



Draft summary report

South Gippsland Shire - Coal Creek Strategic Plan

Draft v1.0, 15 April



About this report

This draft report summarises the findings of the South Gippsland Coal Creek Strategic Plan engagement process, which was conducted from January to March 2024. The purpose of the engagement was to gather input from the community to inform the drafting of a realistic Strategic Plan for the future of Coal Creek.. The engagement was focused on understanding the value of Coal Creek to the South Gippsland Community. Additionally, the engagement identified challenges and opportunities for Coal Creek.

The engagement activities included an online and hard copy survey, intercept surveys conducted at pop-ups across the shire and submissions by community groups and interested members of the community.

Engagement overview

Engagement activities

Online engagement

Online engagement, including an online survey, was conducted to gather community input on their experiences in open spaces and ideas for improvement through Council's Your Say. 322 people participated in the online survey.

Pop-ups

Four were held around South Gippsland to engage with the community through community events and open spaces. Intercept surveys were conducted at pop-ups, and 109 intercept surveys were completed. Pop-ups were held at the following locations.

- The Long Table, Tarwin Lower, 26 Jan (11 am to 2 pm)
- Outside, Memorial Hall, Leongatha, 2 Feb (12 m to 3 pm)
- Coal Creek, Korumburra, 2 Feb, (5.30 pm to 8.30 pm)
- Foster and district Ag show, 24 Feb, (10 am to 2 pm)

Submissions

Twenty-five submissions were received from individuals and community groups across the Shire.



Key findings

Visitation and value of Coal Creek

Surveys

Visitation: Most respondents from both the intercept and online surveys had visited Coal Creek (96%)

Condition of Coal Creek: In the online survey, almost half of respondents rated the current condition of Coal Creek as average (47%), with 34% rating it positively.

Attractions: In the online survey, over half of respondents (60%) rated the attractions at Coal Creek positively.

Value of Coal Creek to the community: Across the intercept and online survey, a large majority of responses (84%) believe Coal Creek provides value to the community.

We asked how what value respondents believe it provides, and an analysis of the responses across both surveys revealed the following themes:

- **Tourism and economic value:** Coal Creek is a vital tourist attraction, drawing visitors to South Gippsland and benefiting local businesses. Large-scale events hosted at Coal Creek also present significant economic opportunities, potentially boosting local employment and economic growth.
- **Educational value:** An important educational resource, particularly for school groups.
- **Historical value:** Coal Creek plays a crucial role in preserving the history, heritage, and culture of South Gippsland. Maintaining historical buildings and displaying a vast collection of artefacts allows both locals and visitors to connect with the area's past.
- **A valued community space:** It acts as a communal hub, hosting cultural and community events that bring locals together.

The most interesting things at Coal Creek were:

- **Historical value:** Respondents appreciate the site's authentic historical buildings, artefacts, and educational opportunities related to local history.
- **Open space:** Coal Creek's natural, park-like setting, known for its tranquillity and beauty, is a significant draw for visitors.
- **Events and activities:** A variety of events, including festivals and train rides, are popular attractions that enhance the visitor experience.

The least interesting were:

- **The disrepair and closure** of some buildings are major concerns, detracting from the overall experience.
- **Lack of interactivity:** The absence of interactive displays is seen as a missed opportunity for engagement and education.
- **Lack of food options:** Inadequate food and beverage services, along with the closure of key facilities like the cafe, are notable drawbacks for visitors.



Submissions

The submissions reflect a strong community desire to preserve and enhance Coal Creek. It is seen as a vital community asset that provides significant benefits, such as community bonding, economic development, and educational opportunities. They recognise its value and potential while also acknowledging the challenges it faces. Based on our analysis of the submissions, almost all appear to support revitalisation or a new direction for Coal Creek.

Challenges and opportunities

Surveys

The top challenges for the continued operation of Coal Creek were:

- **Financial constraints:** Funding and financial resources for maintenance and improvements were identified as major challenges.
- **Maintenance and upkeep:** The continuous maintenance of buildings, exhibits, and grounds, including structured programs for ongoing repairs, is a significant concern.
- **Connecting with younger generations** is a challenge. There is a need for more attractions and activities that appeal to younger people and make Coal Creek exciting enough to capture their interest.

The top opportunities that were identified were:

- **Tourism:** Enhancing its role as a major tourist destination can serve as a gateway to the Shire, potentially boosting visitor numbers with more events and attractions.
- **Education:** Expanding educational offerings, such as school programs and historical workshops, can add significant educational value to the community.
- **History:** Emphasising the preservation and showcase of local heritage and history to educate and attract visitors.
- **Increasing entertainment and events.** Respondents hoped to see a diverse range of activities such as art exhibitions, festivals, music and food events.

We asked, What would entice you to visit more? An analysis of the responses identified the following changes or improvements:

- **More events and experiences:** A significant number of respondents are interested in more dynamic and engaging activities such as interactive exhibits, historical tours, and a variety of events, including music, arts, festivals, and specialised markets.
- **Improved accessibility:** There's a clear need for better transportation options within the park for people with mobility issues or living with a disability.
- **Food and beverage options:** Reopening and providing food options, like the cafe and specialty shops (e.g., lolly shops), was frequently mentioned as a desirable improvement to enhance the visitor experience.
- **Promotion:** There was a call for improved marketing efforts to increase awareness of Coal Creek
- **Reintroducing an entrance fee** to support ongoing maintenance and new initiatives.



Submissions

Challenges: There are concerns about Coal Creek's future, with the need for adequate funding to ensure the park's operations, maintenance, and improvement.

Opportunities: A number of opportunities were identified throughout the submissions, including: Involving local groups and trades in maintenance and improvement, expanding the park's accommodation options, hosting more events and activities, and improving facilities such as signage, entrance building, and amenities.

Factors to guide decision making

Surveys

In the online survey, we asked respondents to prioritise a set of factors that should guide their decision-making about the future of Coal Creek. The factors, in order of priority to respondents are:

1. Preserving historical and cultural significant
2. Community involvement and inclusions
3. Environmental sustainability and access to open space
4. Contributing to the South Gippsland economy
5. Economic viability of Coal Creek (regarding the cost to Council)

Factors that emerged through discussions in the intercept survey and the online survey include:

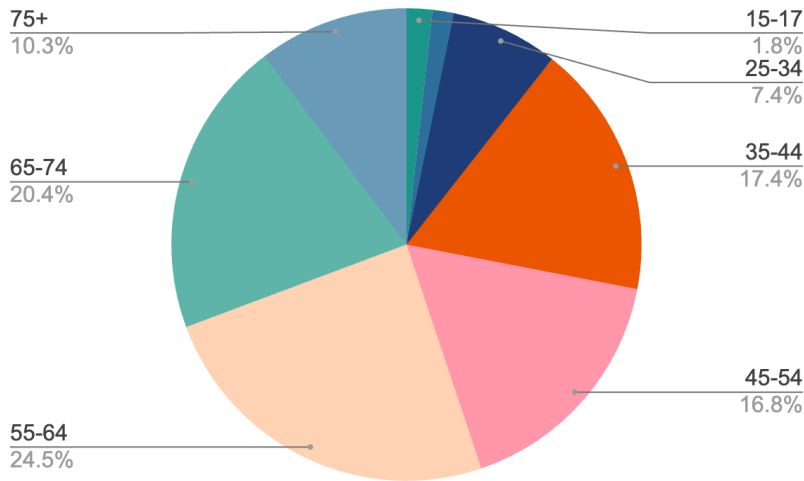
- **Cultural heritage:** The importance of maintaining and enhancing Coal Creek's historical elements as a testament to regional heritage was stressed.
- **Community connection:** Prioritise community engagement in decision-making processes, acknowledging the community's deep connection to Coal Creek and considering their preferences and ideas for its future.
- **Economic viability:** Ensure Coal Creek is financially sustainable by exploring mechanisms like entry fees or investments and assessing its broader economic impact on the South Gippsland region.
- **Long-term planning:** Respondents expressed concerns about the irreversible loss if the park were to cease operations and emphasised the importance of preserving it for future generations.



