Engagement and Public Exhibition Report

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Engagement Summary Report

Mission Possible:
Climate Action Plan 2026-2030

City of Newcastle

Overview

Between 4 February and 4 March 2026, City of Newcastle (CN) sought community feedback on the draft Climate Action Plan 2026-2030 (CAP 2030), our 5-year roadmap to achieve net zero emissions from CN's operations by 2030 and to support a Newcastle-wide transition to net zero by 2040.

CAP 2030 outlines the actions we will take to reduce the impacts of climate change, recognising that cutting emissions also improves our quality of life, supports equity, strengthens our local economy and builds a more resilient city.

CAP 2030 was informed by extensive community consultation, economic modelling, best-practice research, and cost-benefit analyses.

Our engagement

During the public exhibition period, the community could provide feedback by:

- completing our online survey
- participating in our quick poll
- sharing a vision for what a net zero Newcastle looks and feels like
- submitting a written response

A total of 239 formal submissions were received for CAP 2030. The breakdown of submissions by each feedback channel is outlined below.

125
online survey responses

98
quick poll votes

10
vision wall posts

6
email submissions

Our reach

During the engagement period, a communications campaign informed the community of the public exhibition period and promoted the opportunity for people to provide feedback.

The Have Your Say webpage received 1,426 views

A media release (4 February 2026) was sent to 119 media contacts

CN's e-newsletters, including Newcastle Connect, Empowering Newcastle and Natural Connection, was sent to 6,018 recipients, promoting the public exhibition period.

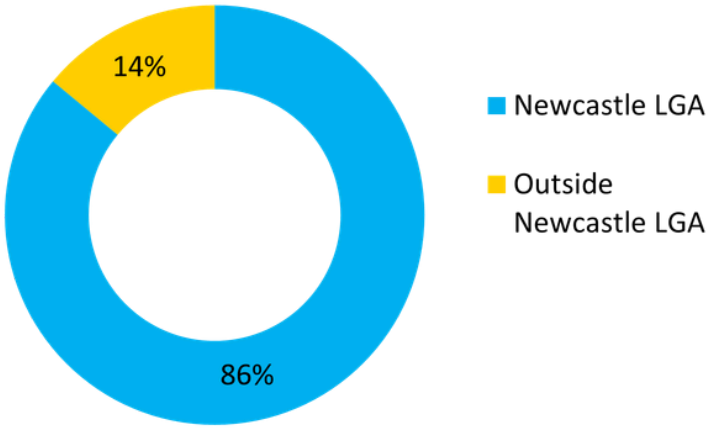
Posts on CN's social media channels and paid advertising received 67,923 impressions

We delivered a community workshop and four pop-up stalls across the Newcastle Local Government Area (LGA)

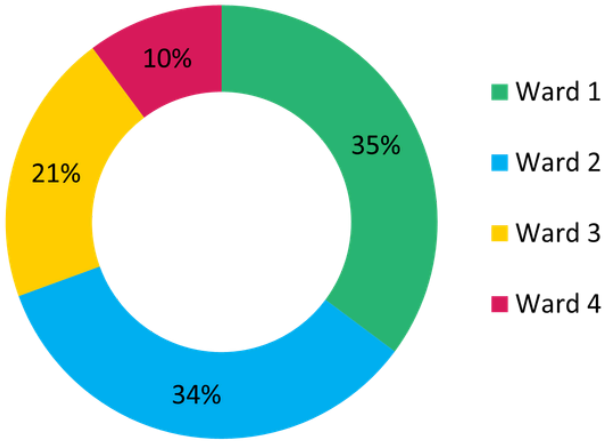
Who we heard from

To ensure a comprehensive and inclusive consultation process, we encouraged participation from a diverse range of participants. Below is a breakdown of survey responses by location and ward (sample size N = 125).

Survey response breakdown by LGA (Newcastle LGA vs outside)



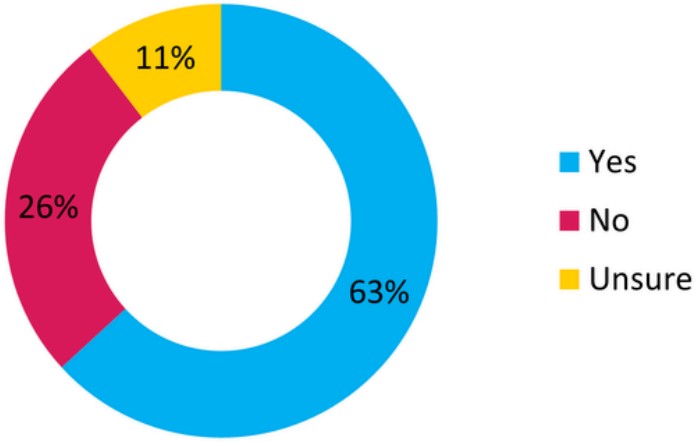
Survey responses by ward – Newcastle LGA



Online survey

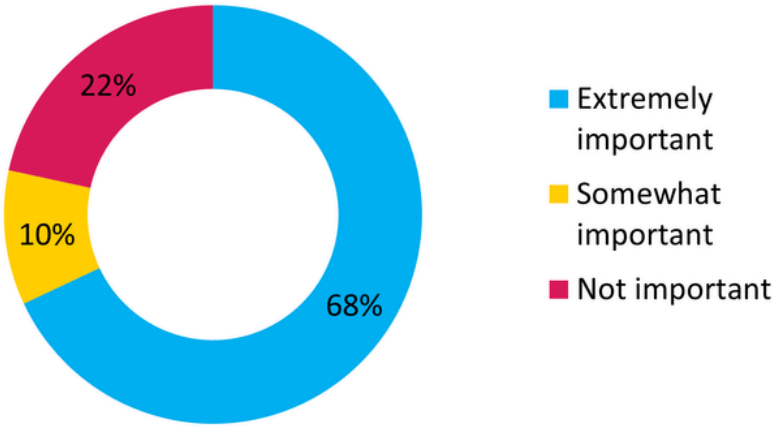
The online survey results (N=125) indicate a generally strong level of community support for CAP 2030, alongside some clearly defined areas for refinement. Overall support for targets and actions within the draft plan is positive, with 63% of respondents supporting CAP 2030, compared to 26% who do not support it and 11% who are unsure.

Overall, do you support the targets and actions within the draft Climate Action Plan 2030?



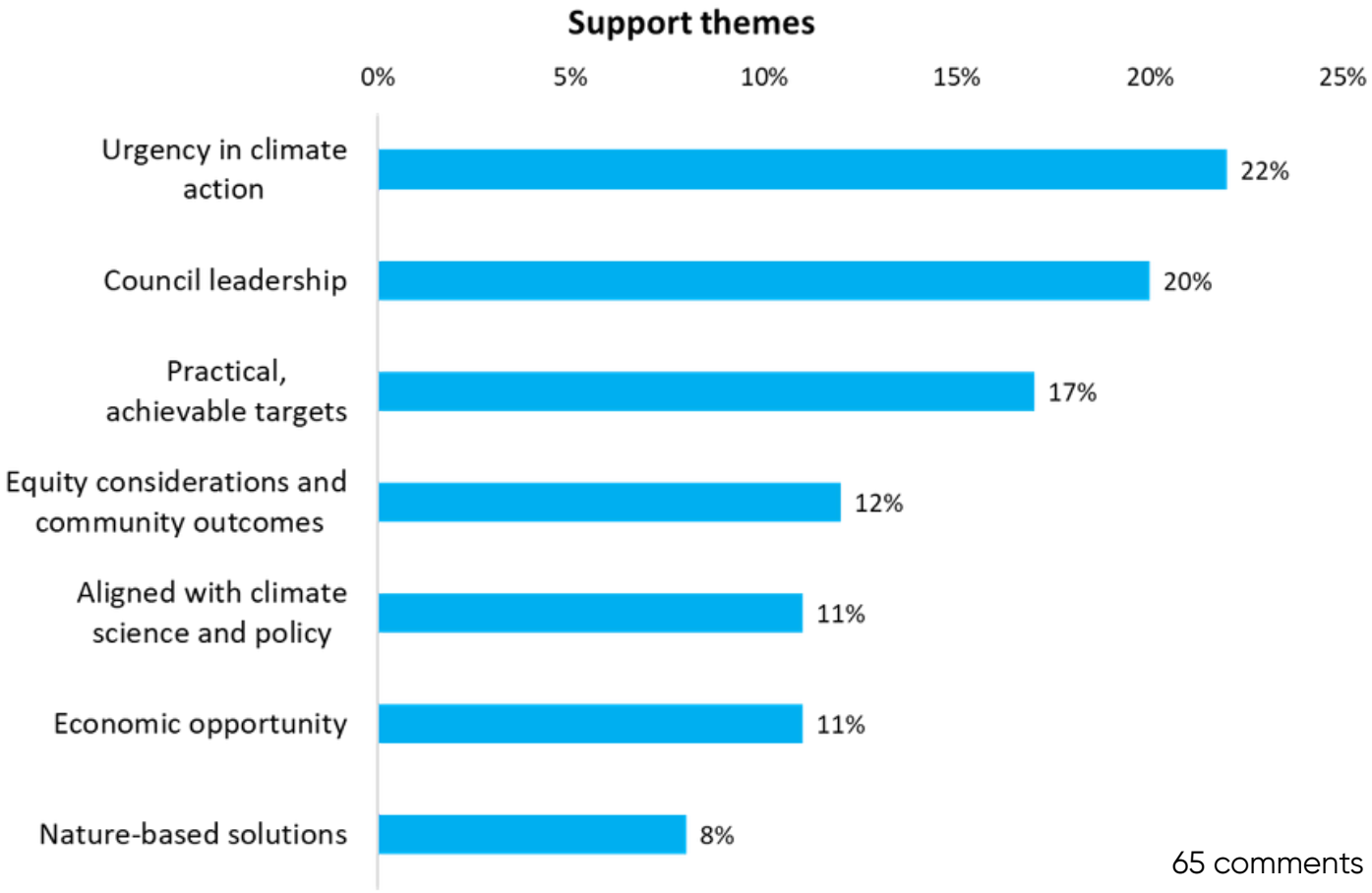
Climate action is a high priority for most respondents. The majority (68%) of respondents consider climate action to be extremely important and another 10% of respondents identifying it as somewhat important. A minority (22%) of respondents indicated that climate action is not important to them.

How important is climate action to you?



