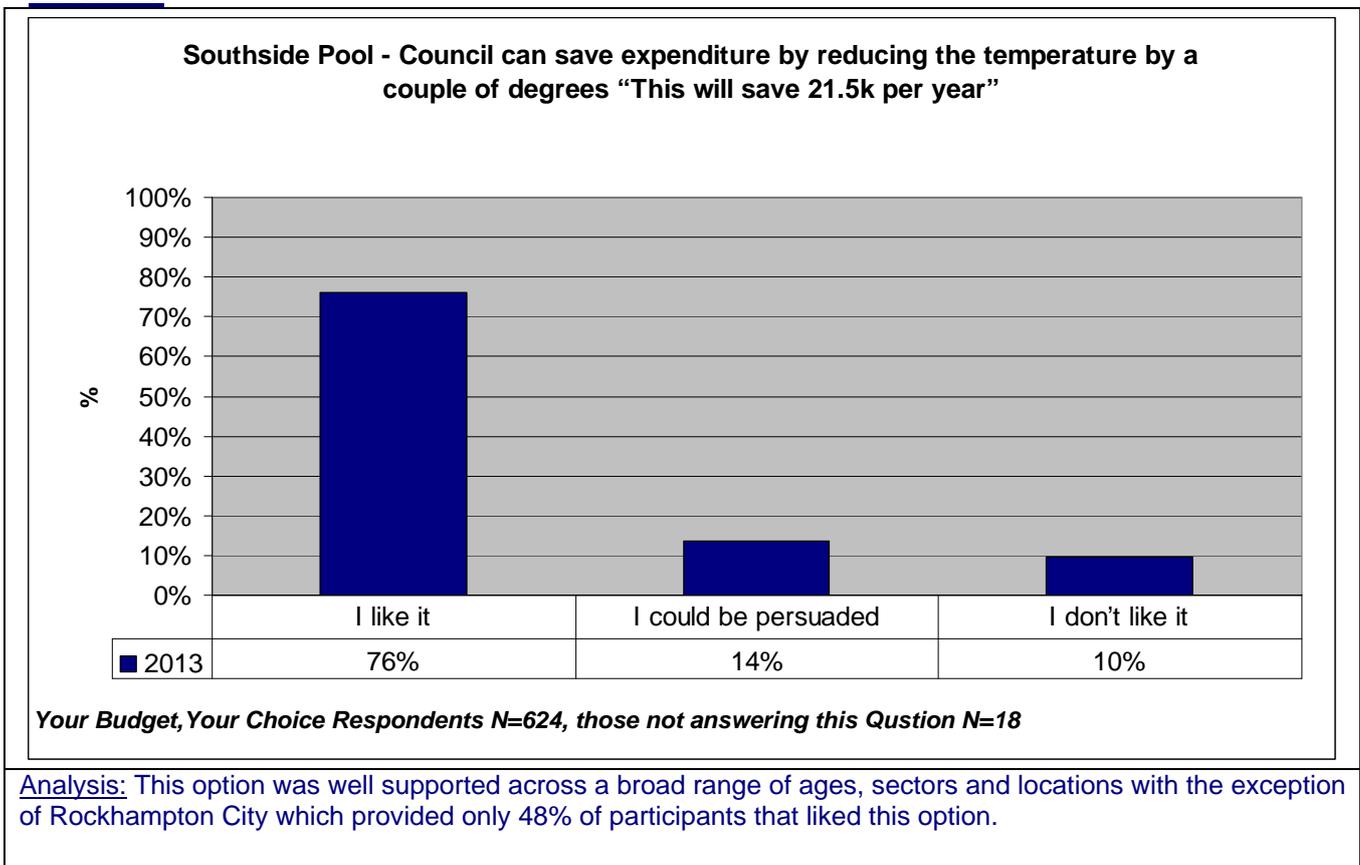


- *“The Pool is operated by a third party under a management agreement*
- *We have 26,000 visitors for this season*
- *Estimated to cost \$850k for 2012/13*
- *Under the management agreement all revenue from gate takings is retained by the operator*
- *We pay the operators a retainer as well”*

