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SHIRE OF PROGRESS AND OPPORTUNITY

1 April, 2016

Council Meeting Notice

I hereby give notice that an Extraordinary Meeting of the Murrumbidgee Shire Council is to be held in the Murrumbidgee Shire Council Chambers at Darlington Point on Monday, 4 April, 2016 at 7.00pm.

Phil Pinyon
Interim General Manager

AGENDA

APOLOGIES

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1. COMMUNITY INPUT INTO MERGER PROPOSALS	2

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GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

1. COMMUNITY INPUT INTO MERGER PROPOSALS

<p>Extraordinary Meeting 4 April, 2016 PP:IGM – Community Input Into Merger Proposals</p>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Murrumbidgee Shire is currently the subject of two merger proposals being investigated by the Office of Local Government with Council needing to formulate a position on the alternative "Whole of Jerilderie" merger option. This report provides details of community input obtained through two community meetings as well as paper-based, online and telephone polls conducted within the Murrumbidgee Shire area – input which was requested by Councillors at the 16 March meeting.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- a) **Note the information contained with the phone, paper-based and online survey reports.**
- b) **Present this information together with the financial analysis reports considered at the March 16 Ordinary meeting as its submission to the Delegate's Inquiry into the whole of Jerilderie Shire merger proposal.**
- c) **Include as a covering letter, information to outline Council's position in relation to the whole of Jerilderie merger proposal (content to be determined by Council).**
- d) **Formally write to the Mayor of Jerilderie Shire Council, Cr Ruth McRae advising of Council's decision and submission details.**

BACKGROUND

At its 16 March, 2016 Ordinary Meeting, Council resolved to defer making a decision in relation to a request from Jerilderie Shire Council to support a merger with the whole of the Jerilderie local government area until there had been an opportunity for further community input into Council's decision. This decision followed on from one taken at Council's Extraordinary Meeting of 7 March, 2016 when it resolved to:

- a) *Advise the community of the consultation and feedback process – distributed via web page, email, media release, Facebook from March 8.*
- b) *Distribute information to the community via the web page, email, newsletter, Facebook, letterboxing from Wednesday, March 16.*
- c) *Hold public meetings in Coleambally on Monday, March 21 and Darlington Point on Wednesday, March 23.*

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- d) *Undertake a survey of the community to determine its position in relation to the whole of Jerilderie merger proposal, consisting of paper-based/online survey or comment forms promoted with Information Distribution 2 - survey to close March 30. Telephone poll of random selection of between 300 and 400 residents. Phone poll to be conducted between March 24 and March 30.*

COMMUNITY SURVEYS

In adherence with the Council resolutions, research consultants, IRIS Research were engaged to undertake a telephone poll of between 300-400 residents with the Murrumbidgee Local Government Area. This survey was conducted over two evenings, being March 30 and 31. At the conclusion of the polling period, 336 surveys were completed. All the numbers listed in the polling pool were called at least 3 times in an endeavour to make contact. There were approximately 275 numbers that were not answered and, given more time some of these would turn into interviews. However, due to the limited time for conducting and reporting on the poll it was determined to close it with the 336 completed surveys. The maximum error rate on the results with 336 surveys will be +/- 5.1% (on 400 it would have been 4.8%) so there is not a great difference in the accuracy of the results.

According to IRIS Research, the response rate for the survey was a very strong 86% (i.e. where they were able to talk to a resident, 86% of the time they undertook the survey). This represented one of the highest response rates the company had ever recorded. The biggest issue they experienced was getting somebody on the line to answer the survey.

The combine response for the paper-based and online survey conducted by Murrumbidgee Shire Council was a lesser number than the phone poll with 239 responses received. These responses were spread across the two main postcode areas for Murrumbidgee.

The following table shows the responses (in percentages) from the IRIS and Murrumbidgee surveys. Full summaries of both surveys appear as attachments A and B to this report.

	IRIS phone survey			Murrumbidgee survey – paper-based/online		
	Don't support	Neutral	Support	Don't support	Neutral	Support
I prefer Murrumbidgee Shire Council to merge with Part Of Jerilderie Shire Council to Yanco Creek	29.2%	17.4%	51.8%	39.9%	6.8%	53.2%
I prefer Murrumbidgee Shire Council to merge with the Whole Of Jerilderie Shire	43.6%	10.2%	44.7%	52.7%	2.1%	45.1%
The Proposed Merger with Part Of Jerilderie Shire Council to Yanco Creek will benefit the Murrumbidgee Community	27.9%	17.9%	52.1%	29.7%	14.6%	55.6%
The Proposed Merger with the Whole Of Jerilderie Shire will benefit the Murrumbidgee Community	43.3%	13.7%	41.6%	51.4%	7.5%	41.0%

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I Have A Community Interest With The Jerilderie Shire Area	55.1%	16.8%	27.3%	59.0%	17.9%	23%
	Yes	No				
While it is not currently an option for Murrumbidgee Shire Council, my preference is to remain an Independent Council	68.7%	31.3%			N/A	

The IRIS survey included the final question as a means of determining community sentiment in relation to merger propositions in general. It clearly indicates that more than two thirds of respondents would prefer no merger were it an option.

COMMUNITY MEETINGS

Two community meetings were held to allow ratepayers and residents to express their views on the whole of Jerilderie merger option. The first of these was held at the Coleambally Community Club on Monday, March 21 and attended by approximately 35 people. The second meeting was held on Wednesday, March 22 at the Darlington Point Sports Club and saw approximately 75 people in attendance. Both meetings were also attended by all Murrumbidgee Shire Councillors. Opinions expressed at the two meetings were varied with support shown for both merger options.

OTHER FACTORS

Financial implications for any merged entity will play a significant role in its ongoing viability. However, this is not the only factor which requires consideration ahead of any merger.

Other factors which need to be considered in assessing merger proposals are outlined within the Local Government Act 1993 (Section 263). These factors can be described as follows:

1. What are the financial advantages or disadvantages of the proposal to the residents and ratepayers of the areas concerned?
2. What is the community of interest and geographic cohesion in the existing areas that will be encompassed by the proposed new area?
3. What are the existing historical and traditional values in the existing areas and how will the changed boundaries impact them?
4. What is the attitude of the residents and ratepayers of the areas concerned?
5. How will the residents and ratepayers of the area be represented by elected Councillors?
6. Will there be a ward structure, undivided area or popularly elected mayor?
7. Will current services be retained or changed?
8. What will the impact be on the employment of the staff by the councils of the areas concerned?
9. How will the change affect rural communities in the areas concerned?
10. How will the new Council ensure that the opinions of each of the diverse communities of the resulting area or areas are effectively represented?
11. Any other factors considered relevant to the provision of efficient and effective local government in the existing and proposed new areas.

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While Council is yet to determine its position on the whole of Jerilderie merger option, it is recommended that Councillors keep the above factors in mind in the consideration of what should or should not be included in any submission put to the Delegate's Inquiry on behalf of the Council organisation. To date, no detailed analysis has been undertaken on some of these elements although a high-level review of Murrumbidgee and Jerilderie Shire's Community Strategic Plans indicates that there are some similarities in the Key Strategic Directions of the two organisations. That being said, there are still a reasonable number of differences in the two communities' objectives and expectations – particularly in relation to services provided, economic development focus and philosophical positions of the elected body. While many of these factors may well be resolved through the development of a new Community Strategic Plan for the new entity, they are still elements which need to receive due regard should Council resolve to support the whole of Jerilderie merger.

