Boulevard Lights 2023

Resident Consultation Summary Report (April 2024)



Banyule
City Council

Survey

In April 2024, Council officers undertook a post-delivery survey with residents to seek feedback on Council's support for the Boulevard Christmas Lights (the Lights) over the past two years. In particular, we wanted to understand Council's role in traffic management, communications and information sharing.

Background

The Lights is a resident-initiated event originating 60 years ago. Banyule Council has supported this tradition over more than 16 years through traffic management, programming and event infrastructure.

In recent years the event had attracted between 7,000 and 10,000 visitors a night, prompting ongoing concerns regarding the risk of high levels of vehicles and pedestrians in the same place at the same time.

Based on community consultation in 2022 and 2023, Council clarified our role and focused on supporting the Boulevard Christmas Lights by providing traffic management, provision of rubbish bins and coordinating community food stalls. Our approach was to balance traffic management, congestion and resident access with the safety of those who come to experience the Lights.

Summary of survey responses

- Opinions on the Boulevard Christmas Lights overall are diverse, with no general consensus.
- While opinions of the current Traffic Management Plan vary, with some desire to return to one-way-traffic, the majority of respondents indicated support for the current plan.
- Concerns about the Traffic Management Plan are typically related to pedestrian congestion on the footpaths, rather than traffic congestion or access to properties, although this is an issue in some side streets.
- The majority of respondents feel Council's communication with residents regarding the event is working well. However, some feel there could be more promotion / info for visitors.
- Many respondents feel that Council should do more to encourage houses to participate, create more of an event atmosphere, and improve neighbourhood amenity such as better rubbish collection.
- Some residents feel the Boulevard Lights works better as a smaller scaled event, while some even find it intrusive or annoying.

Who took part in the survey?

The survey was mailed to 1,016 residents living on The Boulevard and in surrounding streets impacted by the event. The survey was also available to anyone in the community following the Lights project page on Council's Shaping Banyule website.