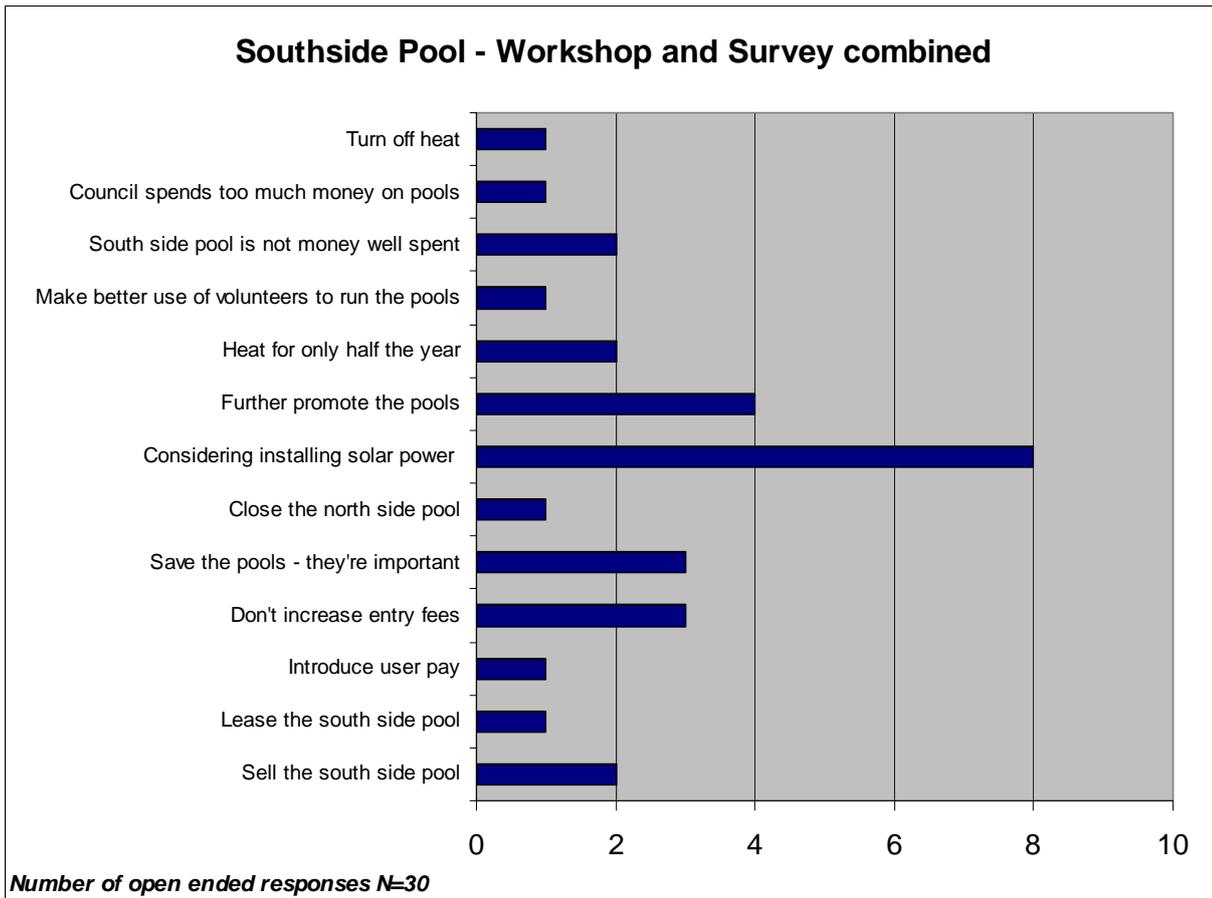
One option was asked of the community:

- 1) Council can save expenditure by reducing the temperature by a couple of degrees, *“This will save 21.5k per year”*

Results



Open ended responses – Southside Pool



Rockhampton Community Technology Centre (COIN)

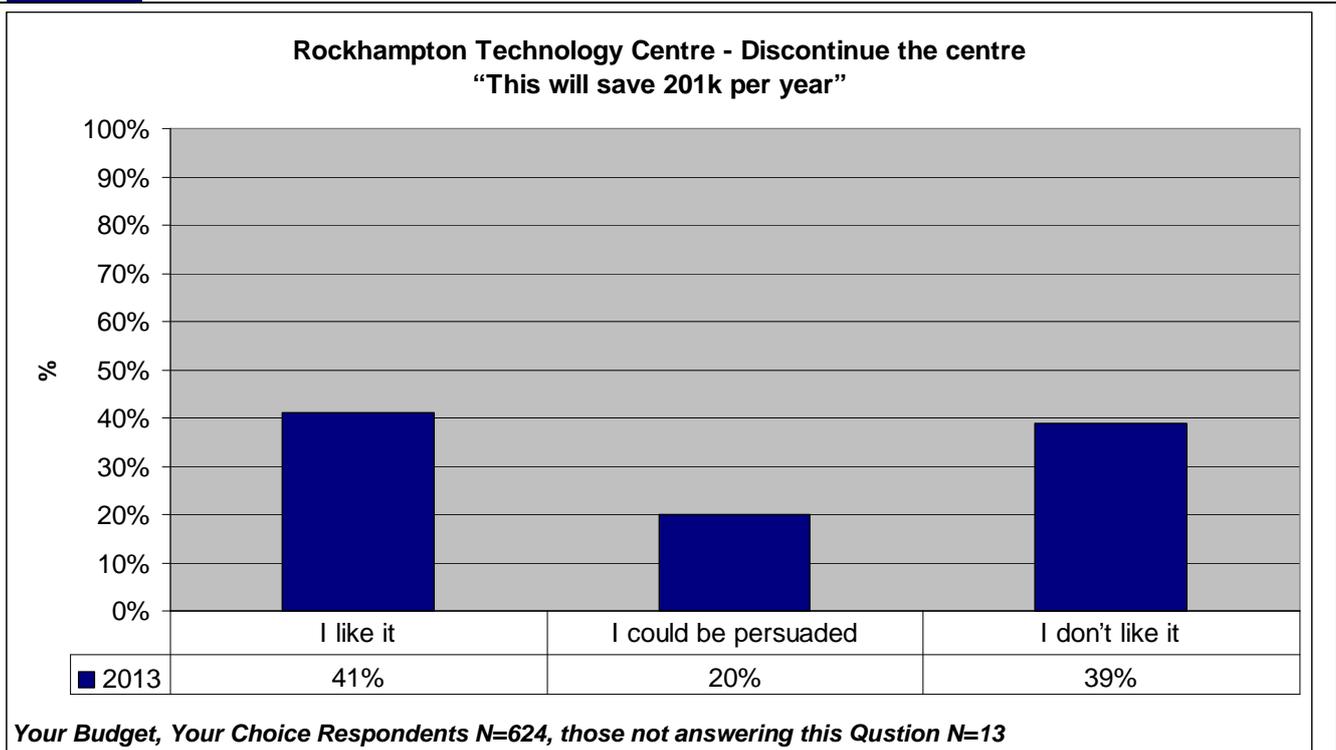
Through the *Your Budget, Your Choice* sessions and also the online/mail based survey participants were provided with an overview of the Rockhampton Technology Centre and that has provided valuable service to community in the past when the internet was relatively new and that it had trained many older people to use computers. The following is the specific overview information provided:

- *The public can access the technology centre through the Rockhampton Regional Library*
- *Groups that use the facility include: general public, cerebral palsy league, 60s and better, U3A, CQLUG*
- *This facility also provides all the in house Council staff training for Microsoft*

One option was asked of the community:

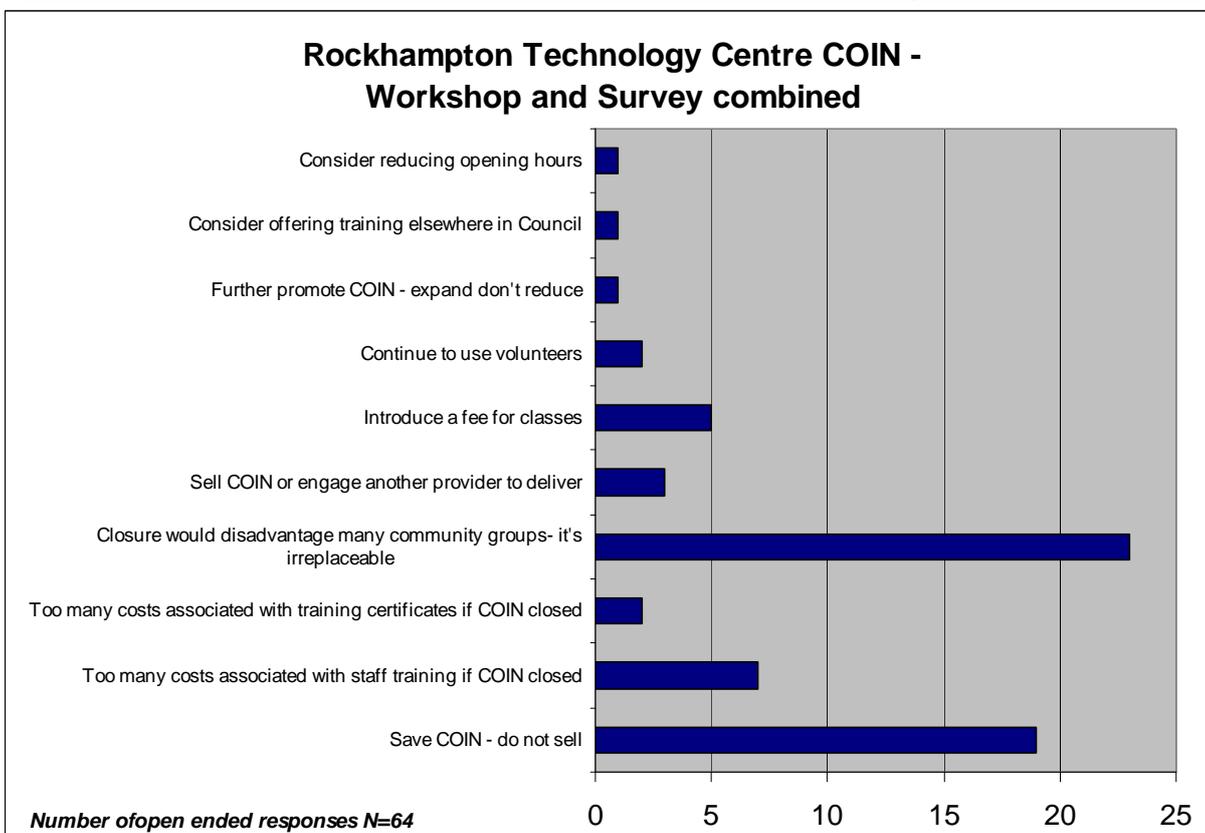
- 1) Discontinue the centre and have other service providers deliver service, *"This will save 201k per year"*

Results



Analysis: The chart above provides a polarization overall and through the analysis it reveals that this extends to ages as well, all ages from 18-25 to 70+ have a similar polarization as the chart above. This extends further to how long a person has lived in the region with the exception of those who have lived here 40+ years. North, South and the City of Rockhampton are more strongly opposed to this concept.

Open ended responses – Rockhampton Technology Centre (COIN)