COMMENT

Councillors have indicated that they wished to base their decision in relation to the Whole of Jerilderie Merger Proposal on input from the wider community. The data obtained from both surveys would indicate that there is marginally more support for the partial merger to Yanco Creek when compared to the Whole of Jerilderie option.

CONSIDERATIONS (Statutory Compliance/Policy, Financial, Integrated Plan, Risk Management)

STATUTORY COMPLIANCE/POLICY

Local Government Act 1993 - Sect 218

Local Government Act 1993 – Sect 23A

Local Government Act 1993 – Sect 263(3)

FINANCIAL

At the Ordinary Meeting of Murrumbidgee Shire Council on February 17, 2016, Councillors resolved to allocate \$10,000 to undertake the investigation into the merger proposals. In addition to this, at an Extraordinary Meeting on March 7, Council resolved to allocate an additional amount of funds, \$13,000, to the community engagement process to gauge the community's position in relation to the merger proposal. Due to the reduced number of completed surveys with the telephone poll, Council has received a reduction of \$300 (excluding GST) in the cost originally quoted. A full breakdown of costs associated with the Community Engagement and survey process will be presented to the Ordinary Meeting of Council in April.

INTEGRATED PLANS

D1.1 – Council leads the community by example demonstrating a high level of leadership and accountability

RISK MANAGEMENT

N/A

CONSULTATION / ENGAGEMENT

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Murrumbidgee Shire Community
Councillors
Council staff members
ELT

OPTIONS

- a) The recommendation as printed.
- b) Council could resolve to note the information contained within the report only and elect to not make a formal written submission to the Delegate Inquiry into the Whole of Jerilderie Merger Proposal.

An alternative resolution could be adopted by Council at this meeting.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Survey data from IRIS Consulting telephone poll

Attachment B: Survey data from Murrumbidgee Shire Council paper and online poll

Phil Pinyon

INTERIM GENERAL MANAGER

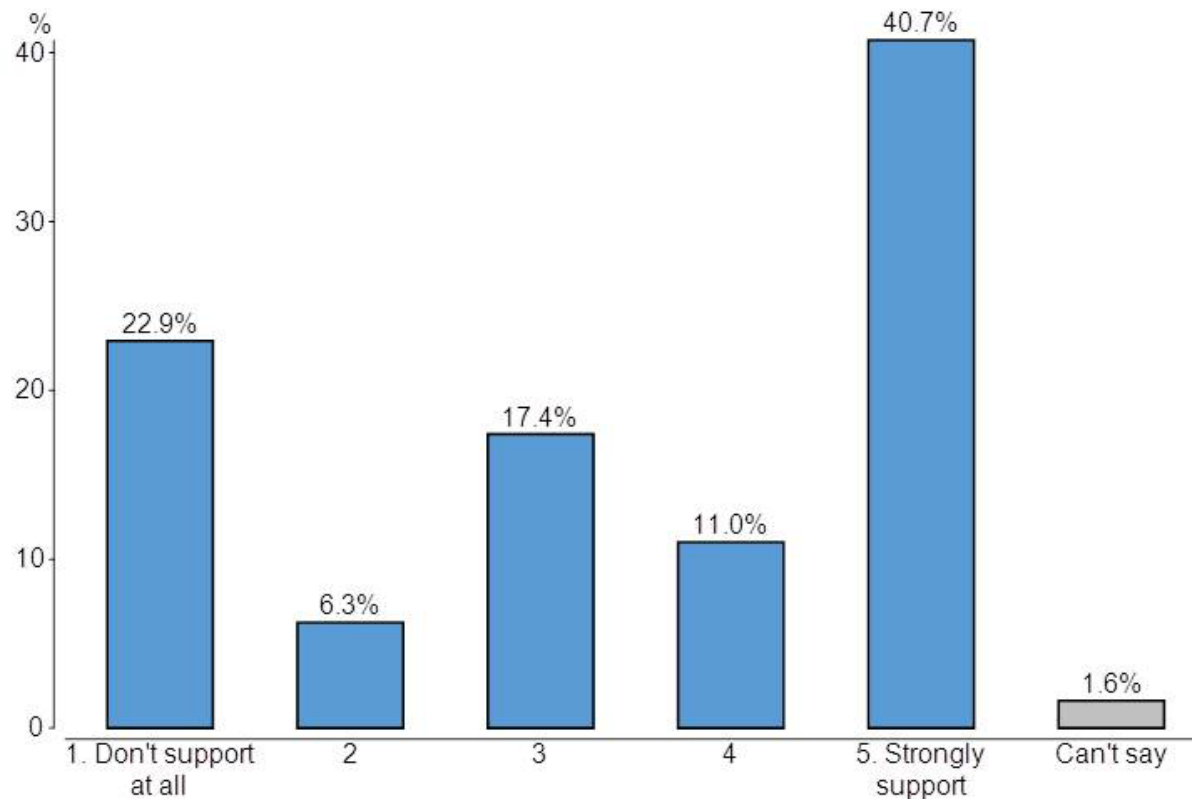
MURRUMBIDGEE SHIRE COUNCIL

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Attachment A: Survey data from IRIS Consulting telephone poll

Using a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 means 'Don't support at all' and 5 means 'Strongly Support', can you tell me how much you support Option 1 : **'That Murrumbidgee Shire Council merge with part of Jerilderie Shire Council to Yanco Creek'**.