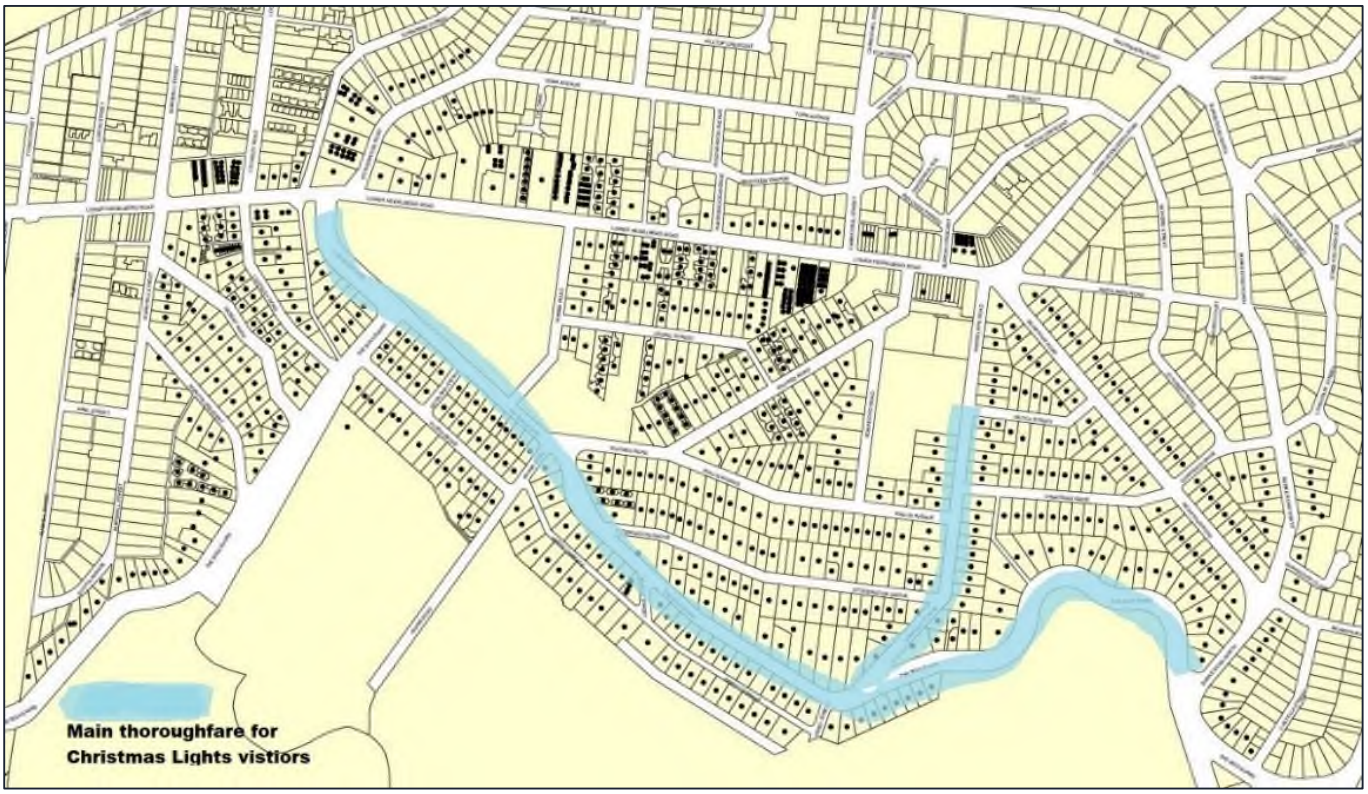


Figure 1 Map showing locations that were mailed the survey

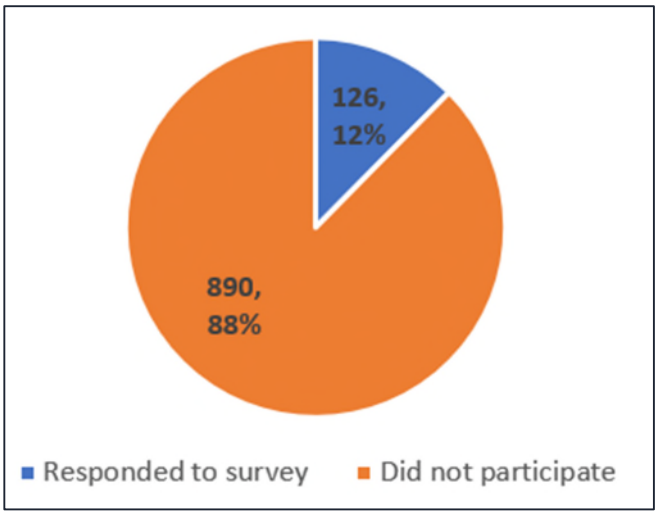


Figure 2 - Proportion of residents that responded to survey

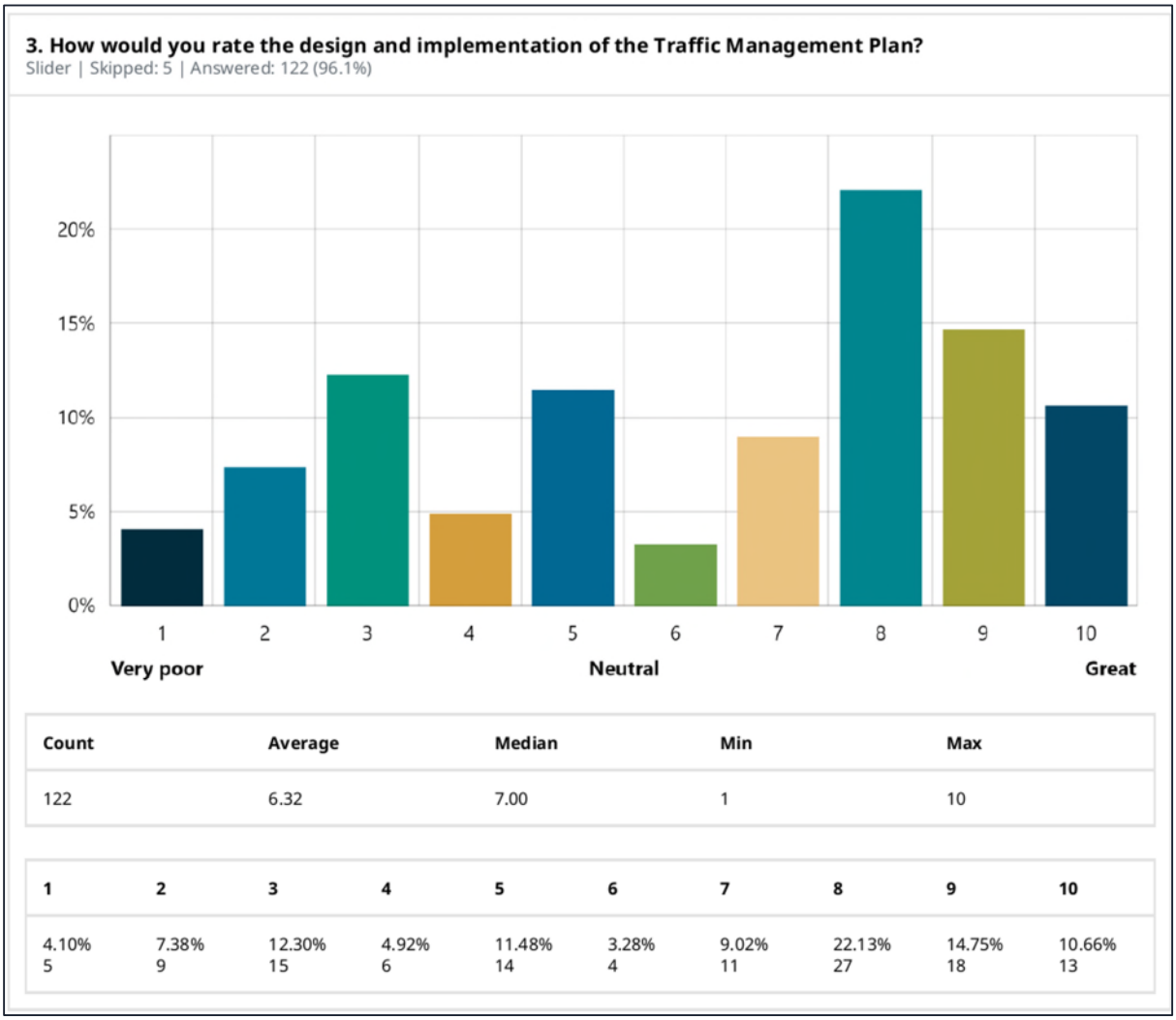
The total number of responses was 126, which was a 12% response rate. While this level of response is consistent with other surveys conducted by Council, it is lower than the 22% response rate (125 people) for the 2022 Lights resident survey.

All respondents were Ivanhoe residents with 98% of respondents living on the Boulevard or surrounding streets.

Survey Topics

Traffic management

Opinions about the Traffic Management Plan were widespread. The median score was 7 out of 10, and 57% of respondents scored 7 or higher.



Count	Average	Median	Min	Max
122	6.32	7.00	1	10

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
4.10% 5	7.38% 9	12.30% 15	4.92% 6	11.48% 14	3.28% 4	9.02% 11	22.13% 27	14.75% 18	10.66% 13

Figure 3 - respondents' rating of the Traffic Management Plan

Commentary on why people gave their score was diverse, however comments can be grouped into key themes.

- **Positive Traffic Management** – 47% of responses were positive, indicating traffic management is working well (53 people).
- **Negative Traffic Management** – 23% gave negative comments, or desired a return to the pre-COVID traffic management plan (26 people).
- **Congestion and access** – 12% raised concerns about traffic congestion and/or accessing the neighbourhood, particularly in Lower Heidelberg and Locksley Roads (13 people).
- **Other related concerns** – 8% raised concerns about other issues – e.g. infrastructure, crowd behaviour, parking over driveways, pedestrian only event, etc. (9 people).
- **Unrelated** – 10% commented on issues unrelated to traffic management (11 people).

