



Review of **Laman Street**
Engagement Processes

February 2012



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Executive Summary

A responsible organisation is self-evaluative and addresses aspects of operations that can be improved. As an organisation dedicated to continuous improvement, it is important that Council review the way it manages significant community issues and objectively critiques aspects of the adopted process.

In response to a Council resolution, a review team was formed to analyse the engagement processes used by Council for the Laman Street trees issue. The review found that while an issues management approach was recommended it was not adopted. Instead, Council's communication strategy was reactive and used traditional communication methods to present information to the community. This was not effective for this issue as community groups had adopted a more proactive campaign using social media. The lack of a dedicated project manager for the Laman Street issue impacted negatively on the success of the communication campaign.

Media releases were selectively reported in the media, and in contrast, the case put forward by community groups was comprehensively covered by the media. In managing the Laman Street tree issue, Council Officers prepared an extensive range of information to the point where their ability to complete their regular duties was compromised.

The review also identified through the community and Councillor surveys there is confusion regarding the term 'consultation' as opposed to 'information'. This may have led to the impression that alternatives to the tree removal could have been considered when evidence indicated that only one option was appropriate.

The discussions at the Laman Street Trees Working Party (LSTWP) mimicked debate in the Council chamber and in the public arena. This resulted in a debate that focussed on contradicting the evidence supplied by Council Officers, discrediting the independent risk assessments, and rejecting any additional data presented rather than seeking 'evidence based solutions'.

The division of Councillors on the issue and the perception that Council was regularly revisiting the issue and changing its decisions may have raised questions for the public about the validity of the data presented. This damaged Council's reputation in the longer term.

Following an analysis of the Laman Street engagement processes the following actions are recommended to enhance Council's processes for engaging with the community on issues of major community significance in the future:

- Develop an issues management strategy for issues of major community significance. The strategy should include the following:
 - A dedicated project manager to oversee all activities including engagement with the community
 - An appropriate budget to ensure effective engagement activities are supported
 - An appropriate overarching community engagement plan as part of an overall project plan
- Provide regular training to Councillors to reinforce the current Media Policy and Code of Conduct
- Develop strategies to better utilise social media to introduce and manage issues

- A directive stating that issues of major community significance, that are also identified as posing a high risk to safety, should be clearly communicated so that the community can be informed on the issues at hand and Council's response. However, community consultation would not be required as this would provide an expectation that the community would be able to provide feedback on an operational issue
- Make representations to the *Newcastle Herald* to instigate a process to check letters for factual correctness (similar to process applied to *Sydney Morning Herald* letters)
- Continue to use the Council briefings, advice and meetings with the General Manager and memos to provide information to Councillors when dealing with significant community issues and group these together on the intranet for ease of Councillor interest
- Develop an Engagement Framework and an awareness campaign on the differing levels of public participation, based on the IAP2 spectrum

Purpose

This report responds to the following Council resolution of 4 October 2011:

- 1) Council directs the General Manager to conduct a review of the Laman Street Fig Tree issue and provide a report evaluating processes adopted by Council, with recommendations for improving Council's engagement processes in respect to issues of major community significance.
- 2) The review will comprise an evaluation of the following, with regard to the Laman Street Fig Trees:
 - a) the community consultation methodologies and processes used by Council
 - b) the scope of information supplied to Councillors and the community
 - c) methods of communication between the Council administration, Councillors, key stakeholders, community groups and the media
 - d) the function and operation of the Laman Street Fig Trees Working Party, relevant Advisory Committees and Council
 - e) any other communication or consultation elements considered relevant by the reviewer
- 3) The General Manager should table the completed report by February 2012.

Methodology

To ensure objectivity, Council Officers who had limited or no involvement in the Laman Street issue conducted the review. A project plan was developed to identify stakeholders, key dates and the methodology for the review.

The Review Team had regular meetings from early November 2011 to early February 2012. Interviews were conducted with key internal stakeholders to establish:

- Their role in the issue
- Any engagement undertaken in relation to their role
- The effectiveness of the engagement process
- Opportunities for improvement

A timeline was compiled to identify the activities that occurred and dates of significant documents about the Laman Street trees.

A Newcastle Voice survey titled 'Significant Community Issues' was conducted to gauge Councillors' level of satisfaction with communication and consultation practices used for the Laman Street issue and to elicit feedback to improve these processes in the future. The survey had a 62% response rate (eight out of 13 Councillors).

The Review Team also conducted a community survey through Newcastle Voice titled 'Significant Community Issues' to measure the level of satisfaction with Council's engagement strategies in relation to this issue. A six question survey was sent to 2,283 online Newcastle Voice community reference panel members. This survey had a response rate of 43% (982 out of 2,283).

Members of the Review Team reviewed each the four main elements of the Council resolution (2a-2d above) and prepared a brief report for consideration by the Review Team as a whole. This information was then compiled into a full report and recommendations were developed.

The sheer volume of information on this topic prepared by Council Officers made it impossible for the Review Team to review all the information. However a significant amount of information was reviewed to inform the report and recommendations including:

- Media releases and media clippings
- Factsheet prepared for Stateline story
- Transcripts from Public Voice meetings
- Results of the Civic Cultural Precinct Laman Street Design workshop
- Newcastle Voice 2010 and 2011 consultation reports on Civic Cultural Precinct Laman Street Design
- 'A Case History Informing Tree Management in Laman Street'
- Minutes of Council Project Control Group Meetings
- Presentation for the Councillor workshop held on 27 July 2010
- Council resolutions pertaining to the Laman Street fig trees
- Minutes of Laman Street Tree Working Party
- Minutes of the Urban Plan and Design Advisory Committee

Background

The Newcastle Urban Forest Policy, adopted 6 May 2008, provides goals and objectives to guide the management of the Newcastle urban forest as an intergenerational resource with ecological, economic, social and aesthetic benefits.

The City of Newcastle has been investigating failures of trees throughout the Local Government Area (LGA) since 2000. This resulted in the collation of data known as the 'case book history' and adoption of a more strategic approach to assessing and managing trees including:

- The Tree Asset Management System that manages the inspection and maintenance of trees.
- The Street Tree Master Plan (adopted by Council 21 February) which provides the framework for the selection of appropriate species for street trees across the Newcastle LGA. The Living Streets campaign supporting this plan focuses on increasing the community's understanding of the benefits of street trees and establishing a sense of pride for Newcastle's tree lined streetscapes.

