

Yarra Matters Panel **Survey May 2009 Results**

The City of Yarra actively seeks the community's views on a regular basis. In May 2009, the Council asked questions about:

- **CONSULTATION**
- **IMPACT of GLOBAL FINANCIAL CRISIS**
- **DRAFT COUNCIL PLAN**

Council surveyed the 780 members of the Yarra Matters Panel, with 282 members completing the survey - a 32% response rate. This is below the 47% response rate average of the Annual Community Survey over the past 2 years.

The survey asked questions on preferred consultation methods, the impact of the global financial crisis on households, and asked for input into the objectives of the draft Council Plan.

Consultation: How would you like us to consult with you?

Currently 65% of panel members have provided an email address and Council is interested in pursuing the use of on-line surveys in 2009. Respondents to the survey were asked whether they would be happy to complete surveys on-line, over the telephone or by mail, with more than three-quarters of those who responded to the question interested in on-line (80%) and mail (77%) surveys; compared with just 23% interested in telephone surveys.

Interested in:	On-line Surveys	Telephone	Mail
<i>Sample</i>	<i>(229)</i>	<i>(188)</i>	<i>(115)</i>
Yes	80%	23%	77%
No	20%	77%	23%

As expected, on-line surveys were more popular amongst younger respondents under 40 years (91% of them) than those aged 60 years or older (67%); while the reverse was noticeable for those interested in mail surveys under 40 years (68%) vs. 60 years or older (85%).

38% of respondents indicated that they would be interested in participating in other on-line consultations such as discussion forums or wikis.

With the information gathered, Council is able to update the contact database for panel members and better meet preferred consultation methods. Depending on the target audience required, both survey methods could be utilised to generate the maximum response rate to Yarra's Community Surveys.

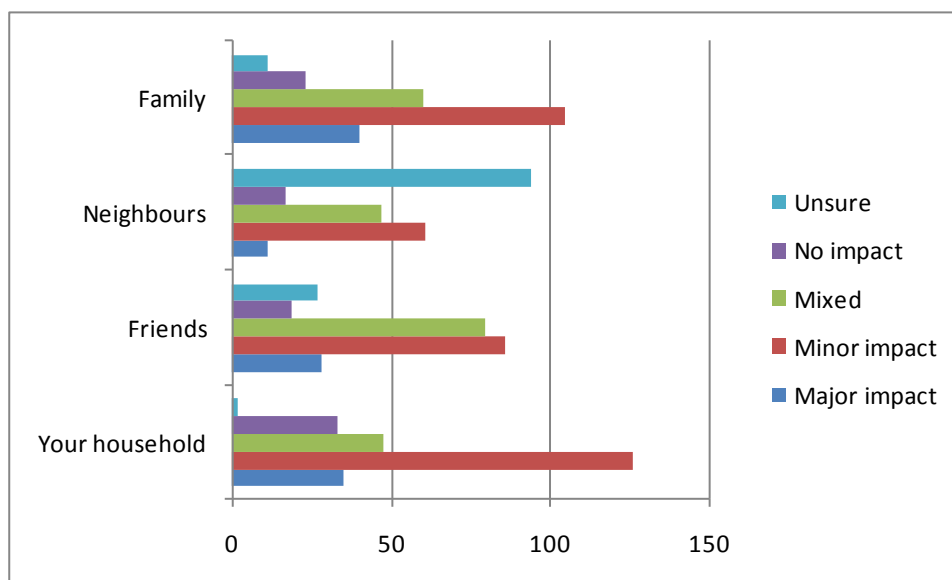
Further comments about the way Council consults with the Panel:

- *I am happy to be a part of the Yarra matters panel as I believe the community needs a voice in local government.*
- *On-line surveys are by far the best, cheapest and most effective way to conduct surveys*
- *It is easier to complete short surveys more frequently*
- *Not too often has been the trend – happy with that.*
- *If you go over to phone or email you exclude people like me who don't like these methods*
- *The email option is a good idea but it will affect the structure of your sample and exclude those without email, so you may have to do both to sample fairly.*

Impact of the Global Financial Crisis

Panel members were most likely to feel that the financial crisis would have a ‘minor impact’ on their household (52%), on their friends (36%) or family (44%).

Understandably, members were less confident to judge the impact on their neighbours with most (41%) being unsure.



	Major impact	Minor impact	Mixed	No impact	Unsure
Your household	14%	52%	20%	14%	1%
Friends	12%	36%	33%	8%	11%
Neighbours	5%	27%	20%	7%	41%
Family	17%	44%	25%	10%	5%

