

Community Consultation Report

INFORMING MEANDER VALLEY'S 2024 - 2034 COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN



Meander Valley Council acknowledges the Pallitorre and Panninher past peoples as the traditional owners and custodians of the land we call home. We pay respect to Elders, past, present and future and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.





MEANDER VALLEY ————— *Always in season.*

Nestled in Tasmania's central north, Meander Valley is more than just a place to live and work—it's a space where we grow, build, and thrive together.

To the west, the valley reveals picturesque landscapes, from lush pastures to the majestic peaks of the Great Western Tiers, a world heritage-listed treasure. Nestled in the foothills, our rural towns are treasured gems. Heading east, our urban and peri-urban communities shine with their own charm, of-

fering our community a peaceful lifestyle enriched by excellent amenities, lush greenery, and a wealth of historical treasures, with the convenience of living close to everything city life has to offer.

More than majestic views, pristine wilderness and deep heritage, the warmth of our close-knit community is the rich thread that weaves together to create a vibrant, authentic and diverse place that feels like home for both locals and visitors.

Consulting our **COMMUNITY**

The journey so far.

The purpose of this document is to share the outcomes of the recent *Meander Valley Voices: Our People, Our Place, Our Future* engagement workshops and community consultation activities. The information gathered from the community during this time will be used to help inform the development of a new Community Strategic Plan (the Strategy) for Meander Valley. Collecting the voices of residents was undertaken in order to identify common values, key priorities and an overall vision for the area. The Strategy will provide a map for the Community and Council to help focus decisions and guide actions over the next decade (2024-2034).

February-April 2024

Stage 1 & 2 community engagement and consultation undertaken.

June 2024

Community Consultation Report (this document) published for community review.

What's next?

Draft Community Strategic Plan presented to Council and community for comment

The Meander Valley Voices: Our People, Our Place, Our Future engagement work has been delivered in two stages:

Stage 1.

Activities were delivered by a range of multi-disciplinary external consultants and Council staff through direct Workshop facilitation and targeted engagement across the whole of community.

Stage 2.

Undertaken by Council's Community Wellbeing staff through a variety of methods ranging from surveys, interviews and focus groups and were targeted across a wide range of community cohorts.

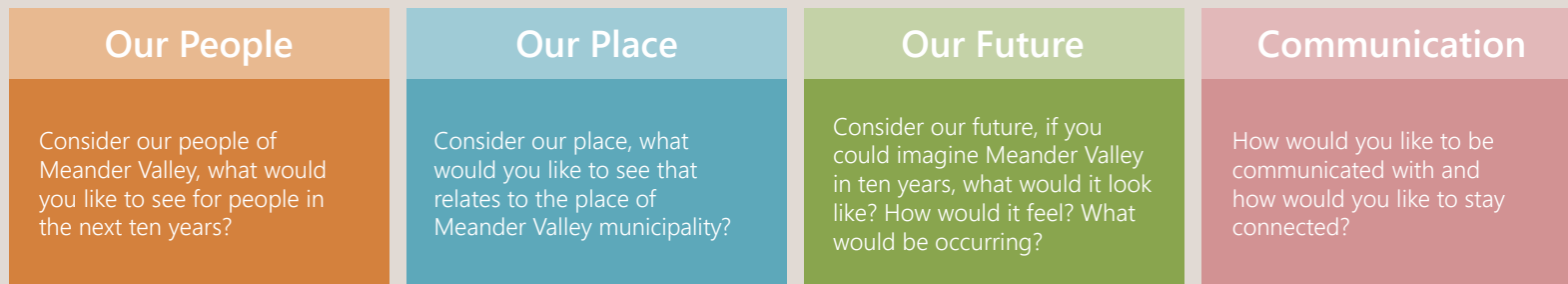
 7 Service provider organisations contributed feedback	 124 Local residents contributed at community consultation workshops	 5 Interviews with local farmers and resource management groups	 36 Data collection forms returned from local aged care facilities	 1 Morning tea with local residents Aged 60+	 2 Interviews with First Nations residents
 8 Interviews with local religious groups	 55 Youth surveys	 19 Interviews with culturally and linguistically diverse new Australian citizens		 45 Interviews with local tourism operators and businesses	 19 Online consultation surveys submitted

“We’re always community minded
and community spirited. If you
don’t get in and do things for the
community, nothing happens.”