The risks associated with the Laman Street trees were first identified in 2006 and the attached chronology of events indicates all the work undertaken from that date to inform councillors and the community of these risks.

Analysis

A chronology of tree management issues from 2000 to 2011 and the associated communication strategies and Council decisions is included as Appendix A.

Appendix B illustrates one of the communication methods that was used after the resolution to remove the trees in August 2010.

A full copy of the results of the councillor and community surveys undertaken to inform this review is included in Appendix C and G respectively.

Key issues from these documents have been analysed and included in the sections below.

a) Community consultation methodologies and processes used by Council

Discussion

Council recognises and abides by best practice principles and core values developed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) (refer Appendix D). The Public Participation Spectrum defines the goal of consultation as to obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.

In early 2009 a number of negative Council stories were published by the media about issues such as the strike by the waste collection staff (in response to Enterprise Agreement negotiations), the alleged illegal sale of fill from Summerhill Waste Management Centre and the organisational restructure that resulted in all senior managers being offered voluntary redundancy. The Sustainability Review had commenced and the report on Stage 1 contained controversial recommendations such as closing The Loft Youth Venue and removing the animal exhibits at Blackbutt Reserve.

In this operational environment, and in an effort to be open and transparent regarding Council operations, the General Manager at the time made the decision to take the operational matter of the Laman Street trees to Council, where previously this would not have occurred.

Prior to the Council resolution of 19 May 2009 no community consultation had been undertaken by Council Officers for Laman Street as the recommended action was removal of the trees due to the risks posed to public safety. In this context, the lack of consultation was considered appropriate.

On 19 May 2009 Council resolved to investigate a phased replacement strategy and a range of risk management approaches. In response to this resolution Council Officers proposed holding a design workshop to involve the community in the new design for the area.

The community consultation processes undertaken included:

- A Newcastle Voice one question survey to gather information about the community's vision for the Laman Street and Civic Precinct conducted in February 2010. 414 comments were received from Newcastle Voice members and the broader community. The responses revealed the complexity of the subject and the physical location which included buildings and important thoroughfares to other parts of the inner city.

- The Civic and Cultural Precinct Laman Street Design workshop on 19 and 20 March 2010 supported by advice from appropriately qualified (external) technical specialists. All constraints and opportunities relating to Council's duty of care in the management of this area were examined against a quadruple bottom line background (economic, social, environmental and governance). The workshop participants were drawn from the community in the following proportions:
 - one third residents randomly selected in an area drawn from a 1km radius around the Newcastle Art Gallery
 - one third residents randomly selected from across the LGA (outside the 1km radius described above)
 - one third directly related stakeholders eg land managers/residents/businesses located in Laman Street

Approximately 50 stakeholders and community representative attended and were provided with an information package prior to the workshop.

- The resulting document, Civic and Cultural Precinct Laman Street Design Framework, was placed on public exhibition (by Council resolution on 14 December 2010) from 20 December 2010 to 28 February 2011. A community consultation program was undertaken during the public exhibition period to encourage diverse public feedback. The survey was open to Newcastle Voice participants as well as the broader community. A total of 807 responses were received. Thirty five written submissions were received from individuals and one from a community organisation.

Findings

- Results from the Councillor survey (Appendix C) show that when Councillors were asked overall, how satisfied they were with the community engagement activities undertaken by the administration regarding the Laman Street figs, 63% of respondents indicated that they were Very Satisfied or Somewhat Satisfied.
- Results from the community survey (Appendix G) show that when the community was asked how satisfied, overall, they were with the tools used to communicate and consult during this significant issue, 44.2% indicated they were Very Dissatisfied with 21.08% indicating that they were either Very Satisfied or Somewhat Satisfied.
- In hindsight, the decision to transfer the decision making for this operational issue was not appropriate as this implied that alternatives could be considered when evidence indicated that only one option was appropriate. This resulted in debate in the Council chamber, public forums and through the media that was unnecessary and at times inaccurate.
- Combining the replacement strategy for the fig trees in Laman Street with the consultation process for the broader Civic and Cultural Precinct Laman Street design process was intended to provide an opportunity for the community to have direct input into the new design. However, there was the perception from community members that the future of the fig trees was yet to be determined when in fact the decision had already been made.
- A recommendation to hold a community information session and information campaign ahead of the design workshop was rejected by the Project Control Group. This was due to concerns about the increasing antagonism in the community and fears that those opposed to Council's decision would seize control of the session for their own purposes. However, not holding this session may have impacted on the community's ability to participate in the workshop in a meaningful way, as they may not have fully understood the complex issues, the decision-making processes, or their role in the process.

- Despite presentations at the Design Workshop from Council Officers and independent experts on risk management, urban forestry and Council's tree management policy framework, the information was clouded by contrary arguments through formal and social media during the same period.
- Feedback was received regarding timing and structure of the two-day Design Workshop. It was suggested that the workshop include more community members, not take place during a weekday and include an information session prior to the Design Workshop.

b) Scope of information supplied to Councillors and the community

Discussion

Following the removal and replacement of the fig trees in Tyrrell Street in 2004, a Communications Plan was developed to inform the public about the ongoing issues surrounding Newcastle's 'veteran trees' and Council's new tree management practices.

The risks associated with the trees in Laman Street were first identified in an independent report in 2006. Over the life of the management of the issue, which extends across two elected Councils, three General Managers and two Acting General Managers, Council Officers have provided Councillors with a large volume of information which consistently reinforced that the trees pose a significant risk to public safety including:

- Evidence from independent experts (full list included in Appendix E) on topics including:
 - Root plate architecture
 - Wind loading
 - Quantified Tree Risk Assessment
 - Social impact assessment
 - Heritage assessment
 - Fauna habitat assessment
 - Trenching investigation
 - Feasibility study into tree restraint
 - Feasibility study into pull testing
 - Peer reviews of previous independent reports
- Council reports, briefings, presentations and memos with input from across Council including:
 - City Presentation Services
 - Infrastructure Management Services
 - Parks and Recreation Services
 - Compliance Services
 - Strategic Planning Services
 - Governance and Council Services
 - Customer Service, Communication and Consultation Services
- Reports in response to risk mitigation strategies suggested by Councillors, the Laman Street Trees Working Party, and participants at the Civic and Cultural Precinct Laman Street Design Workshop.