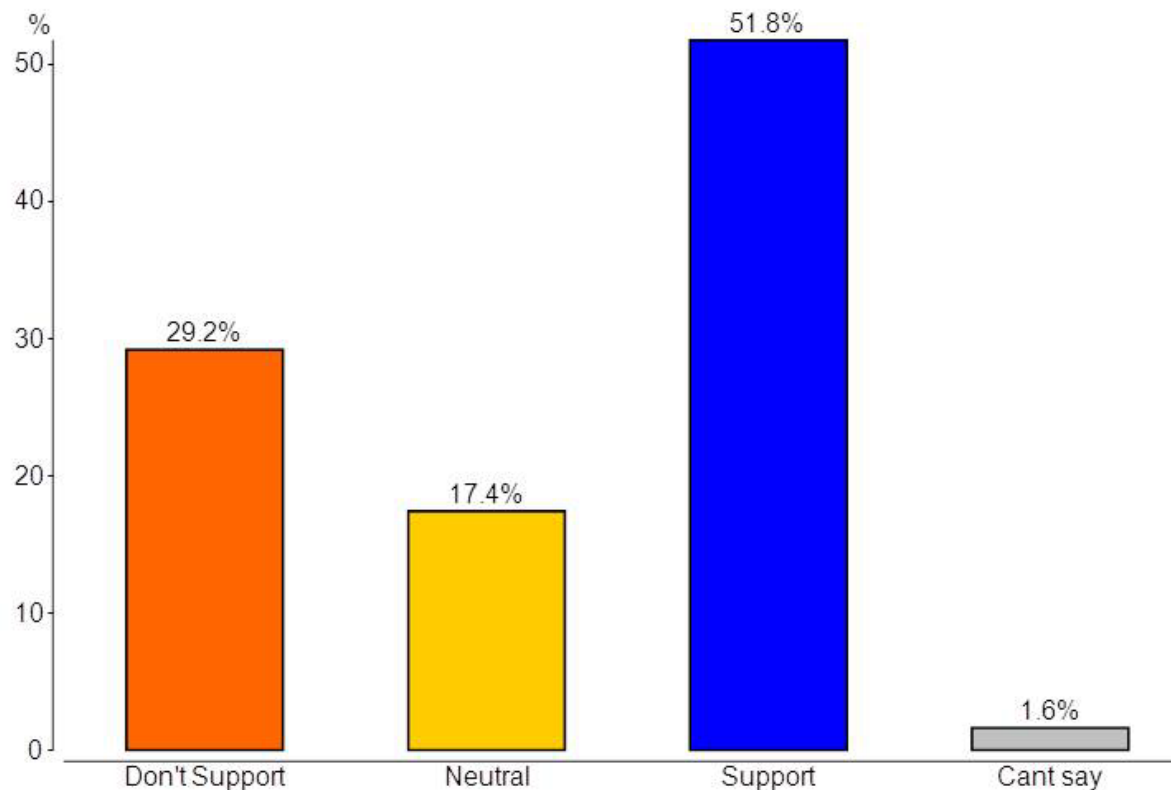
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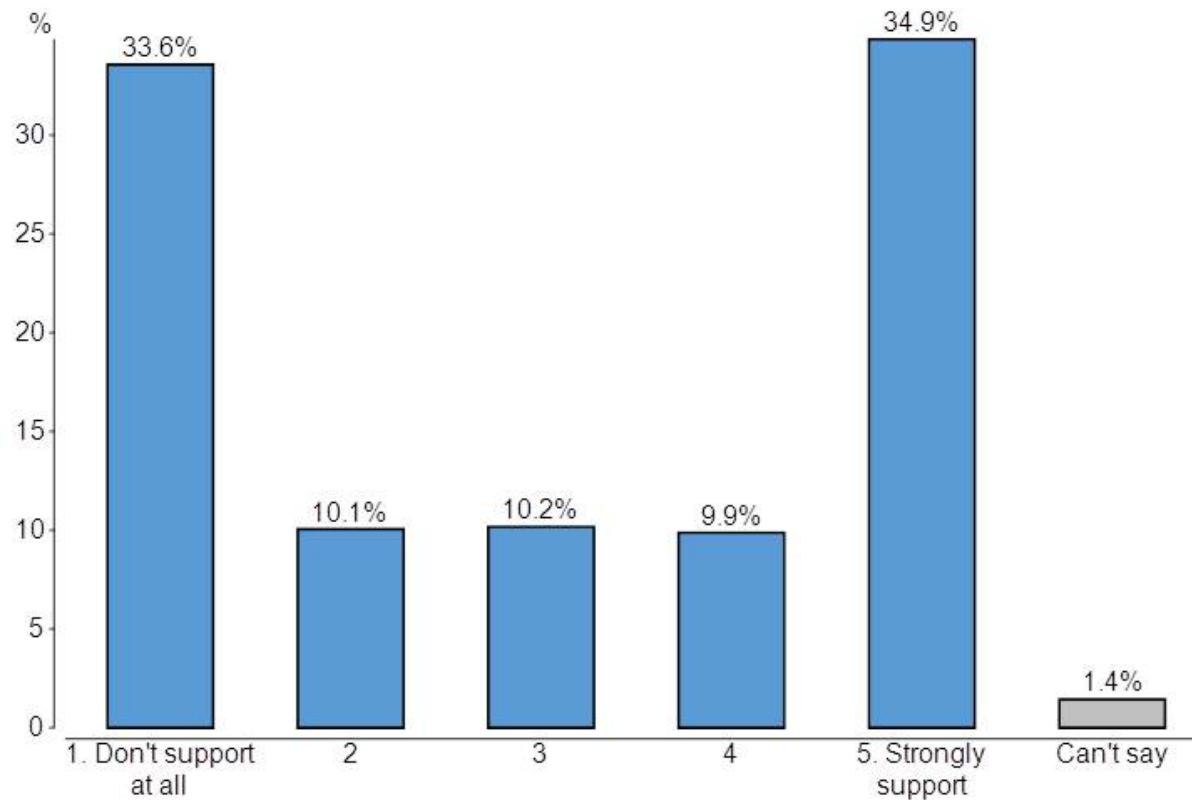
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Attachment A: Survey data from IRIS Consulting telephone poll

Using a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 means 'Don't support at all' and 5 means 'Strongly Support', can you tell me how much you support Option 2 : **'That Murrumbidgee Shire Council merge with the whole of Jerilderie Shire'**.



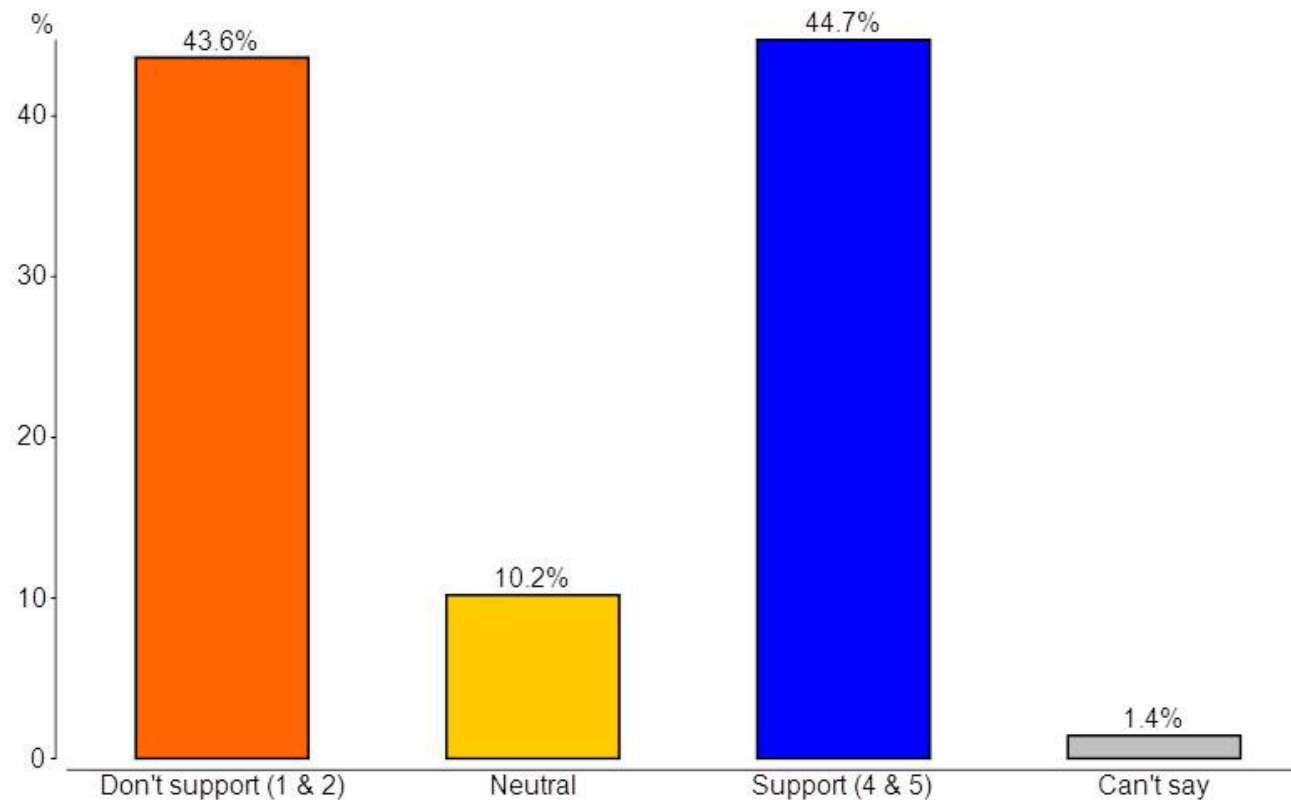
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Using a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 means 'Don't support at all' and 5 means 'Strongly Support', can you tell me how much you support Option 2 : **'That Murrumbidgee Shire Council merge with the whole of Jerilderie Shire'**.