– Quote from a resident attendee of one of
the Meander Valley Voices Workshops.

What we **ASKED**

Participants across both stages of our community engagement work have all been asked to consider four themes in order to identify priority focus areas for the ten-year Strategy:



Additionally, participants within the workshops also contributed via a range of activities designed to distill information on strengths, values, character, identity and the lifestyle specific to Meander Valley.

What we HEARD

Whether having lived in Meander Valley for generations, or having relocated from elsewhere, the pride that residents have in this place is unanimous. There are common attributes and values that appear consistent across the region and that underpin the community, these included:

Resilient	Diverse	Connected	Creative	Passionate
<p>Across the Meander Valley we heard stories of resilience and the community coming together. From small proactive gestures, to bypass street parties, to responding to natural disaster, the community leads with optimism in any situation.</p> <p><i>"We're always community minded and community spirited. If you don't get in and do things for the community, nothing happens."</i></p> <p><i>"People just band together. When we had the floods, people just go 'what can I do? How can I help and what can I do?'"</i></p>	<p>Diversity of the community was a central theme. It was reflected as different people across different landscapes, with different occupations, histories, perspectives, interests and faiths and even in the large variety of different groups and activities that everyone is invited to join.</p> <p><i>"It's a very accepting community. There's all types of people... they're welcoming and inclusive. It doesn't matter what you look like, what you do, or where you come from – they'll just accept you in."</i></p> <p><i>"I think it's starting to become more diverse, especially as more people move here... It's more diverse than people think, and it has been for quite a long time."</i></p>	<p>Those we spoke to had a deep sense of connection with place. For some, their connection is generations old. For others, they have come to the area seeking a sense of connection with their community.</p> <p><i>"Everywhere I go, when I say I'm living near Deloraine, they'd have a story about Deloraine, or a story about Quamby. I've never come to a place that feels this connected."</i></p> <p><i>"Authentic, genuine, good country folk. We're more connected with nature and being part of it"</i></p>	<p>While Deloraine is a creative centre point for the region, the creative spirit extends well beyond just one town. It can be seen in innovative ideas, creative ways of bringing people together, and the desire to create meaningful change.</p> <p><i>"The amount of people who are just families doing stuff. The Tomato and Garlic Festival, The Crop Maze. These are not big businesses or organisations. It's pretty impressive what people are doing."</i></p> <p><i>"People want to be more involved and see things happening. They want music, they want art, they want culture. They don't want to travel to Launceston – they want it in Meander Valley."</i></p>	<p>People in Meander Valley fully embrace life and what they do. Its not always about being the best, but about having a go and being willing to learn and be a part of community.</p> <p><i>"They have a lot of passion. For anything they do. No matter how small, or how good they are, they have a lot of passion and they love doing it"</i></p>

Other key insights highlighted that the environment, the distinctive surroundings of the region combining the natural world and the built environment is vitally important to people, the way they live, their identity and sense of belonging to place. These insights included:

Landscape	Heritage	Agriculture	Sustainability	Lifestyle
<p>There is no escaping the breathtaking Western Tiers that span the Meander Valley. Whether far away, or immersed within them, the tiers are ever present and synonymous with this place.</p> <p><i>"It's so picturesque. You can breathe. I've been around, but I just come back and as soon as you come over the bridge, I look up and go, oh my god, it's so beautiful here."</i></p> <p><i>"I've been farming here for 30 years and I still look up at the mountains. It takes your breath away."</i></p>	<p>The history of Meander Valley is very much alive today in the stories, architecture and services offered throughout the region. There is an appetite to celebrate this history, whilst elevating First Nations perspectives and connection to land.</p> <p><i>"This area has huge amounts of history. There's so many stories."</i></p> <p><i>"We get a lot of people who come into the history rooms who just want to know the history of their house."</i></p> <p><i>"The Indigenous trail around the river is really good. I'd like to see more of that. It makes the whole community run better. I feel proud about it."</i></p>	<p>Agriculture has deep roots in the Meander Valley. From industrial farming, to flowering front yards, locals know how to make the most of the fresh air, and fertile soil, working in harmony with the 4 distinct seasons.</p> <p><i>"Whenever we meet with people, it's always cartons of eggs, sunflowers, or tomatoes."</i></p> <p><i>We're one of the best vegetable producers for Australia. We grow more produce here than we can use."</i></p> <p><i>"It's about connecting you to their passion. Getting you on the farm and getting dirty. A lot of people are yearning for that connection."</i></p>	<p>Sustainability, desire to preserve the natural environment was a consistent focus from residents. Importantly, there are different perspectives on how Meander Valley should proceed into a sustainable future.</p> <p><i>"I'd like to see the natural areas remain, not untouched, but honored."</i></p> <p><i>"We're known for water, wine, soil, produce – so why not look after it the best we can?"</i></p>	<p>Meander Valley means you reset your pace and priorities. It means you prioritise taking time to chat to a neighbour, to connect with nature or to look after your health and wellbeing.</p> <p><i>"Things are done much slower here and that's just how it is... you just need to be patient and things will happen.."</i></p> <p><i>"Where are we all in a rush to? A lot of people choosing this lifestyle have moved on and out of the rat race."</i></p>

“It’s a very accepting community. There’s all types of people... they’re welcoming and inclusive. It doesn’t matter what you look like, what you do, or where you come from – they’ll just accept you in.”

– Quote from Meander Valley resident.

Informing our **STRATEGIC PRIORITIES**

While some differences emerged across locations, townships and specific cohorts, key similarities presented clear focus areas for what individuals, groups and communities felt should guide Meander Valley's future. These future priorities are consistent with the strengths, values and identity insights gathered in this consultation.

In order to capture and present these ideas, the recurring themes that emerged from the consultation workshops were referenced against those presenting their feedback and insights through surveys, interviews and focus groups. These have been grouped into five broad Strategic Priorities:

- 1. Growing a diverse, unified and empowered community.*
- 2. Honouring our natural environment.*
- 3. Creating a well-developed built environment.*
- 4. Investing in infrastructure that facilitate connection.*
- 5. Providing responsible governance and valuing our local economy.*

A summary description, key components and direct quotes from responders across all engagement methods are provided below for each of these five broad Strategic Priorities as identified through the Meander Valley Voices engagements.



A snapshot of the 'graphic harvest' created by artist, Fiona Miller, during our in person Community Consultation Workshops.

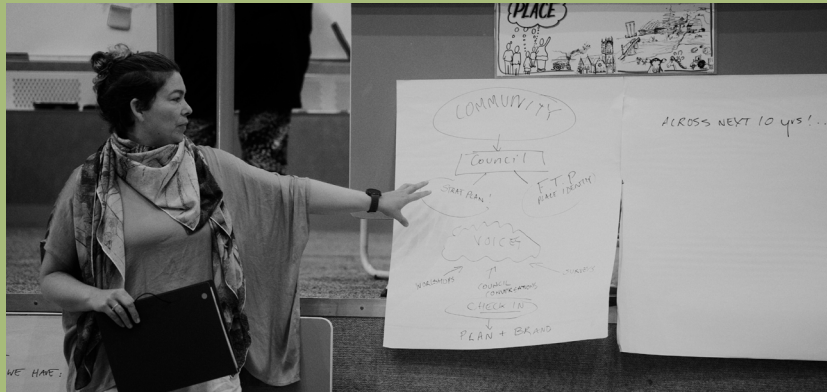
Strategic Priority 1.

**A DIVERSE, UNIFIED AND
EMPOWERED COMMUNITY.**

What we heard-

Our community expressed a strong desire to enhance its wellbeing by fostering intergenerational connections and creating a sense of belonging. Our residents aspire to have easy access to a wide range of community and health services, quality education, artistic and cultural activities, and local sporting opportunities.

By uniting people of all ages and backgrounds, our community believes we can cultivate a vibrant and supportive social environment where everyone feels acknowledged, contributes, and thrives. We hope to see collaboration that leverages our values, strengths, and local assets. Through embracing empathy and a commitment to inclusivity, we're on the road to building a diverse, unified, and empowered community for generations to come.