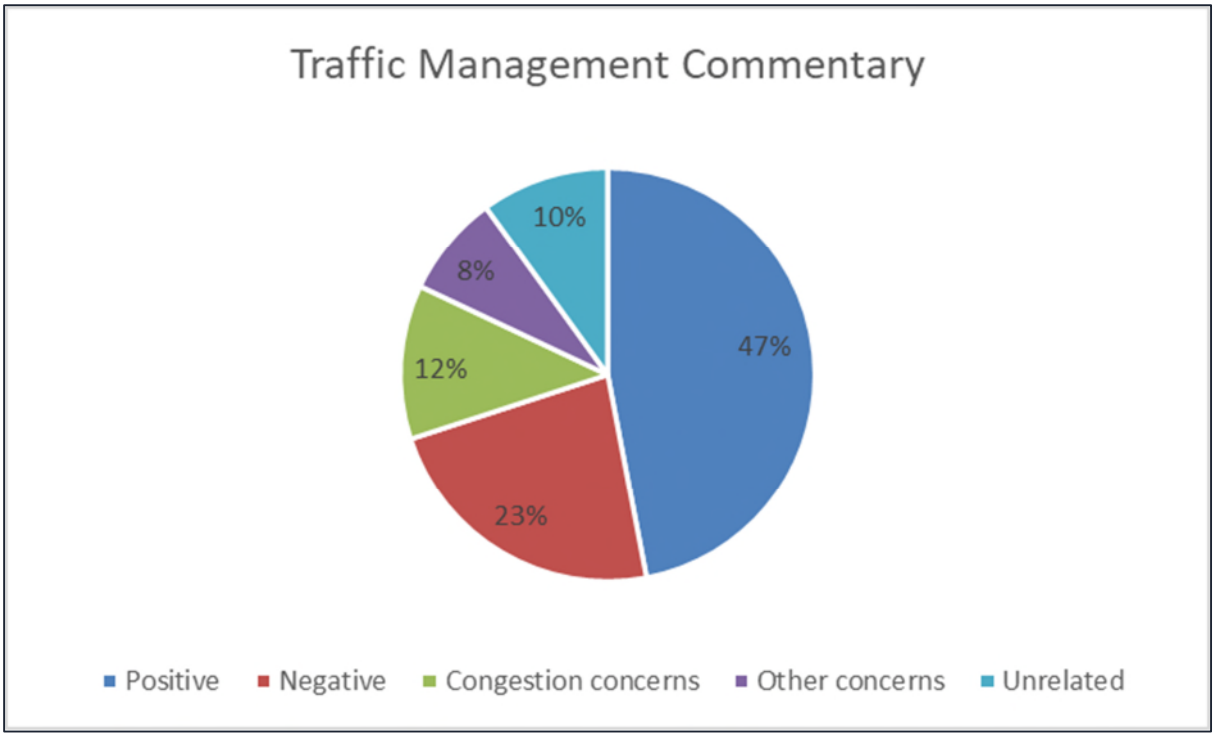


Figure 4 – respondents' comments regarding traffic management

Commentary examples

Positive

"Worked well for both cars and pedestrians as each flowed and was safe for all."

"As a resident, I found it easier to commute along The Boulevard. During previous years it was a nightmare coming home during light display hours. My work involves being on call 24 hours a day, sometimes the call outs are emergencies."

"I experienced minimal impacts on traffic. Parking was impacted but that's unavoidable."

"We have lived in the area for 24 years now and no concerns."

"Well planned and safe for pedestrians with minor disruptions to residents in the area."

"The organisation of the traffic plan was much better than previous years. Traffic flowed well.

"Balanced needs of residents with the requirement to allow efficient traffic flow."

Negative

"Please make sure you revert to the 2022 model where traffic flowed in one direction only. This allows more space for walkers and makes crossing the road safer."

"Go back to the prior year's traffic system and bring back the Christmas Carols."

Not allowing people to walk on the road created crowding on footpaths - which forced people to walk in gutters. Not ideal. This was made worse by people stopping on footpath to take photos."

"No real plan for traffic - it just assumed chaos would stop people coming."

Congestion Concerns

"Generally good but people still parked in our street, not obeying the 'no parking' marked areas. Locksley Rd."

"Thought it was generally well managed although traffic on Lower Heidelberg Rd was very congested at times."

Other Concerns

"Traversing the street in non-boulevard lights hours was difficult. Barriers were obstructive (e.g. erected days before event and post Xmas)."