Mowing Maintenance

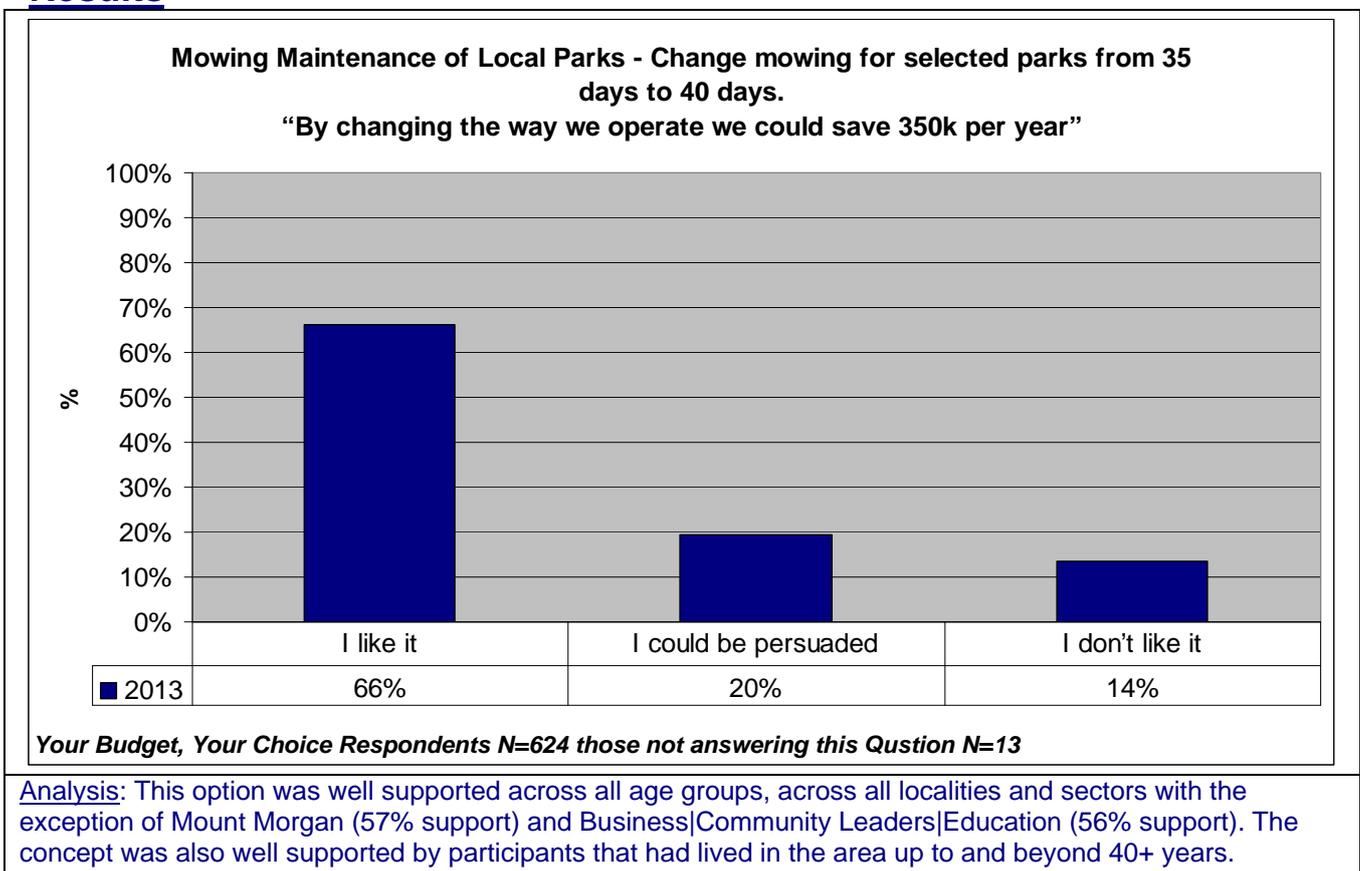
Through the *Your Budget, Your Choice* sessions and also the online/mail based survey participants were provided with an overview of the Mowing Maintenance and examples of which parks are rated at category B and category C types of parks. The following is the specific overview information provided:

- *An Option is to categorise some local parks from a “B” to a “C”*
- *This would mean that mowing maintenance would go from 35 days to 40 days across growing seasons*
- *Then in periods such as Winter a supervisor will dictate when various local parks should be mowed*

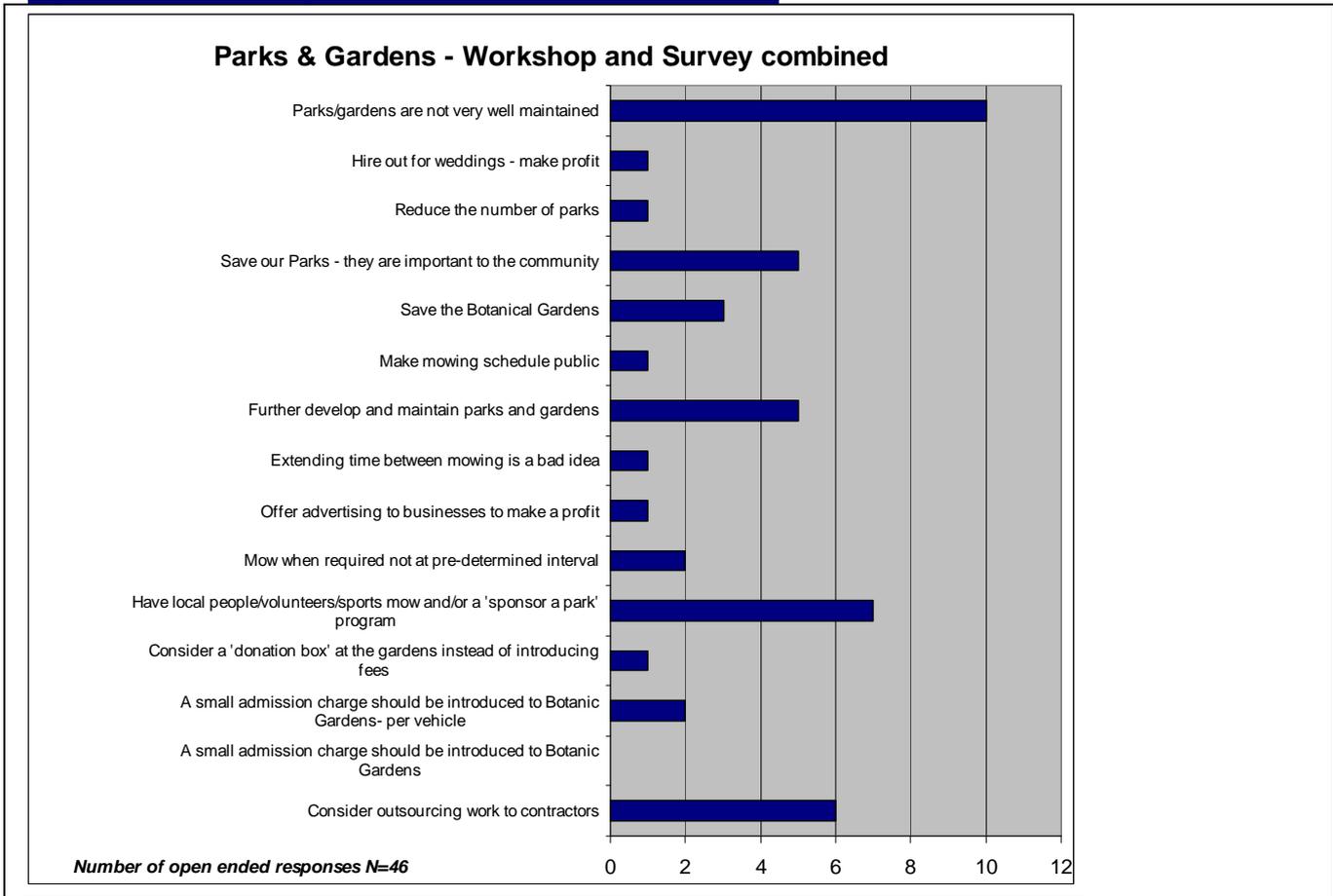
One option was asked of the community:

- 1) *Mowing maintenance would go from 35 days to 40 days across growing seasons for selected park*

Results



Open ended responses – Parks & Gardens



Rockhampton Airport

A detailed understanding of the Rockhampton Airport, what is occurring with our neighbours, what challenges Council will have with funding improvements and a detailed description of the option being placed forward were provided to respondents, for example:

Rockhampton Airport

- Number of user per year: 750,000 people movements, holding constant
- Value: Upwards of \$160 million dollars
- Income to ratepayers: \$4million per annum
- Strategic location utilised by a wide variety of sectors – tourism, military, mining – FIFO
- GKI going ahead will increase tourism movements

The Airport is a big issue

- Needs major investment that we can't afford right now, \$30M in the next couple of years
- It returns less than 2.5%
- An option is to sell the Airport, bring down debt and establish a "Future Fund"

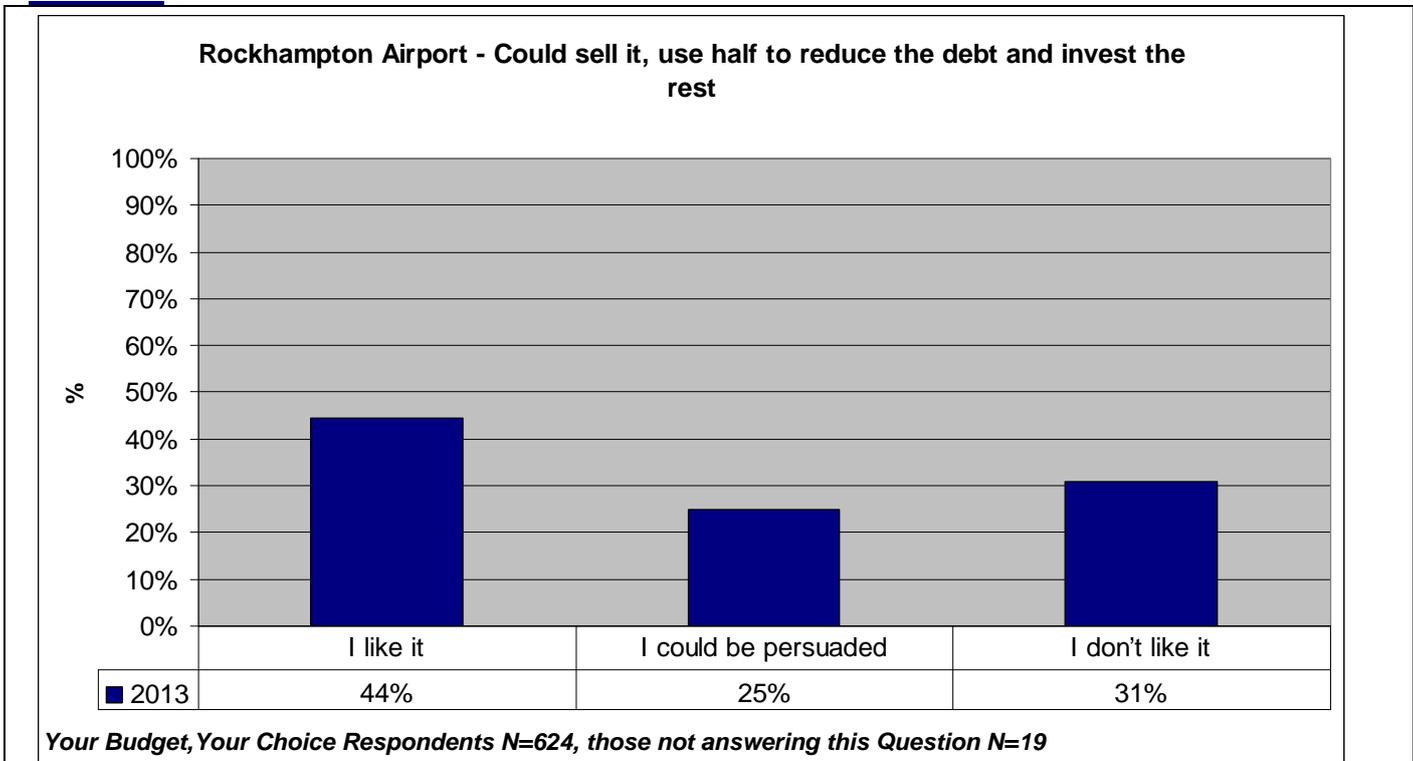
One option is to sell the Airport from upwards of \$160m