This looks like-

- Recognising and celebrating increasing multiculturalism
- Engagement and participation in volunteering, community groups, sporting clubs and associations, show societies and specific interest groups
- A range of local community inclusive, family friendly events
- Available childcare
- Support for families
- Quality education
- Youth engagement, development and activities
- Local access to quality community, education, health, disability and mental health services
- Improved access to aged care services and activities locally
- Acknowledging, celebrating and elevating First Nations people
- Digital literacy and availability with regular accessible communication
- Community safety with police presence

What you said-

“Community ties will get weaker, and life more impersonal, unless we are proactive in engaging residents in community life: sports, arts, environmental and cultural events and activities.”

“When I think about how this place will look 10 or 20 years from now, I know a thriving community includes thriving local clubs, I truly believe local sport is the backbone of an engaged community, especially in small towns.”

“A place where people feel safe.” (i.e. crime prevention)

“Thriving with more emphasis on youth and the young.”

“Multicultural aspect needs to be improved to bring a different sense to the community.”

“I’d like to see a community neighbourhood space like Deloraine House. A place for people to meet and share resources for the good of the community.”

“More families move into the area. Taking better care of the elderly who still live in their homes.”

“More community get together events utilising the venues across the towns to support the local venues.”

“More mental health services in Meander Valley and services for young people. Regular services here. Not just 6 months funded.”

“A deep understanding of the aboriginal culture of the region.” “An area that is proud to showcase its Aboriginal heritage.”





“I’d like to see Westbury be a family-friendly place to live. It should be safe, have lots of opportunities and be a place to nurture and grow. A sense of community and inclusion.”

“I hope it continues to be a growing, vibrant and thriving community with amazing community assets. I hope it continues to be a creative hub for the state. I hope the strong sense of community continues to flourish.”

“A thriving local community, caring for each other and respecting everyone’s ideas and beliefs.”

“Better education and schooling for children in Meander Valley.”

“More facilities for young people and families: Childcare, children’s activities.”

Strategic Priority 2.

HONOURING OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT.

What we heard-

Widely recognised by responders was the invaluable role our natural environment, wildlife, and farming areas play in our lives and community ask for commitment to preserving and honouring these resources for current and future generations.

Through proactive measures and thoughtful stewardship, we can not only protect but also enhance our ecosystems, ensuring their resilience in the face of climate change impacts.

By valuing and safeguarding our natural world, we are not only safeguarding biodiversity and productivity but also safeguarding our own future.

An aerial photograph of a rural landscape. A winding river flows through the center, reflecting the sky. The surrounding land is a mix of green fields, brown patches, and clusters of trees. The lighting suggests a late afternoon or early morning setting, with long shadows and a warm glow.

This looks like-

- Natural history
- Heritage protection.
- Valuing and preserving our flora and fauna
- Valuing and preserving our catchments and waterways
- Managing waste and reducing waste that goes into landfill
- Recycling facilities
- Promotion of regenerative agriculture
- Preparing for the impact of climate change and increasing frequency of disasters
- Innovation in sustainable technologies
- Encouraging reduced carbon footprint



What you said-

“Support for climate action initiatives.”

“Make Meander Valley a leading municipality in terms of sustainability, lowering carbon emissions, and projects that enable healthy housing.”

“More focus on regenerative agriculture.”

“A flagship for building local community participation in environmental projects and promoting a diversity of lifestyles built upon sustainability and inclusion.”

“Industries suited to meet the challenges of reducing emissions and contributing to positive climate action. Council to support the planting of trees (shelter belts on farms, street trees in towns, and green spaces in new developments) and land regeneration generally.”

“Valuing our natural assets for now and future generations.”

“Balance of making progress and maintaining our environment.”

“More environmentally friendly e.g. solar on council buildings and using electric vehicles.”

“Council to immediately start planning and implementing climate change policies - resilience during crisis emergencies, e.g. community battery bank led by solar microgrid.”

“A recycling centre that manages our waste and utilises green waste in an ethical sustainable way, value adding to products to sell back to the community.”