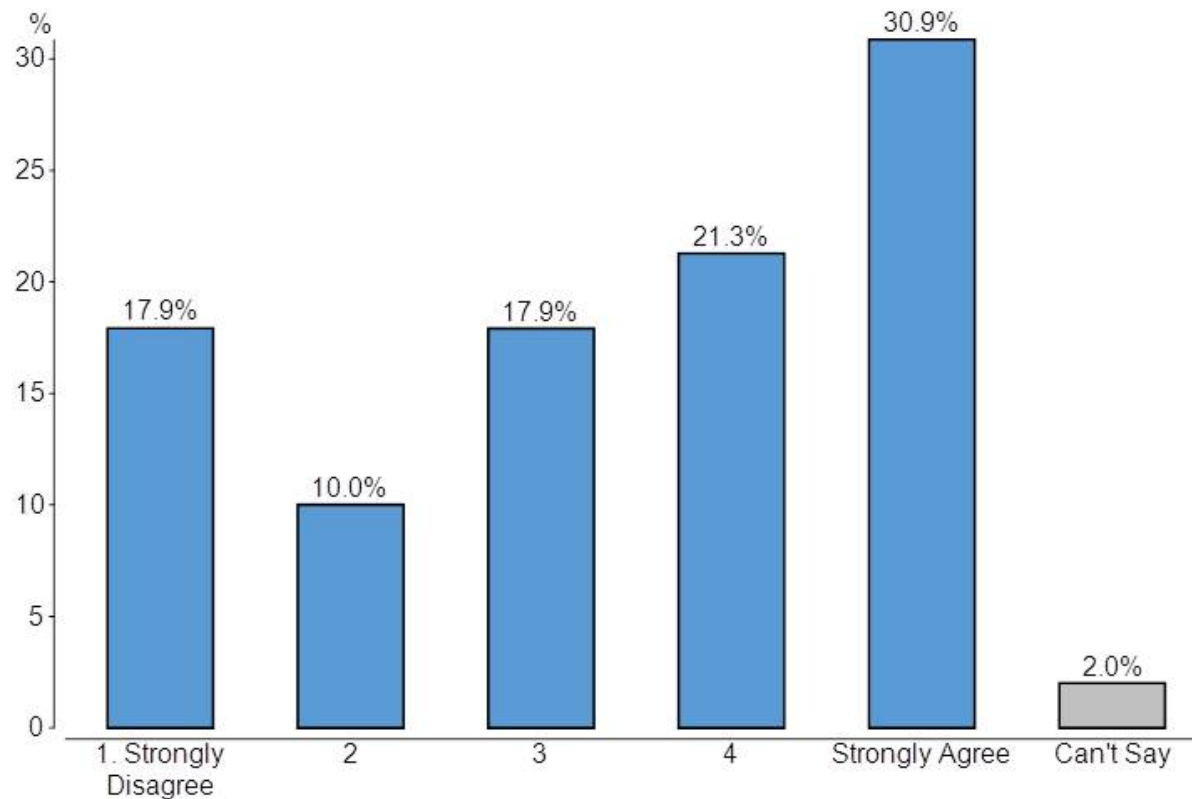
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Attachment A: Survey data from IRIS Consulting telephone poll

The proposed merger with **part** of Jerilderie Shire Council to Yanco Creek will benefit the Murrumbidgee community