Participation

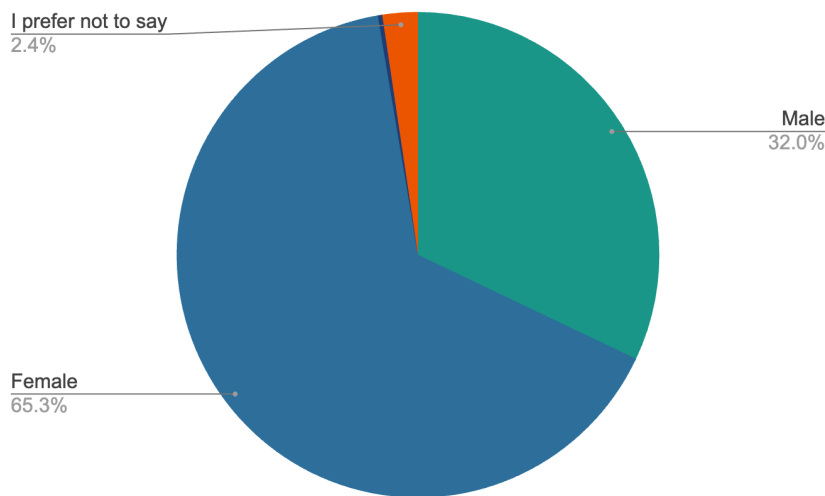
Age groups

335 people responded to this question through online and intercepted surveys. The highest representation was by the age group 55-64 (25%) and 65-74 (21%)



Gender

330 people responded to this question through online and intercepted surveys. Females had the highest participation, with 65%.

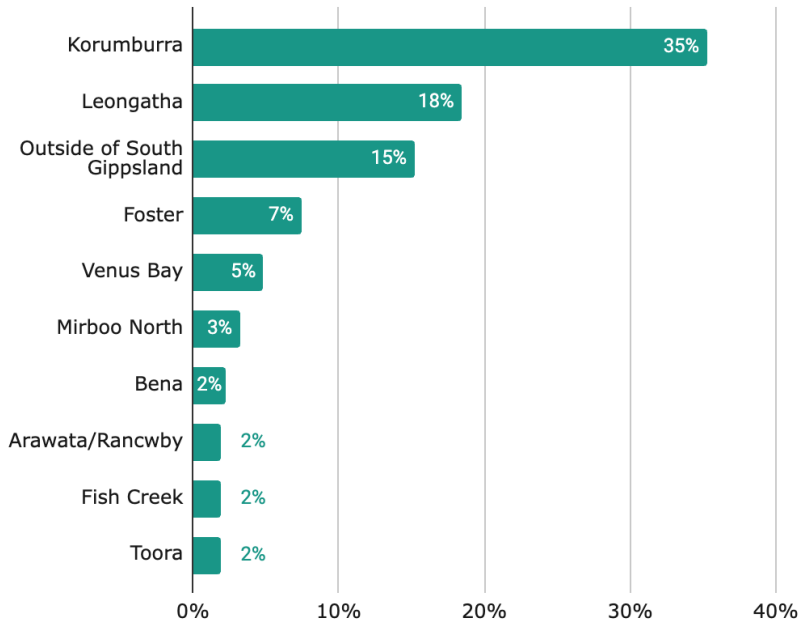




Township

309 people responded to this question through online and intercepted surveys. Representation was highest from Korumburra (35%), followed by Leongatha (18%).

Respondents from outside of South Gippsland Shire made up 15% of responses.





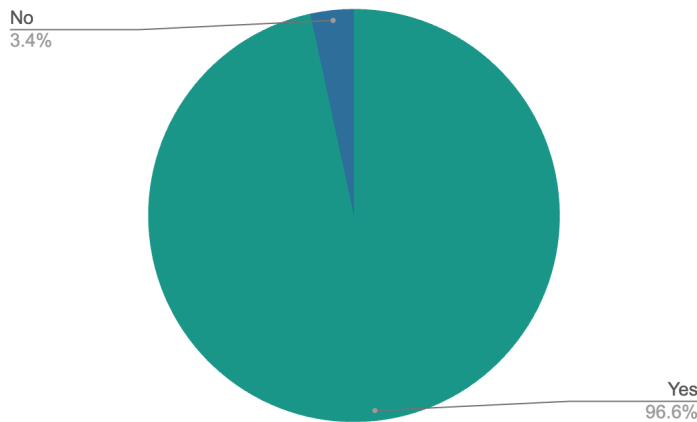
Detailed findings

Online survey

Have you visited Coal Creek?

322 people responded to this question.

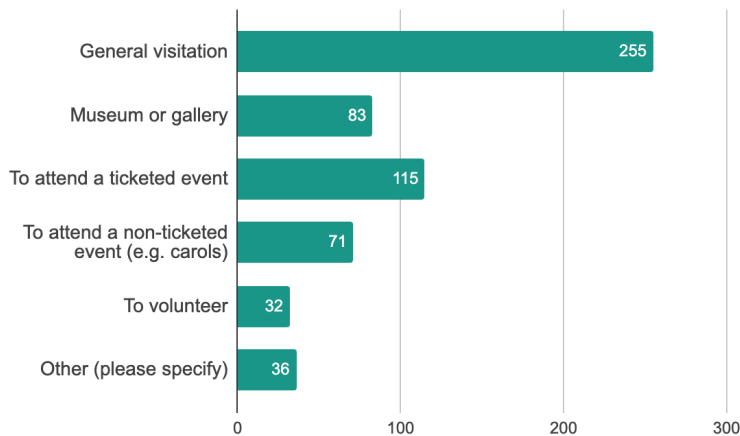
The vast majority of respondents (97%) have visited Coal Creek. Only a small proportion (3%) have not.



What was the purpose of your visit?

312 people responded to this question.

General visitation was the most common reason for visiting Coal Creek (82%) Attending a ticket event was the second most common reason (37%), followed by Museum or Gallery visit (27%).





Why haven't you visited?

10 people responded to this question, an analysis of the responses revealed the following themes:

Unappealing: Many respondents find Coal Creek unappealing or uninteresting, citing reasons such as it appearing quiet, run-down, neglected, or lacking attractions.

Time constraints: Another common theme is the lack of available free time, with respondents mentioning busy schedules, self-involvement, or recently moving in as reasons for not visiting.

What do you think is the best thing about Coal Creek?

311 people responded to this question, and an analysis of the responses revealed the following key themes.

The historical significance of Coal Creek was highly valued by respondents, who appreciated the authentic historical buildings, artefacts, and displays that provide insights into the past.

The beautiful setting of Coal Creek, with its natural surroundings, park-like environment, and picturesque landscape, was frequently mentioned and appreciated for its peaceful and serene atmosphere.

Events were highlighted, with respondents appreciating the various events and activities held at Coal Creek.

The educational value of Coal Creek was valued, with respondents mentioning that it serves as a valuable resource for learning about local history, especially for children.

What is of least interest to you at Coal Creek?

293 people responded to this question.

A large number of responses said that there was nothing that they didn't find interesting about Coal Creek. An analysis of the responses revealed the least interesting things to the respondents.

The disrepair of buildings is a significant concern among visitors. Respondents express disappointment in the state of the buildings. The closure of some buildings is also a point of dissatisfaction, with visitors expressing a desire for all buildings to be open and accessible

Lack of interactive displays: The absence of interactive displays detracts from the overall experience, suggesting that such displays would make the park more engaging and provide a more immersive and educational experience.

Art exhibitions that weren't of interest: Some respondents found the art exhibitions run at Coal Creek of low interest, particularly those that were not in line with the historical and cultural significance of Coal Creek

The lack of food and beverage offerings is a significant issue for respondents. The closure of the cafe and the general store is seen to impact the visitor experience negatively.



Limited accessibility (the steep hills): There were also concerns about the accessibility of Coal Creek, with specific regard to the steep hills, particularly for people living with disabilities or mobility issues.

What changes or improvements might encourage you to visit in the future?