- Invest \$80m in a Future Fund = \$3.2m income per year
- Reduce current debt by \$80m, therefore \$166m - \$80m = \$86m
- Interest Payment on \$166m (RRC debt) = \$8.2m per year
- Interest Payment on \$86m = \$4.2m per year
- Add Interest Saving \$4m per year + Income of \$3.2m = \$7.2m
- Less Net Operational from Airport earnings = \$4.1m per year
- Equals Net Operational improvement = \$3.1m per year
- Redemption of Capital = \$5.3m per year – can be invested elsewhere or reduce overall Council debt

Therefore we will be in a position of strength

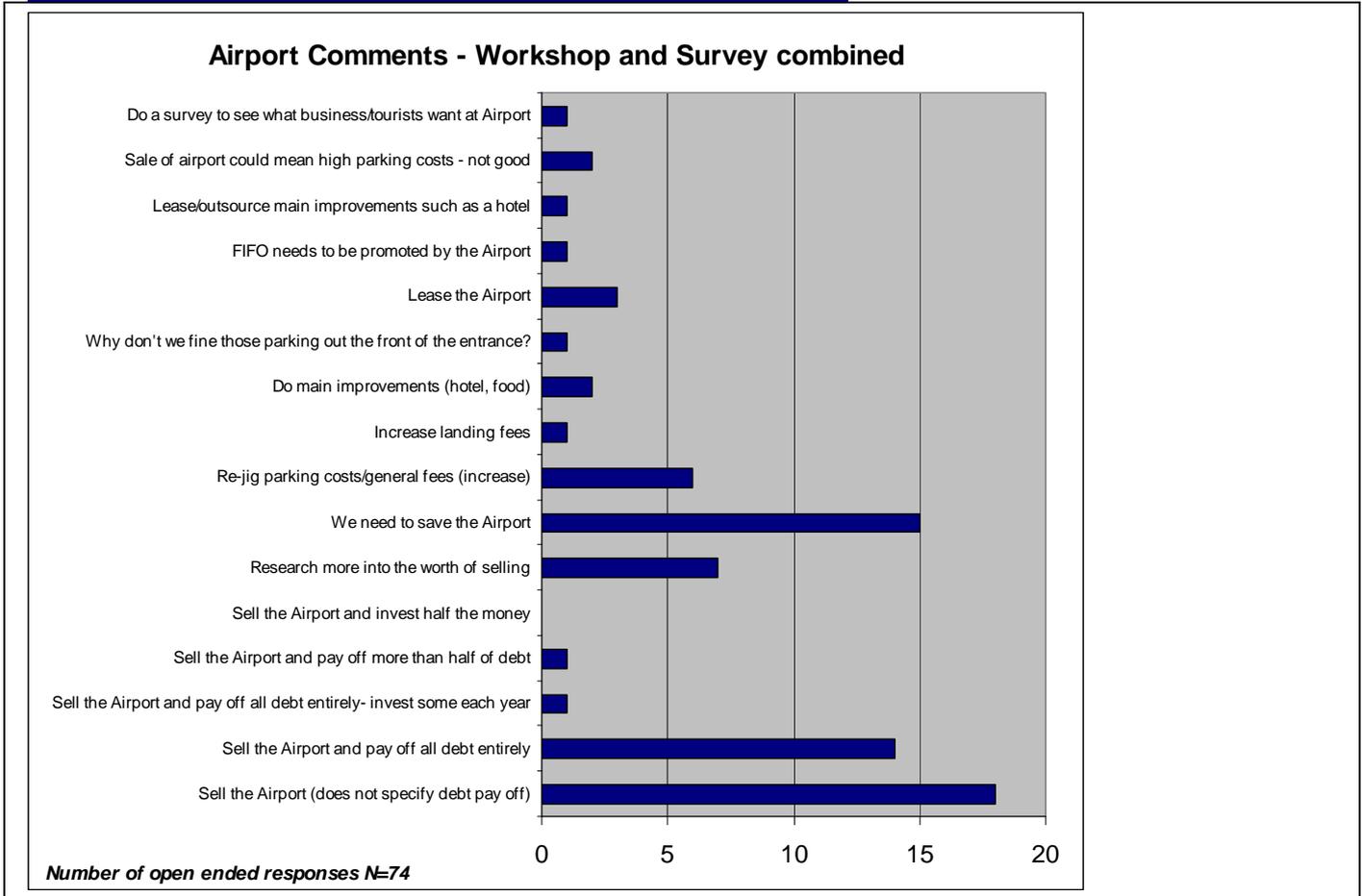
- Halve the debt
- Have a nest egg of \$80m
- \$12.5m will be earned each year from income, interest savings and redemption of capital
- If we lose \$4.1m in income from the airport operations we will still be \$8.4m better off