Council Officers have delivered the same messages to the community using different methods. For instance, the key findings in the reports were summarised and released to the media for general dissemination (refer to Appendix A for details of all media releases).

Since April 2010 all the independent reports listed in Appendix E were made available on Council's website to mitigate criticisms about Council's motives and decisions. Council also prepared a range of other materials for the website to enable the community to gain a full understanding of tree management in general, and the Laman Street trees in particular.

Council's decision making processes were also influenced by community members who campaigned through social media, Public Voice presentations, letters to the editor, petitions, individual representation to Councillors and the General Manager, and reports from other authors supporting the contrary position.

Findings

- The Councillor survey in Appendix C indicates that 75% of respondents rated the relevance of the information provided them by the administration regarding the Laman Street figs as Extremely Relevant or Very Relevant.
- When Councillors were asked overall, how informed the administration had kept them regarding the same issue, 63% of respondents indicated that they were Very Well Informed or Well Informed.
- The community survey in Appendix G indicates that when survey respondents were asked, overall, how informed Council kept them in relation to the Laman Street Figs, the majority of responses (72.3%) indicated that they were Somewhat Informed or Not At All Informed.
- The key areas that emerged were in regard to Council process, transparency, and lack of trust in the Council. Respondents indicated that they expect a 'just do it approach' from Council, where significant issues are decided on and actioned swiftly without the use of excessive funds or resources. Respondents commented on the need for the information to be completely transparent, where they are provided with simple, honest, easy to understand 'facts' from the onset.
- The overwhelming number of requests received from Councillors, community groups, the media and members of the public impacted significantly on Council Officers' ability to complete their regular duties. For example, on average the Media Officer receives 70-100 requests a month regarding Council activities. However in November 2011 over 200 media requests were received on Laman Street alone.
- To further exacerbate this problem, no designated Council Officer managed the flow of information in and out of the organisation therefore multiple areas were at times working simultaneously on similar requests.
- In May 2010, a Council Report recommending the renewal of the street trees in Laman Street between Darby and Dawson Streets was presented to Council. Parallel to this process, an Issues Management Plan was developed by the Communications unit to deliver a comprehensive information campaign to educate the community about the risk management issues in Laman Street, the replacement process for the street and future tree management strategies. This campaign was not implemented on the direction of senior management due to other organisational priorities at the time.
- In 2010-2011, the scope of the information provided to the community was largely driven by forces external to the organisation with the organisation being more reactive than proactive.
- From early 2010 to the present there has been an active campaign opposing Council's position and criticising Council's information and officers. Although the Project Control Group discussed putting out media releases to counter the claims, this was not adopted as the preferred strategy. This, combined with the media's sustained coverage of the

opposition's position, resulted in the Council's key message of public safety being lost or diluted.

- Although efforts were made to correct the misinformation presented by community groups to the media, the information provided to journalists was often not published. Senior management were also reluctant to respond assertively to the misinformation in the highly charged political environment at the time. This decision may have contributed to a public perception that the information was correct and therefore prolonged the debate. From late 2011 a more proactive approach (eg media interviews with the General Manager including ABC's *Statewide* program, publication of 'Fig Forum light on facts' on Council's website 17 January 2012 and full page community announcement in the *Newcastle Herald* on 25 January 2012) have received positive feedback from the community.
- Council Officers used the term Operation Beanstalk for the tree removal operation. Although this term was used only informally the name was leaked to the press and resulted in negative publicity. The use of this term, even on an informal basis, was inappropriate as it may have been interpreted as insensitivity on the part of Council Officers to a subject which was of considerable concern to the public.
- The Community Survey (Appendix G) indicates a lack of trust in Council was also a key theme, with a significant proportion of respondents commenting that they believed Council to have a hidden agenda in felling the Laman Street Figs. However, there were also a number of respondents commenting that community groups had dominated the situation and that Council had 'pandered' to the minority.

c) Methods of communication between Council administration, Councillors, key stakeholders, community groups and the media

Discussion

The table in Appendix D shows how Council's activities in relation to the Laman Street trees are aligned with the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum.

Information was provided in a variety of formats as shown in the following table.

Category	Communication Methods
Councillors	Advice and meetings with the General Manager Council briefings Council workshops In Touch (Councillor newsletter) Media releases Mediation and meetings with members of Save our Figs Memos Notices on Councillor intranet Public Voice Quarterly Ward Forums Updates in Community Issues Reports Council Reports (including two Newcastle Voice consultation reports) Reports from Laman Street Trees Working Party Reports from Urban Planning and Design Strategic Advisory Committee

Category	Communication Methods
Key Stakeholders: RSL, churches, art gallery, library, police	Signage in Civic Park, Laman Street and at the Art Gallery and Library Direct contact to inform of removal process and timeline
Community Groups and the Broader Community	Advertising in the <i>Newcastle Herald</i> Advertising in free newspapers (<i>Star</i> and <i>Post</i>) Council's e-newsletter Council News (delivered to households in Newcastle Local Government Area) Newcastle Voice Newsletter (distributed to registered Newcastle Voice participants) Signage in Civic Park, Laman Street and at the Art Gallery and Library Quarterly Ward Forums Council's website Responses to individual enquiries
Media	Media releases Media conferences Media statements where required Responses to media enquiries

Findings

- Results from the Councillor survey (Appendix C) indicated that the most useful communication tools were briefings, advice and meetings with the General Manager, and memos.
- Results from the community survey (Appendix G) indicated that the most useful communication tools were Local Newspapers (80.45%) and word of mouth (41.34%)
- Traditional communication methods such as media releases, advertising, stories in Council News and website updates were used by Council to provide information to the broader community. However, a very active campaign was implemented by community groups using alternative methods such as social media and letters to the editor of the *Newcastle Herald*.
- Unlike the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Council understands that the *Newcastle Herald* does not fact check letters to the editor prior to publishing them. This leads to erroneous information being presented to the public. Council only responded to some of these letters and, due to the publication cycle of the newspaper, this response could not be published until the following day at the earliest leading to the erroneous information being in the public arena for at least 24 hours before correction.
- Media releases were selectively reported by the media. For instance, the full page response to a media enquiry about 'Why are the Laman Street figs different to other figs in Newcastle?' resulted in one short sentence being used – 'There is simply no ulterior motive to remove the trees and Council finds that assertion absurd'. To combat this a more proactive approach using paid advertising stating the facts could have been utilised if there was a budget allocated.
- There was a consistently high level of demand for information from community members and the LSTWP. The Chair of the LSTWP advised the members of the LSTWP on a number of occasions that the requests for information were excessive and time consuming.