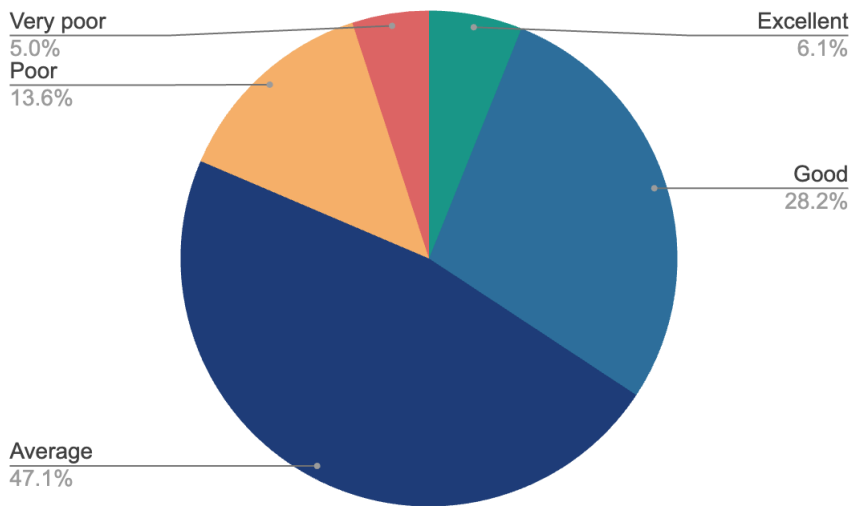
291 people responded to this question. An analysis of the responses revealed the following changes or improvements that would attract more future visitors.

- **Offering food and beverage options**, including reopening the cafe and lolly shop.
- **Improving maintenance** so that more buildings are for exploration and the steam train starts running.
- **Introducing interactive displays**, new technologies and demonstrations or workshops by volunteers.
- **Hosting more events** and festivals, such as music, art, food, wine, and other cultural events.
- **Improving accessibility to the park** or including options for people with mobility issues.
- **Enhancing marketing and promotion efforts**, as well as a desire to see an entrance fee reintroduced.

How would you rate the current condition of Coal Creek?

277 people responded to this question.

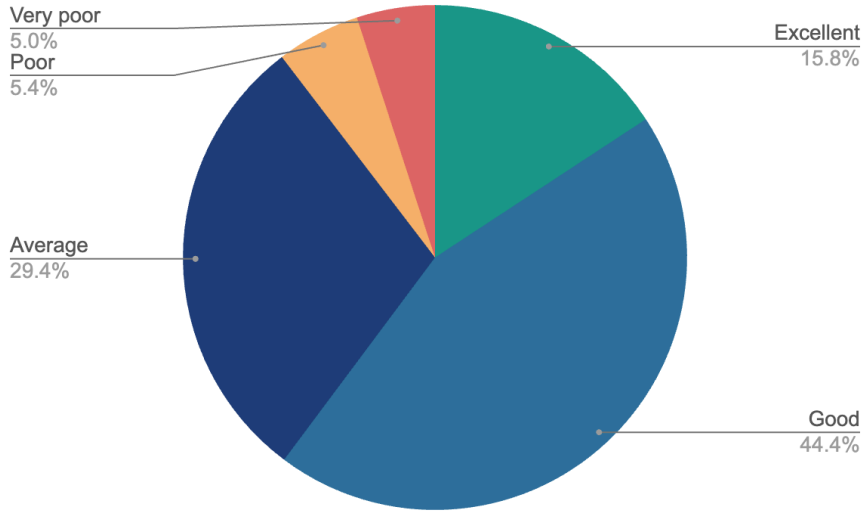
Almost half of respondents rated the current condition of Coal Creek as average (47%).



How would you rate the attractions at Coal Creek?

276 people responded to this question.

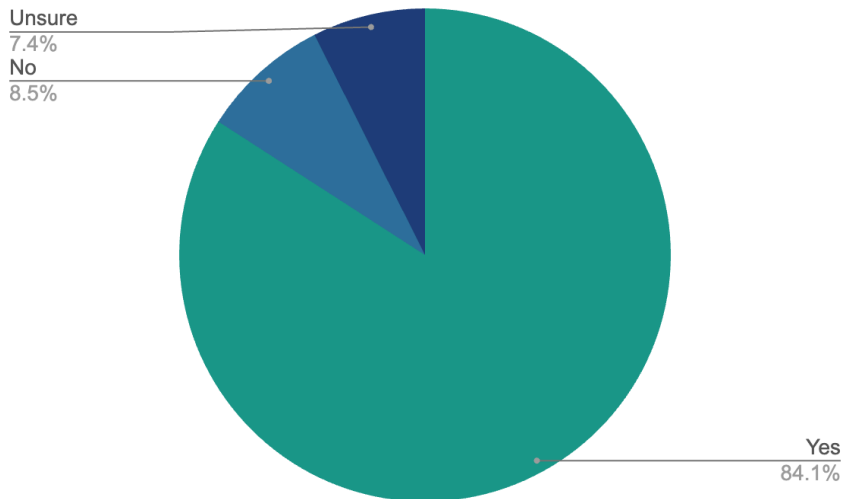
Over half of respondents (60%) rated the attractions at Coal Creek positively, with 44% rating it 'good' and 16% rating it 'excellent.'



Do you believe Coal Creek provides value to the South Gippsland community?

283 people responded to this question.

A majority of respondents (84%) believe Coal Creek provides value to the South Gippsland Community. A small portion of the population did not believe it provided value (9%).





Please describe the main way Coal Creek provides value to the South Gippsland community.

Those who value Coal Creek believe it is:

- A **valuable tourist attraction** that brings visitors to the area, offering free entertainment, educational opportunities, and a chance to learn about the region's history and heritage
- Of **historical significance**, preserving and showcasing the history, heritage, and culture of the South Gippsland area through access to historical buildings, artefacts, and information about the region's past
- A valuable community asset acting as a **meeting place for locals**, a space for cultural and community events and a beautiful natural open space
- A valuable economic asset that **attracts tourists** who spend money at local businesses and allows for large-scale events that bring economic opportunity to South Gippsland, potentially driving economic growth and employment opportunities for the community
- It is an **educational resource**, particularly for school groups. It offers hands-on historical experiences and opportunities for children to learn about the region's past, providing unique insights into the early settlement and development of South Gippsland.

Please explain why you don't think Coal Creek adds value to the South Gippsland community.

For those that didn't see a value in Coal Creek believe:

- It's a **financial cost** to the community and Council, which drains money better used elsewhere in the Shire and does not have a significant economic impact on the community
- It's **outdated, irrelevant** and unsuited for the expectations of tourists. Noting that it does little to bring visitors to the area and lacks engaging activities or attractions
- It **lacks clear a purpose**, with exhibitions and events that don't suit the park
- In a **state of disrepair**, with concerns over the lack of maintenance and the cost of works needed to rejuvenate the park and preserve the heritage buildings

Are you able to specify what makes you unsure or what additional information would help you form a view about the value of Coal Creek?

Of the 19 people who were unsure about Coal Creek Value, the reasons they were unable to provide an answer were:

- **Lack of maintenance and upkeep:** Respondents suggest that funds for maintenance could be raised through entrance fees and that more efforts should be made to attract visitors
- **Underutilisation and potential value:** Despite concerns about underutilisation, many believe that Coal Creek has potential value to the community, but in its current state, they were unsure.
- **Lack of recent visits and knowledge:** Some respondents have not visited Coal Creek recently or have only seen it briefly, indicating a lack of firsthand knowledge about its current condition.

What do you see as the greatest challenge for the ongoing operation of Coal Creek?

269 people responded to this question. The key challenges identified were:

- **Funding and financial needs**, with many respondents highlighting the challenge of where to find the funds or financial support to provide ongoing maintenance and improvements at Coal Creek.



- **Maintenance and general upkeep:** The maintenance and upkeep of the buildings, exhibits, and grounds are seen as major challenges. The cost of maintenance, ongoing repairs, and the need for a structured maintenance program are key issues.
- **A decline in volunteers** running interactive exhibits and workshops is highlighted as a challenge, with concerns over recruiting and retaining volunteers to help with the operation, maintenance, and staffing of the park.
- **Council's role and commitment to the park:** Many respondents mention the importance of support from Council and the need for commitment from Councillors on the future of Coal Creek.
- **Promotion and publicity to attract more visitors:** Make Coal Creek interesting and relevant to visitors, as well as promote it effectively.

Where do you see the greatest opportunity for Coal Creek to add value to the South Gippsland community?