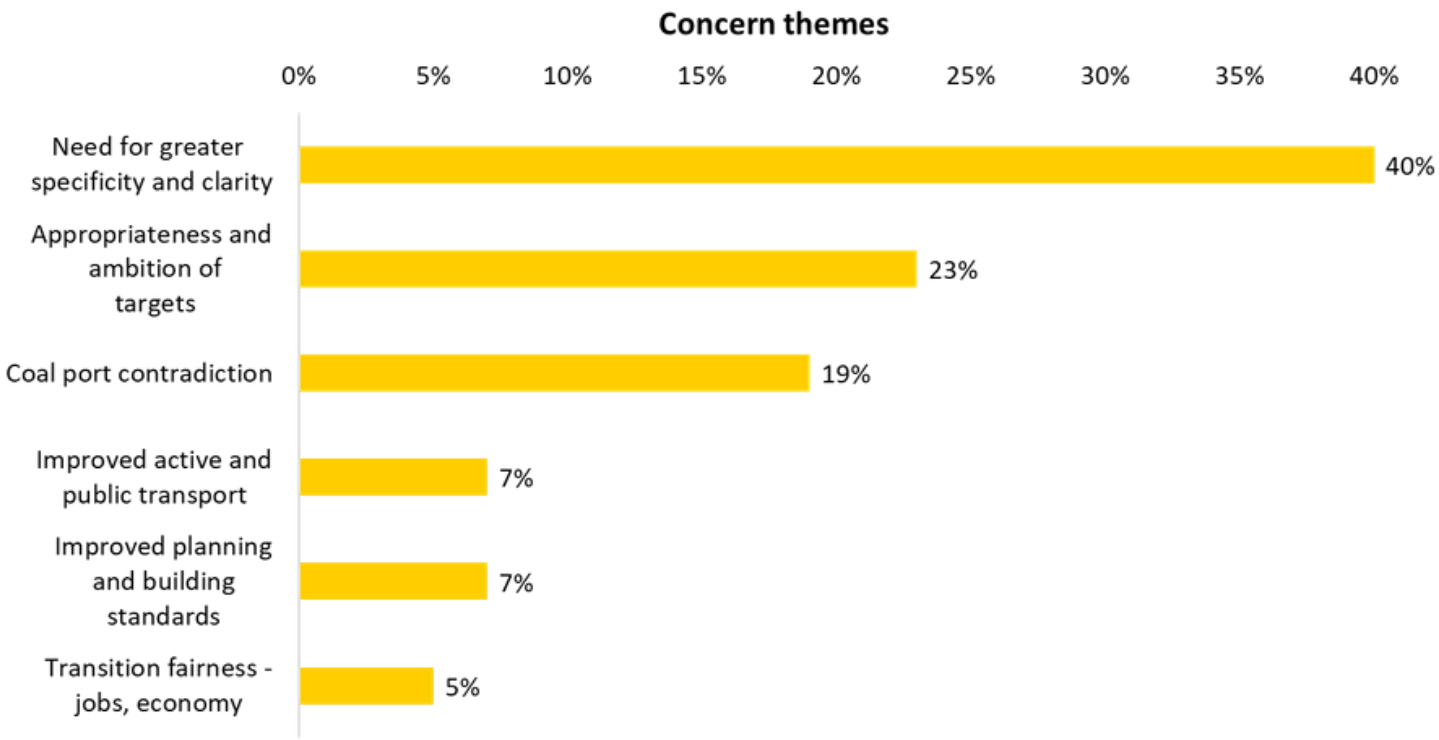
Support themes

Among those who made supportive comments on the plan, the most frequently cited themes were urgency of climate action, concern for future generations and the importance of CN setting an example and demonstrating leadership. Practical and achievable targets were also widely noted, suggesting supporters are not just emotionally motivated but also see the plan as credible and deliverable.



Concern themes

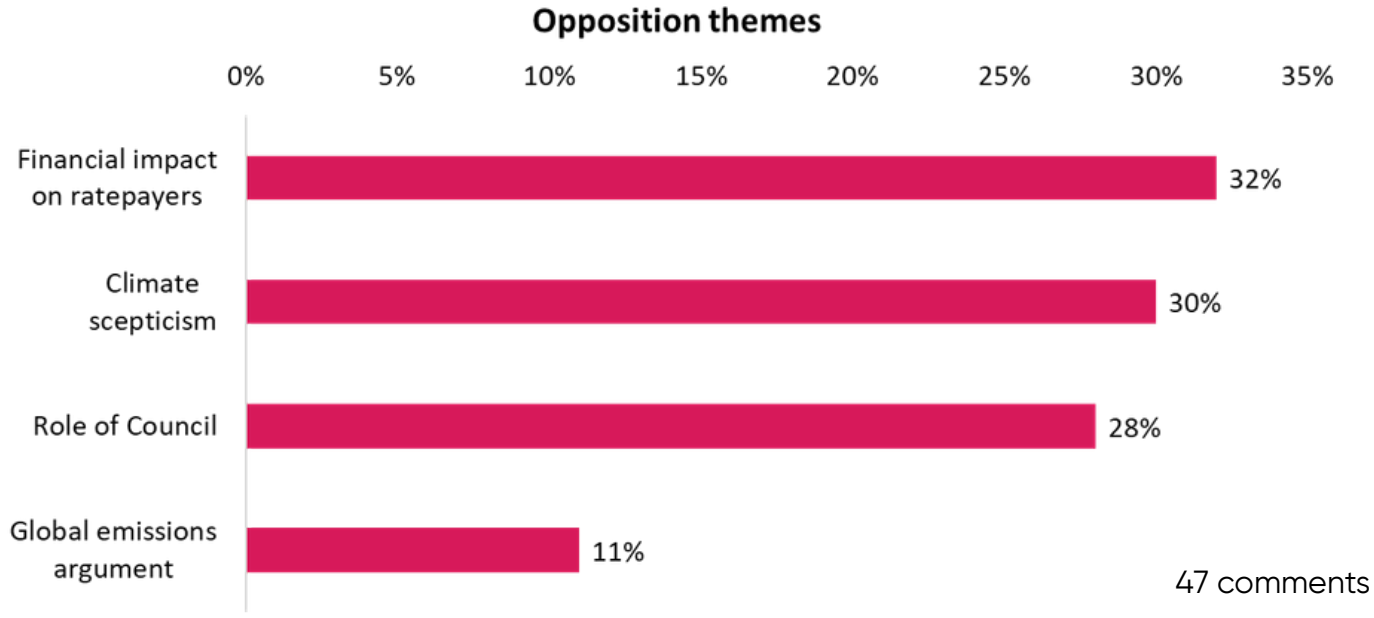
A number of respondents who broadly support the plan raised concerns about its implementation and reflected a genuine desire for greater detail rather than opposition to the plan's direction. The need for better public transport and alignment of planning and building standards were less frequent but raised by engaged respondents with specific policy suggestions.



44 comments

Opposition themes

Among those who did not support the plan, comments related to four key themes; cost and ratepayer burden, climate scepticism and denial, climate action is not the role of local government, and the global emissions argument - the view that Australia's or Newcastle's actions are meaningless given larger emitters like China and India.

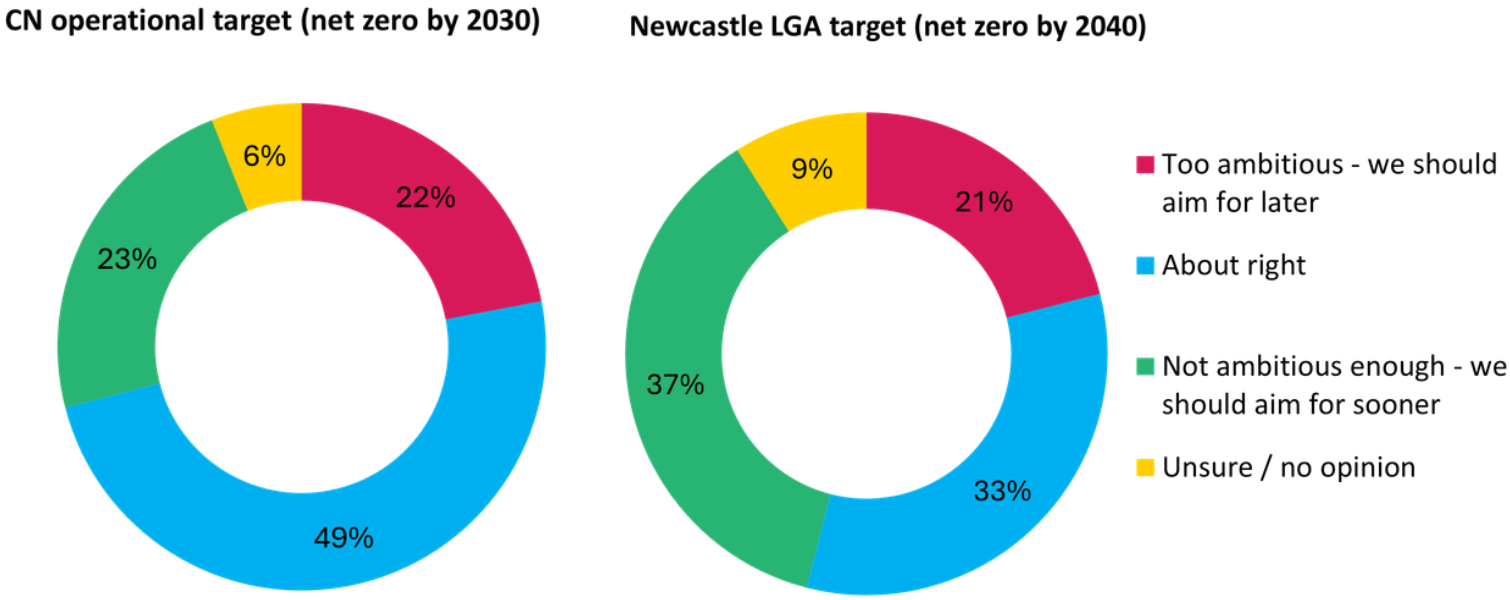


47 comments

Support for science-based targets

Online survey respondents showed strong overall support for CN's operational net zero target, with 49% of respondents considering it about right and a further 23% supportive but calling for greater ambition. A total of 22% of respondents viewed the target as too ambitious, with 6% being unsure.

Online survey respondents also indicated strong overall support for the Newcastle LGA net zero target, with 33% of respondents considering it about right and a further 37% supportive but calling for greater ambition. A total of 21% of respondents viewed the target as too ambitious, with 9% being unsure.



Support for strategic opportunities

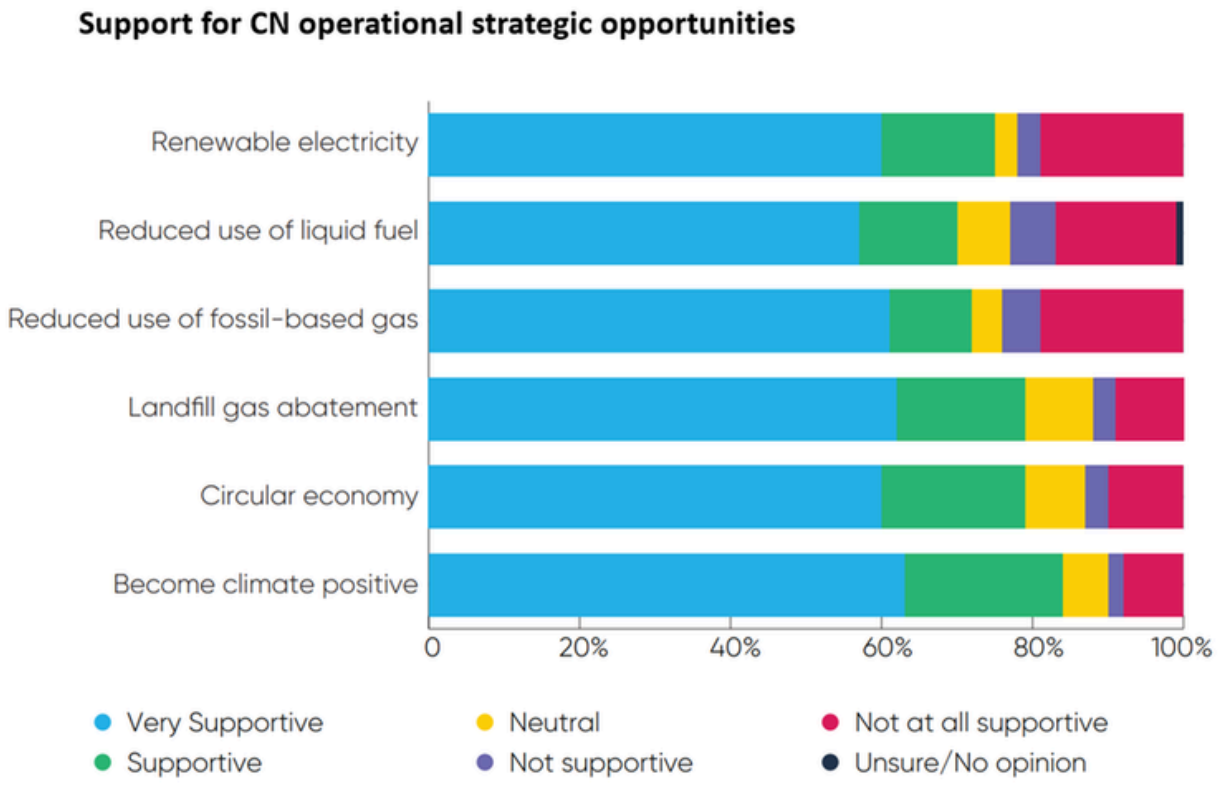
Support for the strategic opportunities was high across CN operations and in supporting a Newcastle-wide transition to net zero emissions, with most respondents indicating they are "very supportive" or "supportive" of every strategic opportunity.

