

PIRIE VOICES
Shaping our future, together

1,000 VOICES REPORT

October 2026

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Introduction

Pirie Voices is the start of a community-led approach to fundamentally change the ways we solve problems and pursue opportunities in Port Pirie and surrounding communities. It has emerged from a shared interest across the community in driving our own agenda and not waiting for others to decide, acknowledging that change happens when the people most affected are part of driving it.

We want a future shaped by those who know Port Pirie best - the people who call it home, work here, or depend on it. Through the support of local people, organisations and partners, Phase One of Pirie Voices has focused on hearing from our community. We have achieved our goal of hearing from over 1,000 people in our community to understand what matters most.

Over ten months, from September 2025 to June 2026, we listened. 1,154 community members, ranging in age from 5 to over 71 years, told us that Port Pirie's people, our connections, care, and community spirit, are our greatest asset. Quality services, education, and employment are foundational to a good life here. Financial pressures and health challenges are the most consistently cited barrier to hope. Young people sit at the heart of both the community's dreams and its concerns. And Port Pirie residents are ready to act together.

This report presents the full picture of Phase 1: what we heard, how we heard it, what we learned, and what the community is ready for next.

"I don't know if Pirie Voices really realises how unique it is, and the opportunity it has. It is one of the very few initiatives like this that have genuinely come completely from community and hasn't been in response to a crisis."

Leadership Group member

Background

Port Pirie is a small provincial city in the Upper Spencer Gulf region of South Australia. With a population of around 14,000[1], Port Pirie is the main service centre for many smaller, surrounding communities of the Mid North and Southern Flinders Ranges which rely on Port Pirie for education, healthcare, retail and employment.

The population of the wider Port Pirie local government district is around 17,000 and takes in a productive dryland agricultural sector, employing just under 4% of residents. There are 907 businesses in Port Pirie, with 97% (886) operating as small businesses with less than 20 employees[2].

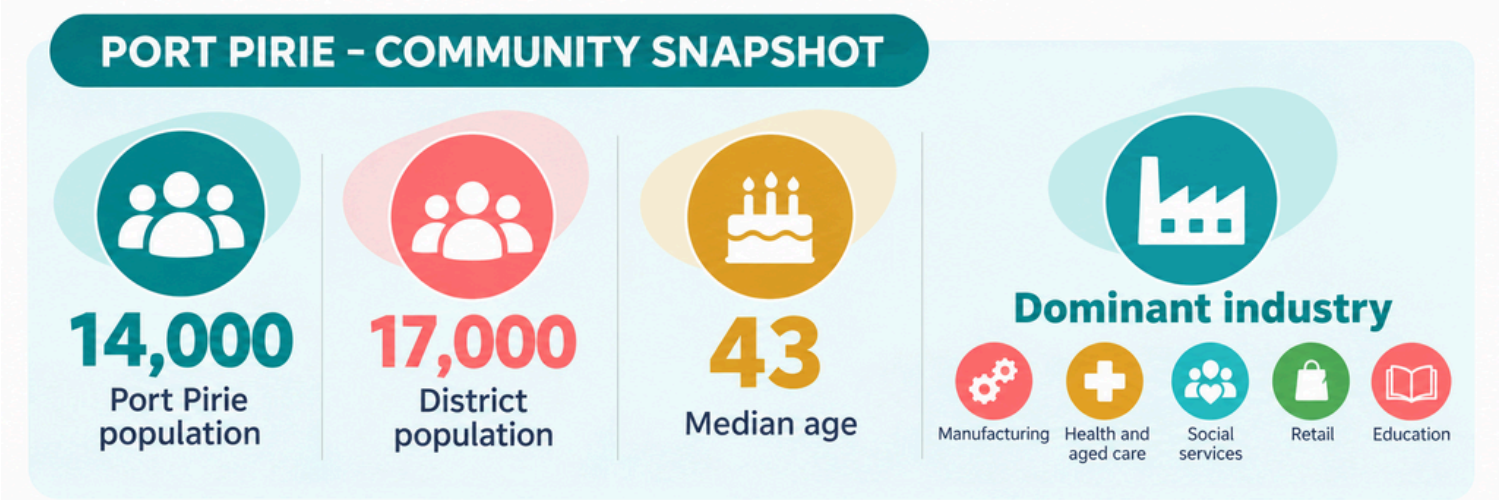
Port Pirie's economy is underpinned by Nyrstar's multi-metals processing facility, which has operated continuously for more than 130 years[3]. Currently owned by Singapore-based multi-national commodities trading company Trafigura, the Port Pirie site is one of the world's largest multi-metals smelters, producing lead, silver, zinc fume, copper matte and sulphuric acid. The dominance of this industrial operation flows through the economy of Port Pirie with more than 13% of local employment in Port Pirie in the manufacturing sector.

Despite its industrial dominance and identity, the majority of employment in Port Pirie is actually in the health and social services sector, with 19% residents working in these industries. Retail trade also provides a substantial employing around 12% of locals, along with just over 8% employment in the education sector [4].

The prominence of the industrial and healthcare industries shows up in the skills and capabilities of Port Pirie residents that are well above the state. Nearly double the number of machinery operators at 11.2% (compared to 6% in the whole of South Australia) and markedly higher in community and personal service workers, labourers, trades and sales workers.

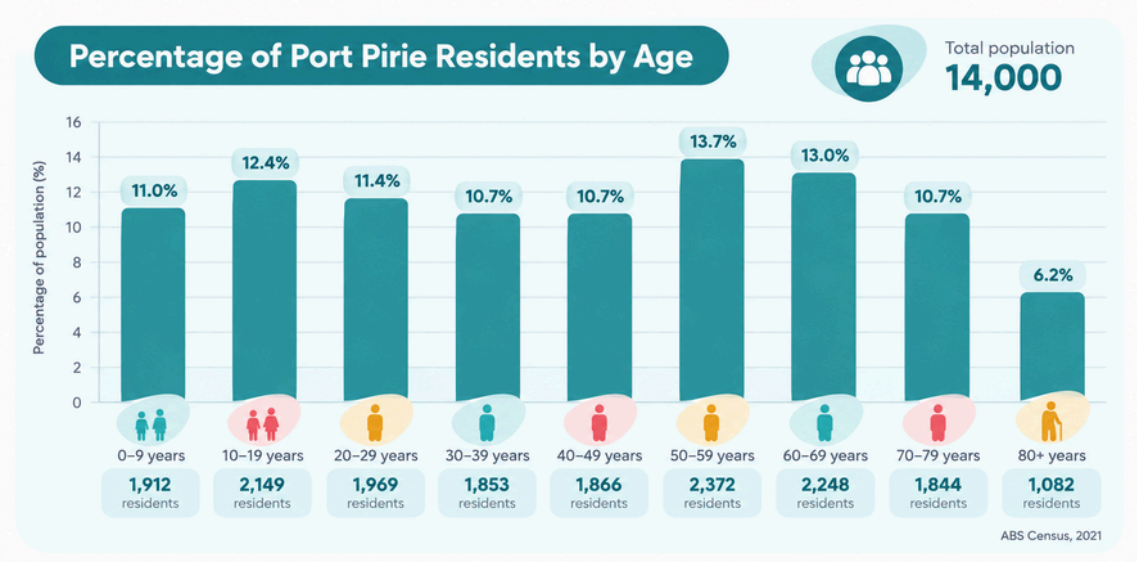
Conversely, there is around one third less professional and management roles located in Port Pirie than across South Australia, pointing to a clear lack of locally based decision-making by companies and organisations operating in the district. The lack of professional and management capability is further highlighted by the very low number degree qualified people living in Port Pirie (8% compared to SA at 17%) and compounded by an even smaller percentage (less than 6%) currently studying at university (compared to nearly 17% across the state)[5].

Furthermore, whilst Port Pirie and the Upper Spencer Gulf is often lauded for its potential to support the nation's industrial and energy transition through its abundant renewable energy and critical minerals, less than 3% of residents are currently employed in mining and less than 2% in the energy sector.

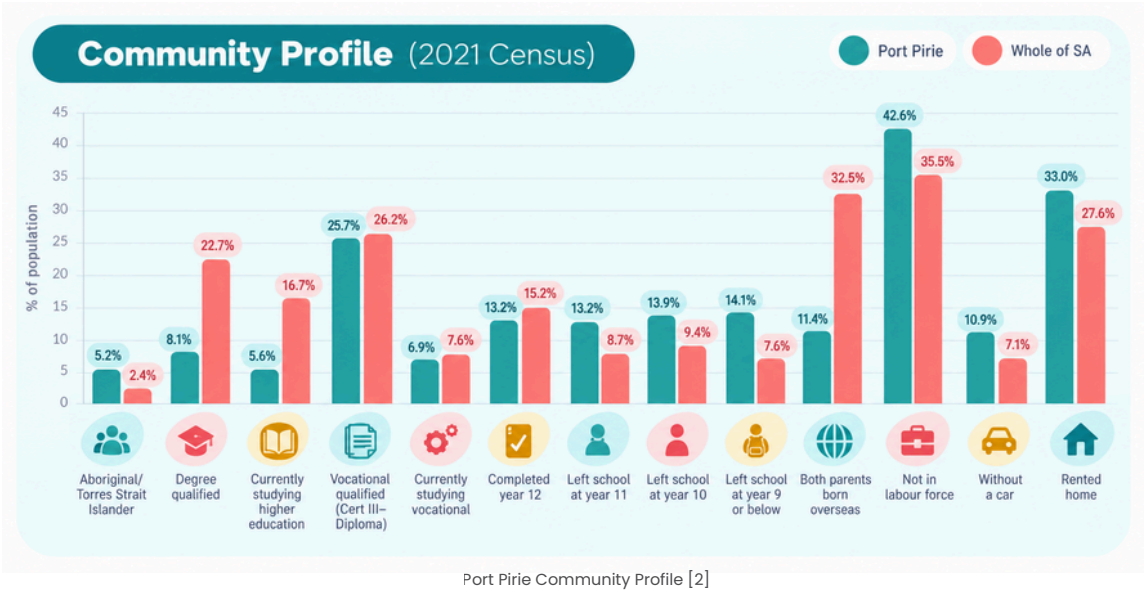


[1] Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021, Port Pirie, Census All persons QuickStats
[2] National Emergency Management Agency, Port Pirie Profile Report generated on 15 November 2024; Port Pirie - LGA profile.docx, accessed 30/09/26
[3] Nyrstar Port Pirie (Australia) | Nyrstar, https://www.nyrstar.com/operations/metals-processing/nyrstar-port-pirie, accessed 30/09/26
[4]Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021, Port Pirie Census Community Profile, Port Pirie Regional Council LGA 46450
[5] Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021, Port Pirie, Census All persons QuickStats

Despite this, Port Pirie does have opportunities for growth and residents want to be a much bigger partner in shaping these opportunities, maximising local benefits and ensuring the economic transition of our town, region and state produces a positive and enduring legacy for the Port Pirie community. The broad lifespan of Port Pirie's residents are reasonably well proportioned, with around 23% of residents aged under 20 years old, 22% of residents aged between 20 - 40, 24% of residents aged between 40 - 60, 23% aged between 60 - 80 and 6% aged over 80. 50 to 70 year olds make up the largest portion of the population, followed by young people under 20 years.