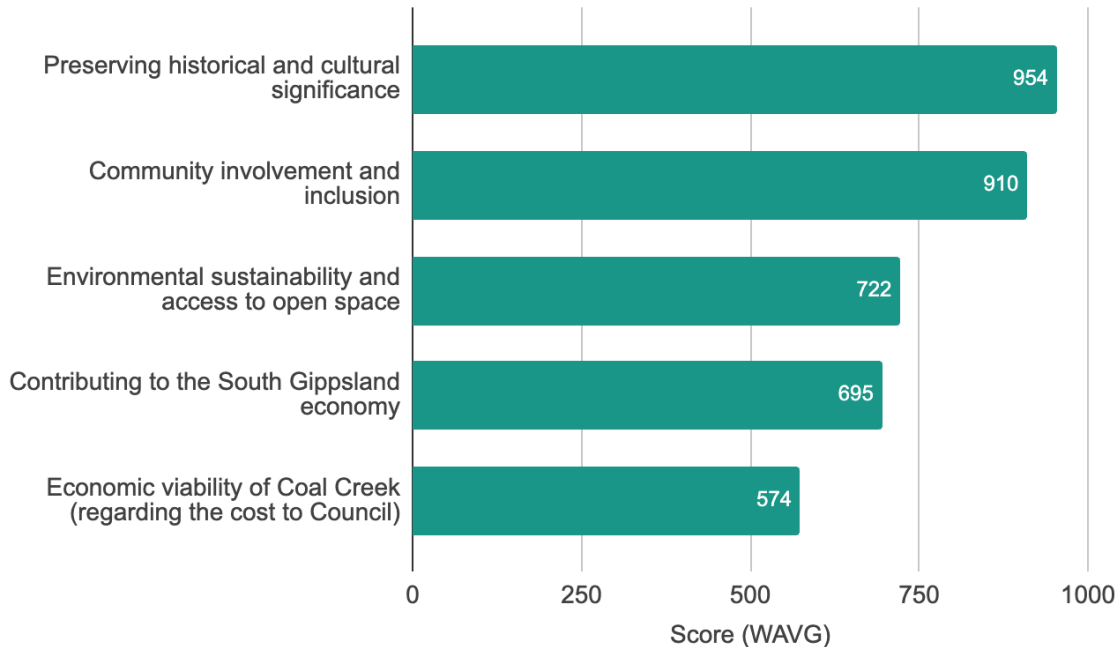
264 people responded to this question. The key opportunities identified were:

- **Tourism and providing a gateway to the Shire:** Many respondents suggested that Coal Creek could attract more visitors and become a major tourist attraction by hosting events, festivals, concerts, and markets. Given its location, it also has the potential to become a stronger getaway to the shire.
- **Education opportunities for schools:** There were suggestions for developing more educational programs, school camps, and workshops to teach children and visitors about the history and culture of the area.
- **Showcasing the area's heritage:** Respondents emphasised the value of preserving the historical buildings and artifacts at Coal Creek, showcasing the history of South Gippsland and educating visitors about the region's past.
- **Boosting the local economy and supporting local businesses:** Coal Creek has the potential to contribute to the local economy by creating jobs and attracting businesses. The development and revitalisation of Coal Creek could benefit the community areas such as tourism, hospitality, event management and retail.

What do you think are the most important factors that should guide decisions about the future of Coal Creek

257 people responded to this question, participants ranked the factors that should guide decisions about the future of Coal Creek in order of priority. Responses were rated as '1' for lowest priority and '5' for highest priority.

- Preserving historical and cultural significant
- Community involvement and inclusions
- Environmental sustainability and access to open space
- Contributing to the South Gippsland economy
- Economic viability of Coal Creek (regarding the cost to Council)



Is there anything else you think should guide the decisions about the future of Coal Creek?

246 provided a response to this question, and an analysis of the responses revealed the following key themes:

- **Preserving and showcasing local history** - the importance of maintaining and improving Coal Creek as a testament to the region's heritage, the social and cultural significance of Coal Creek's history
- **Importance to the community** - Coal Creek is an important cultural asset to many in the community, respondents noted the importance of community involvement in decision-making and the ongoing management of Coal Creek. Respondents would like decision-makers to consider the community's wishes and ideas
- **Economic sustainability** - Making sure Coal Creek is economically viable and self-sustaining is important to respondents. The potential economic impact of Coal Creek on the wider South Gippsland region was also raised as an important consideration
- **Tourism** - Coal Creek has the potential to be a major tourist attraction. With promoting and marketing, Coal Creek can be positioned as a family-friendly tourism attraction, with large open spaces for events, festivals, and activities to attract visitors and increase visitation
- **Long-term vision and planning:** Taking a long-term perspective when making decisions about the future of Coal Creek. Considering the potential benefits and impacts of different options

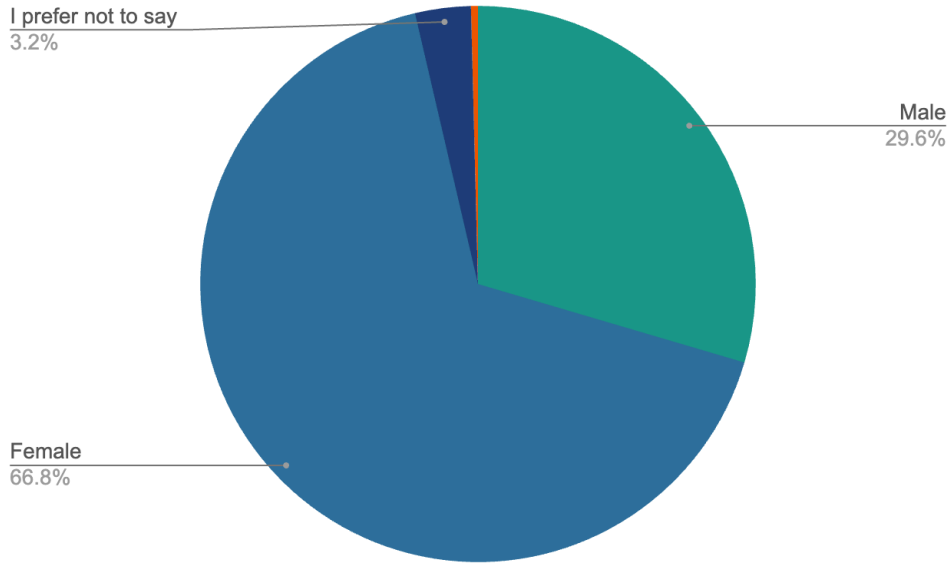
Demographics

What is your gender?

247 people responded to this question.



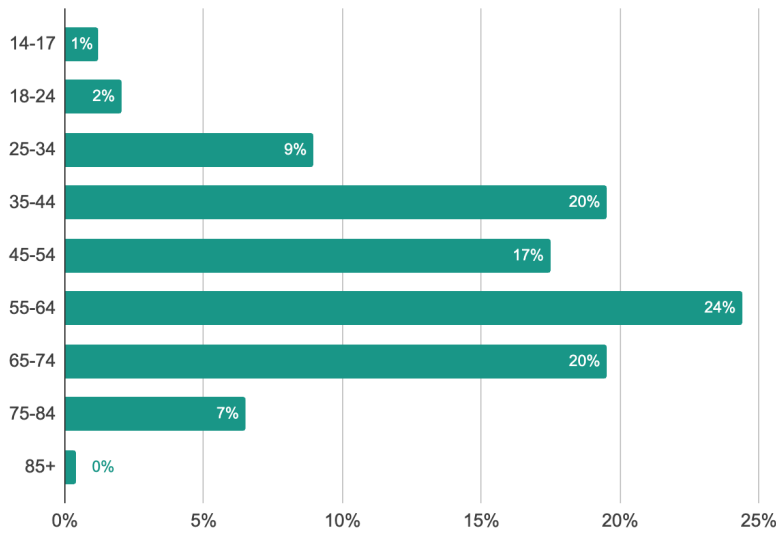
The majority of responses (67%) were female.



What is your age group?

246 responses were provided for this question.

The age groups with the highest participation were 55-64 (24%), 35-44 and 65-74, both with 20%. Younger age groups, 14-17 and 18-25 had the lowest rates of participation (1% and 2% respectively).