Overall, the results demonstrate broad endorsement of all six CN operational and six Newcastle LGA strategic opportunities, with particularly strong support for nature-based solutions and practical, system-level actions. Opportunities involving direct energy transition costs or behavioural change tended to draw the most opposition, pointing to where targeted communication and support measures may be most needed.

Support for operational strategic opportunities

Combined support for the strategic opportunities around CN operations range from 79% to 83% across all six proposed. Becoming climate positive, though nature-based solutions such as urban greening, tree planting and ecosystem restoration topped the list at 83% combined support and attracted the highest "supportive" responses of any action. The landfill gas abatement and circular economy opportunities both performed strongly.

Opportunities involving maintaining renewable electricity supply and electrifying gas appliances had slightly higher "not at all supportive" responses (both 19%), possibly reflecting cost-of-living pressures or concerns about electrification transition costs.

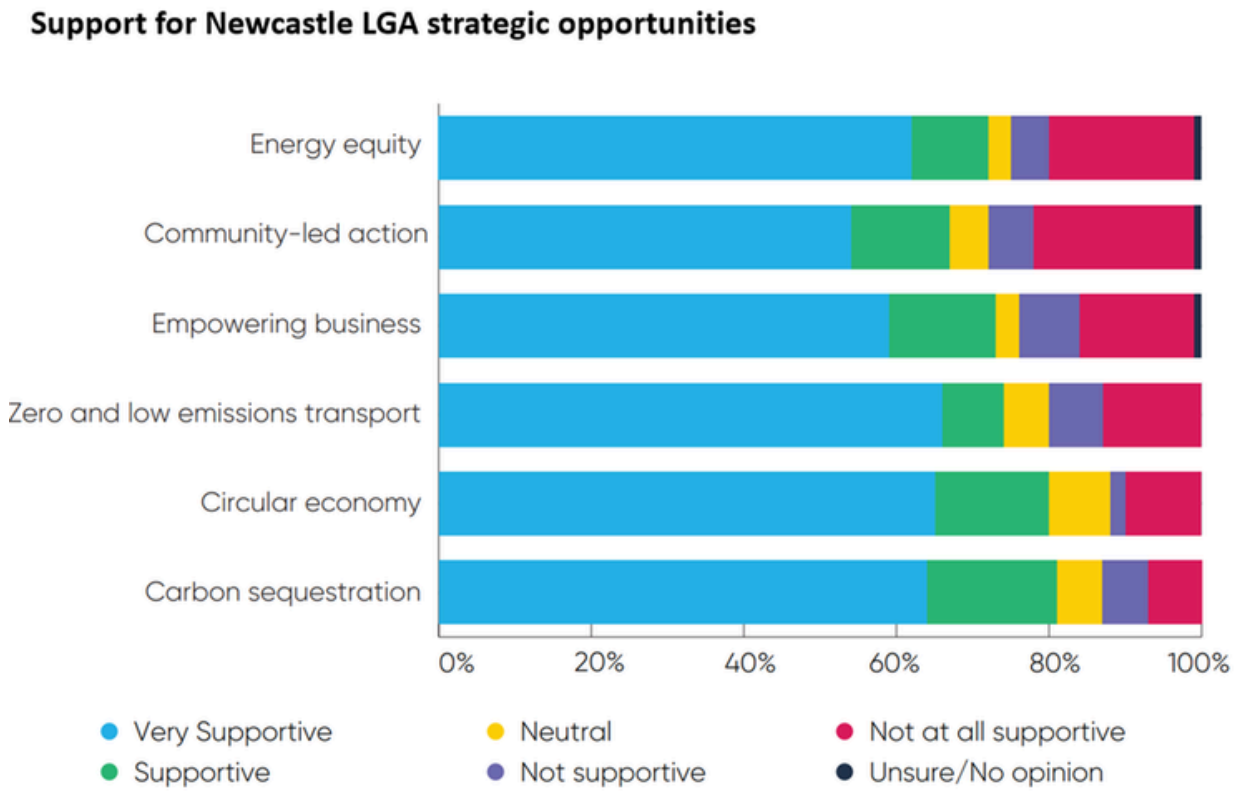


Support for Newcastle LGA strategic opportunities

Combined support for the strategic opportunities that support a Newcastle-wide transition to net zero emissions ranged from 67% to 81%.

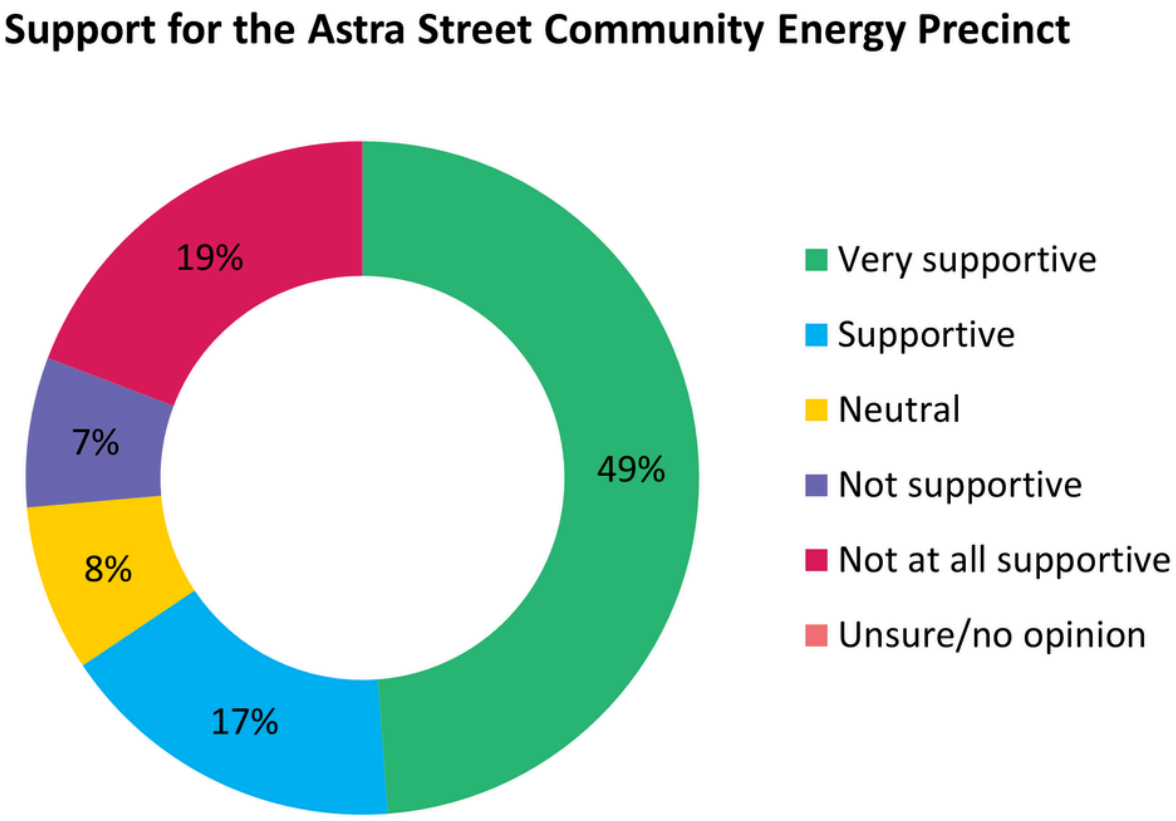
The opportunities from nature-based solutions again ranked highest, with the priority of carbon sequestration attracting 81% combined support. Prioritising zero and low emissions transport and accelerating the transition to electric vehicles also received high support (74% combined), including the highest proportion of "very supportive" responses (66%).

Opposition was highest for community-led climate action (21% not at all supportive), suggesting some scepticism about the effectiveness or role of community-led approaches.



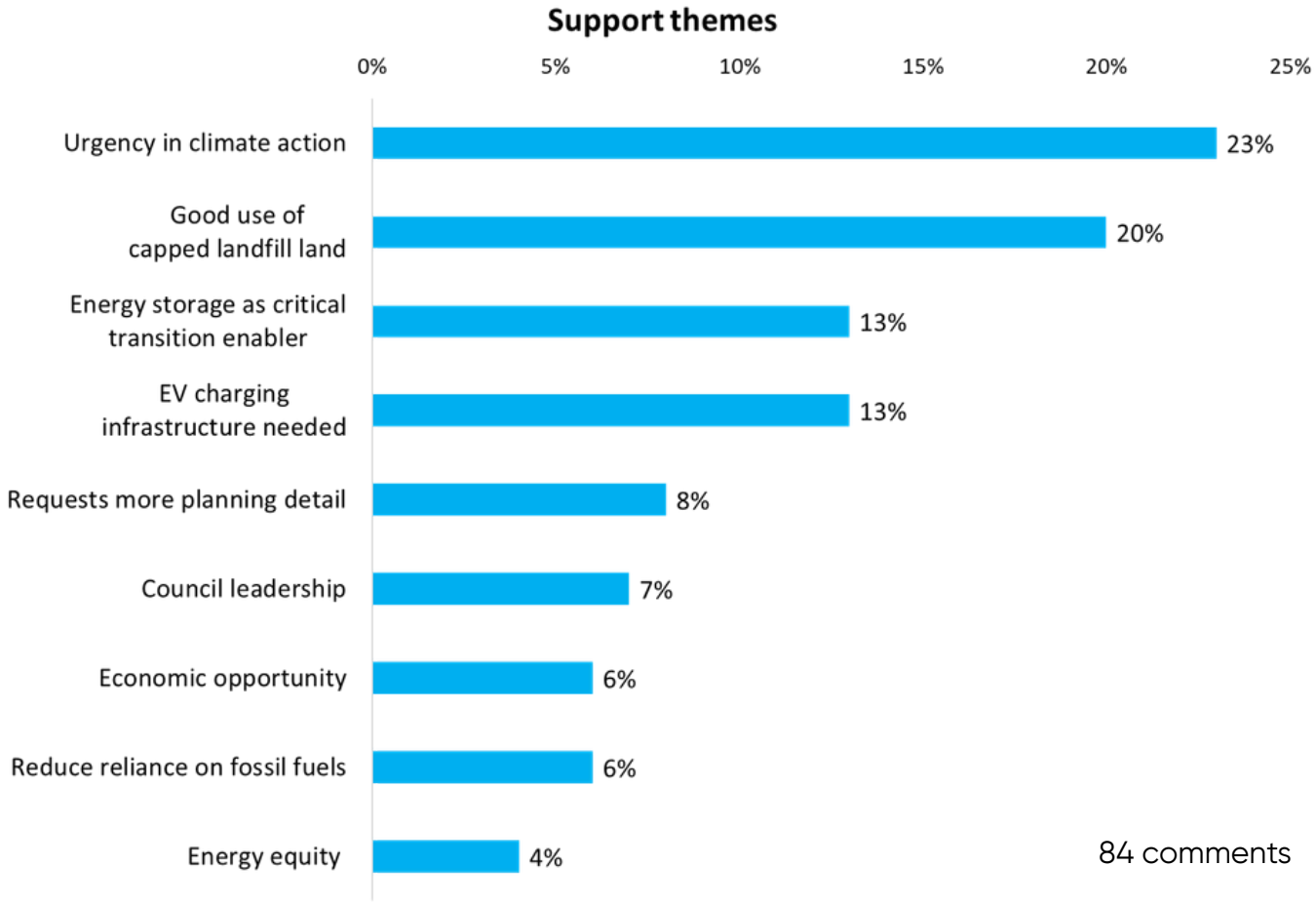
Support for the Astra Street Community Energy Precinct

There is strong community support for the proposed Astra Street Community Energy Precinct, with 66% of online survey respondents either very supportive (49%) or supportive (17%) of this project. Neutral responses account for 8%, while 26% of respondents were either not supportive (7%) or not supportive at all (19%).