Port Pirie has more than double the South Australian proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents 5.2%, compared to 2.4% in A[1], pointing to opportunity to build on a strong cultural base. Port Pirie residents do face a relatively high level of disadvantage, including high levels of youth unemployment, intergenerational unemployment and jobless families. Unemployment in Port Pirie is just over 9% and around 140 people are homeless[1].Single parent families in Port Pirie are at 23% - one third higher than across the state and the number of jobless families at just over 30%, compared to 23% across SA. Nearly 30% of Port Pirie households have an income of less than $650 per week (SA 19.6%). The number of Port Pirie residents reporting three or more long term health conditions is nearly double that reported across the whole of South Australia.



Port Pirie Community Profile [2]

Despite decades of interventions, services and programs this trend has not shifted. The message is clear. Government-led policies and programs are not working for our community, and if we keep doing the same thing, we will keep getting the same result.

What we do know is that local solutions often yield the best outcomes. The small, community-led initiatives that often fly under the radar, borne from local knowledge, lived experience, and a shared desire and brave commitment to try something different to make our community a better place.

[1] Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021, Port Pirie, Census All persons QuickStats
[2] National Emergency Management Agency, Port Pirie Profile Report generated on 15 November 2024; Port Pirie - LGA profile.docx, accessed 30/09/26

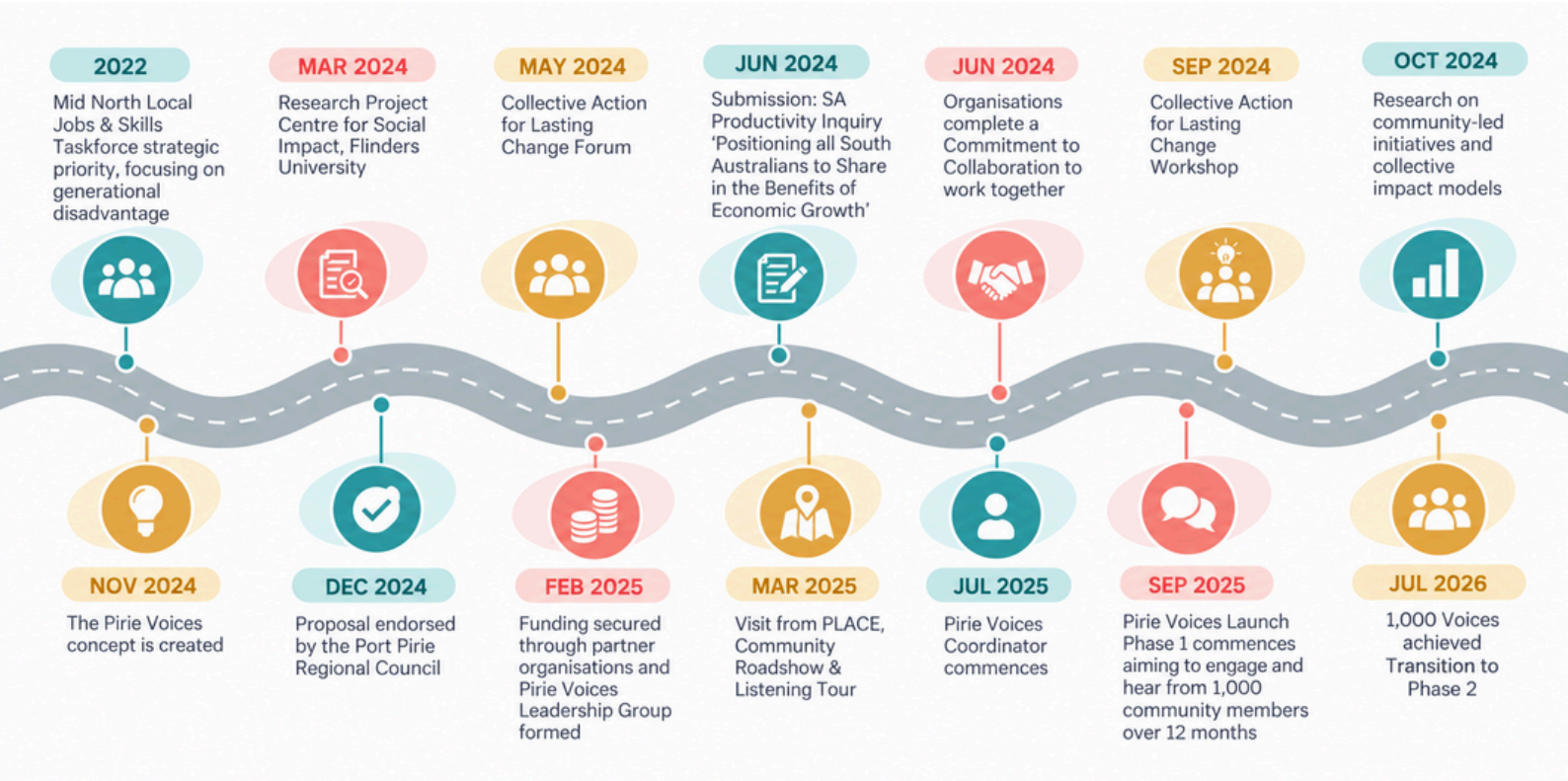
About Pirie Voices

The change people in our community want will need courage, innovation and understanding.

Taking inspiration from successful community-led efforts in Australia and internationally, the origin of Pirie Voices was first explored in 2022 by a group of locals with the vision of creating the conditions to empower Port Pirie residents to drive their own change locally and generate their own long-term solutions to help Port Pirie grow and flourish. At its heart, the Pirie Voices initiative echoes the long-held sentiment from residents that the people who live, work, and contribute to our community should play a stronger role in shaping the decisions and opportunities that affect our future. Pirie Voices builds on years of work from local people and organisations advocating and striving to do things differently.

Following two years of learning and building relationships with like-minded agencies, a consortium of organisations came together in 2024 to fund and deliver the first stage of Pirie Voices, which focused on listening to the community. These conversations will inform a longer-term strategy, which aims to embed Pirie Voices as a local initiative to broker and facilitate stronger community voice in service delivery, policy and important decisions about our future. Pirie Voices is driven by the principles of community ownership, collective action and systems-wide change. The approach aims to ensure community ownership of solutions and strengthens social cohesion and agency.

The consortium/funding partners for this first stage included: Port Pirie Regional Council, Preventive Health SA, Uniting Country SA, Nyrstar, Centacare Catholic Country SA, Workforce Australia - Local Jobs, Department of Human Services, Workskil and Country Arts SA.



Our Approach

Methodology

Engagement Questions

The first stage of Pirie Voices, the engagement phase, was designed around five open-ended questions that align strongly with contemporary community engagement theory. Their value lies in how they invite residents to articulate lived experience, aspirations and barriers in their own words—an approach shown to generate richer, more authentic insights than closed or survey-style questioning.

1. What do you think is helping people live a good life in Port Pirie and its surrounding area?
2. What are your personal hopes and dreams?
3. What gets in the way of these hopes?
4. What hopes do you have for our children and young people in the region?
5. What action can we take together to make these hopes happen here in Port Pirie?

The questions follow a deliberate progression, often used in participatory design and community visioning:

- Beginning with strengths encourages more open and confident participation because it builds psychological safety, pride and collective efficacy, while also revealing the informal social infrastructure—relationships, norms and local knowledge—that formal planning processes often overlook.
- Exploring personal and collective aspirations positions residents as active agents in shaping their future, eliciting the values, motivations and long-term desires that participatory methods such as appreciative inquiry and visioning show are essential for strategies that genuinely reflect community identity and lived experience.
- Identifying barriers enables residents to articulate the structural, social, economic and cultural constraints shaping their lives, producing more nuanced, context-specific insights than external assessment and helping distinguish individual challenges from systemic issues that require collective action.
- Shifting thinking to intergenerational hopes broadens perspectives and deepens shared purpose, as deliberative engagement research shows that focusing on children and young people encourages longer-term, less polarised reflection and strengthens the foundations for community-wide planning.
- Ending with collective action generates agency, momentum and practical pathways by shifting the conversation from aspiration to shared responsibility, positioning residents as collaborators rather than consultees and strengthening ownership, legitimacy and long-term commitment to change.

These five questions were intentionally consistent across all methods of engagement: online and paper-based surveys, group sessions, school facilitations, and community events. This allowed for meaningful comparison and cumulative analysis across the life of the project.

Pirie Voices Guiding Values and Principles

Pirie Voices is a new initiative without precedent in our community. Without a well-established template, the following set of values has instead guided the development and delivery of the first stage and indeed, the long-term aspiration of Pirie Voices:

1. Local - We speak plainly, listen deeply, build collaboration and agreement and work with people where they already gather to build shared understanding and action.
2. Flexible - We adapt as we learn and respond to changing needs, opportunities, and challenges in our community.
3. Accountable - We are responsive to our community and each other, and we follow through on the real work needed to create meaningful change.
4. Building belonging - We value diverse experiences, ensure everyone can contribute, and work toward fair outcomes for all.
5. Brave - We honour local strengths while boldly facing the future—having hard conversations, taking risks, and making decisions that benefit the next generation.

Equally important, the principles underpinning the way Pirie Voices works are based on:

1. Community-led. Every step of the way, we make sure the people of Port Pirie are driving change.
2. Fostering leadership. We connect and grow local leaders ready to change systems for the better.
3. Strong collaboration. We have so much to work with here. By joining forces and using what we have more effectively, we'll see new opportunities and overcome old barriers. A diverse group of influential partners provide the foundation for the changes we want to see.
4. Shared priorities. We are working across the community to develop a shared sense of what's important to work together towards, with whom, and how this will happen. We make the complex simple.
5. Learning as we go. We're supporting understanding of the issues and learning what's working and what isn't.

Program Logic

An important part of Pirie Voices is ensuring there is a clear, theory-based framework – or program logic - that links the problem the initiative is addressing with the activities it undertakes and the outcomes it aims to achieve, making assumptions and pathways explicit. Having a strong program logic helps Pirie Voices funders and stakeholders see how engagement efforts are expected to create change, strengthen coherence, accountability and shared understanding.