Results

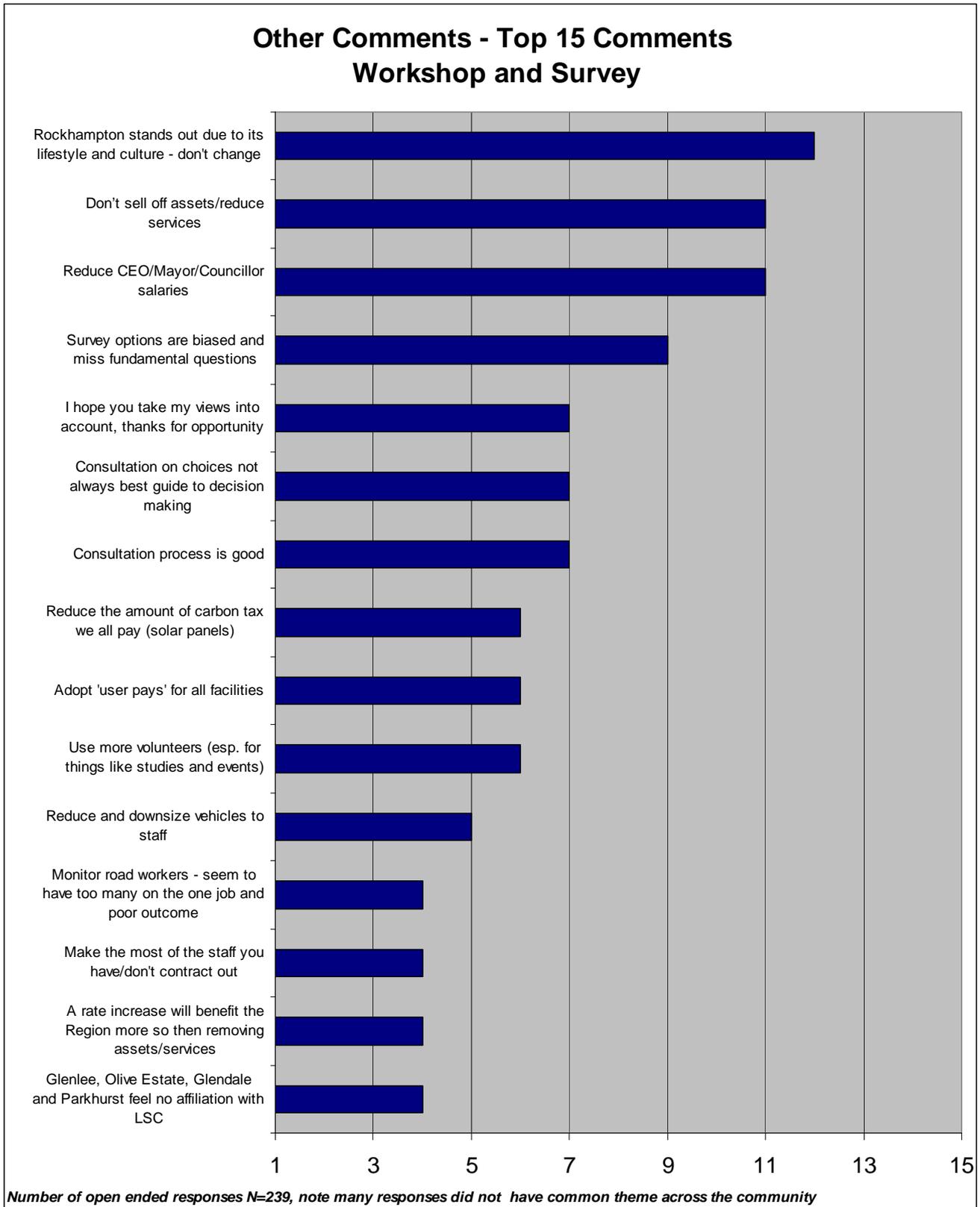


Analysis: This concept was supported by a broad range of localities across the region with the exception of Rockhampton City and Bajool/Marmor* and surrounds. There was strong sector support from Arts|Culture|Heritage, and Sporting groups.