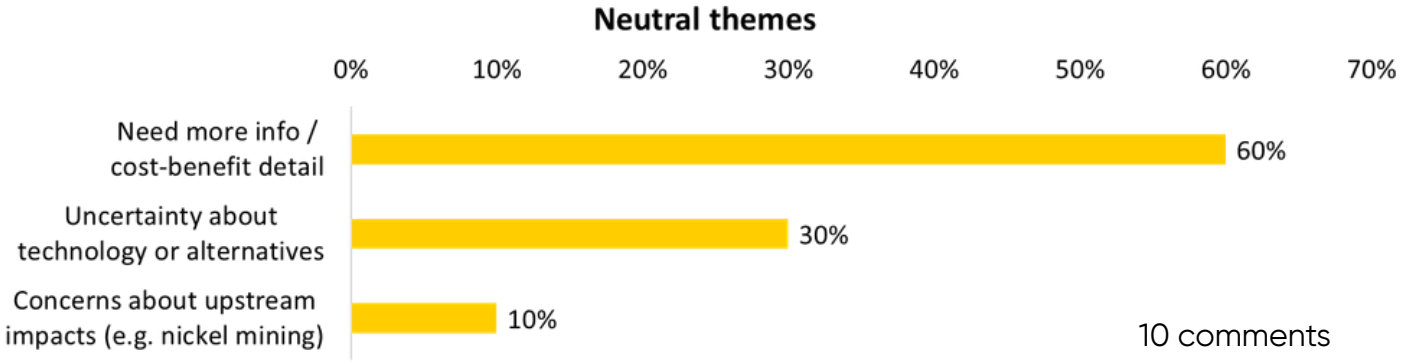


The high "very supportive" share suggests the Astra Street Community Energy Precinct resonates strongly as a tangible, place-based project that brings together several priorities the community has already indicated support for: renewable energy, electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure, and smart repurposing of underutilised land.

Among those who supported the Precinct, comments mostly related to the urgency around net zero and climate action, followed closely by the view that the site represents a smart repurposing of otherwise unusable capped landfill land. Energy storage as a critical transition enabler and the need for EV charging infrastructure were equally prominent. A smaller but notable thread raised questions about financial planning, committed industry partners and complementary technologies, signaling appetite for more detailed project information as planning progresses.

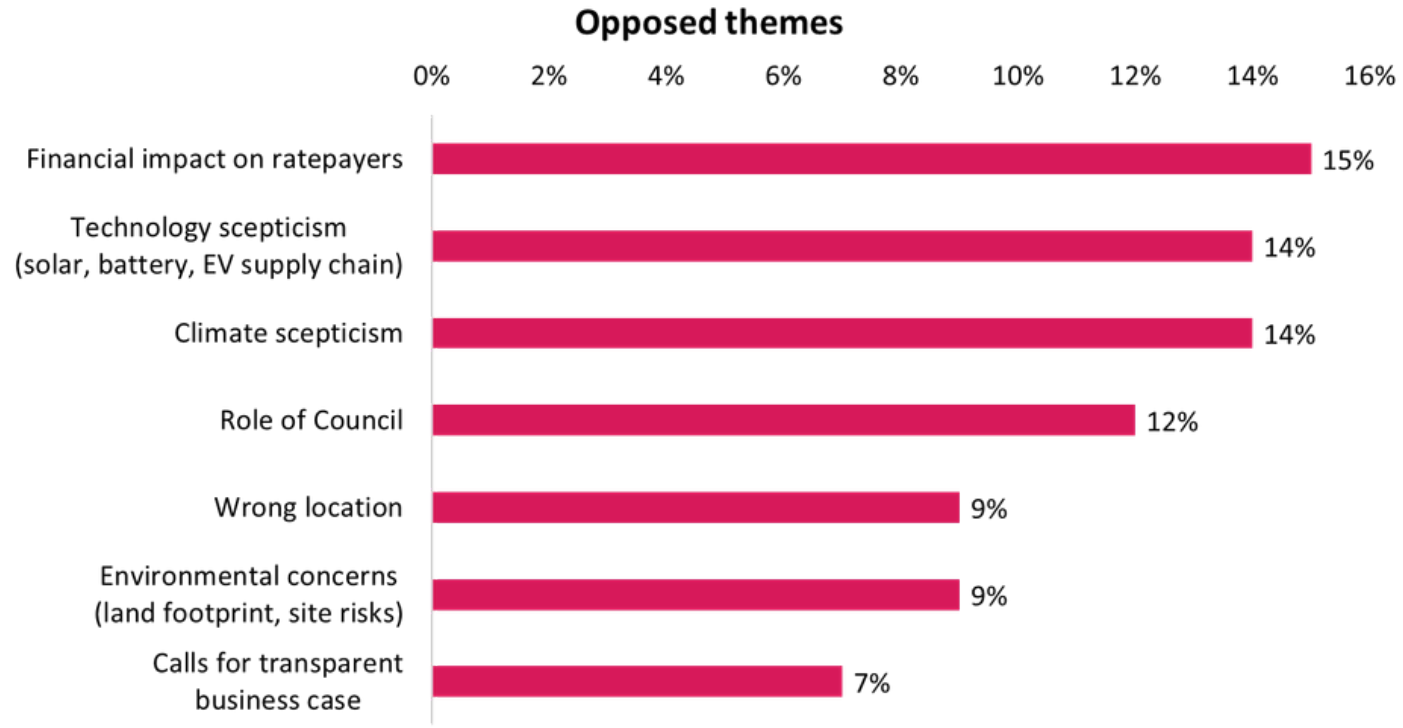


Neutral comments primarily related to a lack of information such as cost-benefit analysis, uncertainty about technology and upstream social and environmental impacts.



10 comments

Of those who did not support the Precinct, comments related to the cost and burden to the ratepayer, with many arguing that a viable project should attract private investment rather than council funding. Technology scepticism around solar lifespan, battery disposal and EV supply chain impacts, and climate scepticism or ideological objections were the other common themes.

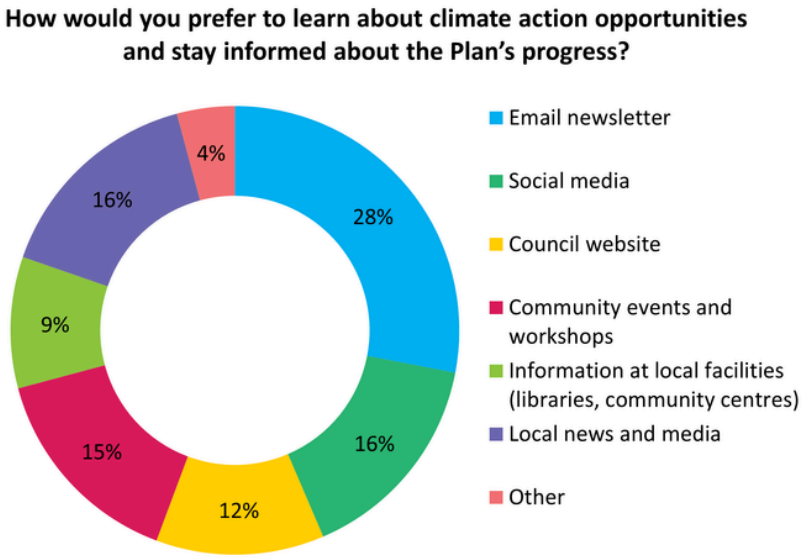


43 comments

Communication and community participation

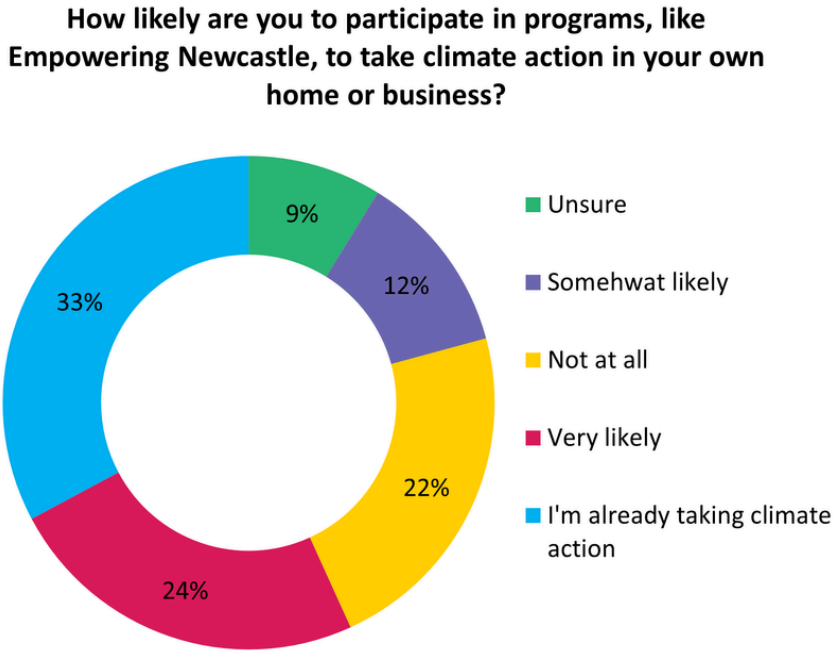
Preferred communication channels

The strong preference for email and digital channels suggests that a well-maintained e-newsletter and social media should be the primary vehicles for communicating CAP 2030 progress.



Likelihood of participation

Community appetite for programs like Empowering Newcastle is encouraging, with a majority either already engaged or likely to participate. A third of respondents (33%) indicated they are already taking climate action, and a further 24% said they are very likely to participate, meaning 57% are either active or highly motivated. Twelve percent are somewhat likely, suggesting further potential with the right support or information. However, 22% said they are not at all likely to participate and 9% were unsure, indicating that around a third of respondents represent a harder-to-reach cohort unlikely to engage through voluntary programs alone.