The Pirie Voices Phase One program logic is summarised below:

- **IF** we create accessible, trusted ways to engage > **THEN** more community members will participate > **BECAUSE** people share when they feel safe and valued
- **IF** we genuinely hear and reflect community voices > **THEN** trust and connection will grow > **BECAUSE** people engage when they see their input matters
- **IF** community develops its own action plan > **THEN** there will be authentic ownership and commitment > **BECAUSE** people invest in what they create
- **IF** community leads change over time > **THEN** agency, capacity, and wellbeing will improve > **BECAUSE** sustainable change comes from within, not from external imposition

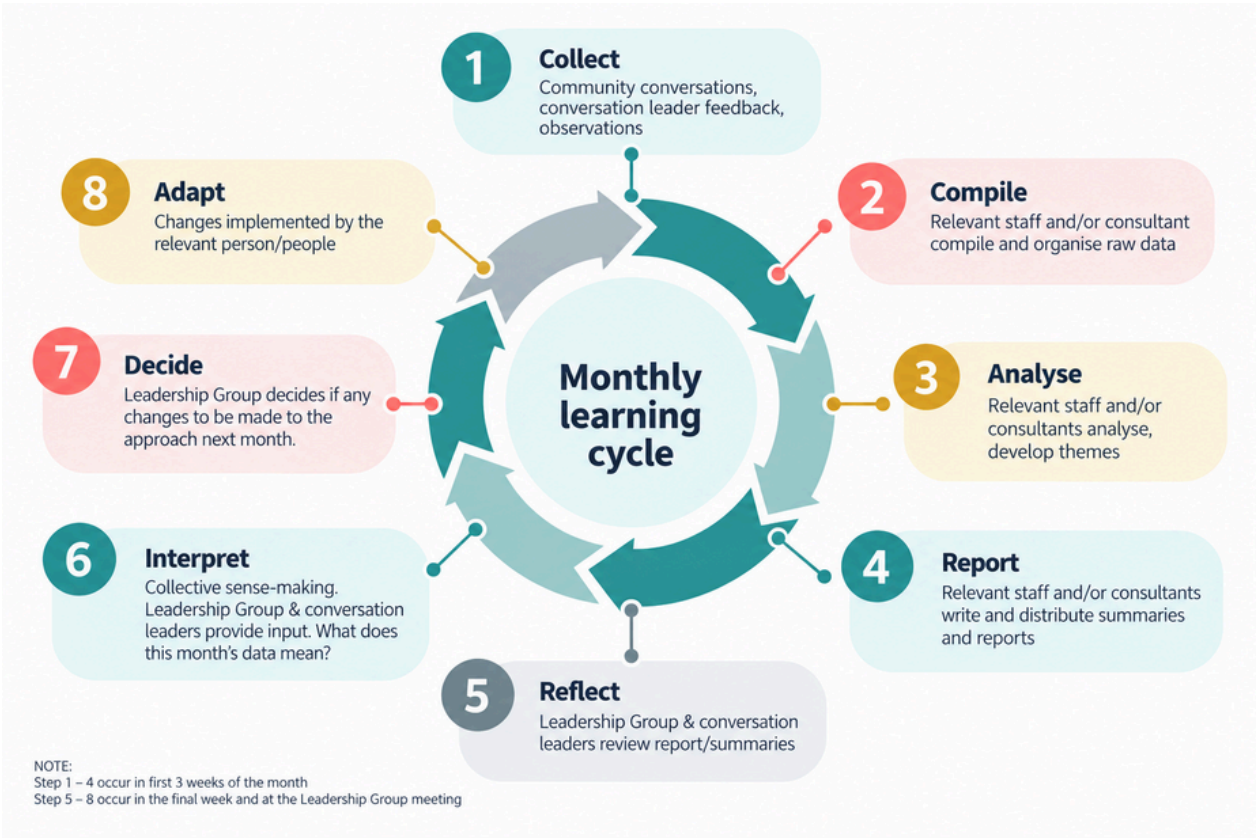
The assumptions that underpin this program logic are:

- Assumption 1: Community members want to be involved in decision-making.
- Assumption 2: The Pirie Voices approach will encourage participation and connection.
- Assumption 3: Stronger connections will lead to collective action.
- Assumption 4: Ongoing funding will be secured to ensure the sustainability of Pirie Voices beyond its initial stage.

Pirie Voices has always been grounded in learning as we go. Phase One has been closely monitored and evaluated, helping us understand what is working, what we are hearing from the community and how the initiative can continue to grow.

Understanding, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework (UMEL)

A Pirie Voices UMEL framework and tools were developed at the outset of the initiative. The eight-step monthly UMEL learning cycle is depicted below:



- Collect: Community conversations held across all channels; Coordinator compiled data from online survey exports and manually entered group session responses.
- Compile: Coordinator organised and combined data sources in the Summary Sheet workbook, ensuring the Collective Data tab was updated with all group session responses for the period.
- Analyse: External consultant used data analysis software to run keyword-based coding of all responses, count responses per theme per question, calculate percentages, and tabulate demographic data. Human review of outputs was conducted to verify accuracy and identify nuances.
- Report: Coordinator and external consultant drafted the monthly report (and quarterly report where applicable), including theme analysis, demographic data, quotes, and narrative synthesis. Reports followed the UMEL report template.
- Reflect: Leadership Group and Community Conversation Leaders received the report and completed the monthly UMEL survey/pulse check, sharing reflections before the monthly meeting.
- Interpret: At the Leadership Group meeting, the 'Three Questions' framework (What are we learning? What does this mean? What will we do?) guided collective sense-making of the data.
- Decide: Leadership Group decided on any adaptations to the approach for the following month, considering the data, community context, and UMEL principles.
- Adapt: Changes were implemented by the relevant person/people

Data Analysis

Pirie Voices Phase One used a structured analytical approach to make sense of the large and diverse qualitative dataset. Two primary data sources were combined for all analysis: the online survey (Microsoft Forms, downloaded as cumulative Excel files) and the Summary Sheet workbook maintained by the Pirie Voices Coordinator, which captured event-level demographic data and manually entered responses from all group and collective sessions. All analyses treated both sources as equivalent data.

Thematic coding was guided by a framework developed by the external consultant in collaboration with the coordinator. Version 1 was developed in Month 1 from initial survey responses and consisted of granular codes organised by question. This evolved into Version 2, which formalised codes into named themes and added 'Be culturally responsive' as an explicitly tracked theme. This change was endorsed by the Leadership Group to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices remained visible in the data rather than subsumed within broader categories.

The analytical process combined automated keyword-based coding, conducted using Claude (Anthropic AI assistant), with a monthly human review layer conducted by the external consultant and coordinator. Automated coding was used to calculate theme frequencies and percentages across the combined dataset; human review checked outputs for accuracy and nuance and incorporated local contextual knowledge. This hybrid approach enabled efficiency and integrity and was applied consistently across all reporting periods.

Governance and Resourcing

Management and Delivery

The governance and delivery of Phase One was provided through a Leadership Group comprising representatives from funding partners representing health, education, community services, major industry, and local government. This group was supported by a part-time Pirie Voices Coordinator and consultancy expertise in facilitation, data analysis and research, along with a small volunteer community engagement support team and in-kind finance and project management.

Pirie Voices has been intentional about structuring the initial governance to bring a collaboration of partners together to enable the initiative to commence, while providing the flexibility to evolve to a community-led governance arrangement to ensure local voices set the future direction of Pirie Voices. Across the first phase, the Leadership Group met monthly, providing direction and support to the initiative. Port Pirie Regional Council managed project funding and auspiced the Coordinator This part-time (0.8 FTE) role was responsible for day-to-day implementation, engagement and reporting, with support from an external consultant who conducted data analysis and reporting using an understanding, monitoring, evaluation, and learning (UMEL) framework. Additional support was provided by a community capacity-building specialist, who offered insight and guidance to the Leadership Group and facilitated a transition plan project and workshops with the Leadership Group and community members. The output from this engagement informed planning for Phase 2 and provided direction enabling Pirie Voices to continue connecting with industry, government and community members as the initiative evolves.

Community Conversation Leaders (CCLs) were a small but key part of the engagement phase. These community members facilitated conversations among their friends, neighbours, colleagues and clients. The CCL network was valuable in ensuring community members could contribute to Pirie Voices through people they knew, within existing, trusted relationships in environments they felt comfortable - sporting clubs, community events, kitchen tables and workplaces). Whilst the number of CCL's during the initial engagement stage was lower than anticipated the approach was extremely valuable and sets a foundation on which the initiative can build and leverage in subsequent phases of Pirie Voices.

Financial Resources

Pirie Voices was financially supported by several partner organisations, including Port Pirie Regional Council, Preventative Health SA, Workforce Australia Local Jobs, Nyrstar, Centacare Catholic Country SA, Uniting Country SA, WorkSkil, Department of Human Services and Country Arts SA. This seed funding enabled engagement of the Pirie Voices Coordinator and additional consultancy expertise to support UMEL, reporting and strategic advice to the Leadership Group.

Importantly, there is enough committed funds by existing partners to support Pirie Voices through the coming transition ahead of fully establishing and embedding as a community-led model.

Pirie Voices - Income & Expenditure Summary	Amount
Income received to date	$278,363.64
Expenses Phase 1	$127,047.81
Funds remaining for Phase 2	$151,315.83
New income expected	$105,000.00
Income committed for Phase 2	**$256,315.83**

In addition, more than $78,000 was donated or contributed as in-kind resourcing support to Phase 1 of Pirie Voices. Local businesses, service and government agencies contributing to Pirie Voices included Intersport, Country Arts SA, Woolworths Port Pirie, the Country Counsellor, Local Jobs Network, Business Port Pirie, Centacare, Department of Human Services and Preventive Health. This included contribution of products and services to support community engagement activities, program monitoring, evaluation and reporting support, marketing and media support, administration and strategic support, and staff from partner organisations who supported Pirie Voices as community conversation leaders.

What we heard

Pirie Voices exceeded its primary goal of 1,000 community conversations, reaching a total of 1,154 people across all engagement channels by June 2026.

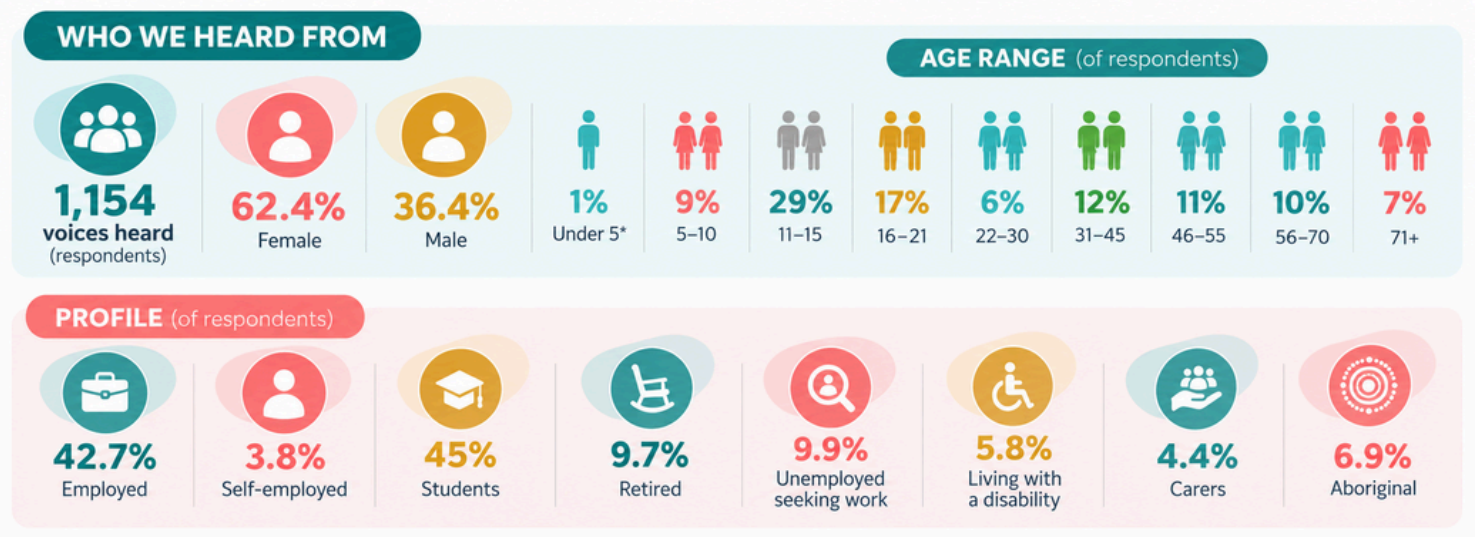
Engagement reach

The initiative used a range of methods to reach different community segments, adapting its approach as the project progressed:

- Online survey: The primary data collection tool, hosted digitally with QR code access at events, in workplaces, and via community partners. Hard copy surveys were also made available on the Pirie Voices website and at the Port Pirie Library.
- Group sessions: Facilitated sessions held at community venues, schools, workplaces, and events. Session data was recorded by the Pirie Voices Coordinator or session hosts using the five standard questions. Over 25 distinct session types were conducted.
- School programs: Facilitated sessions at primary and secondary schools, including Solomontown Primary School (Years 5/6, Junior Primary), John Pirie Secondary School, St Mark's College (Years 3, 4 and 6), and Mid North Education Centre.
- Community events: Major events including Reflect, Reconnect and Ready for 2026, Business Port Pirie Business Lunch, Our Youth Our Festival, Tarpari Wellbeing Day, Coffee with a Cop, Reconciliation Week Paint and Connect Event, and the Career Roadshow.
- Community venues: Mid North Education Centre, Lighthouse Church, and Uniting Country's FoodHub, Goods@Gertrude and Community Centre.