- The volume of information prepared by Council Officers led to an inconsistent approach to distributing information to members of the LSTWP with documents emailed, placed on Council's website, provided in hardcopy or electronically on CD. There were complaints at one meeting when a detailed report from Council Officers was tabled rather than being provided with enough time for Working Party members to read and consider the information. A more consistent approach to information requests and provision should have been used

d) Function and operation of the Laman Street Fig Trees Working Party, relevant strategic advisory committees and Council

Discussion

Council's Strategic Advisory Committee structure allows for working parties to be formed reporting to the 'parent' committee which then reports to the Council as a whole.

Following a Council resolution on 14 December 2010, the Urban Planning and Design Advisory Committee (UPDAC) adopted a framework on 10 February 2011 for the composition of the LSTWP. UPDAC also adopted the selection method for community members and technical experts, and the Terms of Reference for the LSTWP.

Findings

- There was a contradiction within the original Council resolution and within the Terms of Reference for the Working Party which compromised the success of the LSTWP from the outset. Both include the retention of the existing trees and implementation of alternative risk mitigation strategies. However, the basis of all the independent assessments had been the risks posed by the trees, and the issue for Council and its insurer were, that no acceptable risk mitigation strategies could be implemented to adequately address these risks.
- The Council resolution to create the LSTWP was raised as a Motion without notice so Council Officers were unable to provide advice on the Motion before it was resolved. With officers advice, the contradiction could have been removed facilitating a more productive outcome for the LSTWP.
- The LSTWP operating procedures specify that meetings will be open to the public. However this created a sense of formality and appears to have hindered open conversations. This was recognised by the members of the LSTWP resulting in the resolution that they hold a facilitated workshop to 'stimulate creative flow and dialogue about ways to address the Council resolution, particularly in relation to risk management'. This was held on 26 June 2011. However, it was open to the public and was attended by four observers and the Lord Mayor.
- Concerns were raised by members of the LSTWP about the appropriateness of the voting structure that allowed for the General Manager to be the Chair and Council Officers to be voting members of Working Parties as it was stated that this would present a conflict of interest. This was reiterated in the Councillor survey included in Appendix C. Following a Council resolution on 16 August 2011, the Working Party operating procedures were reviewed and these provisions were amended.
- The minutes of the LSTWP mimic debate in the Council chamber and in the public arena as membership of the LSTWP consisted of members holding both points of view. This resulted in a debate that focussed on contradicting the evidence supplied by Council Officers, discrediting the independent risk assessments, and rejecting any additional data

presented rather than seeking 'evidence based solutions' as specified in the Terms of Reference. A copy of all the LSTWP and UPDAC resolutions relating to Laman Street are included as Appendix F. No LSTWP resolutions referred to UPDAC were adopted indicating that the intent of the LSTWP was not successfully realised.

- On several occasions comments were made by Councillors that were not aligned with Council resolutions and encouraged protestors in their criticism of Council's decisions. The current Media Policy states:
 - *Council officials should support Council decisions and should refrain from using the media to make negative personal reflections on each other or comments that could be interpreted as such and which are reasonably likely to undermine public confidence in the Council or local government generally.*
 - *As members of the community, Council officials are entitled to enter into public debate and make comment on civic affairs provided they do not give the impression they are speaking in their official position for or on behalf of Council.*
- The division of Councillors on the issue and the perception that Council was regularly revisiting the issue and changing its decisions may have raised questions for the public about the validity of the data presented. This damaged Council's reputation in the longer term.

Conclusions

A consistent message was delivered to the community and Councillors about Council's position regarding risk management of trees and the need to remove the trees in Laman Street to ensure public safety. However, an active community campaign opposing the removal of the trees and a reactive approach to communications by Council for this issue, resulted in alternative views clouding the overwhelming evidence presented to Councillors and the community. The issue also overshadowed other good news stories which occurred in relation to trees and other projects such as the Stockton shared pathway.

There has been considerable damage to Council's reputation and a loss of the community's trust in Council's decision making as a result of the Laman Street trees. In order to restore Council's reputation and the community's trust it is important that learning opportunities are gained from the deficiencies highlighted in its engagement processes for issues of significant community importance so that the events of the past do not reoccur.

It is important to develop and apply appropriate issues management strategies to ensure the community is fully informed about Council activities. However, it is equally important to carefully identify which issues require development of these strategies, as the resources required to manage such issues can be quite extensive and may impact on officers' ability to complete their normal duties.

Recommendations

Following an analysis of the Laman Street engagement processes the following actions are recommended to enhance Council's processes for engaging with the community on issues of major community significance in the future:

- Develop an issues management strategy for issues of major community significance. The strategy should include the following:
 - A dedicated project manager to oversee all activities including engagement with the community

- An appropriate budget to ensure effective engagement activities are supported
- An appropriate overarching community engagement plan as part of an overall project plan
- Provide regular training to Councillors to reinforce the current Media Policy and Code of Conduct
- Develop strategies to better utilise social media to introduce and manage issues
- A directive stating that issues of major community significance, that are also identified as posing a high risk to safety, should be clearly communicated so that the community can be informed on the issues at hand and councils response. However community Consultation in such matters would not be required as this would provide an expectation that the community would be able to provide feedback on an operational issue
- Make representations to the *Newcastle Herald* to instigate a process to check letters for factual correctness (similar to process applied to *Sydney Morning Herald* letters)
- Continue to use the Council briefings, advice and meetings with the General Manager and memos to provide information to Councillors when dealing with significant community issues and group these together on the intranet for ease of councillor interest
- Develop an Engagement Framework and an awareness campaign on the differing levels of public participation, based on the IAP2 spectrum.