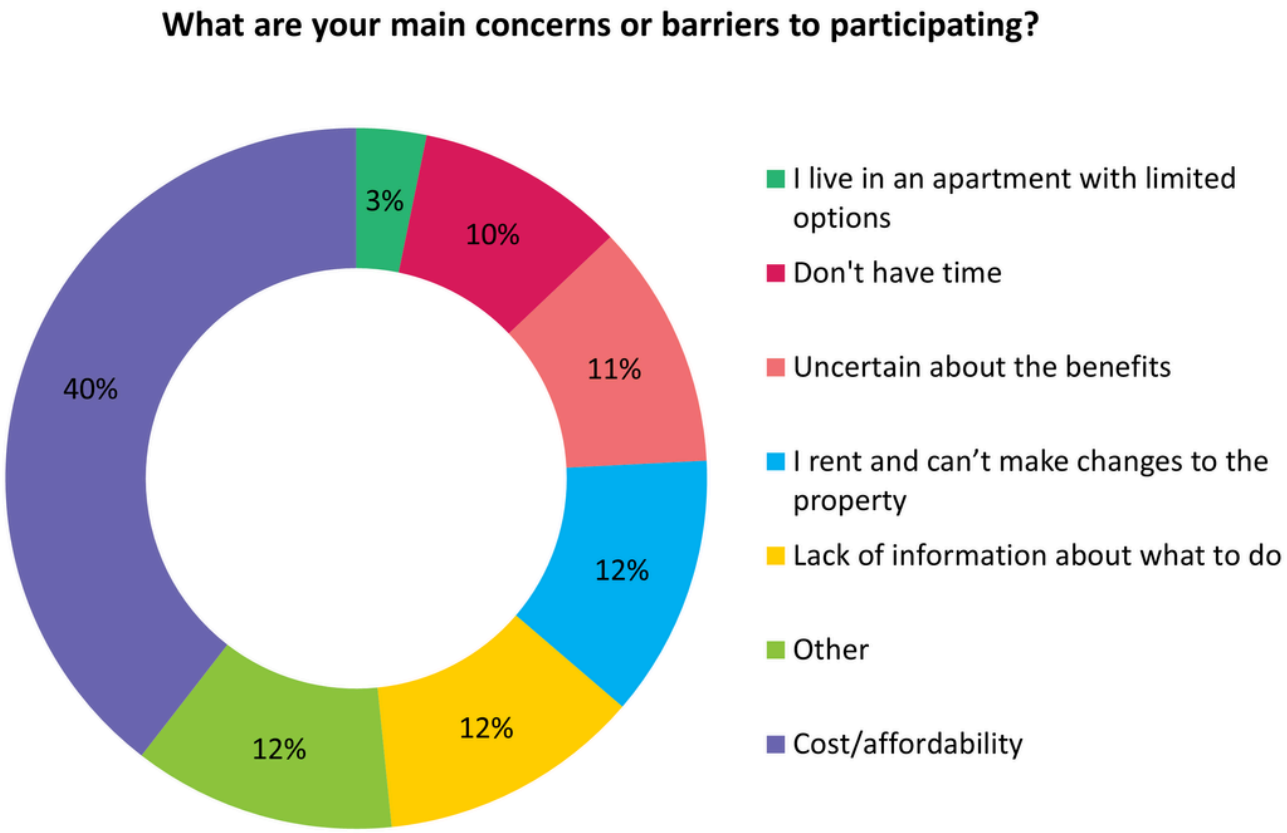
This underscores the value of structural and policy-based interventions alongside community programs.

Barriers to participation in climate action

Cost and affordability was by far the most significant barrier to community participation in climate action, cited by 40% of respondents - more than three times the next most common barrier. The remaining barriers are relatively evenly distributed.

The "other" responses add important texture to this picture. Among those citing cost, a recurring sub-theme was the tension between wanting to act and short tenure, with several respondents noting they would love to invest in batteries or other technology but are planning to move, making the financial case unviable.

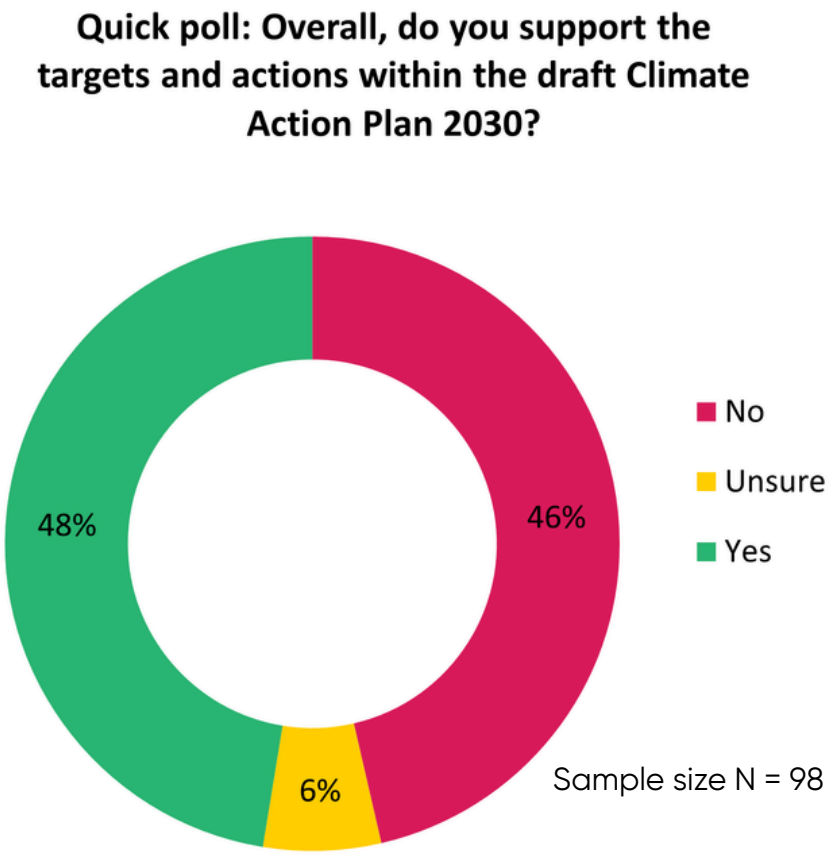
Lack of information and misinformation were also raised, with respondents noting the difficulty of navigating conflicting advice and the need for better sustainable literacy across the community. One respondent pointedly asked whether a nurse, unlike an engineer, would know where to start.



What we heard

Quick poll

The quick poll results reveal a more divided community on support for the targets and actions within CAP 2030, with support and opposition almost evenly split. Of 98 votes cast, 48% indicated support, 46% were not supportive, and 6% unsure.



Email

The six email submissions received reflected support for climate action, with the feedback provided centred around:

- The desire for absolute emissions reductions, rather than relying on 'net zero'
- Lack of measurable emissions reductions for individual actions
- Insufficient monitoring, evaluation and accountability mechanisms for specific actions
- The desire for greater focus on public and active transport initiatives
- Nature based solutions and sequestration not quantified or target driven
- The desire for more implementation detail
- An integration of CAP 2030 with CN's existing asset management systems
- A perceived over reliance on influence rather than direct, controllable actions
- A perceived lack of transparent emissions modelling and attribution, and financial clarity and accountability mechanisms

Vision wall

Ten submissions were received through the online vision wall, attracting a combined 31 likes across contributions. The submissions were largely from engaged, informed respondents who broadly support the plan's direction but want it strengthened, reflecting a similar pattern to the online survey's qualitative feedback, including:

- Strong demand for improved public and active transport and innovative solutions (e.g. electrified rail, robotaxis).
- A desire for Council to invest in and scale local innovation (e.g. solar technology, batteries, EV retrofitting) and support new industries and jobs beyond coal.
- Interest in preserving urban forests, biodiversity, and green space along with calls for better measurement of environmental impacts before land clearing.
- Concerns about job losses (especially linked to coal), cost of living impacts, and whether the plan delivers a livable, inclusive future for all, not just inner-city residents.

"There is so much to do and this is a huge opportunity to make our community lead climate change action"

"The single most cost effective method is cycling infrastructure... such cost effectiveness cannot be overlooked."

"The need to ensure that every Novocastrian gets a fair go out of this transition"

"Forests ... lock up enormous quantities of carbon... before we clear anything we need to measure the impact it will have and act in the best interests of the long term health of our city and environment."

Part 2: Consideration of matters post public exhibition

Community feedback collected though the online survey and written submissions are themed and addressed in the tables below.

2.1 Online survey – general

Eight key themes emerged from the comments received through the online survey.

Online survey responses - general	
Matters raised	**CN's response**
### 2.1.1 Financial impact on ratepayers • Concern that climate actions may increase rates or divert funding from core Council services, during ongoing cost-of-living pressures. • Questions about value for money, particularly where emission reductions or community benefits are viewed as indirect, long-term, or outside Council's direct control. • Expectation for clearer details of costs, savings, and financial trade-offs, including how actions reduce operating costs over time (e.g. energy and fuel savings). • Calls for financial rigour, including alignment with asset replacement cycles, clear prioritisation for investment, and transparency around reliance on external funding. • Equity concerns about cost impacts falling disproportionately on low-income households,	Funding for the delivery of CAP 2030 is integrated into CN's capital works and operational budgets and is endorsed by Council annually, considering the funding required for other core Council services. A sustainable funding model for the currently preferred (and most cost effective) emissions reduction pathway to achieve net zero emissions from CN operations by 2030 is detailed on pg. 86-87. Equity concerns are addressed in 2.1.6, below. **Proposed changes:** **Introduction (pg. 10-11)** Additional sentence added: CAP 2030 initiatives will be delivered in accordance with Council's Long-Term Financial Plan and integrated into CN's capital works and operational budgets, considering the funding required for other core Council services.

renters, and vulnerable groups through indirect or flow-on costs	**New section: Adaptable delivery (pg. 87)** A new section has been added to CAP 2030 (Adaptable delivery) to improve clarity that: • CAP 2030 implementation will require clear prioritisation, staging and decision points to ensure its delivery is sustainable, affordable and aligned with CN's broader social, environmental and financial responsibilities, involving: ○ The preparation of business cases for major capital initiatives, including whole-of-life costs and revenue opportunities, payback periods and risk sensitivity. ○ Options assessments and analysis to prioritise actions that will provide the highest and most cost-effective emissions reductions. ○ An analysis of how proposed emissions reduction trajectories compare with NSW Government and Australian Government legislated interim and net zero emissions reduction pathways. ○ Analysis to ensure the interaction between CAP 2030 actions and CN's parallel climate adaptation and resilience programs are understood, including investment requirements. A paragraph has also been added to this section as follows: 'The preferred and most cost-effective pathway to net zero emissions from CN operations may change over time, due to factors such as technological advances and changes in the cost of abatement activities. It will be imperative that emission reduction pathways are regularly reviewed, including a consideration of revised options, prioritisation and staging, to ensure the most cost-effective and impactful abatement is achieved for both our operational and community and business net zero projects and programs'.