Online survey responses accounted for 44% of participation, with group and community workshops generating 40% of responses and other community interactions yielding 16% of responses.

It should be noted that not all participants answered all questions, and some provided multiple answers to a question, meaning the number of responses vary. Furthermore, percentages were calculated based on the total number of survey respondents, meaning that percentages may exceed 100% when respondents express multiple themes.



Geographic reach

Most respondents (91%+) reside within the Port Pirie Regional Council local government area including a small but consistent cohort from surrounding regional towns, including Crystal Brook, Napperby, Wandearah. Residents from nearby districts including Laura, Gladstone and Port Broughton also participated throughout the project, with the initiative adapting its language and materials to be more inclusive of surrounding communities from the second quarter onward.

Demographic reach

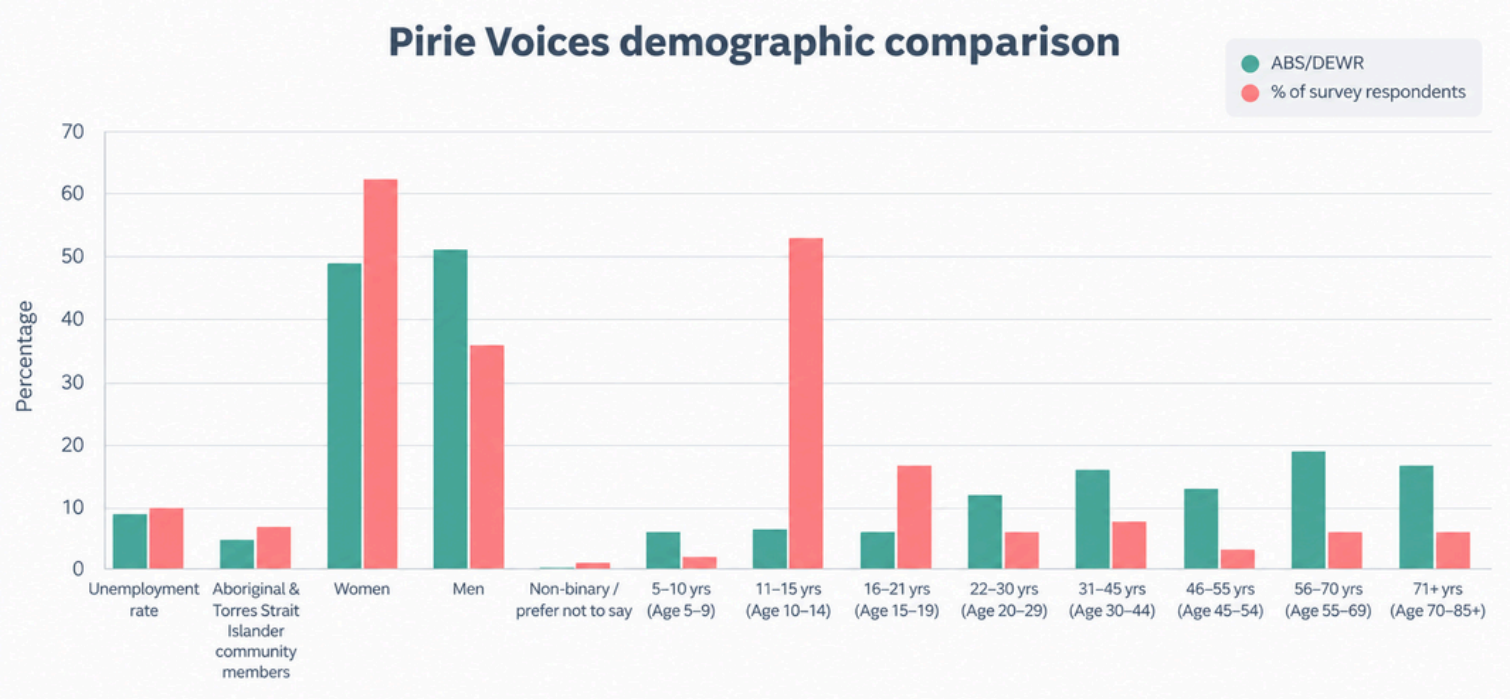
Pirie Voices engaged respondents across the full lifespan, from children under five (engaged through pictorial methods) through to participants aged 71 and over. Of the 621 respondents who provided age data, the strongest representation is in the 11–15 age bracket (29.8%), reflecting the significant school-based engagement that characterised Q2 and Q3 of the project.

Adult cohorts (ages 22 to 45, 56 to over 70) were underrepresented when compared with their proportion of the population.

One of the most significant shifts across Phase 1 was the growth in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation. At the project's outset, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents comprised approximately 1.2% of online survey responses. By the final quarter (April–June 2026), this had grown to 8.0%, with a cumulative figure of 6.9%.

Across Phase 1, the following groups remained underrepresented relative to their proportion in the Port Pirie population:

- Adults aged 22-71+
- Males
- Culturally and linguistically diverse community members beyond Anglo-European backgrounds
- People living in surrounding regional towns



Responses across all engagement methods described a community proud of its strengths, honest about its challenges and ready for collective action. Port Pirie voices form a consistent picture - residents want a connected, safe and inclusive community; economic security and a region worth staying in; education, employment and opportunity for all; young people at the centre; and community-led action that is accountable, transparent and culturally responsive.

Question 1:

What helps people live a good life in Port Pirie?

Respondents, n=850

The key themes shaping quality of life for residents of Port Pirie is a strong sense of connection and community belonging (44.2% of responses), access to essential services that provide a strong foundation (62.5% of responses) and our lifestyle and natural environment (16.4% of responses).

The strongest theme running through the responses is a deep sense of connection and community. Community spirit, belonging, and the informal networks of care that tie residents together appear in responses from every age group, every engagement method, with feedback consistently highlighting friendliness, support, and the feeling that people look out for one another. Sporting clubs, volunteer groups, schools, and neighbourhood networks form the backbone of this social fabric, creating belonging and resilience even during difficult times. Many people emphasise that this connectedness is what makes Pirie feel safe and home.

Access to essential services providing a strong foundation is another major contributor to wellbeing. The hospital, GP Plus, allied health, mental health supports, schools, kindergartens, TAFE SA and Uni Hub are repeatedly mentioned as critical to living well. These services reduce the need to travel, support families, and give young people pathways to education and employment. For many, the ability to study locally or access disability and social supports is central to staying in the region. People recognise that while wait times and service gaps exist, the overall availability of health, education and community services is a major strength.

Sport, recreation and community activities play a significant role in shaping daily life. Football, netball, basketball, gymnastics, swimming, skate parks and bike tracks are described not just as activities, but as places where friendships form and confidence grows. Families value parks, playgrounds, walking trails and the foreshore as spaces to gather, exercise and connect. Community events—Smelters Picnic, Winterfest, markets, pageants and theatre—are celebrated for bringing people together and building pride.

Employment opportunities, particularly through Nyrstar and essential services, are seen as stabilising forces. Jobs in industry, health, education and retail help families remain in the region and support young people entering the workforce. Residents recognise that economic opportunity is a key ingredient in living a good life.

The natural environment and affordability also underpins the local lifestyle. Relatively lower housing costs, manageable living expenses and short travel times make life easier for many households. People appreciate that Port Pirie is “big enough to have everything you need, but small enough to get around easily.” The town’s location —close to beaches, the Flinders Ranges, wine regions and larger centres —adds to its appeal, offering nature, recreation and day-trip opportunities.

Alongside these strengths, some respondents express frustration or concern. Issues raised include crime and substance use, uneven access to infrastructure, service gaps, and perceptions that council investment does not always align with community need. A small number of responses reflect deep dissatisfaction, highlighting the importance of listening to those experiencing disadvantage or disconnection. These voices signal areas where further investment, community-led solutions and targeted support could make a meaningful difference.

What helps people live a good life in Port Pirie?

Community connection & belonging

44.2% of respondents

- People, relationships, and looking out for one another
- Sporting clubs as social connectors
- Community organisations and volunteering
- Collective pride and community spirit
- Feeling safe as a community value

Quality services – a strong foundation

62.5% of respondents

- Health services (GPs, hospital, allied health)
- Education (schools, TAFE, UniHub)
- Employment and the economy (Nyrstar, local business)
- Sporting and recreation facilities
- Affordability and liveability
- Proximity to Flinders Ranges, beaches and wine areas

Lifestyle, nature & events

16.4% of respondents

- Local parks, foreshore, beach, river and outdoor spaces
- Community events and cultural activities
- Climate, pace, and lifestyle

"I think we get great access to education, health facilities, and has plenty of activities to do"

"Community - Pirie is a city of good and bad times but the sense of community is still strong"

"Lots of schools. Unihub/tafe, sports teams"

"The hills, fishing, river"

"Sense of community, sporting opportunities, job opportunities, rural yet close to the city in comparison to other nearby towns"

"Access to either beautiful beaches, the Flinders or wine region only 1 hour away for each"

"Sporting and social options, football, netball, tennis, baseball, etc etc"

Question 2:

What are your personal hopes and dreams?

Respondents, n=963

While individual aspirations range from the deeply personal to the broadly civic, they collectively paint a picture of residents who want to live well, contribute meaningfully, and see Port Pirie grow into a place where everyone can thrive. Across the responses, people's hopes and dreams reveal a community wanting a place to work and call home (27% of responses), a quality of life with good health and wellbeing (20% of responses), a future providing opportunity and a reason for families and young people to stay (15% of responses) and a community that steps up together to grow and prosper (14% of responses).

Within these key themes, many people expressed hopes for personal security and wellbeing - a healthy, happy life, financial stability and the ability to raise their families in a safe and supportive environment. Dreams of owning a home, securing stable employment, retiring comfortably, or simply "living happily with family" appear throughout the responses. For some, this is tied to access to reliable health services, mental health support, and aged care—reflecting a desire for systems that sustain wellbeing across the lifespan.

Parents and caregivers hope their children will grow up healthy, confident and able to build futures in Port Pirie. They want local employment pathways, affordable housing, good schooling, and a community that feels safe and welcoming. Many young respondents share ambitions for personal growth—finishing school, going to university, learning new skills, starting businesses and aiming for a wide range of careers. These aspirations highlight both ambition and the importance of local education, apprenticeships and training opportunities.

Residents also express hopes for greater opportunity and inclusion. People want more chances to study, work, upskill and participate in community life. Some describe barriers—cost of living, limited specialist services, social isolation, or feeling excluded from community groups—and dream of a town where everyone can access support, feel welcome, and be part of something.

A significant portion of responses focus on community development and civic pride. Many dream of Port Pirie growing, modernising and becoming more vibrant. Ideas range from improved footpaths, upgraded playgrounds, better sporting facilities and expanded youth spaces, to larger visions such as a revitalised foreshore, a wildlife park, a water park, a driving range, a tram, or a signature festival that celebrates local identity. Some hope for more shops, cafes and entertainment venues; others want derelict buildings addressed, empty shops activated, and infrastructure improved. Underpinning these ideas is a desire for a town that feels alive, attractive and future-focused.