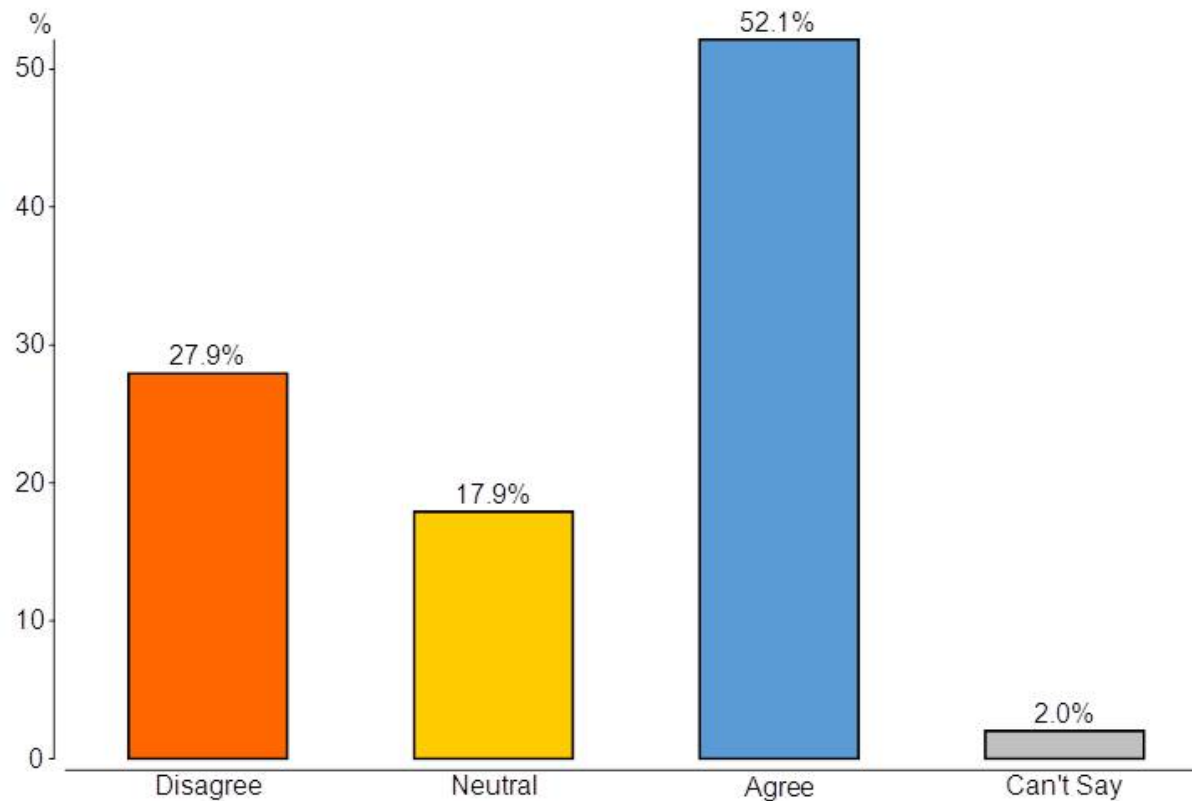
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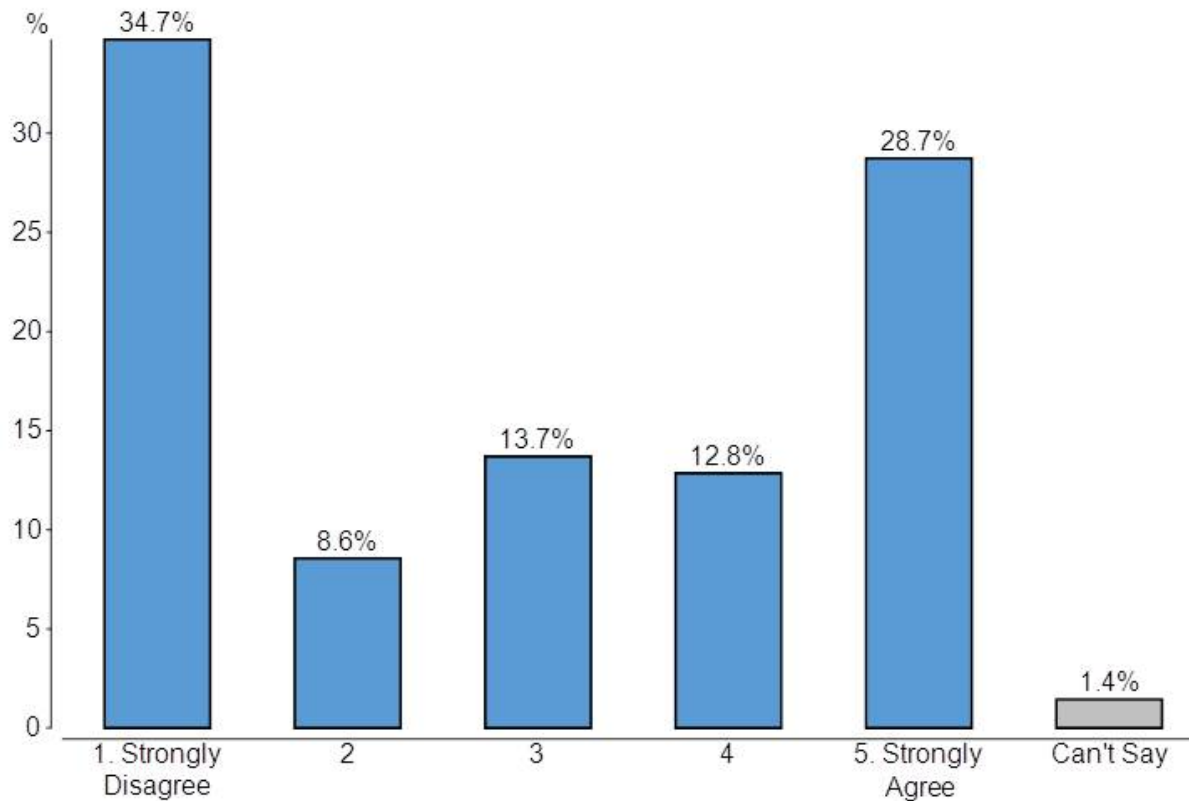
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MURRUMBIDGEE SHIRE COUNCIL

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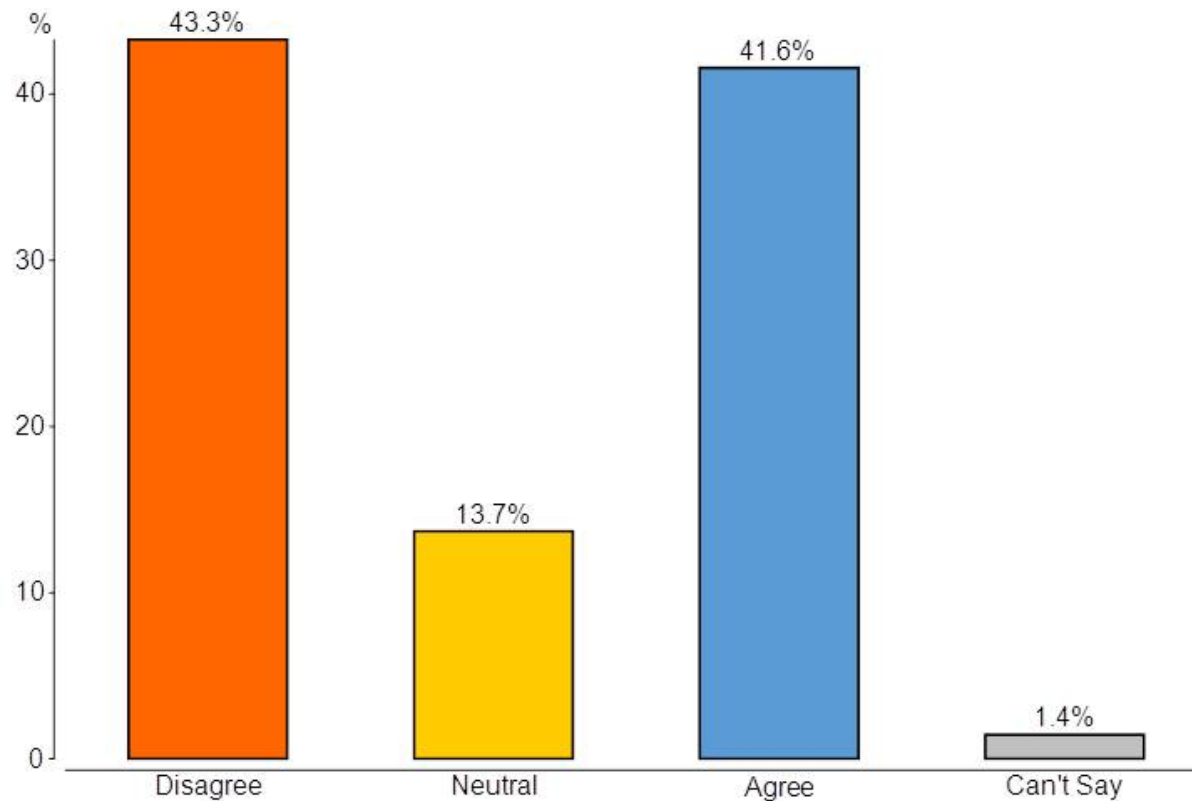
The proposed merger with the **whole** of Jerilderie Shire Council will benefit the Murrumbidgee community



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Attachment A: Survey data from IRIS Consulting telephone poll

The proposed merger with the **whole** of Jerilderie Shire Council will benefit the Murrumbidgee community