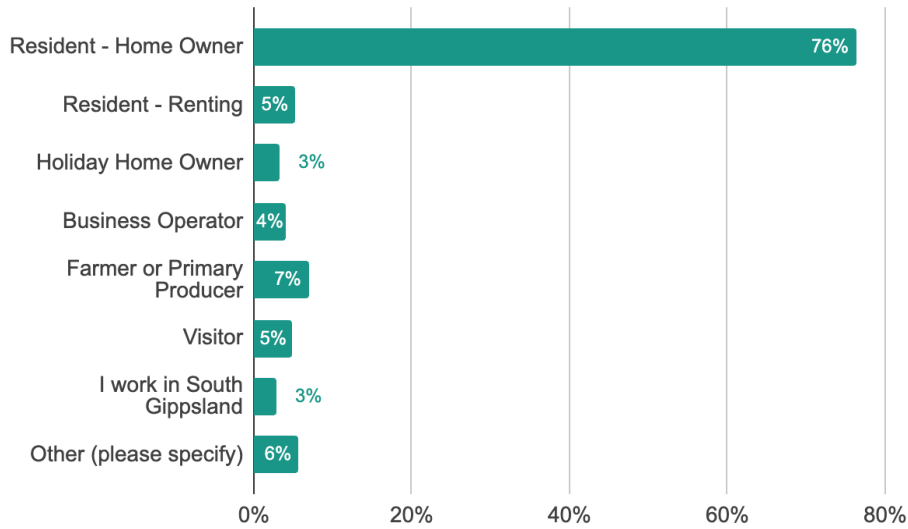




Which of the following best describes you?

245 people responded to this question.

The majority (76%) of respondents were residents.

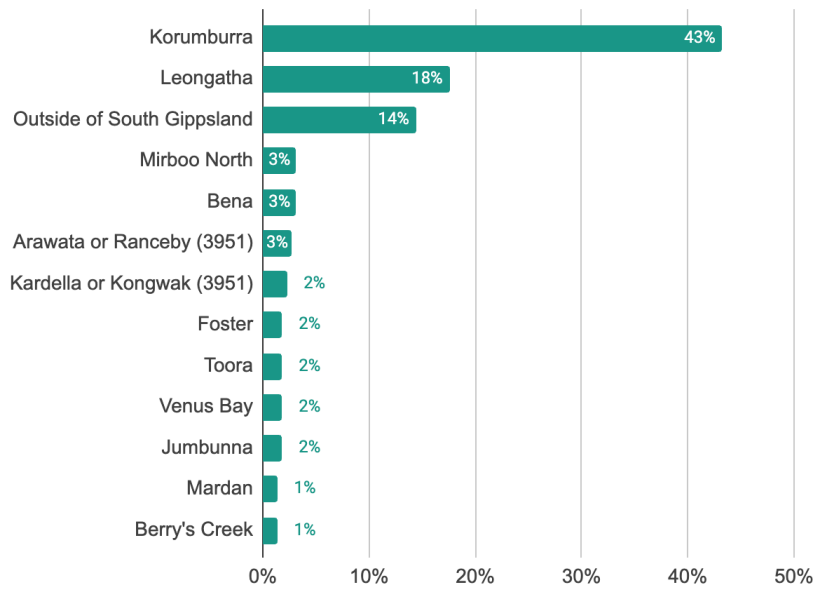




What is your township or postcode?

241 responses were provided for this question.

Representation from Korumburra was the strongest with 43%, followed by Leongatha (18%) and people living outside of South Gippsland (14%)

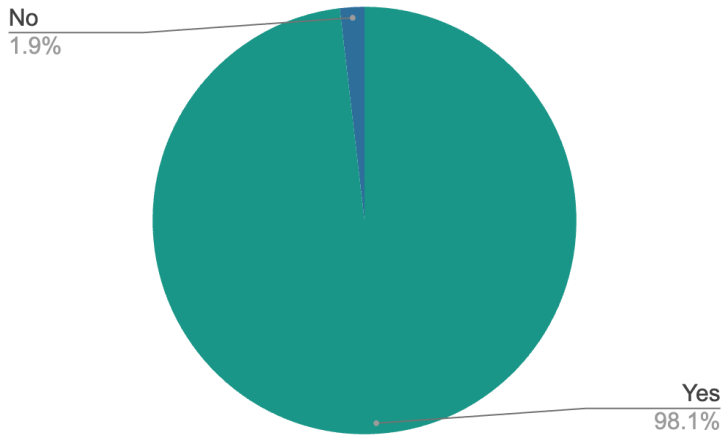




Intercept survey

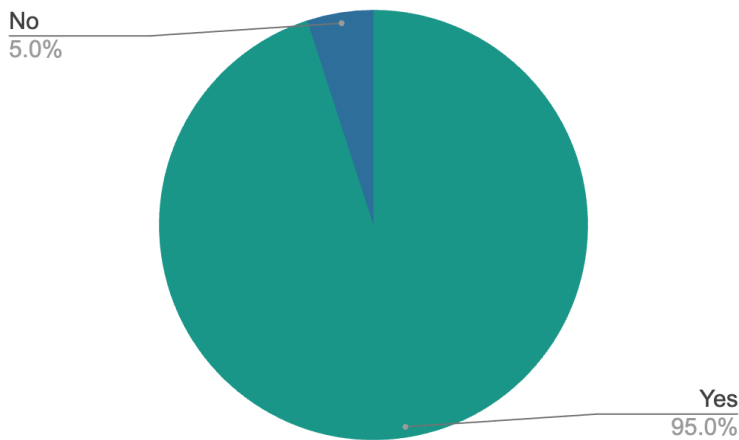
Have you heard of Coal Creek?

107 people responded to this question. The majority of respondents had heard of Coal Creek (98%)



Have you visited Coal Creek?

106 people responded to this question. The majority of respondents had visited Coal Creek (95%)

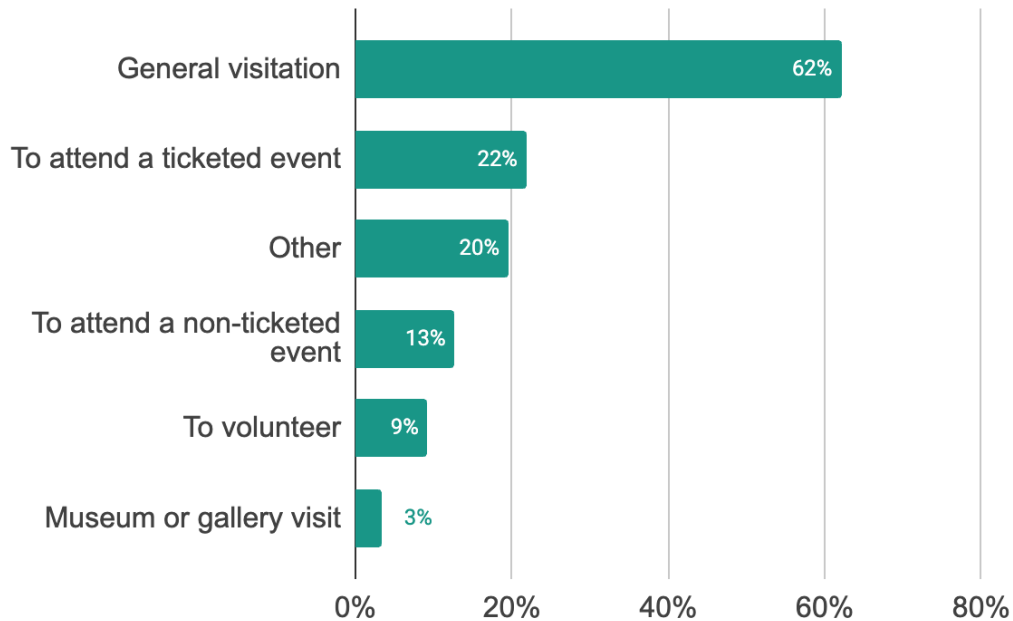




What was the purpose of your visit?

87 people responded to this question.

Attending Coal Creek for a general visit was the most frequent purpose of visits (62%), followed by attending a ticketed event (22%).



What do you think is the best thing about Coal Creek?

87 people provided a response to this question, and an analysis of the responses reveals the following key themes.