There is also a clear desire for cultural and social change. People hope for a more inclusive, neighbourly community where newcomers feel welcome, where cultural heritage is respected, and where locals feel proud of where they live. Some express hopes for a shift in attitudes — greater motivation, aspiration, and community responsibility. Others want the stigma around the smelter to ease, or for media narratives about Port Pirie to become more positive.

Taken together, the hopes and dreams of Port Pirie residents reveal a community that wants safety, opportunity, connection and pride. People want to build good lives for themselves and their families, and they want their town to evolve in ways that support those aspirations. The sentiment is hopeful and forward-looking: a belief that Port Pirie can be a place where people flourish, where children have choices, and where the community's potential is recognised and realised.

What are your personal hopes and dreams?

A place to work and call home

27% of respondents

- Home ownership
- Local employment and career pathways
- Career aspirations, youth voice
- Tension between wanting to stay in Port Pirie and wanting to leave
- Financial security and stability

Health, happiness and wellbeing

20% of respondents

- Health access as a personal hope
- Simple contentment and quality of life
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Family wellbeing

Opportunities for kids and families to stay

15% of respondents

- Keeping young people and families in the town
- Education and opportunity close to home
- Children growing up proud of Port Pirie

Positive and strong community future

14% of respondents

- Council transparency and responsiveness
- Economic diversity beyond Nyrstar
- Lead and environmental health
- Community narrative and cultural change

"That the older generation have access to more aged care facilities locally so they don't have to move away from their family"

"Changing the narrative around what it means to be from PP. Our identity is more than the Smelter — we are diverse!"

"I hope to finish year 12 and do university"

"Be a centre of excellence in terms of education – from early childhood, through schooling and into VET and tertiary education, We already have great foundations and facilities such as child care centres, options in terms of public and private schooling, a large TAFE Campus and Uni Hub – leverage these assets and build on them."

"To have a fun and good life. Mostly have a good career and a happy time living in Pirie"

"Access to a women's yarning circle"

Question 3:

What gets in the way of these hopes?

Respondents, n=769

Across the responses to this question, people describe a complex mix of personal, social, economic and structural barriers that make it difficult to achieve their hopes and dreams. While the aspirations shared by the community are hopeful and forward-looking, the obstacles they identify reveal considerable financial pressures (30% of responses), social and wellbeing issues (25% of responses), along with policy challenges and sense of regional neglect (14% of responses).

A dominant theme is cost-of-living pressure, mentioned hundreds of times. Rising prices for food, fuel, utilities, rent, mortgages and basic services are making it harder for people to study, save, buy homes, raise families or pursue personal goals. Many describe having to choose between essentials, delaying education, or giving up opportunities because they simply cannot afford them. Financial strain is compounded by limited local employment options, lower wages, casual work, and uncertainty about the future of major industries.

Another major barrier is limited access to services, specialists and supports. People repeatedly mention long wait times, the need to travel to Adelaide for medical care, a shortage of doctors, psychologists, allied health professionals and disability supports, and inconsistent service quality. For families with children who have additional needs, the lack of timely assessments and ongoing therapy is a significant source of stress. Regional living also limits access to diversity of education pathways, specialist training, apprenticeships and university courses, making it harder for young people to pursue their chosen careers without leaving home.

Residents also highlight barriers created by infrastructure gaps and accessibility issues. Footpaths, public toilets, playgrounds, and community spaces are often described as unsafe, inaccessible or poorly maintained, particularly for people using wheelchairs, prams or mobility aids. Transport limitations—few bus routes, infrequent services, lack of driving instructors, and difficulty obtaining licences—restrict access to work, study and social participation. Some rural residents feel overlooked, noting inequity in council investment and the higher cost of accessing services located in town.

A significant portion of responses focus on social issues and community safety. Crime, drug use, vandalism, antisocial behaviour and homelessness are frequently mentioned as factors that undermine confidence, limit participation and make people feel unsafe—especially at night. Young people describe boredom, lack of entertainment options, and peer pressure as barriers to staying engaged and motivated. Parents worry about the environment their children are growing up in, and older residents express concern about isolation and declining community connection.

People also identify systemic and structural barriers. These include red tape, inconsistent communication between services, limited funding, siloed decision-making, and perceptions that government—local, state or federal—does not listen to or invest adequately in regional communities. Some feel that opportunities depend too much on “who you know,” making it harder for newcomers or disadvantaged residents to access jobs or support. Others express frustration with council decisions, lack of transparency, or slow progress on infrastructure and development.

Personal barriers also feature strongly. Age, disability, health conditions, mental health challenges, lack of confidence, time pressures, caring responsibilities and limited social support all affect people’s ability to pursue their goals.

Young people often mention being "too young," struggling with grades, or not knowing what career to choose. Adults describe exhaustion, workload stress, and the difficulty of balancing family, work and study. For some, the emotional impact of isolation, grief or trauma makes progress feel overwhelming.

Together, these responses show that while Port Pirie is a community with strong aspirations, many residents face layered and intersecting financial, structural, social and personal barriers that make it harder to realise their hopes. The sentiment is not one of defeat, but of realism: people want to thrive, but they need systems, services and community structures that are easier to navigate, more responsive, and better resourced. The narrative points to a community ready for change, seeking practical solutions, and wanting to be part of shaping a future where these barriers are reduced and opportunities are more accessible for all.

What gets in the way of these hopes?

Cost of living and financial struggles

30% of respondents

- General cost of living and rising interest rates
- Housing affordability
- Driver's licence costs (barrier for youth)
- Transport gaps and fuel costs
- Age and money (school-age respondents)

Social and wellbeing challenges

25% of respondents

- Substance abuse, crime and anti-social behaviour
- Mental health access, including waitlists, cost, gaps
- Social isolation and post-COVID disconnection
- Disability access barriers
- Negative community reputation and media portrayal
- Age barriers (too young / too old)
- Neurodiversity and learning differences

Policy gaps and regional neglect

14% of respondents

- Regional neglect and government priorities
- Council decision-making transparency
- Education and training gaps
- Council rating inequity
- Nyrstar instability and economic dependence

"I have a disability and not much is available"

"Mental health struggles - where do I go for help and if people ask me where do I suggest they go for help?"

"It is time for the Government to stop ignoring everyone outside of Adelaide and create more development in the city so as not to just rely on Nyrstar"

"Cost of living, petrol prices, interest rates and available housing options"

"The cost of getting my licence"

Question 4:

What hopes do you have for our children and young people in Port Pirie?

Respondents, n=820

Across the responses, people express deep care, pride and concern for the future of children and young people in Port Pirie. Their hopes reveal a community that wants its young people to grow up feeling safe, supported and included (49% of responses) and able to build meaningful futures, whether they choose to stay in the region or return after exploring wider opportunities (41.5% responses).

A central theme is the desire for safety, wellbeing and stability. Residents want children to grow up in a community free from violence, crime, drugs and fear, and without the backdrop of the lead hazard. They hope for safe homes, safe streets, and safe online environments. Many emphasise the importance of nurturing mental health, building resilience, reducing screen time, and ensuring children feel seen, supported and celebrated. For families experiencing disadvantage, people hope for wrap-around supports that prevent cycles of poverty, neglect or isolation from continuing into the next generation.

Another strong theme is education and lifelong learning. People want children to have access to high-quality schooling, diverse learning pathways, and specialised support when needed. They hope for more university options locally, expanded TAFE offerings, and programs that teach practical life skills—budgeting, cooking, digital literacy, job readiness and independence. Many emphasise the need for inclusive education that supports neurodivergent children, those with disabilities, and those who learn differently. Underpinning these hopes is a desire for children to feel proud of their achievements and confident in their future.

Residents also express a clear wish for greater opportunity and choice. They want young people to have access to meaningful employment, apprenticeships, work experience, mentorship and career pathways beyond the traditional industries. People hope for a more diverse local economy so young adults can stay in the region without sacrificing ambition. They want children to grow up believing they can become anything—artists, tradespeople, professionals, entrepreneurs—and have the support to pursue those dreams.

A major theme is the need for places and activities that engage young people. Many responses call for youth centres, creative arts programs, safe hangout spaces, with ideas like arcades, bowling alleys, water parks, skate parks, indoor play spaces, gaming clubs. Residents want more free or low-cost activities that keep young people active, connected and off the streets. They emphasise that not all children play sport, and that the region needs more inclusive, non-sporting options that cater to different interests and abilities. People also hope for better footpaths, bike tracks, shaded playgrounds and accessible facilities for children with disabilities.

Community identity and belonging also feature strongly. People want children to feel proud of Port Pirie—to know its history, embrace its culture, and feel connected to Country and community. They hope for a positive narrative that counters stigma and celebrates local strengths. Many want young people to grow up in a town where kindness, respect, inclusion and environmental responsibility are the norm. They hope for a community where children feel they have a voice, where adults listen, and where young people are empowered to contribute to shaping the region's future.

Underlying all these hopes is a desire for equity. Residents want every child—regardless of background, ability, family circumstance or postcode—to have access to food, housing, education, healthcare, recreation and opportunity. They want systems that are easy to navigate, services that collaborate, and supports that are available without stigma or delay.

Overall, the community's hopes reflect a future Port Pirie where children and young people grow up safe, healthy and confident; where they have rich opportunities to learn, play and work; where they feel proud of their community; and where they can imagine a future full of possibility.

What hopes do you have for our children and young people in Port Pirie?

A community that is safe, inclusive and supports our young people

49% of respondents

- Physical safety and environmental health (including lead)
- Belonging, inclusion and being seen
- Something to do, activities and venues for young people
- Disability inclusion in spaces and programs
- Mental health support access
- Cultural connection and identity for Aboriginal young people

Future possibilities and opportunities for every child

41.5% of respondents

- Education and post-school pathways close to home
- Employment within Port Pirie
- Having the right and choices to stay and not having to leave for opportunities
- Life skills and practical education
- Big dreams and self-belief

"Inclusive, safe indoor spaces where children can climb, explore, and burn energy regardless of the weather."

"To be happy, healthy, and financially secure"

"That UniHub continues"

"That they are healthy, feel safe and can live, work and play in our town"

"That they are proud to call Port Pirie home"

"A youth centre"

· "More job opportunities in the region. To entice more industry to the region. To keep Nyrstar in our community."

"For Aboriginal children and youth to have a safe space to connect with each other"

"I hope they have a sustainable life where they have the resources and help readily available to keep them on track for moving forward with lifestyle, employment, friendships and general wellbeing."

Question 5:

What action can we take together to make these hopes happen?

Respondents, n=726

Across the responses to this question, people express a strong desire for the Port Pirie community to work together and have a stronger voice in decisions that impact them (46% responses), a stronger, more coordinated and genuine focus on our young people (34% of responses), create a more diverse, vibrant and sustainable local economy (15% of responses). A small but consistent theme calls for a community to become more culturally aware and responsive (2.3% of responses).

A major theme is the need to strengthen community voice and leadership. People want more genuine consultation, more opportunities to be heard, and more transparency in decision-making. They call for community forums, youth committees and better communication from government, council and service agencies. Many emphasise that change must be with the community, not for it—built through deep listening, shared planning and collaboration across organisations. Residents want diverse voices included, especially young people, Aboriginal families, people with disabilities, and those who often feel overlooked.