"Don't allow cars, only people."

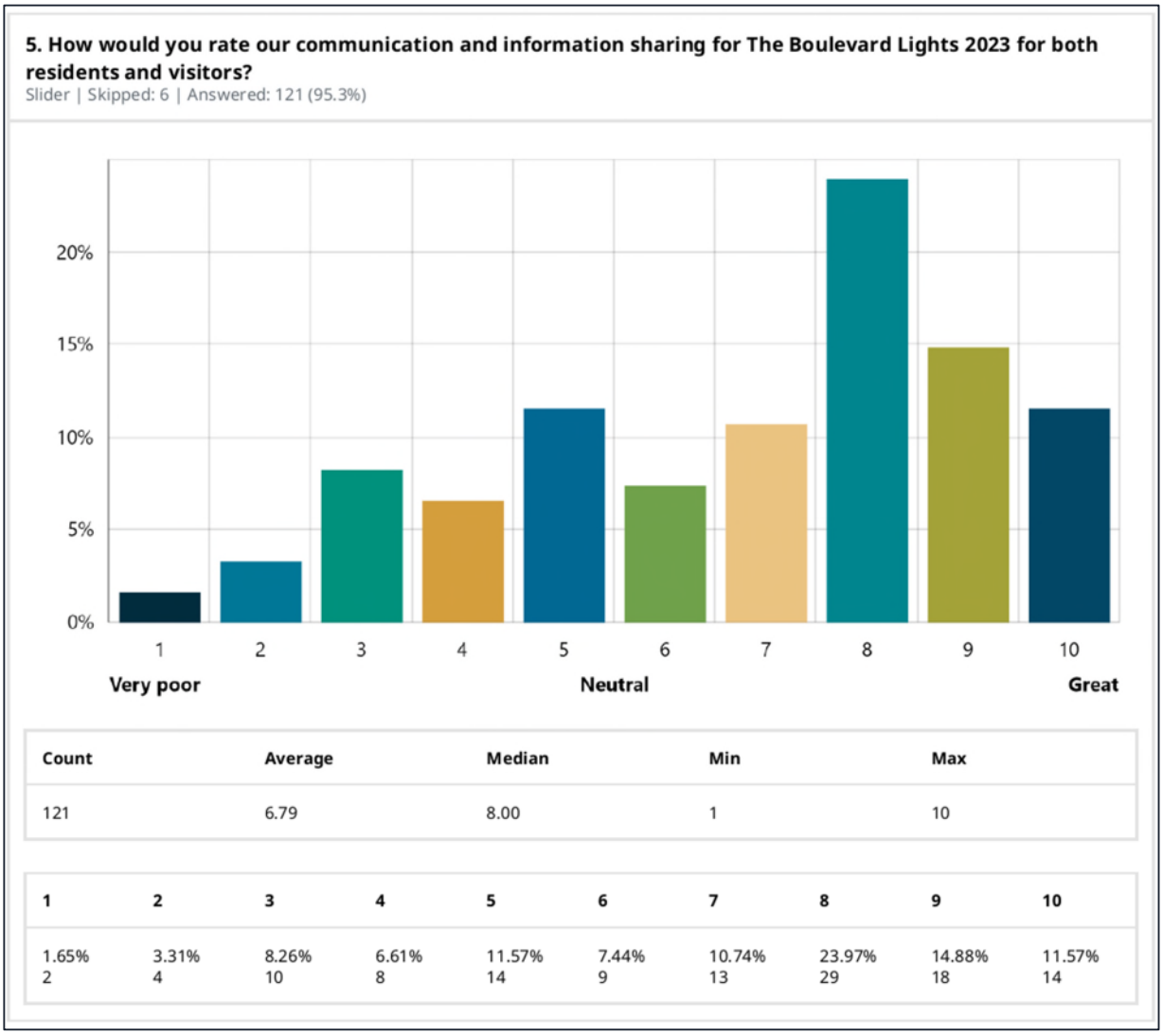
Unrelated

"For the amount of lights actually displayed it is too much disruption to the area."

"Lack of direction."