Phil Pearce

GENERAL MANAGER

February 2012

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Appendix A - Chronology of Events

Date	Communication Activities	Documents provided to Council	Council Decision
2000 to 2004			
2000	The City of Newcastle begins investigating failures of trees throughout the Local Government Area (LGA) and developing strategies to combat those trees identified of a high risk.		
	Detailed investigation into the figs in lower Tyrrell Street by 'The Tree School' recommending removal. City Arborist and The Tree School author briefing to Council on Tyrrell St trees. City Arborist briefed Council on structural issues in aging trees – in particular mature Figs.		
24/10/02		Memo to Councillors regarding large fig tree in Laman Street Cooks Hill - temporary road closure for public safety.	
2004	A study of the Fig trees in Laman Street by Dennis Marsden identified that the tree root structures were similar to those of the trees that failed in Tyrrell Street in 2004.		
26/05/04	Following the removal of the fig trees in Tyrrell Street a Communications plan was developed to inform the public about the ongoing issues surrounding Newcastle's "veteran trees"	Memo to Councillors to advise of Communication Plan for veteran trees	
	Media release on Newcastle's veteran trees - 15 recommended for removal for public safety		

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2006			
01/12/06	Investigation Report Root Plate Architecture - Gallery DA - Trench excavations in front of the art gallery revealed an absence of roots for six trees (three trees on the north side and three on the south side).		
Dec-06	A request for an investigation into implication of Hills figs in Laman Street as a result of a proposed DA for the extension of the art gallery. Dennis Marsden conducted the investigation and found no evidence of root structure for six figs adjacent to the gallery and further stated that the root systems were similar to those found in Tyrrell Street		
2007			
2007	Media releases outlining the damage and the proposed replacement strategies were distributed.		
11/07/07	Investigation into the stability of three Hill's Weeping Figs along Laman Street - D Marsden inspects trees – one outside No 41-42 Laman Street plus two opposite the art gallery. The tree at 41 Laman Street removed due to continued subsidence (topple) evidenced by heaving on the tension side and cracking of root crown compression side. One tree opposite the gallery removed due to lifted root plate compounded by extreme crown bias. Another tree - second from Darby on north side – had signs of lifting but no crown bias and was monitored for a period.		
30/7/07		<p>Memo to Councillors advising five Laman Street Fig trees were severely damaged by the June 2007 storm.</p> <p>The storms in June result in destabilisation or significant damage to approximately 1,400 trees in many parts of the LGA including two trees in Laman Street that were found to have been wind rocked. These trees were inspected immediately and removed due to the threat of immanent danger.</p> <p>Wind loading report in Laman Street by L Djenidi found no evidence of root structure for six figs adjacent to the gallery and further stated that the systems were similar to those found in Tyrrell Street.</p>	

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		Council commissioned Dennis Marsden to prepare an independent assessment of the remaining trees in Laman Street and two were identified for immediate removal with a third placed under a period of monitoring.	
18/09/07		Briefing to Council on the Newcastle Urban Forest Policy.	Council resolved that the briefing be received.
09/10/07		Report to Council for the Newcastle Urban Forest Policy to be placed on Public Exhibition.	<p>Council resolved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Urban Forest Background Paper be received and placed on public exhibition with the draft Urban Forest Policy for a period of eight weeks to allow community and industry input into the documents. • That consideration of Recommendation 2 be deferred until Council receives the report on the rest of LEP Amendment 4 on 6th November. Meanwhile the General Manager be requested to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Council either a) does not define 'tree' in the LEP, or b) defines it in a manner consistent with the definition from the Trees (Disputes Between Neighbours) Act. ○ Council addresses the regulatory burden through inclusion of trees based on size and species in Schedule 1 or 2 of the LEP - Exempt or Complying Development. ○ The detail of the species and size could be included in the technical manual similar to the way exempt species are managed. • The draft Tree Management Development

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			<p>Control Plan be placed on public exhibition for a minimum period of eight weeks pursuant to clause 18 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulations 2000.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Urban Forest Technical Manual be received and made available for perusal by interested parties during the exhibition of the draft DCP.
Late 2007	Media releases to inform the public about the Urban Forest Policy and the benefits of greening the City	Draft Urban Forest Policy placed on public exhibition	
2008			
06/05/08		Report to Council for the adoption of the Newcastle Urban Forest Policy.	<p>Council resolved to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt the Newcastle Urban Forest Policy. Pursue implementation of the Urban Forest Policy by developing a 10-year Strategic Action Plan. Resource allocation for the development of the Strategic Action Plan be made from the quarterly review. Resource requirements identified in the Strategic Action Plan be incorporated into Council's 10 year strategic plan, 4-year implementation Plan and annual budgets. Council adopt Newcastle Development Control Plan – Element 4.10 Tree Management as amended. The date of commencement for the Development Control Plan – Element 4.10 Tree Management be 1 July 2008. Notification of Council's approval of the Newcastle Development Control Plan –

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			Element 4.10 Tree Management be given in a newspaper during the month of June.
09/09/08		NOM - Laman Street Trees	Council resolved to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge the iconic status of Laman Street streetscape • Replace the two figs in Laman Street removed following the 2007 storm • Report on planting options in Cultural Precinct for trees lost in storm
		<p>Memo to Councillors prepared in response to resolution but not sent. Included the following information.</p> <p>In the context of Council's Asset Management approach and background issues that may not have been available to the Council at the time. Resolution cannot be actioned as it would contravene risk management obligations.</p> <p>Instead, the information was provided at a briefing to councillors on 03/02/09</p>	
13/09/08	COUNCIL ELECTIONS		
2009			
03/02/09		<p>Briefing to Councillors - Urban Trees in Particular Laman Street</p> <p><i>'This briefing is in response to Council's notice of motion and resolution (9 September 2008) regarding Laman Street trees.'</i></p>	Council resolved that the briefing be received.
19/05/09	An Issues Management Plan was developed in response to the	Report to Council recommending renewal of street trees in Laman Street between Darby and Dawson	<p>Council resolved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council notes the 3-page officer's report dated 15 May 2009, including that the 'trees have