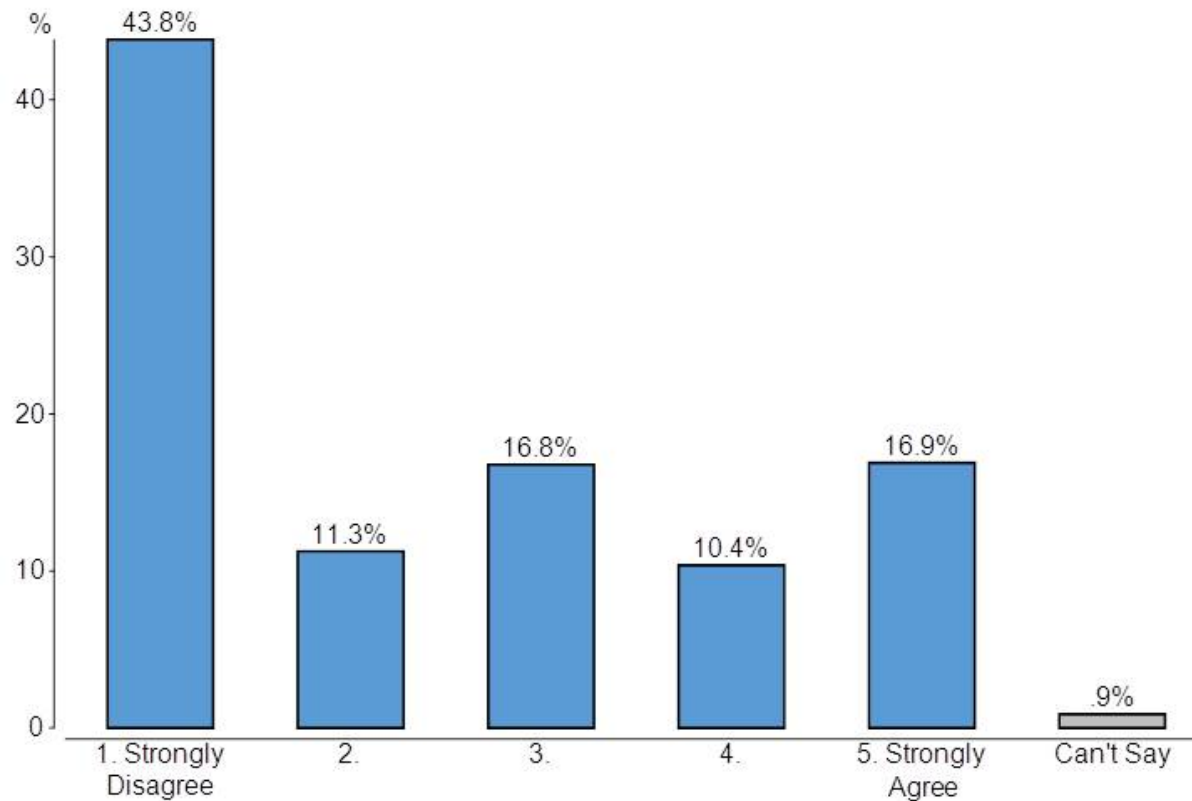
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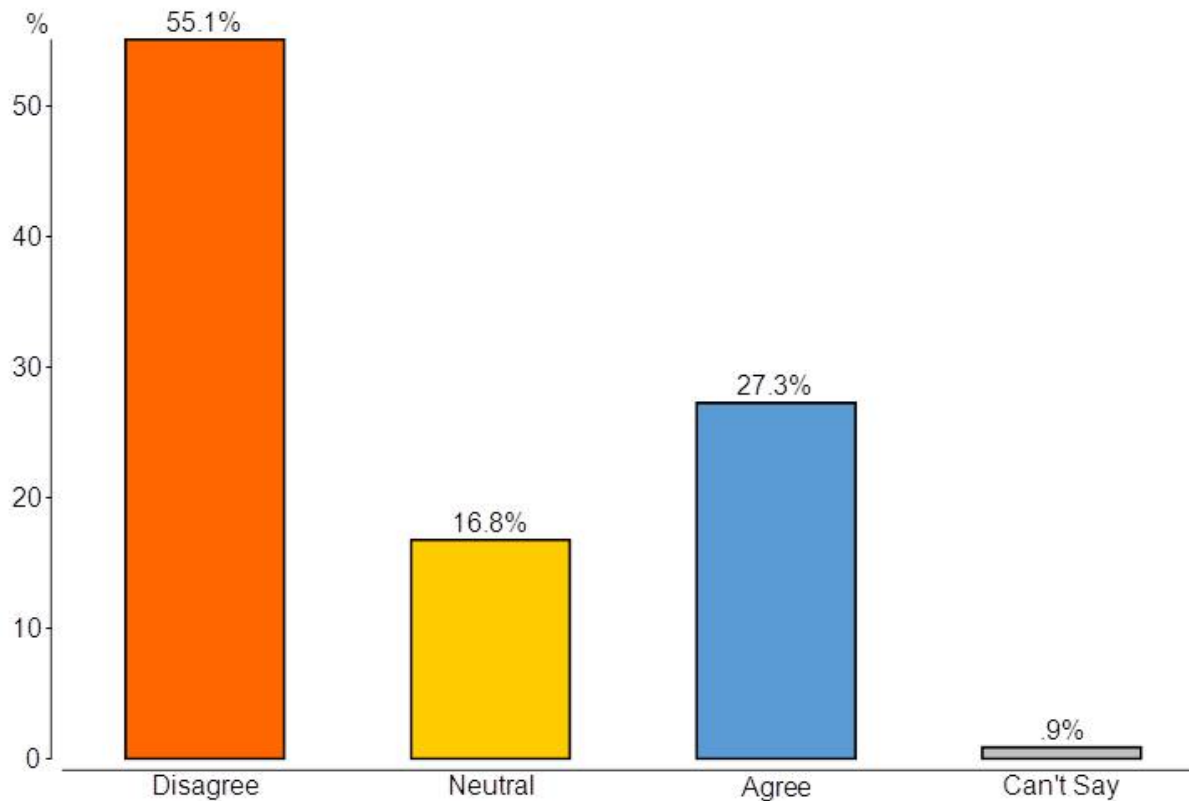
Attachment A: Survey data from IRIS Consulting telephone poll

I have a community interest with the Jerilderie Shire Area.



Attachment A: Survey data from IRIS Consulting telephone poll

q4_2: I have a community interest with the Jerilderie Shire Area.