Communication and information sharing

Scoring of Council's communication and information sharing was also diverse. This topic received a median score of 8 and more than 60% of respondents gave a score of 7 or higher.



Count	Average	Median	Min	Max
121	6.79	8.00	1	10

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1.65% 2	3.31% 4	8.26% 10	6.61% 8	11.57% 14	7.44% 9	10.74% 13	23.97% 29	14.88% 18	11.57% 14

Figure 5 - respondents' rating of Council's communication and information sharing

Commentary on why people gave their rating can be grouped into the following themes:

- **Positive/satisfactory** – 53% of responses (54 people).
- **Negative** – 31% of responses were negative or indicated that there is not enough info for visitors or promotion (31 people).
- **Other** – 16% of responses gave comments unrelated to communication (16 people).

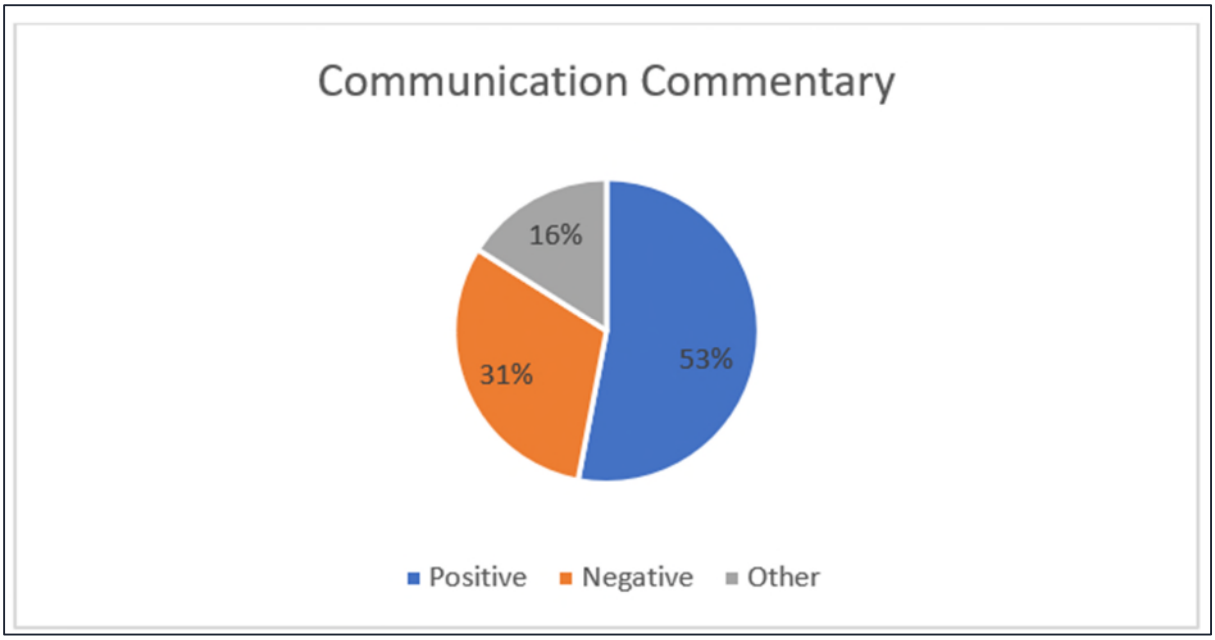


Figure 6 - respondents' comments regarding communication and information sharing

Commentary examples

Positive

"Happy with updates and communication of the event we received."

"I knew a lot in advance and felt very sure of what was happening."

"Received info as a flyer in my letterbox which was informative with parking and timings."

"I think the residents are always considered."

"Council communication to residents is very good. We would prefer if Council did NOT advertise the event extensively outside East Ivanhoe/surrounds, keeping it a local event. Keep the attendance numbers down."

"I didn't experience any negative impact from the event. As a resident I know what to expect and when."

"Got all the info we needed."

"In general the comms is good. More emphasis on what time to turn lights off. It is tricky to monitor if people adhere to the advice."

"Good info. Timely."

Negative

"Advertising for locals was good. But visitors seemed less aware for a while. Advertising on freeway exits and more social media might be good."