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	<p>recommendation to remove the trees in Laman Street from Dawson to Darby Street. The plan's focus was to educate the community about risk management issues in Laman Street, the replacement process for the street and future tree management strategies.</p>	<p>Streets including removal of figs and replacing with a more suitable species of fig. Attachments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newcastle Urban Forest presentation – Public Trees Laman Street Cooks Hill • Laman Street Cultural Precinct Hills Fig Plantings 2008 – Area Map 	<p>been assessed as having a remaining life expectancy of between 5 and 15 years'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council receive an appropriately phased replacement strategy for the individual trees, including costed options that <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a Recognise the value that the mature trees bring to Laman Street b Preserve the canopy cover and landscape qualities of Laman Street c Investigate a range of risk management approaches with the view to retaining the trees for as long as practicably possible d Notes the benefit of staggering the cost over a number of years e Commence growing the replacement trees
07/08/09	Report Assessment of Hills Weeping Fig Laman Street Cultural Precinct - The Sugar Factory		
17/08/09	Report from The Sugar Factory , as a result of the Council meeting in May, advises that the best solution is whole of street removal and replacement as alternate risk management strategies that were reviewed would be impractical.		
02/09/09	Quantified Tree Risk Assessment (QTRA) - by Dean Simenson. Following IMS meeting seeking to quantify an obvious risk as per The Sugar Factory reports and case book study - 1:19 ROH for the June 2007 storm event or similar based on case book history.		
Sep-09	Treelogic commissioned to undertake Quantified Tree Risk Assessment. They also provided further comment on The Sugar Factory report and agreed with the findings that the future of the trees is limited due to some trees requiring immediate removal which would then place increased wind loading on the remaining trees.		
17/11/09		<p>Council received a report on Laman Street Trees in response to Council resolution 2 of the ECAG Strategic Themes Committee of 19 May 2009 concerning replacement of the Laman Street Cultural Precinct Fig trees</p>	<p>Council resolved that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillors participate in a community design process using place making principles to inform the Civic Cultural Precinct Laman Street design during December 2009- March 2010. • Council adopts a whole-of-street replacement strategy for the Civic Cultural

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			Precinct Laman Street to be commenced in 4 th quarter 2009-10 financial year after the adoption of street design for the Precinct.
24/11/09	A ward forum was held where a member of the group that would be known later as Save Our Figs (SOF) questioned the reports that were commissioned by Council without providing details of specific concerns		
08/12/09		Memo to Councillors regarding a request for information on the brief provided to the Arborist who reported on Laman Street figs.	
		Memo to Councillors regarding Civic Precinct - Laman Street Fig Trees - Quantified Tree Risk Assessment.	
		Public Voice - Briefing to Council - Laman Street Trees: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council heard a presentation from independent Arborist, Ian McKenzie about Council's resolution of 17 November 2009 regarding the determination to remove the Laman Street trees. • Mr Adrian Swain from Eco Design was in attendance as an independent arborist who had peer reviewed the Sugar Factory report on the stability and risk of the Laman Street Fig Trees and if required respond to issues raised by Mr McKenzie. In preparation for the briefing Mr Swain was provided with the report, allowed access to the site for an inspection and the case book history of the trees within the precinct. 	
14/12/09		Memo to Councillors regarding Civic Precinct - Laman Street fig trees update.	
15/12/09	Media Release 'Tree Management is a Balancing Act'.	NOM 15/12/09 - Rescission Motion - Item 28 Of the Economy & Civic Assets and Governance Agenda of 17 November - Laman Street Trees	Council resolved to rescind its decision of 17 November 2011. Council resolved to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • form a community design process using place making principles for the civic and cultural

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			<p>precinct of Laman Street.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> consider the arboricultural advice, the relevant resource and risk issues, and the full range of options available to Council and the community to address the future of these trees and make an appropriate recommendation to Council. Report back to Council by 1 May 2010. <p>Council resolved that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The General Manager forthwith be given Council's full support to implement whatever safety measures are deemed necessary to ensure the safety the public safety of the Laman Street precinct, apart from removing the trees. The General Manager report to Council by way of memo as information becomes available or as action is taken.
17/12/09	Communication Plan and Consultation Plan are developed which includes a Newcastle Voice survey	Memo to Councillors on the Civic Precinct - Laman Street Fig Trees - Risk Management Update.	
2010			
Jan-10	Feasibility Study Restraint and Archway by Total Height Safety in conjunction with Partridge Partners		
14/01/10	A Project Control Group (PCG) was formed comprising of managers and staff from across the organisation involved with Laman Street trees. The group met at least fortnightly to		

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	discuss operational and strategic issues. The forum was also used to discuss and approve communication methods and messages.		
19/01/10	Due to time constraints Newcastle Voice survey dedicated to Laman Street issue is no longer feasible.		
21/01/10	PCG decides not to proceed with community information session. Discussion about Newcastle Voice survey - decision to send a vision question to members and distribute postcards for community members to provide comment or draw their vision - information to be collated and distributed to design workshop participants. Detailed advertising campaign for nominations to design workshop		
22/01/10	Preparation of documentation to be distributed to participants at Design Workshop		
Feb-10	Newcastle Voice Survey on the long term vision for Civic Park and Cultural Precinct. Story included in February Newcastle Voice newsletter		
02/02/10		Report to Council - Laman Street - Civic Precinct Design Workshop - Outline of Process	Council resolved: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To endorse the community design process outlined in this report. • Councillors attend as observers as opposed to

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			stakeholder members.
		Memo to Councillors advising a two day intensive design workshop has been schedule to investigate options for Laman Street - Civic Precinct on 19 and 20 March 2010.	
04/02/10		Memo to Councillors regarding Laman Street - Civic Precinct Design Workshop proposed stakeholder list.	
10/02/10	Full page ad in <i>The Star</i> included information on the Laman Street – Civic Precinct Design Workshop		
11/02/10		Memo to Councillors advising of workshop scheduling, advertising and nomination process.	
13/02/10	Full page ad in the <i>Newcastle Herald</i> included information on the Laman Street – Civic Precinct Design Workshop		
24/02/10		Memo to Councillors advising of the nomination period for members of the public, nearby residents/businesses and stakeholders to participate in the Laman Street - Civic Precinct has been extended to 5 March 2010. 'The list of nominees requested by the Lord Mayor will then be sent to all Councillors'.	
25/02/10		Memo to Councillors advising Laman Street-Civic Precinct Workshop Nominations extended to 5 March 2012.	
03/10	Council News, Autumn Edition contained an article titled 'A vision for		