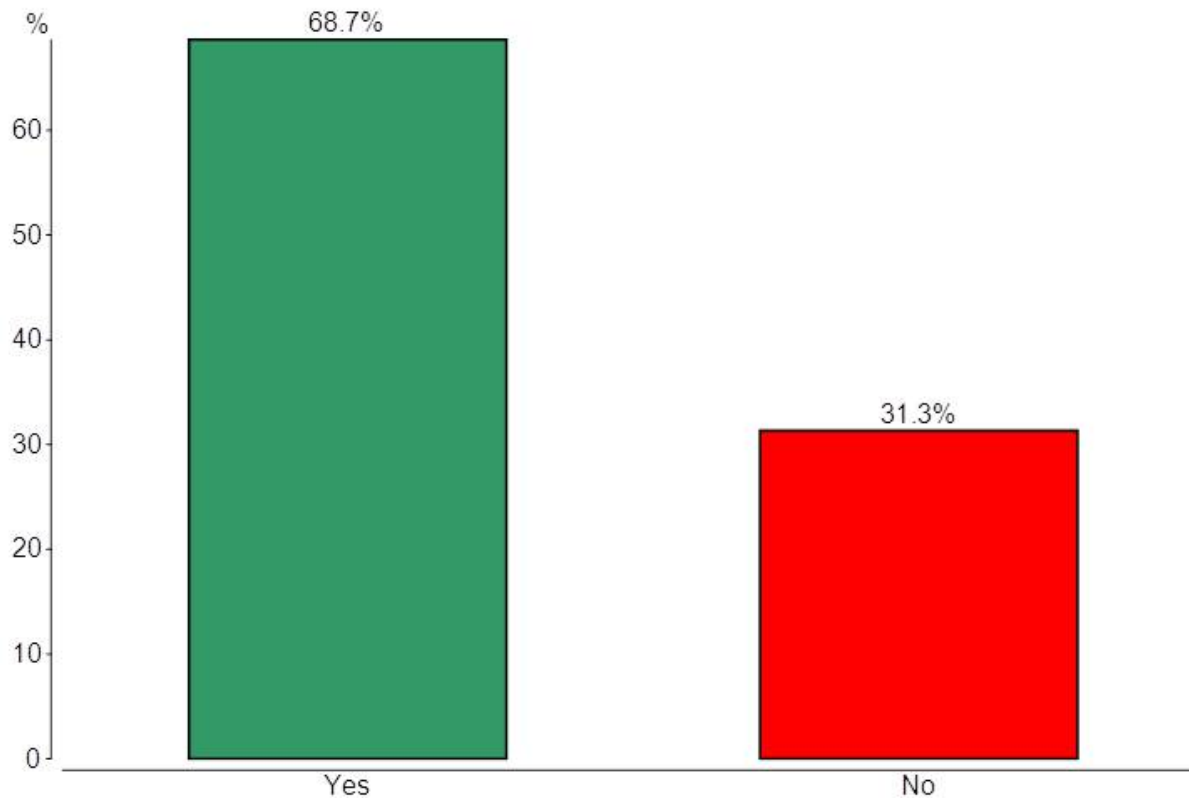
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Attachment A: Survey data from IRIS Consulting telephone poll

While it is not currently an option for Murrumbidgee Shire Council, **my preference is to remain an independent Council**



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Attachment A: Survey data from IRIS Consulting telephone poll

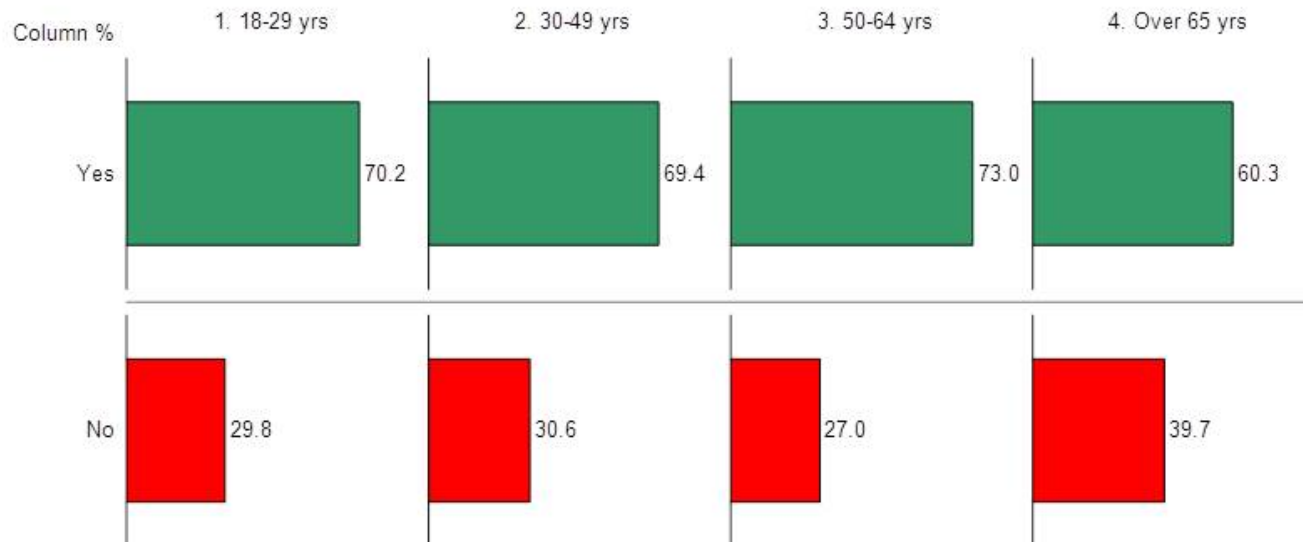
While it is not currently an option for Murrumbidgee Shire Council, my preference is to remain an independent Council by Gender



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Attachment A: Survey data from IRIS Consulting telephone poll

While it is not currently an option for Murrumbidgee Shire Council, my preference is to remain an independent Council by Age



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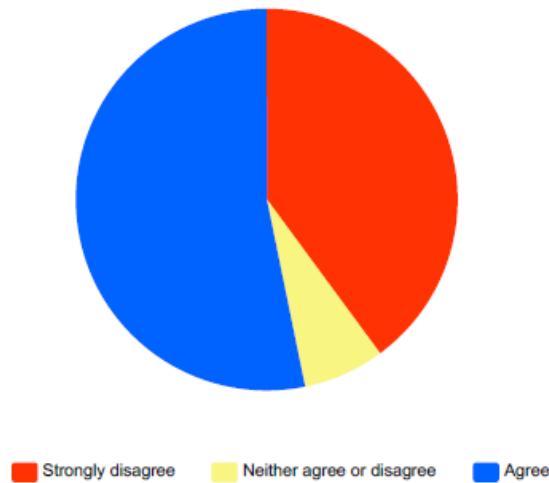
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Attachment B: Survey data from Murrumbidgee Shire Council paper and online poll

Q1 'I PREFER MURRUMBIDGEE SHIRE COUNCIL TO MERGE WITH PART OF JERILDERIE SHIRE COUNCIL TO YANCO CREEK.'

Answered: 233 Skipped: 6



	Strongly disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Total	Weighted Average
(no label)	39.91% 93	6.87% 16	53.22% 124	233	2.73

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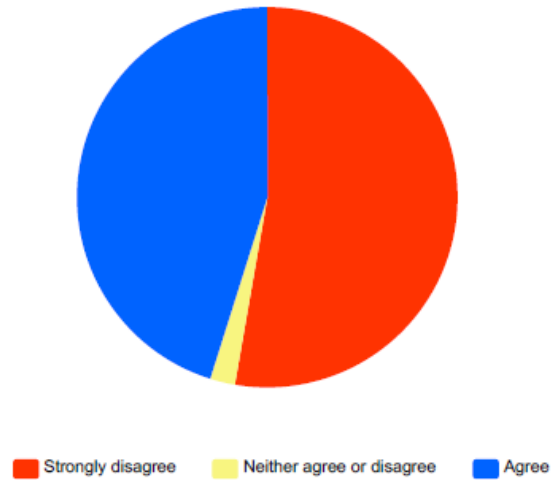
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Attachment B: Survey data from Murrumbidgee Shire Council paper and online poll

Q2 'I PREFER MURRUMBIDGEE SHIRE COUNCIL TO MERGE WITH THE WHOLE OF JERILDERIE SHIRE.'