"Potential for greater social media comms."

"Communication is a two-way process. Council does whatever they want irrespective of the Community needs and desires."

""Needs more hype."

Other

"Get rid of the process. All the lights are just junk bought online. Good for economy but bad for the environment/global warming. The emissions from all the vehicles is atrocious. Will the council pay for my hospital admission each year due to breathing?"

"The lights were great last year, having a few extra days meant the extreme business of 2022 was lessened. It was more enjoyable and easier to access."

Additional Comments

Is there anything else we should consider when planning for the Boulevard Lights in 2024?

76% of participants (96 people) provided responses to this question. Responses varied greatly and have been grouped by theme.

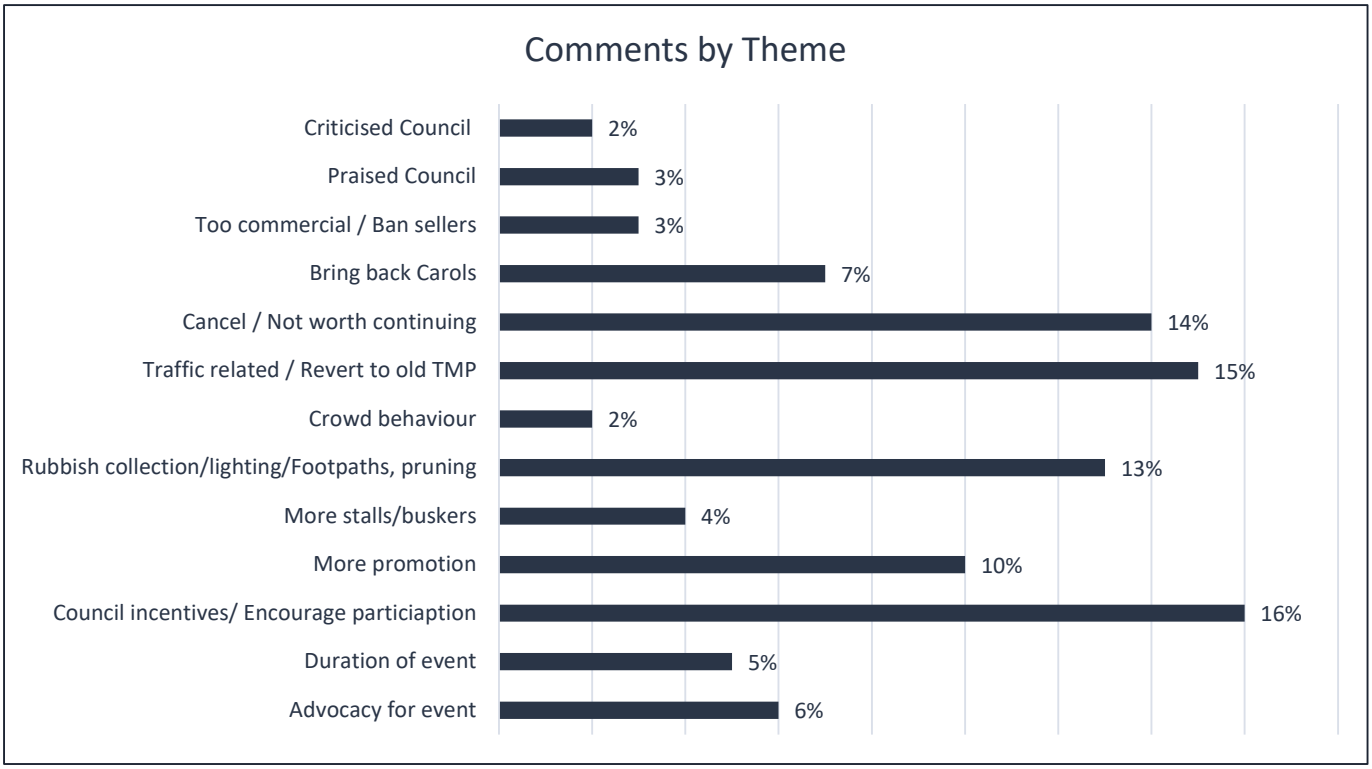


Figure 7 - themes of comments for consideration in future planning

Commentary examples

Praise/criticism for Council

"As I was growing up on Mervyn Cres, we all had Christmas lights and decorations. It was bedlam. We could hardly get off the streets into our drive due to the speed of cars driving up the Boulevard. But not this year, as traffic was (seemed to be) directed elsewhere and the visitors kept moving. Thank you very much Council."