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	Laman Street - Civic Precinct'		
08/03/10	Social impact assessment stage 1 - Hills Figs Trees, Laman Street, Newcastle by Community Dimensions .		
09/03/10	The following documents to be distributed with letters of offer for participants: - Newcastle Voice consultation report - Dennis Marsden's report - Draft Heritage Assessment - Workshop timetable		
	Communication Team advise of progress on consultation and recommends distributing the Newcastle Voice consultation report to ELT, Councillors and to publish on Council website by 19 March	Memo to Councillors with details of Workshop Attendees 19 and 20 March 2010.	
	Laman Street Hills Figs QTRA and review by Aboreport .		
		Memo to Councillors in response to Lord Mayor's request for the number of nominations received for the Laman Street Civic Precinct Workshop on 19 and 20 March 2012.	
11/03/10	Newcastle Voice Report - documentation provided to the workshop participants.	Memo to Councillors regarding Laman Street Workshop 19 and 20 March 2012 and providing electronic copies of the following reports:	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newcastle Voice Laman Street Civic Precinct Report • Assessment of Hill's Weeping in the Civic Cultural Precinct, Laman Street Cooks Hill, by Dennis Marsden, Consulting Arborist • Draft Laman Street Fig Trees Heritage Assessment & Recommendations by Heritas Architecture. 	

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12/03/10		Memo to Councillors providing Update two on Laman Street Fig Trees - QTRA and Root Investigation.	
16/03/10	Heritage assessment and recommendations by Heritas Architecture dated 09/03/10 together with the revised report dated 16/03/10.		
19/03/10 and 20/03/10	Two day Civic and Cultural Precinct Laman Street Design Workshop held. Presentation at the Laman Street Civic Precinct community design workshop by Earthscape Horticultural Services on 19 March 2010.		
Apr-10	All expert reports made available on Council's website.		
06/04/10		Memo to Councillors attaching the information pack distributed to workshop participants.	
15/04/10	Survey responses received (survey development by Strategic Planning Services after Plenary Session).		
22/04/10		Memo to Councillors in response to Councillor request on behalf of Mr John Perceval regarding changed parking conditions in Laman Street and a subsequent parking penalty infringement notice (PIN).	
02/05/10		Councillors received briefings by Michael Down (DLA Phillips Fox) and Dr Ken James (ENSPEC)	
03/05/10	LSTWP received briefings by Michael Down (DLA Phillips Fox) and Dr Ken James (ENSPEC)		
11/05/10		Public Voice - Civic Precinct Community Design Process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On behalf of the Street Action Group Mr John DeBruyn and Fee Drelincourt provided a presentation outlining why the trees could remain from a workshop participants 	

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		<p>perspective.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillors received a copy of the presentations. 	
12/05/10	CD of background information to Design Workshop - Proceedings of Civic Design Workshop.	Memo to Councillors enclosing a CD containing the proceedings of the Laman Street-Civic Precinct Community Design Workshop and Plenary held in March and April 2010.	
14/05/10	Media Release - Precinct Plans unveiled Media Statement - War Memorials in Design Framework		
18/05/10		Report to Council - Laman Street Civic Precinct Community Design Process, for Public Exhibition	
21/05/10	Media Statement - No parking in Laman Street risk strategy		
25/05/10		Memo to Councillors in response to Lord Mayor request regarding parking of motor vehicles in no stopping zones in Laman Street Newcastle.	
23/06/10	Media Statement - Number of Laman Street closures		
08/07/10		Memo to Councillors attaching copy of letter to resident explaining Council processes re: road closure and safety management.	
09/07/10	Feasibility Study – tree restraint by Total Height Safety Pty Ltd – Tree Restraint Division		

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15/07/10		Memo to Councillors advising of Councillor Information Session 27 July 2010 on Laman St-Civic Precinct Tree Management Options.	
20/07/10		LMM - Laman Street Memorial Trees	The Lord Mayor put the motion to the meeting and declared it defeated.
26/07/10	Media Statement - Laman Street Councillor Information Session		
27/07/10	Council holds an open workshop on the draft Civic Cultural Precinct Laman Street design framework. A range of Replacement Strategies are prepared as an Excel spreadsheet known as the "tablecloth". It summarises the quadruple bottom line for a range of scenarios – 10 in total.		
28/07/10	Media Statement - Laman Street Risk Stats		
05/08/10	Media Statement - Laman Street update root damage		
09/08/10	Media Statement - Laman Street trees valuation		
12/08/10		Memo to Councillors providing an Update on Laman Street Civic Precinct Tree Management Issues following Councillor Public Workshop 27 July 2010.	
17/08/10		Memo to Councillors in response to Councillor request regarding staged replacement of Laman Street trees.	
		Report to Council - Laman Street Civic Precinct - Recommendation for Tree Management	<p>Council resolved that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Laman Street and Civic Park Precinct Design Framework (from May 2010) be adopted as the guiding principle and that Laman Street be implemented as Stage 1 of the Precinct project.

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Hills fig trees in Laman Street Newcastle between Darby St and Dawson St be removed as soon as possible and replaced with a central line of Hills figs as soon as suitable trees can be provided. • Detailed designs in accordance with the design framework be prepared immediately and referred to the Traffic committee. • Council be briefed by December 2010 on implementation of the Laman St and Civic Precinct renewal project.
18/08/10	Media Release - Future of the figs decided Media Statement - cost of figs instead of liquid ambers	Memo to Councillors containing text of Council Resolution from 19/05/09.	
24/08/10	Media Statement (<i>The Star</i>) - Laman Street Tree Removal		
31/08/10	Media Statement Save Our Figs arborist's report		
01/09/10		Memo to Councillors in response to Lord Mayor's request for information regarding a report by Mark Hartley.	
02/09/10	Flyers designed for Laman Street History Project and distributed via libraries and various other distribution methods.		
03/09/10		Memo to Councillors in response to Lord Mayor's request for information regarding a report by Mark Hartley and the Memo to Councillors dated 1	