- **Historical and heritage value:** Respondents appreciated Coal Creek's historical and heritage value, with many mentioning the old buildings and the opportunity to learn about the past.
- **Events and festivals:** The events and festivals held at Coal Creek were also a highlight for many respondents, who enjoyed the various activities and experiences offered
- **Train rides:** The train and train rides were frequently mentioned as a unique and enjoyable feature of Coal Creek
- **Location and atmosphere:** The location and atmosphere of Coal Creek, with its beautiful setting, large tree and open spaces, were also appreciated by respondents

What is of least interest to you at Coal Creek?

58 people responded to this question, and an analysis of the responses identified the following key themes.



- **The lack of entertainment and interaction:** Respondents expressed a need for more engaging experiences, such as augmented reality, workshops or interactive exhibits.
- **Maintenance and disrepair:** The challenges related to maintaining the park and its facilities were highlighted, with specific issues being the disrepair of buildings and the train.
- **The lack of appeal:** Some respondents expressed that the historical elements of Coal Creek are not exciting or appealing to them, and they would prefer more modern and interactive experiences.

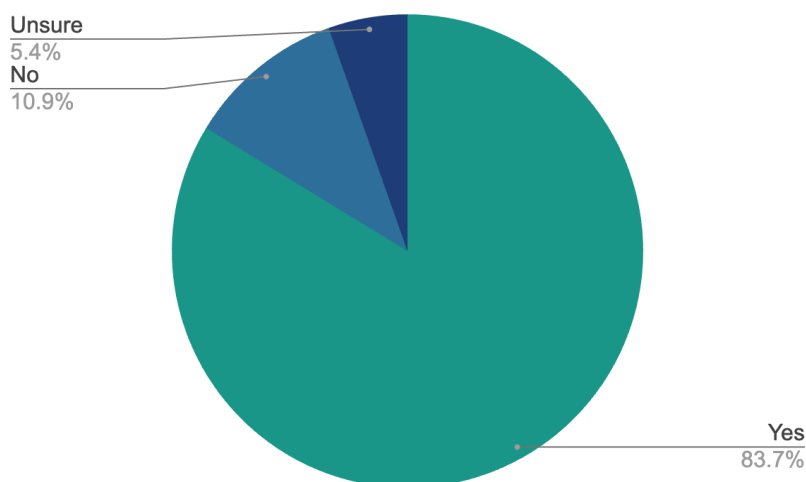
What changes or improvements might encourage you to visit in the future?

78 people provided a response to this question, an analysis of the responses identified the following changes or improvements.

- **More events and interactive exhibits:** There is a desire to see more events and interactive exhibits at Coal Creek. We heard suggestions such as offering ghost tours, more music and arts events, markets, more children's entertainment and offering guided tours focused on history.
- **Accessibility and transport:** There was a desire for more transport options within the park, to improve the accessibility. Some suggestions include golf buggies or running the train from the top of the park to the bottom, to help people up and down the hill.
- **More family activities:** Suggestions include working closely with schools and providing entertainment options specifically designed for families.
- **Preservation of heritage:** Respondents were keen to see more effort in maintaining heritage-listed buildings, suggesting that by collaborating with Friends of Coal Creek or charging an entry fee, more resources would be available to provide ongoing maintenance.

Do you believe Coal Creek provides value to the South Gippsland?

92 people responded to this question. An analysis of the responses reveals that 84% of respondents believe that Coal Creek does provide value to the South Gippsland community.





Further analysis of the responses identified the following key themes.

Historical value: preserving and educating about the area's history. There is a perception that it's a place people can go to learn about the heritage and history of South Gippsland.

Tourism: There is a belief that Coal Creek brings economic benefits to the community through tourism. Offering a unique historical experience, providing family-friendly activities, and being located in a good place for picnics and events make it an attractive gathering place for people coming from Melbourne.

A valuable community space: Coal Creek is seen as a vital asset that supports the community in coming together through cultural events and educational opportunities. It is also a destination for private events such as weddings and social get-togethers.

Family-friendly venue: It is seen as a family-friendly venue where people can bring their families. It is seen as a great place for a family day out and an exciting place for children.

What do you see as the greatest challenge for the ongoing operation of Coal Creek?

74 people responded to this question, and an analysis of the responses revealed the following challenges

Financial challenges: There are concerns about the ongoing cost of maintenance, funding, and the need for financial resources to keep the operation running.

Lack of volunteers is another significant issue, there is a perception that with more people to provide their time and support, maintenance and upkeep would be less significant burdens

Maintenance and upgrades: There is a recognition that there is a need for ongoing work to preserve the buildings and attractions and invest in upgrades to keep the site appealing.

Attracting new visitors and promotion: There is a need for better marketing and promotion of Coal Creek to bring new visitors in.

Connecting with younger generations is a challenge. There is a need for more attractions and activities that appeal to younger people and make Coal Creek exciting enough to capture their interest.

Where do you see the greatest opportunity for Coal Creek to add value to the South Gippsland?

76 people responded to this question, an analysis of the responses identified the following opportunities:

Increasing entertainment and events. Respondents have suggested a diverse range of activities such as art exhibitions, festivals, laser tag, movies, and interactive displays.

Improving marketing and promotion to help increase the visibility of Coal Creek, more advertising on the side of the highways, more ads, and providing more information about what's available online.



Enhancing the visitor experience: Respondents have suggested creating interactive elements, introducing modern technologies, providing period costumes to bring history to life through workshops and providing food and beverage options.

Collaboration with other tourist attractions and events could attract a larger audience. Respondents have suggested partnering with concerts, events, markets, and festivals. This can also help in cross-promotion and increase South Gippsland's overall tourism potential.

Developing additional facilities and services can cater to a wider range of visitors and provide a more comprehensive experience. Respondents have suggested adding a function space, accommodation options,, and leasing spaces for arts.

What do you think are the most important factors that should guide decisions about the future of Coal Creek?

81 people responded to this question, an analysis of the responses identified the following important factors.

Historical and cultural significance: with many respondents emphasised the importance of retaining the historical element and maintaining the collection of important historical items. The community's connection to the history and heritage of the area is also highlighted

Financial sustainability: There were discussions about the need for economic sustainability and the park's ability to pay its due. Several respondents mentioned the importance of making Coal Creek financially self-funded, either through entry fees, donations, or investments.

Community engagement and input: are emphasised as crucial factors in decision-making about Coal Creek's future. Respondents stressed the need to consider the community's wants and needs, focusing on community-driven decisions.

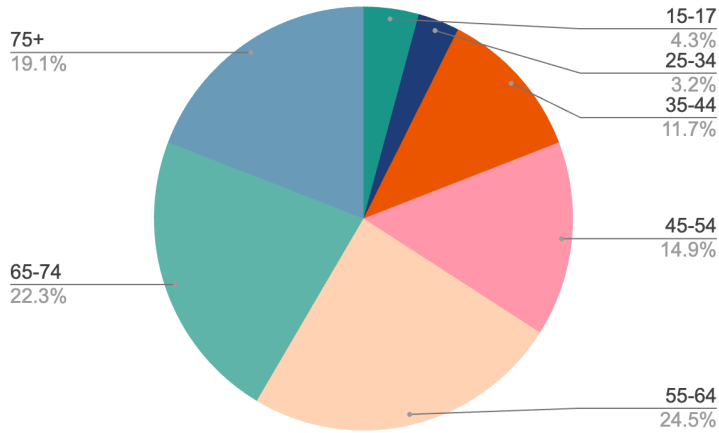
Tourism and economic impact: This section highlights Coal Creek's potential as a tourist attraction and its positive impact on the local economy. It suggests using Coal Creek as a venue for music, festivals, and weddings to generate revenue and increase its appeal.

Long-term planning: Many respondents stressed the need for long-term planning and taking a future-oriented view when making decisions about Coal Creek. They expressed concerns about the irreversible loss if the park were to cease operations and emphasised the importance of preserving it for future generations.

What is your age group?