“Urgent signage: “Slow down Dusk to Dawn” “Protect our Wildlife.”

“Greening of our towns especially new developments. Planning for a warming climate.”



Strategic Priority 3.

CREATING A WELL-DEVELOPED BUILT ENVIRONMENT.

What we heard-

As we move forward in time, people recognise the intrinsic value of preserving history while simultaneously adapting our constructed spaces to meet the evolving needs of our communities. It is felt imperative that Meander Valley prioritise the preservation of cultural built heritage ensuring it remains an integral part of our collective identity.

Recognising the value that our constructed recreation, parks, green spaces and playgrounds have for our wellbeing will also be import-

ant, consideration of how they are included in growth planning essential.

Simultaneously, as we strive to enhance our built infrastructure, we do need to foster inclusive growth and development, ensuring that everyone has access to safe and secure housing.

It was widely expressed that planning also needs to be rooted in sensitivity to the unique contexts of each community, embracing diversity, and promoting equitable opportunities for all.



This looks like-

- Increasing housing options for people at different price points
- Intentional planning of housing subdivisions and density of dwellings
- Heritage preservation and protection
- Value, maintain and plan for quality recreation places, parks, green spaces and playgrounds
- Maintaining, upgrading and developing community facilities
- Maintaining, upgrading and developing public amenities
- Accessibility.
- Responsible service delivery that is easy to navigate and provided in an affordable manner

What you said-

“We need to see development in housing that encourages a broad cross-section of residents so that we continue to develop as a broad-based community. Anything that leads us towards being mainly for one demographic or another would be counter-productive in the long run.”

“Free up crown/private land for smaller allotments so that people can get into the property market.”

“Maintain Westbury’s ambiance - quiet and friendly. Not too much development.”

“Development applications to be made easier by Council.”

“Council need to be more flexible to allow things like granny flats. People will need to have a carer staying near them.”

“Value heritage - protect heritage places, spaces & buildings with heritage precincts.”

“We need to have access to the community infrastructure we require and value.”

“Need access for people with a disability to public toilets in Mole Creek”.

“Well maintained facilities.”





*“No more dividing 5-acre blocks.
“Low” density to accommodate
horses etc.”*

*“Don’t allow over-development of
subdivisions which may be (without
green space and such).”*

*“Less changes to land use planning
to allow high density developments.”*



*“Inclusion of green spaces in
developments in townships - be
smarter about the environment we
are setting up for people to live in.”*

*“More affordable housing. More
recognition of heritage buildings.”*

Strategic Priority 4.

INVESTING IN INFRASTRUCTURE THAT FACILITATES CONNECTION

What we heard-

Responsible investment and thoughtful planning should aim to cultivate a region characterised by enhanced connectivity and equip us with the infrastructure required by our communities for the future.

By prioritising our transport networks encompassing roads, cycling and pedestrian pathways, we envision fostering accessibility and safety for all residents.

Simultaneously, we should aspire to create inviting communal spaces, serving as meeting places and hubs for interaction and engagement, thereby helping to nurture a sense of belonging and cohesion within our diverse communities.



This looks like-

- Improvement is required for access to public transport
- Carparking in townships to enhance accessibility and safety
- Pedestrian safety, accessible pathways and passive walking trails.
- Create infrastructure linkages between key community places (e.g. Shops, Schools)
- Vibrant, activated community spaces and meeting places.
- Entry and exit points to improve fire and emergency service road accessibility and safety

What you said-

“Sustainable investment in the built environment.”

“A semi-rural collection of towns acting like satellites to Launceston. People from the city, towns, and farming communities feel connected and close enough to flow easily in between, but as equal.”

“Safe road crossings.”

“Placemaking for inclusive community facilities.”

“Focus on updating our towns infrastructure - parks, footpaths, community halls, roads and drainage systems to cope with the new developments.”

“An increase in the availability of essential services, like water, sewage, NBN (especially Fibre) to premises.”

“A more connected community - without a car there are huge limitations for education and employment.”

“Walkable, connected communities.”