"You have managed to spoil it over the years. Not a lot of participants decorating houses and garden this year."

More activities

"Can we please bring the Xmas Carols opening night back to Ivanhoe Park where it's meant to be. What's the point in having the Xmas carols at Greensborough but the lights are in Ivanhoe???"

"This used to be a real fun family event - with the carols in Ivanhoe Park on the first night and food trucks it was a celebration and a fun family outing. It seems like the council needs to step it up to this year and lean into the event and invest in making it magical and fun."

"We enjoyed it. It would be nice to have people singing carols."

"Local entertainers or a small local makers market at the oval site would be lovely (add to the complexity tho I realise)."

Too commercial / Not worth continuing

“I think it’s a great concept. We have lived in Banyule for well over 30 years, but I think the lights are just becoming so commercialised. I’m not sure how this can be changed and I accept that this is a challenge for council. There were pop-up stores all along the boulevard where people were selling iridescent wristbands, etc.”

“Not do them at all. Write it off as a historical event. Participation rate and standard is very low. Not worth considering.”

“I love the fact that the Boulevard Lights event has scaled down to the smaller size. It was getting crazy before, especially with the traffic issues. And for what? So people across Melbourne can see the houses lit up. Banyule residents get nothing out of that at all, but we locals have had to put up with mayhem in the local streets for 3 weeks prior to Xmas.”

“Is this something we really need anymore? There are impacts from light pollution, traffic, parking, and electricity usage, not to mention the cost council spends on managing aspects of the event.”

Traffic Management

“Please revert to the single lane of traffic for cars on the northern side of the Boulevard and leave the southern side of the boulevard for pedestrians. The way it was done for the last few years is not good for pedestrians and those walking the lights (of which there are many).

“The 'pedestrian only' option for the Boulevard should be considered, like happened in 2022.”

“Consider blocking off access to surrounding streets.”

Crowd behaviour

“Ensure that people leave upon cessation of the night.”

“It’s just the very late and intoxicated ones who leave rubbish and goon after 11pm. I wonder if the council can come up with a solution to fix this?”

Rubbish/footpaths

“Maintaining enough rubbish bins is important. Some on Otterington Grove would be good as some rubbish is often left there.”

“The rubbish that gets left is my only concern. And uneven pavement where homes are being renovated makes it hard for pedestrians especially elderly/children or those with mobility issues. I love the event and what it brings to our community.”

“By making the footpaths wider. There was a risk of trip hazards on the curbing when it became dark.”

Promotion

“This is a wholesome organic family event that Banyule appears to not value fully. Additional visitor promotion and something at Ivanhoe Park would be welcome.”

“You could consider a social media page?”

Incentives/Encouragement

“Encourage more participation as the number of houses decorated has dropped off. Those that do it are great.”

“Need incentives to homes to do the lights…less and less are doing it and if you continue to allow developers to build apartments it won’t stay…it’s already changed…apart from a handful of houses its poor. Also don’t allow people to stand in their driveways selling glow sticks etc with no lights on their houses!!!! Profiting of those who make an effort to do the lights.”

“Reconnect with the residents of the Boulevard and provide some meaningful incentives to participate. In a nutshell low participation (as was the case last year) essentially means that you don't have an event. It's an awesome tradition that needs some thought to get back to what it has been previously.”

Event duration

“Please extend the Council involvement to at least 2 weeks more to include the post new year period. Please continue this well-loved tradition.”

“I like the event isn't longer than a week, as visitor cars/traffic is detrimental to a residential street. Event extends to/past midnight impacting sleep (especially during a working week). Access to our street/property is revolting.”

Advocacy

“We enjoy the event and would be sad to see it go or decline.”

“They should be more encouraged and supported as they are a shadow of their former self since the council shut them down during covid. It would be great to see them fully recover in coming years.”