### 2.1.2 Climate science scepticism • Scepticism about the climate science, emissions targets, or the effectiveness of climate action. • Views that climate change is exaggerated, ideological, or not demonstrated to justify major interventions. • Opposition to net zero targets framed as unnecessary or economically harmful. • Preference for traditional energy sources, such as coal, gas or nuclear, over renewables.	In 2019, the elected Council formally declared a climate emergency and has committed to the goals of the Paris Agreement, to "hold the increase in the global average temperatures to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, recognising that this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change". CAP 2030 is aligned to CN's adopted policy position on climate change and includes science-based targets to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement. **Proposed changes:** Nil
### 2.1.3 Role of CN and scale of influence Varied responses were given relating to the role of CN and CN's scale of influence in relation to climate change: There were views that CN should do more: • Expectation that CN should lead by example through its own operations as well as influencing others • View that CN actions can normalise change across the community and local economy • Perception that visible leadership strengthens trust and encourages broader participation	Action on climate change is a priority under the sustainability pillar of *Newcastle 2040*, our Community Strategic Plan, which represents our shared community vision and priorities. The *Local Government Act 1993* mandates that all councils carry out their responsibilities consistently with the principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD), which climate action falls under. The 'Working together' section of CAP 2030 highlights that CN has a responsibility to provide regional leadership in shaping our city and responding to the climate emergency at a local government level, and to take meaningful action to mitigate against climate change impacts. This section also recognises that while CN has a custodial role in delivering CAP 2030, it is not solely responsible for its implementation, and that many of the 77

There were other views that CN that should do less: • View that climate change is primarily a state, national, or global responsibility rather than a local government function • Belief that Newcastle's emissions are too small globally for local action to make a meaningful difference • Concern that CN climate action detracts from the delivery of traditional services such as roads, waste, and community infrastructure. • Expectation that higher levels of government and major emitters should carry primary responsibility for emissions reduction	actions in CAP 2030 are beyond the direct control and influence of local government. The 77 actions in CAP 2030 have therefore been categorised as 'deliver, partner, advocate and enable' to show that other various stakeholders and partners, including other levels of government and their affiliated agencies, local businesses and industry, educational institutions, community groups, and other service providers, are also responsible for delivering CAP 2030. **Proposed changes:** Nil
### 2.1.4 Appropriateness and ambition of targets, level of ambition and urgency in climate action • Support for science-based targets that clearly align with the Paris Agreement and best practice. • Concerns that some targets are either insufficiently ambitious or not clearly achievable without stronger implementation detail. • Requests for clearer pathways showing how targets will be met rather than aspirational commitments. • Requests for earlier milestones, stronger measures, and fewer reliance on future technologies or offsets.	As outlined in 2.1.2, above, CAP 2030 is aligned to CN's adopted policy position on climate change and includes science-based targets to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement. The pathways a net zero Newcastle by 2040 and net zero emissions from CN operations by 2030 is provided in the 'Pathway to net zero' and 'Funding model for delivery' sections (pg. 86-87). The target '*100% reduction in city-wide greenhouse gas emissions from electricity by 2030'* is a science-based target based on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) modelling showing that: '1.5°C pathways modelled with no or limited overshoot also include a rapid decline in the carbon intensity of electricity, and an increase in electrification of energy end use, with a reduction in the carbon intensity of electricity of about 90% between 2020 and 2030'. (pg. 35)

• Calls for greater transparency around assumptions, modelling, and reliance on external factors for community 2030 electric emission target. • Strong calls for faster and more ambitious action in response to climate risks already being experienced locally.	**Proposed changes:** Nil
### 2.1.5 Need for greater specificity and clarity • Repeated calls for clearer action detail, timelines, and measurable outcomes. • Concern that strategies and aspirations are not always accompanied by delivery frameworks. • Requests for defined responsibilities, milestones, and reporting mechanisms.	CAP 2030 provides a clear and structured implementation program through the 77 actions across the four pillars of the Community Strategic Plan to be delivered between 2026-2030. CN's varied role in implementing CAP 2030 have been articulated by the inclusion of 'deliver, partner, advocate and enable' against each of the 77 actions, with those actions assigned a delivery role representing actions and subsequent emission reductions directly attributable to CN activities. The 'Measuring success: targets and indicators' section outlines milestones and reporting mechanisms for CAP 2030. Major capital initiatives being delivered as part of CAP 2030 will be subject to the preparation of business cases, including whole-of-life costs and revenue opportunities, payback periods and risk sensitivity. Options assessments and analysis will also prioritise actions that will provide the highest and most cost-effective emissions reductions. **Proposed changes:**

	A sentence will be added to the 'Measuring success: targets and indicators' section to clarify that these targets and indicators, as well as progress on actions in CAP 2030, will be reported in CN's Annual Report. Other stakeholders involved in delivering CAP 2030 have been further articulated against in the 'Working Together' section of CAP 2030 (pg. 17).
2.1.6 Equity considerations and community outcomes • Strong emphasis on ensuring climate action benefits is accessible to all residents. • Concern that without intervention renters, apartment dwellers, low-income households, and vulnerable groups may be left behind. • Calls for targeted programs to address energy access, affordability, and structural barriers. • Strong recognition that energy equity is critical to a fair transition and that many households face structural barriers to electrification and solar. • Support for programs such as shared solar, community energy, and targeted incentives. • Expectation that programs are designed to avoid increasing costs for vulnerable households.	CAP 2030 includes: • Community energy equity as a strategic priority (pg. 45) • Four actions under '3.3.1 Community energy equity' (pg. 74) that focus on delivering programs and piloting renewable energy solutions to improve energy equity and reduce energy hardship, as well as advocating for policy reform and incentives to enable renters to access affordable renewable energy. **Proposed changes:** Under 'Strategic opportunity 1: Energy equity' (pg. 45) additional sentence has been added: These programs are designed to reduce household energy bills and energy hardship and programs that deliver both emissions reductions and affordability benefits will be prioritised (referring to Empowering Newcastle program).
2.1.7 Energy transition impacts on jobs and the local economy	CAP 2030 includes: • Four actions under 3.2.1 Develop skills and jobs in net zero industries and support a just transition' that focus on strengthening partnerships to build skills for the net zero economy, connecting people to sustainability careers, attracting investment, and supporting a just transition for workers impacted by the shift from carbon-intensive industries.

• Recognition that climate action can support local jobs, skills development, and economic diversification. • Interest in renewable energy, electrification, and circular economy initiatives as drivers of economic resilience. • Desire to reduce reliance on external energy sources and improve local energy security. • Support for Council using climate action to strengthen Newcastle's future economic position. • Support for just transition measures for workers and communities affected by the shift away from fossil fuels.	• An action under '2.1.3 Transition the Hunter region' to 'promote and advocate for large-scale renewable energy generation (such as solar parks and offshore wind), green hydrogen and ammonia export hubs, green metal and minerals processing, and other low-emission technologies, to facilitate the net zero transition in the Hunter region and promote the co-benefits for the community'. **Proposed changes:** Nil
2.1.8 Complementary climate actions Strong support for complementary actions that also reduce emissions, including nature-based solutions, building standards and active and public transport. **I. Nature-based solutions:** • Support for urban greening, tree canopy expansion, and protection of existing blue and green spaces, with concerns that development may reduce bushland and natural carbon sinks. • Recognition of multiple co-benefits, including urban cooling, biodiversity protection, improved	**Nature-based solutions** The Newcastle Environment Strategy has a series of targets and indicators that track CN's progress towards maintaining and enhancing our natural assets. CN recognises the importance of the improved measurement and reporting of carbon sequestration outcomes from green and blue infrastructure by including the actions 'investigate and report on carbon sequestration benefits from CN projects to inform project design and in setting potential', and 'integrate carbon sequestration outcomes from relevant CN projects into CN's operational annual emissions profile. under '2.2.1 Enhance blue and green spaces for carbon sequestration' under 2.2 Nature-based solutions in CAP 2030' (pg.66).

health outcomes, and increased climate resilience. • Calls for clearer targets and stronger planning protections to maintain and enhance natural assets. • Desire for improved measurement and reporting of carbon sequestration outcomes from green and blue infrastructure. **II. Improved planning and building standards** • Calls for stronger planning controls to avoid locking in future emissions. • Support for net-zero-ready buildings, electrification-ready developments, and higher efficiency standards. • Concern that current planning settings do not adequately reflect climate risk or emissions impacts. • Expectation that new development should contribute positively to climate and resilience objectives rather than undermine them. **III. Active and public transport:** • Support for prioritising walking, cycling, and public transport over private vehicle use. • Desire for safer, more connected cycling and walking infrastructure. • Recognition that transport reform is essential for emissions reduction, health, and equity.	**Building standards** CN recognises the importance of stronger planning controls to avoid locking in future emissions by including two actions under '1.1.2 Create climate smart development and buildings' that focus on improved planning controls and advocating for improvements in federal and state planning and buildings controls (pg. 60) **Active and public transport** Whilst active and public transport is a critical component of reducing emissions, this is out of the scope of CAP 2030, being addressed in the Newcastle Transport Strategy, Newcastle Cycling Plan 2021-2030, Walking and Mobility Plan 2034 and Local Streets Plan 2026. **Proposed changes:** Active and public transport being outside the scope of CAP 2030 and addressed in the Newcastle Transport Strategy, Newcastle Cycling Plan 2021-2030, Walking and Mobility Plan 2034 and Local Streets Plan 2026 has been made more explicit on the Plan on a Page (pg.8-9) and under Strategic opportunity 4: Supporting zero and low-emissions transport (pg. 46). **Delivered at the local level (pg. 25)** Addition of Local Streets Plan, Climate Adaptation and Resilience Action Plan, Blue Green Action Plan and Water Sensitive City Action Plan under CN's complementary strategies and plans.

• Strong support for walking, cycling, and public transport as first-priority modes. • Calls for safer, better-connected active transport infrastructure. • Mixed views on electric vehicles, with some concerns about affordability and infrastructure readiness.	**Addressing climate change through complementary actions (pg. 16)** An extra section has been added to clarify that CAP 2030 will be delivered alongside other relevant strategies and plans. **Strategic opportunity 4: Supporting zero and low-emissions transport (pg. 46)** A pop out box has been added to clarify initiatives to enhance active and public transport across our city are outside the scope of CAP 2030 and delivered through CN's Newcastle Transport Strategy, Newcastle Cycling Plan 2021-2030, and Walking and Mobility Plan 2034.

2.2 Online survey – Astra Street Community Energy Precinct

Five key themes emerged from the comments received through the online survey specifically related to the Astra Street Community Energy Precinct.

Online survey responses – Astra Street Community Energy Precinct	
Matters raised	**CN's response**
Appropriate site selection and land use implications Positive feedback that the precinct makes productive use of a capped landfill site that is otherwise unsuitable for development, turning a legacy asset into a community and climate benefit.	Support noted. **Proposed changes:** Nil
Financial impacts and business case transparency	CAP 2030 includes an action under '2.1.1 Deliver energy efficiency, electrification and renewable energy initiatives' to 'conduct a feasibility

Requests for clearer information on capital costs, operating savings, emissions reductions, and payback periods to demonstrate value for money and build confidence.	assessment and develop a business case for the Astra Street Community Energy Precinct, and deliver the project if viable, incorporating large-scale solar generation, battery storage and heavy electric vehicle charging infrastructure'. **Proposed changes:** Additional sentence added to Astra Street Community Energy Precinct project description (pg. 59): 'CN will undertake feasibility studies and develop a comprehensive business case to assess capital and operational costs, emissions reduction potential, and financial, social and environmental benefits. Further community consultation will be conducted as the project progresses.'
Solar, energy storage, gas capture and EV charging are enablers of climate action Strong support for maintaining renewable electricity, fleet electrification, EV infrastructure and landfill gas reduction. These are seen as high-impact actions to reduce emissions and are within Council's control. They can also enable broader emissions reduction through showing leadership in these fields, while also prompting calls for clearer timelines, long-term energy procurement, infrastructure readiness and transparent reporting.	Support noted. **Proposed changes:** Nil
Support for equitable access to energy infrastructure Strong support for the precinct's potential to improve equitable access to renewable energy through shared infrastructure such as community batteries and solar, particularly for renters and apartment residents, alongside	Support noted. **Proposed changes:** Nil

calls for clear, inclusive design to ensure affordability and equitable benefit distribution.	
Technology uncertainty and risks Some uncertainty was expressed about the reliability, longevity, and future scalability of the technology, alongside interest in how risks are being managed and lessons shared.	The solar, battery and EV charging technologies proposed for the Astra Street Energy Precinct are well-established, and already operating at scale in the residential, commercial and industrial sectors. Products will be selected through CN's the rigorous procurement processes. **Proposed changes:** Nil

2.3 Written submissions

Six written submissions were received, - two from organisations and four from individuals.