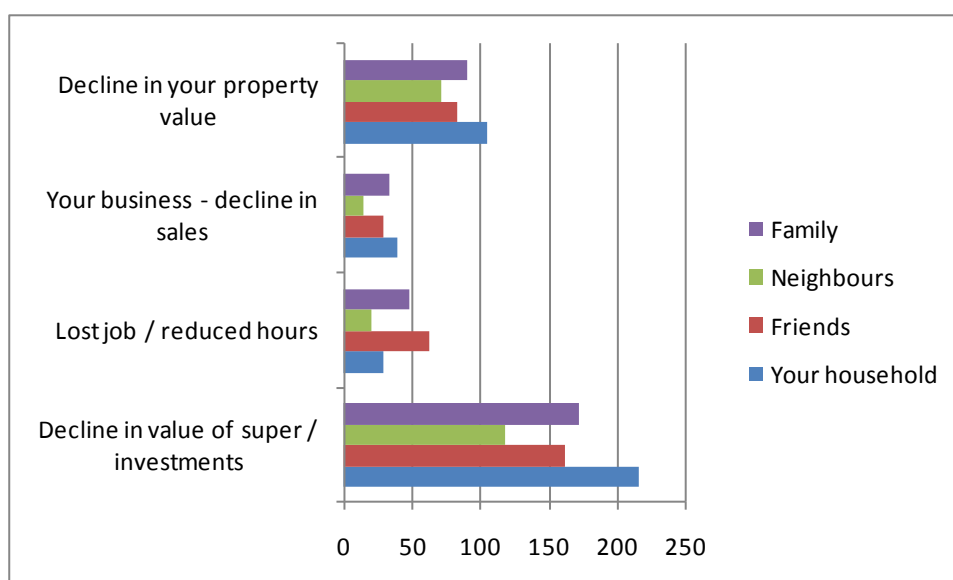
Overwhelmingly, members considered the crisis to have affected the value of their superannuation and investment, as well as for their friends, neighbours and family. A little less than half of members also felt the crisis had impacted property values.

There were mixed responses to the crisis having impacted hours of employment, with friends (32%) most likely to have experienced a drop in hours, followed by family members (24%).

A decline in business sales was reported by fewer members, although this is likely to be due to few members running their own business.

YMP Survey results: Consultation, Global Financial Crisis and Draft Council Plan

	Decline in value of super / investments	Lost job / reduced hours	Your business - decline in sales	Decline in your property value
Your household	92%	12%	17%	45%
Friends	82%	32%	15%	42%
Neighbours	78%	14%	10%	46%
Family	86%	24%	17%	46%



Further comment on other impacts (negative or positive):

Many members had a positive view of the crisis or questioned how bad the impact would be:

- *There are too much negative thoughts and words. We should focus on the fact that most people will remain largely unaffected. Over 90% employment!*
- *Workload on my consulting business has increased due to clients reduced staffing levels. This has also led to an increased expectation by clients in terms of delivering value for money.*
- *I feel there will be a positive outcome with less waste and a decrease in the purchasing of unnecessary consumables.*

While many noted the negative impacts so far:

- *Both of us have diminished incomes as we are both self employed; not on fixed salaries as those employed by others would be.*
- *It is more difficult to get people to part with money for charities etc, particularly as there was such a generous response to the bushfires.*

YMP Survey results: Consultation, Global Financial Crisis and Draft Council Plan

- *Our retirement plan has to be completely revised. Partner has returned to work full time/me part time (financial crisis is an "inconvenience" compared with say a young family, unemployed with a mortgage).*

For many Panel members there was an immediate impact, or a concern that they would be affected soon:

- *Less income means less disposable income to spend on local businesses - restaurants, cafes, clothes, haircuts, etc.*
- *Yes, will probably have to move out of Yarra and rent/sell residence.*
- *Decline in business will affect decision about renovating house (and improving its energy rating etc).*

Some members were concerned, but less clear on the extent or immediacy of the impact on them:

- *It's unlikely to change but if my rent goes up any further I will have to consider moving to a cheaper suburb.*
- *It depends on how bad things get i.e. if my husband loses his job things would*
- *Most significant is decline in property values and reduced income, making it much harder to take the next step on the property ladder.*

Input into the Council Plan

Panel members were informed that all local governments in Victoria are required to produce a Council Plan that sets out the priorities to which Council will allocate its resources over the next four years. The draft of the City of Yarra Council Plan 2009-2013 has been based on an analysis of State and Commonwealth Government Policy, demographic trends and emerging issues, as well as feedback from community surveys and consultations for Council strategies and plans.

Panel members were then required to read the five strategic objectives of the Council Plan under the headings:

1. Making Yarra More Liveable
2. Ensuring a Sustainable Yarra
3. Serving Yarra's Community
4. Supporting a Diverse and Dynamic Yarra
5. Building Council's Capacity and Performance

YMP Survey results: Consultation, Global Financial Crisis and Draft Council Plan

- ⇒ 85% of respondents were favourable about the Strategic Objectives as developed, 57% felt that they covered the major issues facing the City over the next few years, 22% felt that they partly covered the issues and 7% thought they covered the issues but the challenge was in the implementation.
- ⇒ When asked for issues, challenges or opportunities respondents believed needed to be considered in the Council Plan, the most common responses were about Development, high density, appropriate or over-development (18%), better traffic management (16%) and parking or permits (14%).

Further comments about the Council Plan objectives:

- *It's a very good plan – traffic and development issues continue to cause problems particularly with the pro-development bias of VCAT*
- *As an older Australian I agree with the objectives. I go to the gym, library, like the arts. Climate change is very important to me.*
- *The objectives are good but the details which supports it via enabling objectives and implementation plans will need to be provided for proper comment*
- *Basic outline covers most issues, however I think the issue of increased poverty within community should also be addressed*
- *Needs to include transport, including walkability*
- *In theory yes, in practice – yet to be seen*

The City of Yarra Council Plan 2009 – 2013 was adopted by Council on 29 June 2009.

You can view a copy online on the City of Yarra website:

<http://www.yarracity.vic.gov.au/Publications/Council%20Plan/index.asp>