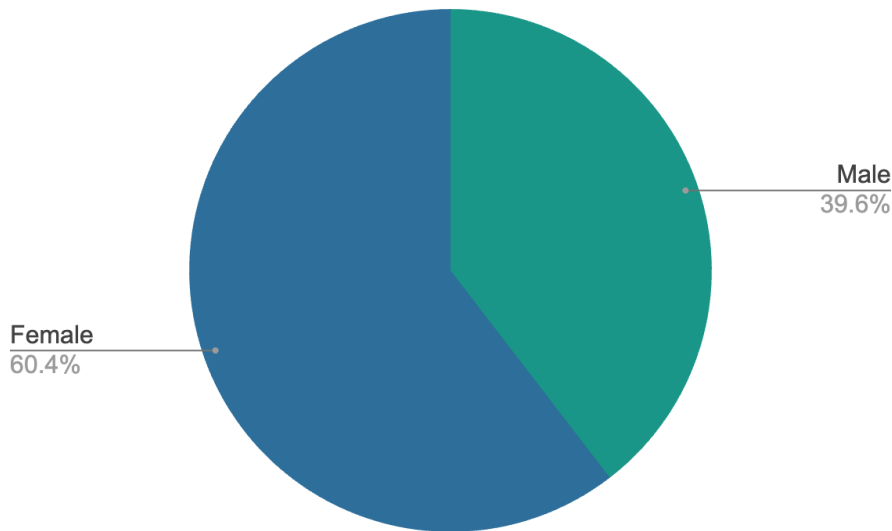
90 people responded to this question.

The age groups with the highest participation include 55-64 (26%) and 65-74 (23%).



What is your gender?

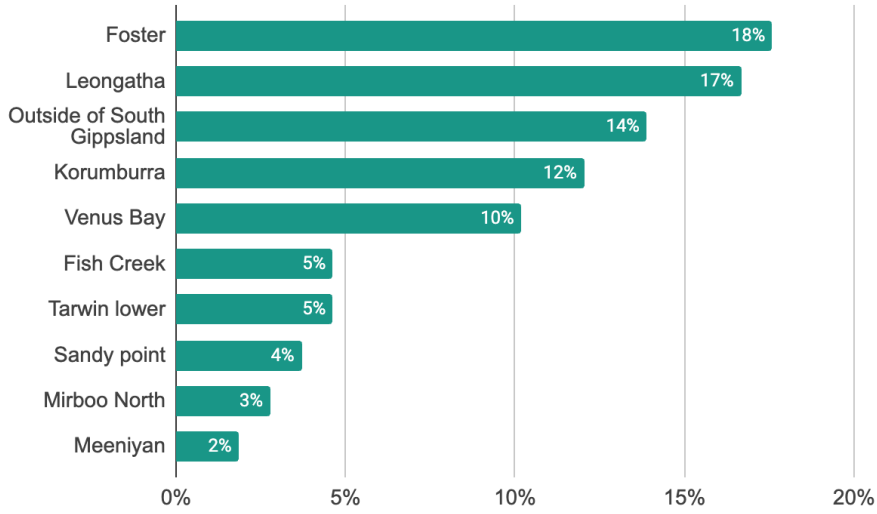
91 people responded to this question. There was higher representation from females, with 60%, compared to 40% for male.



What suburb or town do you live in? (suburb)

107 people responded to this question.

Participation was highest in Foster, with 18%, followed by Leongatha with 17%.





Submissions

Overview

Support for the options

In total, 25 submissions were received. Based on our analysis of the submissions, almost all appear to support revitalisation or a new direction for Coal Creek. None of the submissions received appear to support ceasing operations. The submissions primarily point to the historical and cultural value of Coal Creek Community Park and Museum, emphasising its role in preserving local history, heritage, and culture.

Value

The submissions reflect a strong community desire to preserve and enhance Coal Creek Community Park and Museum. Coal Creek is seen as a vital community asset that provides significant benefits, such as community bonding, economic development, and educational opportunities. They recognise its value and potential, while also acknowledging the challenges it faces. They propose a strategic, community-focused approach to ensure its future sustainability and success.

Challenges

There are concerns about Coal Creek's future, with the need for adequate funding to ensure the park's operations, maintenance, and improvement. This is a recurring theme in the submissions. Despite these challenges, there is strong advocacy for the revitalisation and improvement of Coal Creek.

Opportunities

The submissions suggest various ways to enhance the park's operations, visitor engagement, and financial sustainability. These include involving local groups and trades in maintenance and improvement, expanding the park's accommodation options, hosting more events and activities, and improving facilities such as signage, entrance building, and amenities. The submissions also highlight the opportunities for growth and development at Coal Creek. They suggest exploring new avenues, such as incorporating renewable and efficient energy, introducing new exhibits or collections, and establishing partnerships with local groups for maintenance. The park is seen as having the potential to become a vibrant environmental and cultural hub for the South Gippsland community.

“The Friends Of Coal Creek (FOCC) believe that it is essential for South Gippsland that the Coal Creek Community Park and Museum be retained and revitalised. FOCC believe that the Park can be a major tourist destination and a community cultural centre for the Shire. The Park can be the “gateway” to the Shire and contribute to the economy, driving visitation and commercial activity. For the residents of the Shire, Coal Creek is part of the fabric of the community and its roots go deep into the foundation of who we are as South Gippslanders.”

- Friends of Coal Creek



"I believe that the Coal Creek Community Park and Museum is a valuable asset to the community requiring clear vision on its role and sufficient funds to maintain its viability. It has the scope to become a valuable environmental and cultural centre for the community, fulfilling a space where it complements that provided in the shire."

- Community member

"The ideas in Options 1 and 2 are not mutually exclusive. There are parts of option 2 (new direction) that could be introduced into the revitalisation of Coal Creek without losing the thrust of becoming more than just a repository of the past but a dynamic hub for cultural and heritage education"

- Community member

Summaries

Summaries have been provided for 23 of the 25 submissions. The remaining 2 were unable to be summarised as they only shared media, such as photos or music.

Submission #1

This submission emphasises the site's historical significance, particularly in remembering the miners who worked in the area. They also provided several suggestions for improvements, including the desire to walk inside the tunnel, travel on the tramway, see crafts in operation, and explore other revenue streams such as opening more buildings and cafes. They proposed having displays of new-age equipment, possibly in collaboration with the Science Museum or firms involved in renewable energy. They emphasised the restoration of the train carriages as a priority.

Submission #2

The submission emphasises the historical significance of Coal Creek Historical Park, its potential as a valuable asset, and the need for its revitalisation and redevelopment. It highlights the park's deterioration due to a lack of proper management and maintenance and the need for the shire to recognise its potential as a tourist attraction. The submission proposes a plan for the park's restoration, including the incorporation of technology to enhance the visitor experience, improving accessibility, and options for further development. It notes the importance of preserving the relics and memories of the pioneers who built the region.

Submission #3

The submission discusses key areas such as financials, visitor engagement, business operations, event planning, building maintenance, and community involvement. It proposes opportunities like introducing an entry fee, further developing the volunteer program, and allowing private businesses to operate from the park. It also suggests addressing maintenance issues and revisiting previous strategic plans. The submission acknowledges the challenges in implementing these solutions but also highlights the opportunities they present.



Submission #4

The submission primarily discusses the importance of museums, historical villages, and cultural heritage preservation in fostering cultural understanding, community connection, social cohesion, and tourism. It notes the benefits of maintaining contact with history and the positive impacts of cultural exhibitions on tourism. The submission also highlights the significance of museums and historical villages in cultural preservation and education.

Submission #5

The submission emphasises the potential of Coal Creek Community Park to become a significant tourist destination, drawing inspiration from the success of Sovereign Hill in Ballarat. It identifies the main challenge as securing additional funding for the park's revitalisation. The submission proposes solutions such as seeking additional funding, adding various activities and shows to entertain and educate visitors, and leveraging the strong local support for the park in revitalisation efforts. The submission overall underscores the importance of revitalisation to enhance the visitor experience and make the park a valuable part of regional tourism.

Submission #6

This submission emphasises the need for change at Coal Creek Park. She views the current museum as outdated and draining community resources. She supports the 'New Direction' option, which involves closing the museum and rebranding the park to attract a broader audience. She suggests engaging the wider South Gippsland community in the park's development and implementing corporate and non-profit rates for hiring spaces to increase sustainability. Her feedback underscores the changing interests of the community and the importance of considering these views in shaping the park's future.