2.3.1 Climate Action Newcastle (CAN)

Matters raised	**CN's response**
Targets are insufficiently ambitious and over-reliant on "net zero" Concern that relying on net zero risks delaying real emissions cuts through offsets and sequestration. A call for absolute emissions reductions, recommending a 50% reduction in city-wide emissions by 2030.	The appropriateness of the targets included in CAP 2030 is addressed in 'Science-based targets' (pg. 35). Newcastle LGA's emission profile (pg. 36) shows that 58% of emissions are from electricity. CAP 2030 has a target of *100% reduction in city-wide greenhouse gas emissions from electricity by 2030*. This is higher than a 50% reduction in city-wide emissions by 2030, without considering any other category emission reductions. The choice of this target, and the appropriateness of progressing grid decarbonisation as a priority is also addressed in 'Science-based targets' (pg. 35).

	In response to the use of 'net zero', CAP 2030 aligns to the SBTi Corporate Net-Zero Standard which is the most widely used and science-aligned benchmark. This states that: • Companies must achieve deep emissions reductions of ~90–95% across their value chain • Offsets (carbon removals) are only allowed for the remaining residual emissions after those reductions **Proposed changes:** Added additional sentence under 'Currently preferred pathway to net zero emissions from CN operations by 2030' (pg. 85): Offsets are only used after real emission reductions of at least 90%, as per the SBTi Corporate Net-Zero Standard.
Lack of measurable emissions reductions for individual actions Desire for clarify around how much emissions reduction each action will achieve and whether the actions collectively add up to the stated targets.	Newcastle's pathway to net zero (pg. 84-85) outlines the specific emission reductions attributable to initiatives under CN's preferred emissions reduction pathway to 2030. It is not feasible to conduct an analysis of the specific emission reductions attributable to each of the 77 actions in CAP 2030 and whether the actions collectively add up to the stated targets. CAP 2030 is City of Newcastle's road map to achieving net zero emissions from its operations by 2030 and supporting the Newcastle LGA to transition to net zero emissions by 2040 and does not represent all the actions required by all the players involved for the Newcastle LGA to reach net zero emissions by 2040. Instead, we will continue to evaluate and report on the outcomes of CN programs and initiatives that support a city-wide transition to net zero, for

	example, through the recent evaluation and reporting on our *Solar Neighbourhoods* program, including emission reduction outcomes. We will also continue to utilise the Climate Snapshot for the Newcastle municipality to understand and report on annual emission reductions for the Newcastle LGA. **Proposed changes:** Nil
Insufficient monitoring, evaluation, and accountability mechanisms Both the previous 2021–25 CAP and the draft CAP 2030 lack: • clear definitions of success; • regular reporting against targets; • mechanisms to identify under-performing actions. Quantified indicators, six-monthly public reporting, and stronger evaluation processes are recommended.	'Measuring success: targets and indicators' (pages 89-91) allow us to measure and track our progress against CAP 2030. Progress on key actions and CN's operational and community greenhouse gas emission reduction and net zero targets are also reported annually in CN's Annual Report, *Newcastle 2040* and *Delivering Newcastle 2040*. The adaptable delivery model adopted for CAP 2030 will involve us monitoring and identifying under-performing actions and ensuring the most cost-effective and impactful abatement is achieved for both our operational and community and business net zero projects and programs. As outlined, above, we will continue to evaluate and report on the outcomes of CN programs and initiatives that support a city-wide transition to net zero, for example, through the recent evaluation and reporting on our *Solar Neighbourhoods* program. **Proposed changes:** Nil

Transport emissions response lacks scale, funding certainty, and mode-shift targets While supporting the transport hierarchy prioritising walking, cycling, and public transport, the draft CAP 2030: • Does not specify modal share targets for 2030. • Does not allocate funding proportional to the scale of emissions reduction required. • Has under-delivered on fleet electrification to date. • Doesn't indicate a significant investment in cycling infrastructure and a clearly quantified reduction in transport emissions.	Whilst active and public transport is a critical component of reducing emissions, this is out of the scope of CAP 2030, being addressed in the Newcastle Transport Strategy, Newcastle Cycling Plan 2021-2030, Walking and Mobility Plan 2034 and Local Streets Plan 2026. **Proposed changes:** Active and public transport initiatives being outside the scope of CAP 2030 has been made more explicit on the Plan on a Page and under Strategic opportunity 4: Supporting zero and low-emissions transport (pg. 46).
Carbon sequestration is not quantified or target-driven Supports: • Existing carbon sequestration from blue and green spaces. Proposes: • Explicit sequestration increase targets and using this data to inform planning and development decisions. Without this, these actions as well-intentioned but difficult to evaluate.	CAP 2030 includes two actions under '2.2.1 Enhance blue and green spaces for carbon sequestration' to: 'investigate and report on carbon sequestration benefits from CN projects to inform project design and in setting potential' and 'integrate carbon sequestration outcomes from relevant CN projects into CN's operational annual emissions profile'. These are necessary first steps to help us quantify carbon sequestration outcomes and inform the development of any future carbon sequestration targets. **Proposed changes:** Nil

2.3.2 Flourishing Lives 4 All (FL4ALL) and Expanded Climate and Innovation Agenda

(Dennis Pamlin)

This submission focused on critiquing the draft CAP 2030 in relation to its alignment with:

- The Flourishing Lives 4 All (FL4ALL) framework.
- Expanded climate and innovation agenda.

General feedback is that the draft CAP 2030 from Newcastle is a world leading municipal climate plan from an expanded climate and innovation perspective with a focus on flourishing lives for all on a flourishing planet (FL4ALL). The city explicitly links climate action to quality of life, equity, resilience, local economy, arts and culture, learning, innovation, and community agency and organises the plan across four whole-of-city themes rather than treating climate as a narrow environmental silo. The draft CAP 2030 has great potential to become a fully explicit flourishing-and-solution-provider strategy.

Flourishing Lives 4 All framework

Alignment in the draft CAP 2030 with the FL4ALL framework were identified as: it includes both basic needs and higher-order capacities; it treats equity and inclusion as central, not peripheral; and it recognises biodiversity and nature as part of the transition.

Proposed changes:

Based on the feedback received, and in consultation with Dennis Pamlin, the following changes have been made to more fully align CAP 2030 with the (FL4ALL) and expanded climate and innovation agenda framework:

Working together (pg. 17)

Removed sentence 'In delivering CAP 2030, CN will work with various stakeholders and partners, including other levels of government and their affiliated agencies, local businesses and industry, educational institutions, community groups, and other service providers' and replaced with 'CAP 2030 is an operational plan for CN, while also functioning as a platform for broader civic participation, innovation and collaboration. CN's role is therefore not only to deliver actions directly, but also to be an enabler in helping to create the conditions for healthier, more resilient, and more connected lives over time'.

Added section:

Our stakeholders

The stakeholders CN will work with to implement CAP 2030 include:

- Other local councils
- State and federal government and authorities
- Utilities and infrastructure providers

Areas for improvement in relation to FL4ALL were identified as: **Flourishing is implied, but not operationalised** The draft CAP 2030 points toward flourishing, but it does not yet define success or define measurable outcomes in terms of: • flourishing lives; • flourishing life-years; • multidimensional wellbeing; • meaning, agency, social connection, creativity, or mental flourishing. **Mental wellbeing and social flourishing are present but underdeveloped** The draft CAP 2030 does not does yet really treat the city as a system for: • reducing chronic stress; • increasing belonging; • supporting meaning and purpose; • strengthening social cohesion; • designing public spaces and services for long-term flourishing. **Citizens as participants in transition, not beneficiaries of a flourishing agenda**	• Private sector • Education and research institutes • Community and advocacy organisations • Residents and households • Innovators and entrepreneurs • Financial institutions and investors • Health and social services sector • Business • Tourism and hospitality sector • Transport providers and mobility operators • Artists and creatives A fourth role, 'enable' has been added to 'City of Newcastle's role' (pg. 17), to demonstrate where CN's role in transition outcomes are centred around the conditions that CN helps to create to enable a collective city-wide transition, and added to the 77 actions where CN plays an enabling role. The definition of 'enable' has been added and the definitions of 'deliver, partner, advocate' have been refined to be more relevant to CAP 2030, as follows: **Deliver:** CN directly delivers, funds, operates or controls the action through its own operations, services, infrastructure, assets, policies, projects or programs. **Partner:** CN works collaboratively with external stakeholders to jointly deliver outcomes. **Enable:** CN helps accelerate transitions beyond its own boundaries through demonstration, collaboration, implementation knowledge, partnerships, and the sharing of scalable approaches.

The draft CAP 2030 could address: how does each major action contribute to flourishing lives over time? **<u>Expanded climate and innovation agenda</u>** Alignment in the draft CAP 2030 with the expanded climate and innovation agenda framework were identified as: moves beyond a narrow operational mindset to consider broader city-wide targets and initiatives; it links climate action to innovation, jobs, learning and partnership; it already behaves partly like a living lab and as building and scaling solution pathways; and it is externally connected. Areas to consider in relation to the expanded climate and innovation agenda framework were identified as: **It is still mainly a demand-side climate plan** and could explicitly ask how Newcastle could build globally relevant solution clusters and scalable and exportable solution pathways*, in addition to being a responsible local actor. * A solution-provider city helps accelerate transitions beyond its own boundaries through demonstration, collaboration, implementation knowledge, partnerships, and the sharing of scalable approaches. **Human needs are present, but not used as a design test**, and could become a human-needs driven innovation strategy.	**Advocate:** CN advocates for changes to legislation, policy, incentives and action at relevant levels of government and industry. **Transition of the Hunter region (pg. 26)** Additional sentence added: Newcastle, as a region transitioning from a heavy industrial and fossil fuel legacy, is uniquely positioned to frame itself as a transition solution provider for the world, in terms of its: • industrial transition; • port-city decarbonisation; • community energy; • electrification; • regional just transition; • climate and economic resilience. Amend action under '3.3.2 Build community resilience' to 'develop and deliver programs that address climate-anxiety and climate-related mental health challenges, through partnerships with local health professionals, schools and community groups, and that help create environments that support physical comfort, social connection, and long-term wellbeing'. **A holistic approach to climate change (pg. 28)** Introductory sentence added under '**Mission Innovation: Flourishing Lives 4 All**' heading to position FL4ALL in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals: 'Flourishing Lives for All on a Flourishing Planet (FL4ALL) builds on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), expands their scope, and gives them a shared direction. A healthy economy, harm reduction, climate mitigation, biodiversity protection, profit, innovation and economic productivity remain essential, but they are no longer sufficient as the primary organising