Open ended responses – Rockhampton Airport

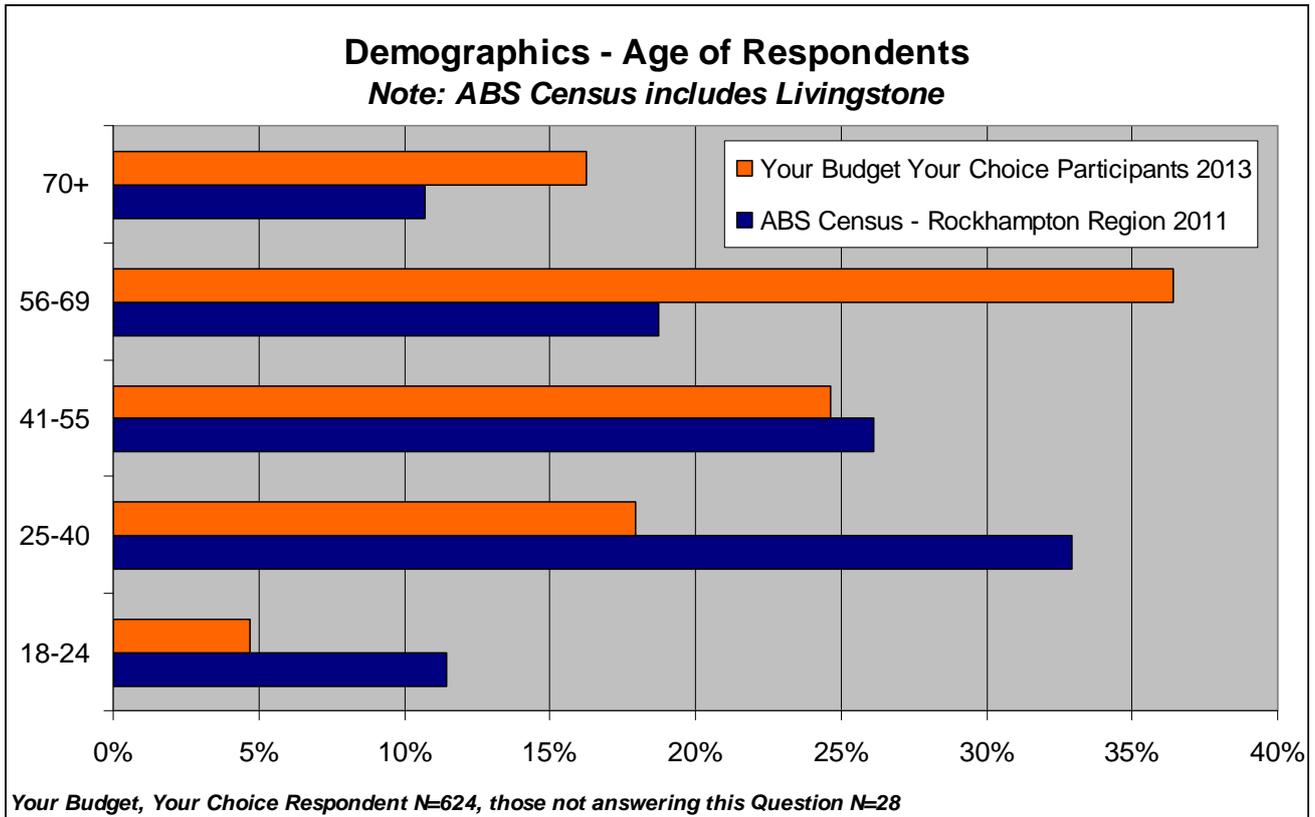


Other Comments – Workshops, Online Survey and Mail based Survey

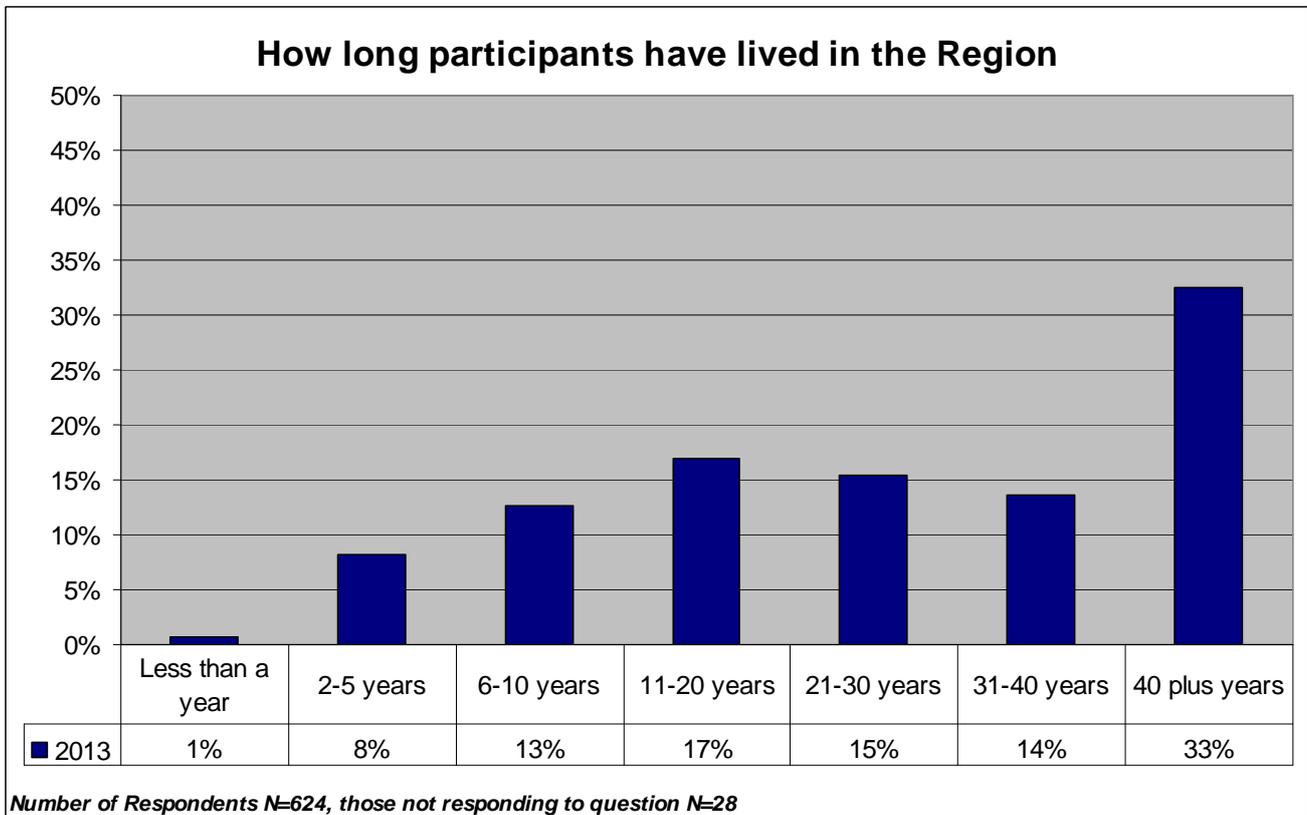


Demographics

Age of respondents



How long participants lived in the Region



Localities and Sectors that respondents represented