Submission #7

The submission discusses the value Coal Creek previously held to them and cautions against the potential closure of Coal Creek Museum due to its impact on the local community and traders. It highlights Coal Creek's current state of neglect and the need for improvements such as maintenance, clear signage, and better information delivery to attract more visitors and generate revenue. Proposed solutions include improving basic maintenance, introducing entry fees and events, creating a stronger educational program, and leveraging technology. The submission suggests short-term fundraising through advertising and a GoFundMe page, and reaching out to philanthropic societies for support. It emphasises the importance of creative and practical solutions, expressing concern over the potential closure of the museum and the financial loss it would cause to the local community and traders.

Submission #8

This submission supports the revitalisation of Coal Creek and proposes extending the museum's collection. It suggests various strategies to increase visitation and engagement, both in-person and online, and highlights the potential for donations under the Australian Cultural Gifts Program. The submission discusses the importance of community involvement and engagement in decision-making and philanthropic support.



Submission #9

This submission supports the revitalisation of Coal Creek and opposes ceasing its operations. They propose incorporating elements from the new direction option into the revitalisation plan, including heritage, culture, arts, environment, and technology initiatives. They see Coal Creek as a dynamic hub for cultural and heritage education. They acknowledge funding limitations as a significant challenge but suggest seeking assistance from government bodies and third parties. They recommend a clear vision for Coal Creek's future and initiating discussions for funding assistance.

Submission #10

The submission underscores the historical value of Coal Creek Historical Park, a significant asset that provides a tangible connection to the region's coal mining history. They envision a future where the park, through revitalisation and redevelopment, becomes a major tourist attraction. This involves integrating modern technology and additional facilities to enhance visitor experience and engagement. However, challenges exist in striking a balance between modernisation and preserving the park's historical integrity, especially given its current state of neglect and disrepair. Opportunities lie in leveraging technology for information dissemination and considering additional facilities to cater to a wider range of visitors. The submission ultimately advocates for a comprehensive plan that respects the park's historical significance while making it more appealing and accessible to the public.

Submission #11

The submission values Coal Creek as a significant asset in South Gippsland and supports the revitalisation option. It identifies challenges such as the lack of a sustainable future plan, budget constraints, and the need for a clear development direction. The proposal to transform Coal Creek into a Southern Gippsland Garden of Useful Plants is seen as a key opportunity, offering educational, training, and economic benefits. The submission also suggests energy efficiency and emissions reduction initiatives, contributing to a low-carbon growth plan for Gippsland. Despite funding and community support challenges, the submission sees potential for social uplift, environmental value, innovation, and economic growth. It calls for a strategic plan focusing on collaboration, negotiation with local First Nations peoples, and the establishment of a working party to develop the necessary principles, strategies, and budgets for the proposed transformation.

Submission #12

The Korumburra Community Development Association's submission underscores the significance of Coal Creek Community Park and Museum as an asset to the entire Shire. It advocates for the park's revitalisation, preservation of historical elements, and financial sustainability. The submission proposes improvements such as better signage, interactive elements, train restoration, an admission fee, and infrastructure upgrades. It also highlights the park's potential as an event venue and its economic benefits to the region. The challenge lies in implementing these changes in a financially sustainable manner that benefits the whole Shire.

Submission #13

This submission underscores the value of Coal Creek Community Park and Museum in preserving South Gippsland's local history and serving as a community hub. She highlights the potential economic benefits to



local businesses through increased tourism. However, the submitter identifies challenges, including the need for increased funding and effective promotion to revitalise the park. The potential costs of closing the park, such as relocating collections and returning the park to native bushland, are also noted. Despite these challenges, the submitter sees opportunities to host various events and exhibitions, promote Coal Creek as a tourist destination, and leverage the park's unique position as the only tourist site on the western end of the Shire.

Submission #14:

The Korumburra District Historical Society's submission values Coal Creek as a significant repository of local history. It sees the future of the site as a balance between preservation and new uses, including educational resources, event hosting, and a unique venue for overseas visitors. They also suggest enhancing accessibility by linking a walking/bike path to the rail trail. The challenge lies in respecting and preserving the region's history while finding these new uses. The opportunities identified include its potential as an educational and event venue, attracting visitors of all ages and providing a valuable learning experience. They emphasise the moral obligation to act as responsible custodians of the region's history.

Submission #15

The submission recognises Coal Creek as a significant economic and cultural asset for the Korumburra community. It discusses challenges in resourcing and maintenance, risking potential damage to its collection. It supports revitalisation through innovative models like Colonial Williamsburg, which generates revenue through performances and visitation. The local theatre group's involvement could enhance the visitor experience and contribute to preserving the region's history. The submission recommends the Shire of South Gippsland to consider these models and conduct a feasibility study to explore potential revitalisation strategies.

Submission #16

The submission sees Coal Creek Community Park and Museum as a significant community asset with the potential to become a vibrant environmental and cultural centre. However, it identifies financial challenges as a major hurdle to its continued operation. To overcome these challenges and secure the park's future, the submission suggests securing adequate funding, rebranding the park to better reflect its potential, and establishing a program of community-focused events. These steps are seen as opportunities to attract more visitors, generate more financial support, and transform the park into a thriving community hub.

Submission #17

The Friends of Coal Creek Inc (FOCC) submission underscores the significant historical, cultural, and potential economic value of the Coal Creek Community Park and Museum to the South Gippsland community. They advocate for its revitalisation rather than closure, proposing improvements and additions to attract more visitors. The submission acknowledges financial challenges and the need for a new management structure, suggesting an independent Board of Management. The FOCC sees opportunities to transform the park into a major tourist destination and community cultural centre, with potential new directions including accommodation, educational facilities, and event and concert facilities. They emphasise the need for financial



support, improved facilities, and a strategic approach to management. The submission reflects the FOCC's dedication to the park's future development.

Submission #18

This submission emphasises the unique value of Coal Creek as a connector of people, trades, and communities across generations and borders. She supports revitalisation, and discussion the potential to fully embrace its historical and cultural significance. The challenges identified include the need for this reimagining and reactivation, and the untapped potential of Coal Creek. Opportunities lie in further community engagement, collaboration, and development of Coal Creek. As a professional in the Museum and Cultural sector, the submitter expresses her willingness to contribute to this process.

Submission #19

This submission emphasises the value of Coal Creek Community Park and Museum to the local community, economy, and tourism. They strongly oppose ceasing operations or taking a new direction, advocating instead for revitalisation. Challenges identified include maintaining the park's relevance and attractiveness to tourists. Opportunities lie in involving local groups in park maintenance, expanding the park to include accommodation, and hosting more events. The submitter suggests charging an entry fee and recruiting more volunteers to support operations. The submission underscores the importance of a community-oriented approach to enhance the park's appeal and visitor experience.

Submission #20

This submission discusses the value of Coal Creek as a community asset and opposes its closure. He supports a new direction, including the establishment of an independent board of directors. The submission identifies financial considerations as a challenge, expressing concern over the council's financial priorities. He sees opportunities in accessing available funding, especially for infrastructure, and in changing the community's perception of the park. He recommends that the council should view the park as a community asset, access available funding, and consider the establishment of an independent board in their strategic plan.

Submission #21

The Korumburra Lions Club's submission underscores the historical and societal significance of Coal Creek Community Park and Museum. They express their commitment to the park's revival and their belief in its value to the community. The club acknowledges the challenges of preventing closure or degradation but also recognises the opportunities for rejuvenation and economic development. They endorse the roadmap provided by Friends of Coal Creek for the park's improvement and recommend that the council consider this plan. The club also suggests that Council engage with community clubs to support the park's revival. They believe that the park's value cannot be measured solely in terms of cost but should be assessed based on the value it delivers to the community.

Submission #22

The Korumburra Round Table's submission strongly supports the revitalisation of Coal Creek, emphasising its historical, cultural, and educational value. They argue against the facility's closure, stating it wouldn't result in



significant operational savings. The submission highlights the importance of recognising Coal Creek's intangible benefits, particularly its successful education programs. The KRT sees the closure of Coal Creek as nonviable, urging the council to consider the broader financial context of the Shire budget. They also identify the opportunity to leverage Coal Creek's Museum status to enhance its value and attract more support. The KRT expects the council to consider these points in their strategic planning for Coal Creek.

Submission #23

This submission, made up of notes written on an invitation to participate in the Community Assembly, describes the value of Coal Creek as a valuable destination that the submitter regularly brings visitors. They discuss the need for a cafe or food options, such as picnic boxes made by local cafes or producers. They would like to see more music performances, both paid and free.