Innovation is mostly framed as collaboration, not as portfolio development, with the expanded agenda being stronger on incubators, start-up ecosystems, innovation clusters, innovation and building future industries. **It does not yet fully reframe the Hunter transition as a global solution opportunity** and could frame itself as a transition solution provider for the world.	principles for strategies, innovations, and investments; instead we must intentionally shape societies capable of delivering flourishing lives for everyone, on a flourishing planet, in a context of rapid technological development, demographic change, mental pollution, geopolitical uncertainty, and ecological limits. Additon of new heading and expanded content: **Human needs categories under the FL4ALL framework** Climate action is not only about reducing emissions and managing risks, but also about supporting a healthy, resilient, inclusive and liveable city. While broader wellbeing outcomes sit across multiple CN strategies and plans, climate action can contribute positively to quality of life through cooler neighbourhoods, healthier mobility, improved public spaces, social connection, resilience, and reduced environmental stress. The FL4ALL framework, being explicitly human-need centred, focuses on how innovations, and clusters of solution providers, deliver on these needs in ways that either support or undermine flourishing lives. Human needs categories under the FL4ALL framework are as follows: 1. Nutrition / health: access to adequate and nutritious food, clean water, sanitation, preventive healthcare, physical activity, and medical services. 2. Spaces / Protection: including shelter, thermal comfort, clean air, adequate lighting, and protection from environmental hazards. 3. Social development / personal growth: once basic survival thresholds are met, additional improvements in material conditions yield diminishing returns for wellbeing, while social, psychological, and

	existential factors become dominant determinants of life satisfaction and resilience. 4. Mobility / access: which shapes exposure to opportunities, higher physical activity, social networks, services, and restorative environments; and reduce exposure to air pollutants, social isolation, and employment and education opportunities. 5. Information / knowledge: education opportunities assist long-term cognitive health and high-quality knowledge ecosystems that support critical thinking, media literacy, and lifelong learning are associated with greater psychological resilience, civic participation, and adaptive capacity in the face of social and environmental change. 6. Energy systems: are fundamental enablers of modern life, affecting thermal comfort, lighting, communication, food systems and healthcare delivery; while energy poverty and a lack of access to reliable, affordable energy is associated with chronic stress, poorer mental health, and reduced cognitive performance. 7. Resources: there is a need to ensure that the resources we use actually deliver on human needs, and also that we use resources in an extremely resource efficient way in order to support a future where everyone can flourish. 8. Nature / biodiversity: the requirement to move beyond extractive models toward systems explicitly designed for co-existence with nature, recognising the intrinsic value of nature and biodiversity. 9. Reducing / avoiding existential risks: which are associated with anxiety, hopelessness, and reduced sense of agency, particularly among younger generations; while long-term risk reduction contributes to psychological security, social trust and future-oriented thinking. Addition of new heading and expanded content:

	A wellbeing perspective Modern urban environments can unintentionally contribute to 'mental pollution' in the form of chronic stress, cognitive overload, social isolation, heat fatigue, noise stress, a disconnection from nature, and fragmented attention. Climate action can often help address these conditions simultaneously, for example: • greener streets reduce heat and stress; • walkable neighbourhoods increase social interaction; • quieter low-traffic spaces reduce cognitive overload; • nature exposure improves recovery and attention; • community participation strengthens belonging and resilience. Additional section added to introduce this framework which CAP 2030 is also aligned with: **Expanded Climate and Innovation Agenda** The Expanded Climate and Innovation Agenda (ECIA) is a global framework, supported by the UNFCCC, ICLEI and Mission Innovation, that shifts city and regional climate strategies from merely cutting emissions to actively deploying and exporting transformative, compatible solutions. This dynamic approach utilises digital technologies and disruptive innovations to address the climate emergency while ensuring societal needs and equity are met. This framework positions cities as: • Solution providers: Rather than just acting as emission sources, cities and regions are positioned as hubs that develop, test, and export scalable green innovations. • Utilising a tech-driven approach: integrating digitalisation, IoT, and AI into local governance and climate response.

	• Focusing on human-centric outcomes**:** sustainability targets are aligned with human flourishing, social equity and economic benefits, particularly for vulnerable communities. • Collaborating globally: the framework relies on matchmaking platforms and partnerships to connect the innovators developing tools with the local governments who need them. Revised sentence: CAP 2030 has combined the FL4ALL and Expanded Climate and Innovation Agenda with our *Newcastle 2040* themes to create a collective and integrated approach that combines global imperative with local action. Additional sentence: Human needs category symbols have been included in each action theme to signify how the 77 actions in CAP 2030 will contribute to flourishing lives over time. The 'enabling' role CN can play in implementing CAP 2030, and the role CN can play in building scalable and exportable solution pathways, in addition to being a responsible local actor, has been strengthened in CAP 2030 as follows: 4.2.1 has been amended to 'Climate action reporting' and an action moved from this section to 4.3 Collaborative and innovative approach Actions under '4.3.1 Driving innovation and collaboration for climate action' (pg. 76) has been refined as follows: • Act as a solution-provider city by accelerating transitions beyond our city's boundaries, through demonstrating practical transition models,

	collaboration, sharing demonstration projects, knowledge and scalable approaches, and partnerships. • Host the Newcastle Climate Action Collaborative to bring together large emitters and key stakeholders within the Newcastle LGA to form a solution provider and mission-orientated transition platform, collaborate, innovate and progress a net zero Newcastle by 2040. • Amplify action by participating in internal cross-council working groups and local and international networks and peer learning opportunities. Revised wording for highlight project: The Newcastle Climate Collaborative (pg. 82) Additional sentence added: 'The Newcastle Climate Collaborative represents an important opportunity to move toward a more mission-oriented approach to climate transition. By bringing together major city stakeholders around shared challenges, pilot projects and demonstration initiatives, Newcastle can strengthen its role not only as a responsible local actor, but also as a city that helps test, refine and share practical transition approaches that may benefit other communities facing similar climate challenges'. **Measuring success: targets and indicators (pg. 89)** In addition to CAP 2030's current indicators: • Overall quality of life in Newcastle • SEIFA Index of Disadvantage

	Additional section added: 'Flourishing Lives for All' and new measure of success has been included 'to develop a small number of 'climate-linked flourishing lives indicators' (not necessarily all 'owned' by CN) that more directly measure how climate action contributes to the conditions that support flourishing lives, and to combine these with stories, citizen experiences, case studies, and participatory feedback to report on 'flourishing lives' outcomes. Examples of potential indictors could include: • Access to cooling, shade and nature. • Walkability and active mobility participation. • Access to public green space. • Perceived neighbourhood liveability. • Public transport accessibility. • Energy affordability / reduced energy stress. • Social connectedness or belonging.
2.3.3 Community member (1)	
The draft CAP 2030 lacks implementation detail and reads as a strategy, not a delivery plan. The draft CAP 2030 sets out ambitions and targets but lacks the detail needed for delivery. It does not include clear schedules, milestones, responsibilities or sequencing to demonstrate how outcomes will be achieved. **There is no integration with Council's existing asset management systems.** The draft CAP 2030 does not align emissions reduction with Council's	The 77 actions in CAP 2030, as well as the role of CN (deliver, partner, advocate or enable) and the other responsible stakeholders for the delivery of the 77 actions, provides the implementation detail for CAP 2030. Clear schedules and milestones for major initiatives will be developed as part of project planning and implementation and is not the role of CAP 2030 which acts as a higher-level strategic document. The following actions integrate CAP 2030 with CN's asset management program:

asset lifecycles, replacement programs or capital planning, limiting the practicality of actions, particularly for fleet and facilities. **There is an over reliance on influence rather than direct, controllable action.** Many actions focus on advocacy or partnerships, meaning outcomes depend on external factors. The plan does not clearly distinguish between emissions reductions driven by Council, other governments or the private sector. **The draft CAP 2030 lacks transparent emissions modelling and attribution.** Emission reduction pathways are not supported by clear modelling or assumptions. It is also unclear how much reduction is attributable to Council actions versus broader changes such as electricity grid decarbonisation. **Insufficient financial clarity and accountability mechanisms.** While funding is identified, the CAP 2030 does not clearly link investment to specific projects, priorities or financial planning. There is also limited detail on reporting, milestones or accountability mechanisms.	• '1.1.2 Create climate smart development and buildings': Develop a sustainable design guideline to ensure all new and existing CN assets are built, renewed and maintained in alignment with sustainability benchmarks (pg. 60). • '1.2.1 Transition CN's fleet to electric vehicles or low or zero-emission alternatives': Develop and deliver a fleet transition plan that outlines timeframes and costs for transitioning CN's fleet to electric or low/zero-emission alternatives (pg. 60). Climate action is also embedded in CN's Asset Management Strategy. Objectives (4.1) (10) includes the delivery of services incorporating environmental sustainability, considering emission prevention and reduction. Achieving net zero emissions for the Newcastle LGA involves CN playing a direct delivery role, as well as an advocacy, partnership and enabling role. The varied role CN plays is appropriately articulated by the inclusion of 'deliver, partner, advocate and enable' against each of the 77 actions in CAP 2030, with those actions assigned a delivery role representing actions and subsequent emission reductions attributable to CN. City of Newcastle's pathway to net zero section (pg. 85) clearly articulates our emissions reduction pathway informed by modelling. The 'Funding model for delivery' section clearly identified the investment requirements for specific projects identified for CN to achieve net zero emissions from its operations by 2030. The 'Measuring success: targets and indicators' (pages 89-91) allow us to measure and track our progress against CAP 2030. In addition, there is an action under 4.2.1 Know and share climate risks and opportunities' to 'use

	best-practice climate-related reporting mechanisms to inform decision-making and communicate our performance'. **Proposed changes:** Nil
2.3.4 Community member (2)	
This submission notes the author has not reviewed the draft CAP 2030 but supports local renewable energy development, particularly wind turbines in the Newcastle Port/Kooragang Island area. They raise concerns about inefficient planning and logistics and recommend that wind infrastructure be located closer to demand centres and existing industrial sites to improve cost efficiency, resilience and local energy access.	Submission noted. **Proposed changes:** Nil
2.3.5 Community member (3)	
Target dates. The 2040 target is seen as too distant, with a preference for stronger, earlier accountability (e.g. 2030 primary target). **Scepticism about electricity targets.** The 100% reduction in electricity emissions target is viewed as unrealistic and outside Council control. **Support for operational net zero.** Strong support for CN achieving net zero in its own operations,	CAP 2030 also includes the target: '*100% reduction in city-wide greenhouse gas emissions from electricity by 2030'*. The choice of this target, and the appropriateness of progressing grid decarbonisation as a priority is also addressed in 'Science-based targets' (pg. 35). has both net zero target as well as interim 2030 targets. This is addressed in response to 2.1.4. A landfill gas emissions target has also been included in CAP 2030: 'Net zero emissions from landfill gas by 2040'.

particularly through electrification (e.g. garbage truck fleet). **Concerns about emissions accounting.** Questions raised about exclusion of landfill gas emissions and reliance on carbon credit assumptions. **Transport and active travel gaps.** Support for active transport, but concern that it is under-emphasised and that more attention should be given to emerging trends such as e-bikes.	Active and public transport initiatives being outside the scope of CAP 2030 has been made more explicit on the Plan on a Page and under Strategic opportunity 4: Supporting zero and low-emissions transport (pg. 46). **Proposed changes:** Removal of sentence 'Residual landfill gas emissions from SWMC and Astra Street are currently not included in CN's operational net zero target' in 'City of Newcastle's landfill gas emissions profile (pg. 52) as this is inaccurate and is referring to the Climate Action Plan 2021-2025. Additional sentence in highlight project (pg. 63) around waste fleet electrification: 'CN will also investigate broader opportunities for waste fleet electrification, including shared-use charging infrastructure, depot optimisation and heavy vehicle charging hub models that could support both CN operations and future local business fleet transition opportunities.'
2.3.6 Community member (4)	
This submission is focused on reviews relating to the NSW EPA's FOGO Policy and applying those concerns to CAP 2030.	CN's FOGO program is outside the scope of the CAP 2030 and is included in CN's *Our Sustainable Waste Strategy*. **Proposed changes:** Nil