Improving local services and support also comes through the responses strongly. People want better access to health care, mental health support, allied health, disability services, early intervention, and practical help for families. They call for stronger coordination between services, simpler pathways to support, and a "no wrong door" approach. Many suggest expanding Uni Hub and TAFE offerings, increasing training pathways, and creating more apprenticeships and work experience opportunities so young people can build futures locally. There is a clear appetite for programs that build life skills, confidence, and resilience.

Residents also emphasise the importance of creating more opportunities, activities and safe spaces for young people including more inclusive spaces for children with disabilities. They see these as essential to keeping young people engaged and connected, while building pride and belonging.

A significant portion of responses focus on economic development and job creation. People want to attract new industries, diversify beyond the smelter, support small business, activate empty shops, and create incentives for new enterprises. They propose shared advertising, pop-up shop spaces, mentorship programs, and stronger collaboration between council, business and community groups. Many believe that improving the town's image—through beautification, positive promotion, and environmental care—will help attract investment, tourism and new residents.
Community safety and wellbeing also feature strongly. Residents call for stronger policing, better responses to drug and alcohol issues, more consequences for vandalism, and greater support for people experiencing homelessness or crisis. They want safe footpaths, clean public spaces, and environments where children and families feel secure. Some propose community-led clean-ups, neighbourhood pride campaigns, and initiatives that encourage respect, kindness and shared responsibility.

Underlying all these ideas is a desire to build a shared vision and act on it together. People want Port Pirie to be known not just for its challenges, but for its strengths—its community spirit, its location, its opportunities, and its potential. They call for collective leadership: aligning around common goals, coordinating efforts across sectors, and investing in long-term strategies that build a stronger, more resilient region.

In summary, the community's responses show a willingness and readiness for action. People want to collaborate, contribute and help shape a future where Port Pirie is a place of opportunity, pride and connection. They believe that by working together—listening deeply, planning wisely, and acting boldly—the hopes they hold for their children, young people and community can become reality.

What needs to happen to make these hopes a reality?

Community stepping up to lead and work together

46% of respondents

- Genuine community voice in decisions (not just consultation)
- Accountability and transparency from council and government
- Positive community narrative through media and online
- Volunteering and mutual community support
- Continuation of Pirie Voices as a form of action

Positive pathways and empowerment for young people

34% of respondents

- Youth voice on committees and in decision-making
- Listen to and act on what young people say
- Education, training and career pathways
- Life skills and practical education
- After-school and weekend activities
- Disability-inclusive youth pathways

Attract new industries for a thriving local economy

15% of respondents

- Local business support and promotion
- Diversifying economic base beyond Nyrstar
- Attracting and retaining professionals

Cultural awareness and integration

2.3% of respondents

- Include Aboriginal people in designing and reviewing programs and decisions
- Cultural education and awareness
- Reconciliation as community action

"Listen to our young people, particularly those in the fringes"

"To work together as a community to make change and help guide these changes"

"Be a positive influence, to stand up and be heard and back new initiatives, not knock them. Speak up and talk our community up, join in and take part in new activities."

"Support local business. Provide opportunities for the younger generation to want to stay."

"Teach Aboriginal culture and history as a primary through to secondary subject"

"Youth events – keep them going with young people driving"

What we heard

Cross Cutting Themes

Across all data points, several cross-cutting themes emerged from all survey questions. These explicitly revealed a strong sense of community and connection, hope and opportunity for our young people, desire for a stronger local economy and a shared vision for a future where everyone can thrive:

Connection and Inclusion
The strongest theme across all questions is community connection. Residents repeatedly describe Port Pirie's community spirit—friendly people, strong sporting clubs, active volunteers, supportive schools, and the familiarity of a small town—as the foundation of a good life. They value belonging, knowing neighbours, and the way people rally together during storms, crises or hardship. This sense of belonging is both a protective factor and a source of identity. People want to preserve it, strengthen it, and rebuild it where they feel it has weakened. Many highlight the need for better disability access and inclusion so people of all abilities can participate fully. Cultural responsiveness and understanding also emerges strongly. At the heart of this theme is a community wanting unity, kindness and a culture where everyone feels welcome and supported.

Safety
A common sentiment expressed across questions was the sense that community and personal safety has declined. People want safe streets, safe homes, safe online environments, and safe public spaces. Concerns about drugs, crime, vandalism, antisocial behaviour and homelessness appear repeatedly as barriers to hopes and dreams. At the same time, people describe safety as something that helps them live well—feeling safe during the day, knowing neighbours, having cameras, or living near trusted people. Actions proposed include stronger policing, better youth engagement, more inclusive spaces, early intervention and community-led responses to social issues.

Health & Wellbeing Services
Another cross-cutting theme is the importance of access to health and wellbeing services and support. Access is both a strength and a barrier. People value the hospital, GP Plus, disability supports and community services. They also describe gaps: long wait times, limited specialists, inconsistent mental health support, and the need to travel to Adelaide. These gaps directly shape hopes and dreams, limit opportunities, and appear again in the actions people propose— more allied health services, better coordination between services, and simpler ways to find help.

Education, Skills and Opportunity for All
Education emerges strongly across all questions as both a strength and a gap and is seen as the key to breaking cycles of disadvantage, expanding opportunity, and giving locals real choices about staying or leaving. Residents value local schools, TAFE SA, Uni Hub and community learning programs however they want more course options, more specialist teachers, more life-skills education, more apprenticeships, and more inclusive support for neurodivergent children and those with disabilities. Young people express strong career aspirations—from trades to health, arts, engineering, sport, hospitality and beyond—but often feel constrained by limited local options or the cost of moving away. Families want more pathways that allow young people to study, train and succeed locally.

Economic Security and a Place Worth Staying
Economic security appears in every dataset as both a strength and a pressure point. Affordable housing, short commutes, access to shops and services, and the "10-minute city"

lifestyle help people live well. But cost-of-living pressures—fuel, food, rent, mortgages are overwhelming many households and adding additional barriers to education, employment, health, recreation and community participation and making it harder to pursue dreams and goals. Residents worry about limited job diversity, lower wages, and the region's reliance on Nyrstar. They want new industries, revitalised business districts, more apprenticeships, and stronger pathways into local employment. Home ownership is a major aspiration, and even though housing in the region is more affordable than the cities, house prices and limited housing stock make it increasingly out of reach for many young families. The community wants Port Pirie to be a place worth staying: economically secure, vibrant, and full of opportunity.

Young People at the Centre

Across all questions, people see young people as the centre of Port Pirie's future—and the group most affected by gaps in opportunity, support, and feeling heard and included. Residents want our kids to be safe, supported, confident and grow up proud of their community. Respondents called for more youth spaces and programs, along with more free or low-cost activities that keep young people engaged and connected. They want to see a focus on youth employment pathways, apprenticeships, mentoring, leadership programs and opportunities for young people to contribute to decision-making. Many call for youth committees, youth representation on council and community boards, and programs that build resilience, life skills and confidence. People want Port Pirie to be a community where young people are heard, valued and empowered.

Community Voice and Shared Responsibility

Finally, a consistent theme across responses is the call for genuine collaboration, transparency and shared responsibility. People want government, council, services, industry and community to listen and work together on solutions —not in silos. They want accountability through clear communication, visible progress, and a commitment to long-term change rather than short-term fixes. They want decisions made with the community, not for it. They want to be part of building a shared vision for Port Pirie's future that reflects the region's strengths, not just its challenges. Responses demonstrated the community is ready to participate and step up to help shape a Port Pirie that reflects the best of who they already are—and the future they believe is possible when they work together.

These themes are not separate—they are intertwined and reinforce each other. Together, they point to the values the community hold and the future direction and focus for policy and decision makers.

Whilst at their aggregated level, these themes may appear broad and unsurprising, their value is in helping to coordinate and support partners and community to unpack the substantial data and evidence base that sits beneath each theme and mobilise collective action towards a common goal.

That work sits at the centre of the next stage of Pirie Voices.

Challenges and Learnings

Phase One of Pirie Voices was intentionally designed as a listening and evidence building stage rather than a formal outcomes phase. Even so, clear patterns emerged across the work that highlight both the challenges encountered and the early signs of impact. These insights now form an important foundation for the design and resourcing of Phase Two.

Community Conversation Leader (CCL) Engagement

Throughout Phase One, a small but committed group of Community Conversation Leaders — typically between four and seven people — carried the majority of engagement activity. Limited capacity to identify, recruit and support new CCLs constrained the network's growth and placed pressure on those already involved. Feedback gathered through workshops, the Leadership Group and directly from CCLs pointed to several improvement going forward: clearer role descriptions, structured induction processes, ongoing training and mentoring, easier pathways for new leaders to participate, and intentional identification of emerging leaders, including young people. A notable success was the establishment of formalised "in-kind" CCL roles within partner organisations, where staff allocated part of their job to Pirie Voices engagement. This model proved highly effective and provides a strong foundation for Phase Two, offering reliable on-ground capacity and strengthening organisational ownership.

Coordinator Workload

Phase One operated with a part-time Coordinator (0.8 FTE), but the breadth of responsibilities consistently exceeded this allocation. Engagement activities, event delivery, data management, CCL support, partnership development and reporting created sustained workload pressure, particularly during peak engagement periods. This highlighted the need for a more robust backbone team to support community-led change sustainably into the future.

Data Management Complexity

As engagement methods diversified to incorporate online surveys, facilitated group sessions and event-based conversations, maintaining consistent and accurate data became increasingly complex. Manual data entry in early months introduced inconsistencies, later resolved through clearer templates and refined processes. These learnings underscore the need for a structured UMEL framework ahead of Phase Two to ensure data integrity, comparability and confidence in the insights generated.

Reaching Underrepresented Groups

Despite broad engagement, several cohorts remained underrepresented: adults aged 22–30, 31–45, 56–70 and 71+, culturally diverse communities, and men. Their limited participation suggests the need for more deliberate and targeted engagement strategies in Phase Two through approaches that build trust, reduce barriers and adapt to the needs of specific groups.

Learnings

The challenges experienced during Phase 1 provided some clear learnings to take forward for Pirie Voices into the future. This includes:

- Appropriate resourcing for action is essential: Community-led change initiatives require diverse skillsets in paid and in-kind staffing, as well as in leadership and operational teams. A funded backbone team will be imperative to ensure the community has the support and sustainable resourcing needed to drive change.
- Effective data management requires structure and flexibility: ensuring accessibility of conversations meant data were gathered in varied ways. To ensure data integrity, structure is needed alongside flexibility. UMEL is critical to facilitating this.

- Deeper, place-based engagement in trusted community spaces is qualitatively different from event-based engagement and will be an important shift by Pirie Voices and partner organisations to gain credibility and trust by community.
- Enabling marginalised voices to be heard requires relationship and time: conversations and connection methods need to adapt. Underrepresented cohorts in Phase One could reflect a need to be more responsive to context and will require more considered and targeted approaches into the future
- On-the-spot incentives work: small giveaways significantly increased engagement at events and can be continued as part of the engagement strategy going forward.
- School partnerships were effective for engaging children and young people: The structured school facilitation model developed at Solomontown Primary School in November 2025 proved replicable and scalable, yielding rich data. These partnerships will also be valuable in drawing out new and emerging young leaders.
- Timing matters for engagement of specific demographics: TAFE and university student engagement works during active semester periods; school sessions need to align with curriculum calendars; community events need to consider competing activities.