“In Reedy Marsh area elderly people walk down the road until someone picks them up. This is not safe. We see this as a broader perspective across all the rural areas in Meander Valley.”

“Better parking, and more disability parking.”



“We need a bus to go into Deloraine to do shopping. Western Creek ladies have to move out of the municipality as they have no transport to get them anywhere.”

“I would like bicycle infrastructure that supported a lifestyle based on participation in a local community... where all the small townships had social hubs and small markets..”



“Public transport to be more regular in Blackstone Heights”

“Transport services are rare and not convenient. We need them. This is essential in the next 10 years.”

“Improved bicycle network.”

Strategic Priority 5.

PROVIDING RESPONSIBLE GOVERNANCE AND VALUING OUR LOCAL ECONOMY

What we heard-

Meander Valley residents are looking for a commitment to establishing a local government that actively engages with and effectively communicates with our communities.

Building collaborative decision-making processes, we can prioritise sustainable community and economic development initiatives tailored to the unique needs and strengths of our region. Central to any approach should be the unwavering support of local produce, business-

es, and agriculture, fostering economic resilience and job creation and retention within our communities.

It's essential to recognise the significance of promoting tourism and enhancing visitor services, leveraging our area's natural and cultural assets to attract visitors. Together, we can create and promote quality events that celebrate our identity, enriching both the local experience and the broader appeal of our region.



This looks like-

- Quality communication: accountable, regular, effective and accessible across various systems or platforms
- Community engagement, capacity building, good consultation and community involvement in decision making
- Placemaking with collaborative action
- Recognise the importance, value and need to plan for the sustainability of the agricultural sector
- Support for the variety and range of business that operate in Meander Valley
- Promotion of businesses, events and Meander Valley as a place and destination
- Home grown produce and local producers to flourish
- Employment opportunities for locals and young people
- Tourism and attracting visitation to the area
- Large scale great quality events (Tasmanian Craft Fair, AGFEST, Party in the Paddock)
- Short walks, wilderness and adventurous opportunities

What you said-

“Design towns to be welcoming for travellers, specifically caravan and motorhome related tourism (i.e. promoting and maintaining long vehicle parking making towns accessible to visitors.”

“The Meander Valley covers a lot of agriculture areas - berries, veggies, dairy, etc. - as far as I’m aware all studies are done in different areas of Tasmania. Consider opportunities for a training centre?”

“More promotion of Meander Valley as a place to be, visit and live.”

“Council need to create and work with businesses to create wintertime activities across Meander Valley.”

“Council need to listen to community and implement with their input.”

“Policies and procedures to promote consensus decision making at all levels of government and community.”

“More visitation for tourism growth.”





“Improve communication with the community.”

“Coordination between small businesses with facilitation of such by the appropriate council officer who would ensure a balance of direction.”

“What can we do to stop skilled people moving away?”

“Create more opportunities for employment.”

MEANDER VALLEY

Meander Valley Council staff will continue to workshop and prepare a draft Community Strategic Plan (2024-2034) that will be available for public comment later in the year. This will be developed using the contributions of the Meander Valley Voices engagement findings and referencing these findings against a range of other information such as previous strategic plans and area strategies, census data, sector plans and a variety of other recent consultation findings. A part of this process will also include developing Strategic Actions that will help establish what community can expect from Council and how we will measure ongoing progress.

It's important to acknowledge that the Community Strategic Plan 2024-2034, when complete, will be a plan that will not only guide the direction that Council will take in shaping the future of our valley for the next decade, but is also intended to be a roadmap for our entire community and other stakeholders in how to make decisions that affect the future of our municipality. While Meander Valley Council undertakes many important roles within our community such as 'provider', 'facilitator' and 'advocate', it's true that by working together we achieve the best possible outcomes for the vision that we have for this place we call home.

This patch of ours.

As the development of the plan progresses, so too does the influence of the insights gained from Meander Valley Voices. We've been excited to share insights across Council as an organisation and within specific work teams. We look forward to working together with you as we continue the journey of empowering our people, nurturing our place and securing our future of our beautiful Meander Valley. Thank you that have attended and contributed. Thank you for getting your hands dirty as we continue to write the story of this patch of ours.





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Working Together

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