Answered: 237 Skipped: 2



	Strongly disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Total	Weighted Average
(no label)	52.74% 125	2.11% 5	45.15% 107	237	2.40

MURRUMBIDGEE SHIRE COUNCIL

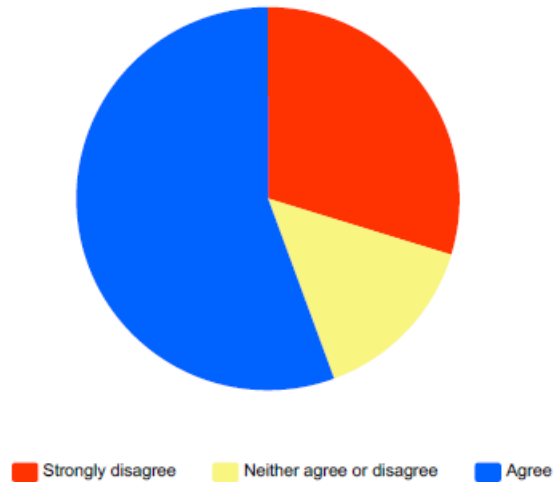
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Attachment B: Survey data from Murrumbidgee Shire Council paper and online poll

**Q3 THE PROPOSED MERGER WITH PART
OF JERILDERIE SHIRE COUNCIL TO
YANCO CREEK WILL BENEFIT THE
MURRUMBIDGEE COMMUNITY.**

Answered: 232 Skipped: 7



	Strongly disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Total	Weighted Average
(no label)	29.74% 69	14.66% 34	55.60% 129	232	2.96

MURRUMBIDGEE SHIRE COUNCIL

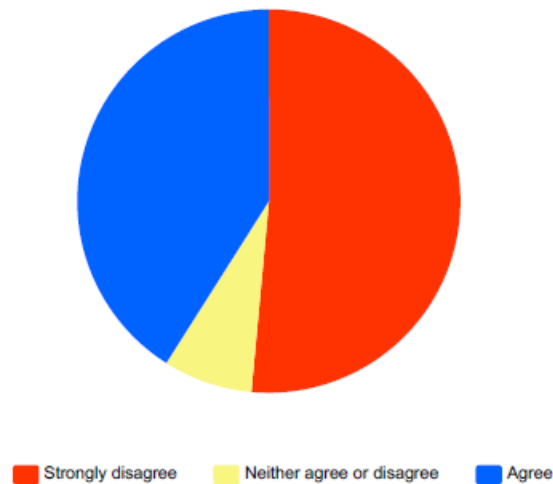
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**Q4 THE PROPOSED MERGER WITH THE
WHOLE OF JERILDERIE SHIRE WILL
BENEFIT THE MURRUMBIDGEE
COMMUNITY.**

Answered: 239 Skipped: 0



	Strongly disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Total	Weighted Average
(no label)	51.46% 123	7.53% 18	41.00% 98	239	2.38

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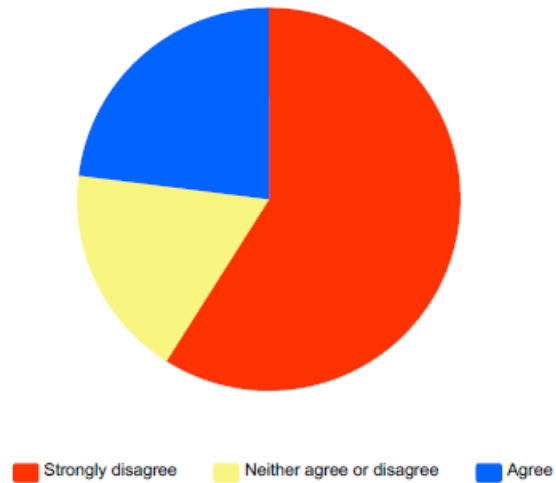
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Attachment B: Survey data from Murrumbidgee Shire Council paper and online poll

**Q5 I HAVE A COMMUNITY INTEREST WITH
THE JERILDERIE SHIRE AREA.**

Answered: 239 Skipped: 0

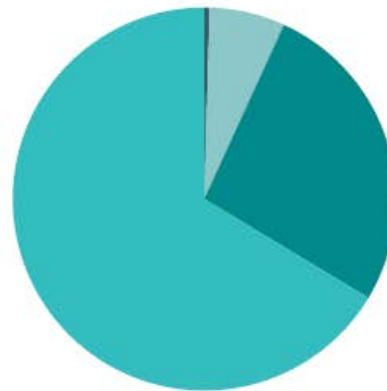


	Strongly disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Total	Weighted Average
(no label)	59.00% 141	17.99% 43	23.01% 55	239	2.05

Attachment B: Survey data from Murrumbidgee Shire Council paper and online poll

Q6 I am aged?

Answered: 220 Skipped: 19



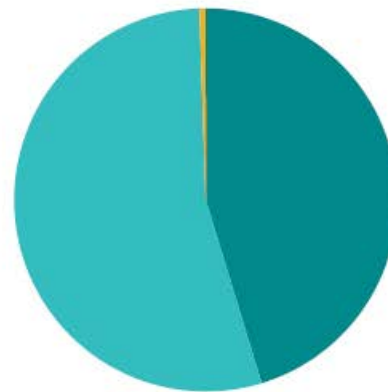
■ Under 18 years
 ■ 18-35 years
 ■ 35-55 years
 ■ Over 55 years

Answer Choices	Responses	
Under 18 years	0.45%	1
18-35 years	6.36%	14
35-55 years	26.82%	59
Over 55 years	66.36%	146
Total		220

Attachment B: Survey data from Murrumbidgee Shire Council paper and online poll

Q7 My postcode is:

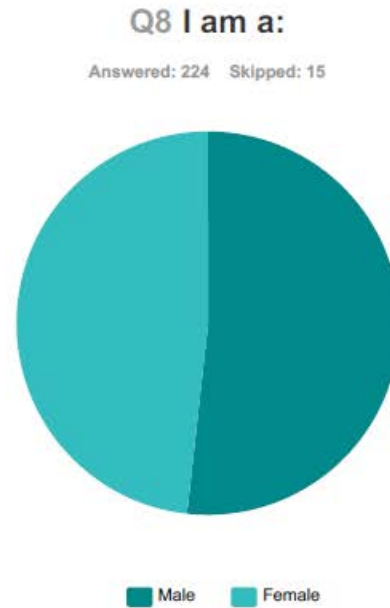
Answered: 192 Skipped: 47



2707 2706 Other (please specify)

Answer Choices	Responses
2707	45.31% 87
2706	54.17% 104
Other (please specify)	0.52% 1
Total	192

Attachment B: Survey data from Murrumbidgee Shire Council paper and online poll



Answer Choices	Responses	
Male	51.79%	116
Female	48.21%	108
Total		224