Early Impact

Formal outcome measurement was not a primary focus of Phase 1, which was designed as a community listening and evidence-building phase. However, throughout the project, indicators of change in four outcome domains were observed.

Awareness and Knowledge

Community awareness of Pirie Voices grew steadily, reflected in rising survey completion rates, workplace newsletter features (including Nyrstar), and unsolicited suggestions from residents for new engagement opportunities. Partner organisations gained a deeper understanding of community priorities through monthly reporting and thematic analysis. The Leadership Group reported a significantly richer and more nuanced understanding of Port Pirie's aspirations than at project commencement.

Skills and Confidence

Children and young people demonstrated enthusiasm and pride in having their voices heard, with many expressing a desire to contribute to their community. The Pirie Voices facilitation model using five consistent questions delivered through varied methods, proved effective and adaptable across settings. The Coordinator also developed strong skills in engagement, facilitation and data management, strengthening internal capability.

Relationships

Phase One established a solid level of support by key organisations in the community including service agencies, schools and tertiary education facilities, local businesses and employers, local clubs and with multiple community venues. Cross-sector relationships within the Leadership Group deepened through shared involvement in the initiative. A new connection with PLACE Australia provided access to expertise that is anticipated to formalise and strengthen in Phase Two.

Attitudes

The consistency of themes across the dataset suggests that community voice has been captured authentically. Of particular note, responses to Question 5 indicate a growing sense of agency and collective possibility with many residents expressing confidence that "we can do this together." A small proportion (2.6%) expressed feelings of disempowerment or that change is "out of our control." This counter-current is important to acknowledge and address in Phase Two planning.

Phase One has provided a strong foundation of insight, relationships and community momentum. The challenges and learnings outlined here will guide the design of Phase Two, ensuring Pirie Voices grows into a more resourced, inclusive and community-led initiative capable of supporting long-term change across the region.

Key challenges, learnings and early impact from Phase One

Phase One focused on listening and building evidence rather than formal outcomes. These challenges, learnings and early signs of impact will inform the design and resourcing of Phase Two.

Key challenges in Phase One

- **Community Conversation Leader engagement**
  A small group carried most engagement, with limited capacity to recruit and support new leaders.
- **Coordinator workload**
  The 0.8 FTE role faced sustained pressure across engagement, data, partnerships and reporting.
- **Data management complexity**
  Varied engagement methods and manual entry complicated accurate data management.
- **Reaching underrepresented groups**
  Some adult age groups, culturally diverse communities and men were underrepresented.

Key learnings for the future

- **Appropriate resourcing is essential**
  A funded, skilled backbone team is needed for sustainable community-led change.
- **Structured and flexible data management**
  A clear UMEL framework can support data integrity and flexible engagement.
- **Deeper, place-based engagement builds trust**
  Trusted community spaces enable deeper conversations beyond event-based engagement.
- **Relationships and time are key**
  Underrepresented groups need trust, targeted outreach and responsive approaches.
- **On-the-spot incentives work**
  Small giveaways helped increase engagement at events.
- **School partnerships are effective**
  School facilitation can be replicated and help identify young leaders.
- **Timing matters**
  Plan engagement around school terms, semesters and community calendars.

Early signs of impact

- **Awareness and knowledge**
  Greater awareness of Pirie Voices and deeper understanding of community priorities.
- **Skills and confidence**
  Young people showed pride; facilitation and engagement skills also grew.
- **Relationships**
  Stronger partnerships across schools, services, businesses and local groups.
- **Attitudes**
  Early indications of collective agency and confidence that "we can do this together".

The Future of Pirie Voices - Next steps

Hearing from one thousand locals is just the starting point for Pirie Voices.

It has provided a strong, credible evidence base and demonstrated a community willing and ready to step up. Pirie Voices now has a clear foundation on which we can build.

Key objectives for Phase 2 will be to reinforce the value of community voice, broaden participation and support the transition to a community led governance model.

Our work and our role going forward is deeper and far more systemic than the engagement work of Phase 1.

Port Pirie is a community that for so long has felt its voice has been dismissed, with attention and support more often driven by industry crisis. It is a community that has not had a say in the future of the town or the programs and services that are delivered to it and is consulted repeatedly at a surface or tokenistic level and not really listened to.As a result it is a community that doesn't know what it can ask for, how to do it, or who can really help.

On the ground the community see and feel first-hand the result of centralised decision-making in policy 'silos' resulting in gaps and duplication in service and program delivery, leading to inefficiency, poor use of resources and minimal change to systemic challenges and disadvantages. Legislative, political and policy constraints often hamper the ability to do things differently.

These are the gaps that Pirie Voices is well placed to bridge. Going forward the focus will be to strengthen community connection, deepen engagement and position Pirie Voices as a trusted, ongoing mechanism for listening, dialogue and shared action across Port Pirie.

The role of Pirie Voices going forward will expand to encompass listening and advocacy, building capacity and leadership and coordinating and brokering relationships and action:

- We have a role to keep listening and to advocate for stronger recognition and involvement of community voices in decisions that affect them.

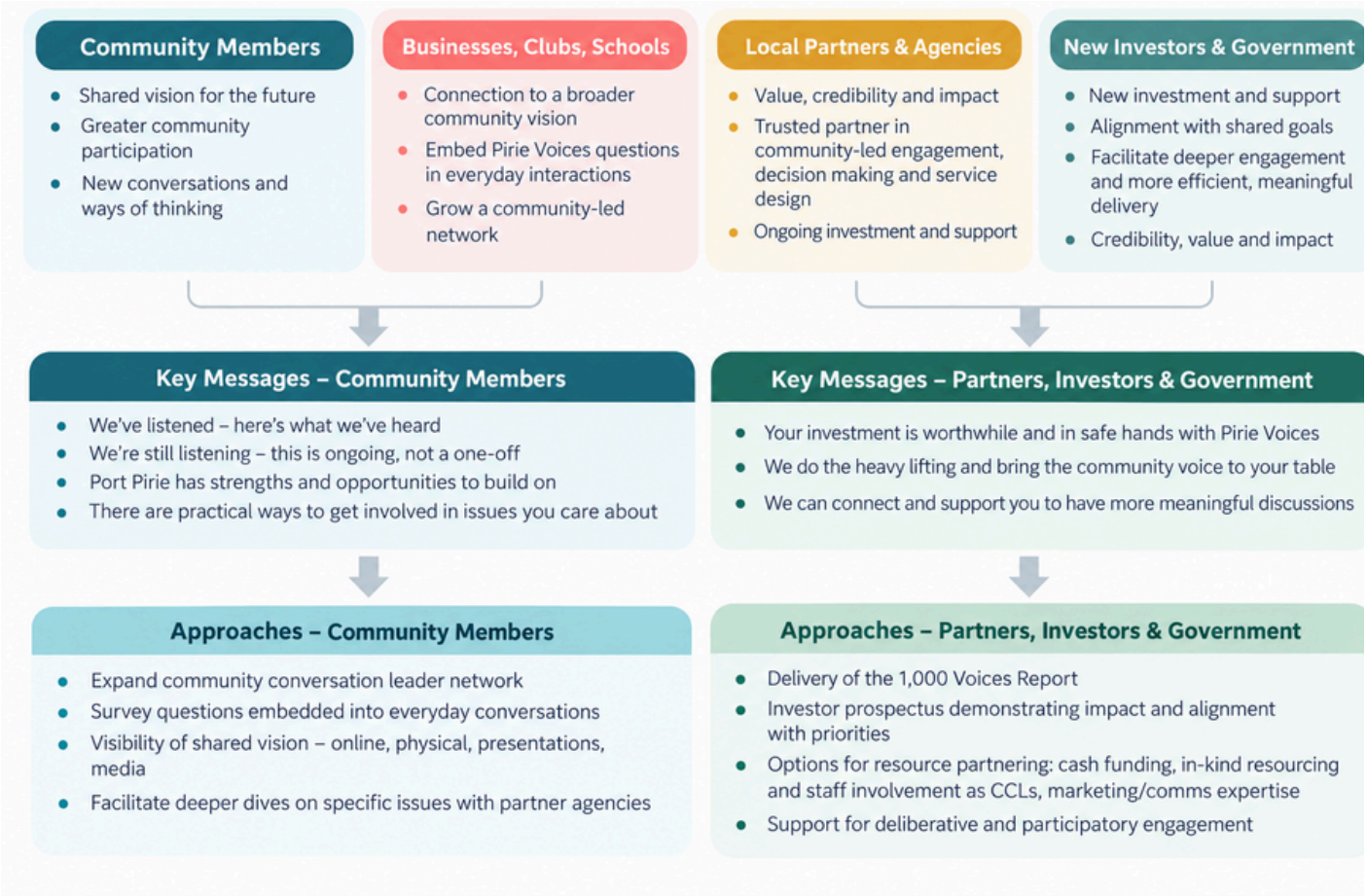
- We have a role in building capacity right across our community, finding common ground and a shared vision; and supporting new and existing leaders to step up and be stronger, more confident, tenacious and more considered in how our community is represented and in asking for what it wants.

- We have a role providing a common starting point to mobilise and coordinate delivery partners around a shared goal, and as a broker, bringing the community voice and decision-makers closer together to dive deeply and deliberatively into areas of shared importance.



Pirie Voices will work with the wider community along with businesses, clubs and schools with the aim to build a shared vision for Port Pirie's future; inspire greater community participation and leadership and importantly, spark new conversations and ways of thinking about local challenges and opportunities.

Alongside this, Pirie Voices will assist organisations, industry, government and service agencies to engage and deliver more meaningfully and effectively through deeper, deliberative forms of community participation, decision making and service design.



Future Approach

Central to this approach, Pirie Voices will operate through a continuous engagement model that combines participation, deliberation and communication to:

1. Listen - Broad participatory engagement identifies issues, ideas and priorities.
2. Deliberate - Representative groups explore issues in depth and produce recommendations.
3. Communicate Findings - decisions and progress are shared widely and transparently.
4. Act - Agencies, partners and community groups implement actions.
5. Report Back - Progress is communicated to the community through dashboards, updates and storytelling.
6. Listen Again - New insights feed into the next cycle.



Key elements to the Pirie Voices engagement model are provided as follows:

1. Participatory Engagement - "The Front Door" - Participatory engagement means citizens take part directly in public life and decision processes, not only by voting in elections. Participation can include proposing ideas, commenting on plans, joining participatory budgeting, serving on boards, petitioning, oversight, and more. These methods keep the voices of Port Pirie residents alive between major processes. It also ensures the governance group has a constant flow of community intelligence feeding into deliberation and decision-making.

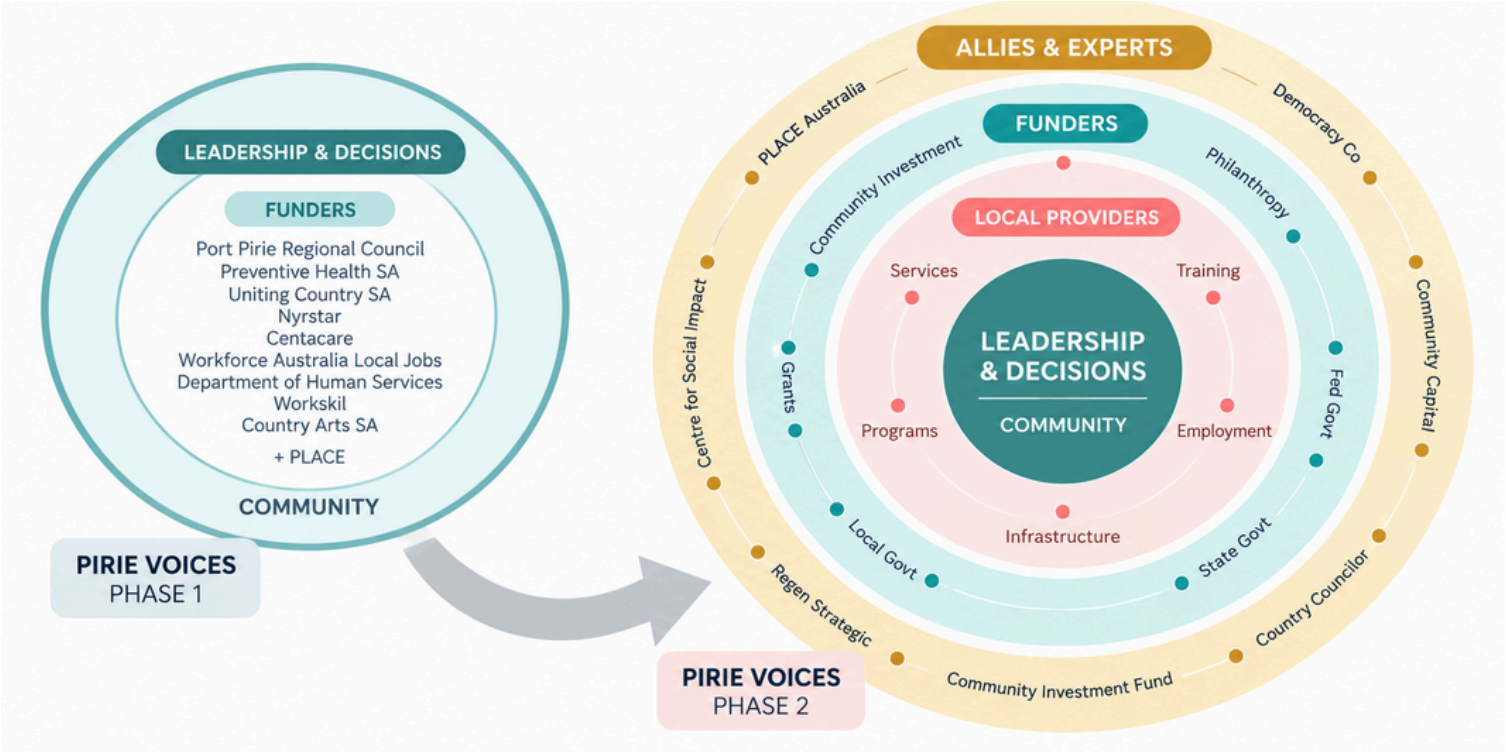
2. Deliberative Engagement - "The Engine Room" - Deliberative engagement means legitimacy comes from public reasoning. The focus is decision quality, fairness, and considered judgment. It is a process based on deep thinking and shared decision-making that enables representative groups of locals to explore complex issues, weigh evidence, consider trade-offs and develop well-reasoned recommendations. When the deliberative process is done well, the outcome is high-quality, legitimate community recommendations that agencies and partners can trust. This is how Pirie Voices can become a trusted evidence base for agencies — not just a consultation exercise.

3. Discursive Engagement - "The Public Conversation" - Discursive participation refers to broad public communication aimed at building shared understanding, transparency and trust. This is the broader public conversation — media, social media, community events, storytelling that helps build shared understanding, reinforce transparency and support community-wide dialogue. The outcome is a well-informed community that understands how decisions are made and how their input shapes outcomes.

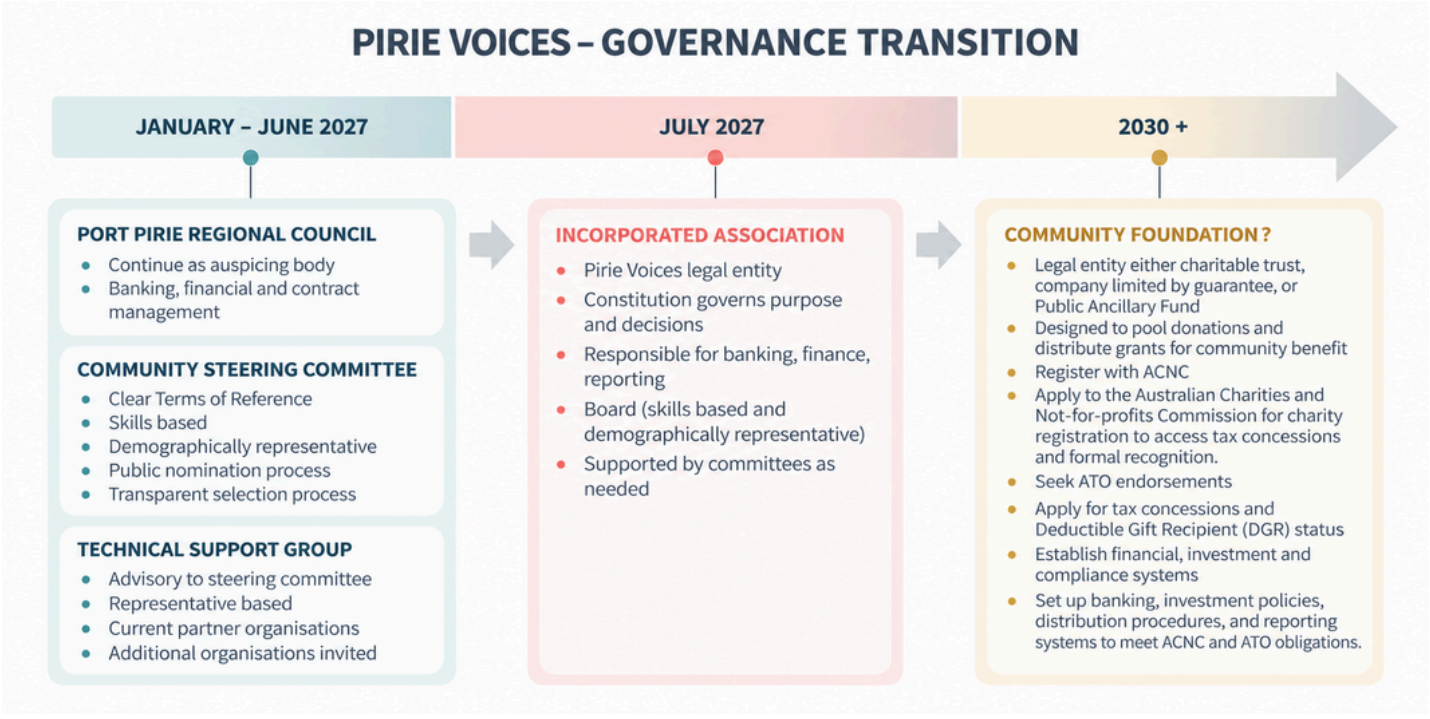
Transition to Community -Led Governance

Good governance and resourcing will be pivotal to the future role and success of Pirie Voices.

Over coming months Pirie Voices will transition from its set up phase managed by partner organisations to a community-led model, partnering with local providers and funders to generate more community-focussed delivery of services, programs, infrastructure, employment and training opportunities, and supported by a range allies and external expertise that can be drawn on.



This will initially take form as a community steering committee, supported by partner organisations, with the intention to establish an independent Pirie Voices legal entity, governed by a skills-based board of directors drawn from the community. Importantly, this governing body will be representative of the diversity of the Port Pirie community. In the long term, the option of establishing Pirie Voices as a Community Foundation or similar entity can be explored should this be a viable option that best suits the needs of the community into the future.



Future Resourcing for Sustainability

Core resourcing required to support Pirie Voices into the future will include strategic, governance and operational delivery, along with some specialist technical support. Initial resource planning for Phase Two has identified a wider scope of 'backbone' skills and roles required to sustain the visibility, coordination and engagement of Pirie Voices going forward:

- Strategic Lead – part-time resource to oversee delivery, strategic partnerships
- Communications/marketing and administrative support – part-time resource to implement communications strategy
- On Ground Engagement including Community Conversation Leader Network – part-time paid and partner sponsored personnel

The backbone team would require additional, specialist support including data analysis, accounting and human resource management.

Whilst staffing costs will be the main core expense for Pirie Voices going forward, the ability to generate strong in-kind partnerships and partner sponsored personnel can reduce costs whilst still accessing necessary expertise. An indicative budget for Phase 2 is provided as follows:

BUDGET ITEM	DESCRIPTION	ESTIMATE	POTENTIAL IN-KIND	TO BE FUNDED
STAFFING				
Strategic Lead	oversee strategy, partnerships, governance, resourcing (0.8 FTE @ $170k FTE + 30% oncosts)	$176,800	$0	$176,800
Communications & Marketing Coordinator	develop & implement engagement & communications strategy (0.6 FTE @ $100k FTE + 30% oncosts)	$78,000	$0	$78,000
Community Conversation Leader Network	partner sponsored personnel (10 x 0.1FTE @ $90k FTE + 30% oncosts)	$117,000	$117,000	$0
Administrative Support	meeting logistics, minutes & agendas, bookkeeping (0.4 FTE @ $50k FTE + 30%)	$26,000	$13,000	$13,000
Data Analysis	10 hrs/quarter - consultancy @ $180/hr	$7,200	$0	$7,200
Accounting and HR	10 hrs/quarter - consultancy or inkind @ $180/hr	$7,200	$7,200	$0
Facilitation/Trg (deliberative)	10 hrs/quarter - consultancy @ $200/hr	$8,000	$0	$8,000
Total Staffing		**$420,200**	**$137,200**	**$283,000**
OPERATIONS				
Office rent	$150 per wk x 52	$7,800	$7,800	$0
IT support, software licences	Tech support $200/mth, Microsoft Premuim 5 x $200, Xero $110/mth	$4,720	$0	$4,720
Staff laptop, phones, tech	3 x $2500	$7,500	$0	$7,500
Insurance	associations, PL, PI, volunteer	$5,000	$0	$5,000
Engagement (participatory) and marketing expenses	advertising, promotional material, workshop hosting, events	$20,000	$0	$20,000
Consumables	$100/mth	$1,200	$0	$1,200
Travel and accommodation	$300/mth	$3,600	$0	$3,600
Total Operations		**$49,820**	**$7,800**	**$42,020**
TOTAL PIRIE VOICES ANNUAL EXPENSES		**$470,020**	**$145,000**	**$325,020**

Conclusion

Port Pirie has spoken. 1,154 times, across ten months, through surveys and yarns, school sessions and community events, conversations at food banks, churches, and cafes. What our community has said is consistent: the people of this city care about each other; we want the best for our children; we are frustrated by the barriers that stand between us and a good life; and we are ready to work together to do something about it.

Phase 1 of Pirie Voices has built a substantial and credible, evidence base that reflects the voice of our community, gathered through methods that respected and valued every participant. It has also strengthened a network of relationships, a set of engagement tools, a growing coalition of partners, and a community that has been seen and heard.

The work of Phase 2 is to keep listening, to reinforce the value of community voice, broaden participation and support the transition to a community led governance model.

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PIRIE VOICES

Shaping our future, together

Pirie Voices Partner Organisations

Port Pirie Regional Council

Port Pirie West Children's Centre for Early Childhood Development and Parenting

nyrstar

Workforce Australia Local Jobs

Uniting Country SA

the COUNTRY COUNSELLOR

Centacare Catholic Country SA

Government of South Australia Preventive Health SA

human services

Workskil Australia



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