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		September 2010. Contains Dennis Marsden's response.	
04/09/10	Ad appears in the <i>Newcastle Herald</i> for Laman Street History Project.		
07/09/10		Memo to Councillors regarding Laman Street Trees independent report from Mark Hartley of Arboreport. (information for Councillors)	
Sept-10	Draft design framework included in a grant application made to the Anzac Centenary Fund. The application was put together by a community reference group which includes representation from the District RSL, National Servicemen's Association and Combined Forces. The application seeks funds to create an Anzac Centennial gathering place on Laman Street, enhancing the War Memorial Cultural Centre (Library) and existing war memorials in Civic Park. If Council is successful in receiving a grant, a detailed plan will be required to be developed and approved.		
13/09/10	Fauna Habitat Assessment by Forest Fauna Surveys Pty Ltd		
	Media Conference held following the resolution to remove the trees and discuss the process of works. Media Release - Tree removal to start		
14/09/10	Newspaper advert prepared advising of temporary road closure for Laman Street	Memo to Councillors advising the removal of Hill's Fig Trees from Laman Street Civic Precinct is commencing 20 September 2012.	
16/09/10	Media Statement - Laman Street tree removal and injunction	Email to Councillors advising Council has been served with a summons by the solicitor for Parks and Playgrounds Movement Inc.	
	Fence signage prepared to inform community of Laman Street road closure and tree removal.	Memo to Councillors providing an update on Laman Street Risk Management Strategy.	
17/09/10	Media Statement - Interim injunction	Email to Councillors advising Land and Environment Court granting interim injunction to prevent Council	

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		from commencing the felling of Laman Street Hill's figs on Tuesday.	
18/09/10	Full page ad in the <i>Newcastle Herald</i> to inform community of Laman Street road closure and tree removal. Included information about Civic Precinct design process, new tree plantings and Laman Street History Project.(Appendix B)		
22/09/10	Media Statement - Council's arborists' reports	Email to Councillors advising the Land and Environment Court granted Parks and Playground Movement Inc's request to move the hearing date for this matter. The hearing has now been set for 6 and 7 October 2010.	
23/09/10		Email to Councillors re: Councillors may be approached by members of the community who are involved in the current proceedings against Council in relation to the Laman Street Hill's Figs.	
28/09/10		Memo in response to Councillor request concerning the environmental impact statement for Laman Street.	
		Email to Councillors providing legal advice on how to respond to matters before the court and requests from community members to meet regarding Laman Street.	
30/09/10	Large signage prepared (600 x 900mm) to inform community of Laman Street road closure and tree removal. Included information about Civic Precinct design process, new tree plantings and Laman Street History Project		

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	Flyers prepared for distribution to residents and general community titled Laman Street – Road Closures and Public Safety		
27/10/10	Media Statement - Civic Precinct Design Framework		
	Media Statement 'Fact Sheet' about the court case.		
04/11/10	Media Statement - Court Case	Memo to Councillors regarding Laman Street Legal Costs.	
10/11/10	Media Statement - Anzac Place Laman Street		
11/11/10	Media Statement - Laman Street Court Decision	Email to Councillors advising of Laman Street Trees Outcome.	
16/11/10		Memo to Councillors - Tree management options for Laman Street.	
		NOM - Late Item of Business - Laman Street Trees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council resolved that before enacting any Council resolution Council investigate the feasibility of a Pull Test on the fig trees. • Receive a briefing on outcome of civic master planning process.
19/11/10		Memo to Councillors with summary of court judgment - case dismissed.	
24/11/10	Media Statement - NBN Laman St figs vs City-wide		
30/11/10		Email to Councillors in response to an email from John Sutton to Councillors regarding information	

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		provided by Council Officers re: legal dimensions of Laman St decision.	
12/10	Council News, Summer Edition - contained an article titled "Laman Street update"		
07/12/10		Memo to Councillors regarding proposals for tree management Laman Street.	
		NOM - Petition for Laman Street Trees General Manager's Comment on NOM 07/12/10 - Item No. 27 - Petition for Laman Street Trees	Council received the petition about <i>Save the Laman Street Trees</i> containing 2,477 signatures.
14/12/10	Extraordinary Council Meeting	Public Voice - Laman Street Trees and Pull Test <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ms Fee Dreincourt on behalf of the Save our Figs Group gave briefing to Council. Mr Morgan Sheehy, Partridge Partners, gave a summary of the report on feasibility of conducting a pull test to Council. 	
		Report to Council - Laman Street Tree Pull Test Feasibility	Council resolved to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not proceed with the Pull Test Retain the fig trees Implement alternative risk mitigation, monitoring and tree management strategies Establish a working party reporting to the Urban Planning and Design Strategic Advisory Committee (UPDAC) Invite ENSPEC to address Council
		Report to Council - Draft Laman Street Civic Precinct Design Framework for Public Exhibition	Council resolved to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council publicly exhibit the draft Laman St - Civic Precinct Design Framework developed at the March 2010 community design workshop for a period concluding 28 February 2011. Officers provide a briefing and report to

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			Council summarising submissions, recommended changes and the final design framework for Laman Street - Civic Precinct in early 2011
23/12/10		Memo to Councillors in response to a Councillor request for the total legal fees incurred.	
24/12/10		Memo to Councillors regarding Public Exhibition of Draft Laman Street Civic Precinct Design Framework.	
2011			
03/01/11	Ads in the <i>Newcastle Herald</i> throughout January and February on public exhibition of the draft Laman Street Civic Precinct Design Framework	Exhibition period of design framework commences concluding 28 February	
07/01/11	Media Release - Feedback sought for Civic Precinct		
09/02/11		Memo in response to Councillor request regarding Working Party formation - Laman Street Trees.	
25/02/11	Media Release - Laman Street Working Party		
28/02/11		Memo to Councillors - invite to nominate to the Laman Street Trees Working Party.	
14/03/11		Memo in response to Lord Mayor's request regarding Laman Street trees and Civic Precinct.	
Apr-11	Living Street campaign commenced in Stockton (completed in November)		

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	2011)		
01/04/11	Case History informing Tree Management was published on Councils website.		
04/04/11		Memo to Councillors providing Laman Street and Civic Precinct Consultation results from Newcastle Voice Survey about the exhibition of the Laman Street Civic Precinct Design Framework.	
06/04/11	Media Release - Community feedback for Civic Precinct		
07/04/11	Media Statement - Laman St Fencing		
19/04/11		LMM - Removal of Barricades in Laman Street - to remove the wire mesh barricades. General Manager's Report on LMM Item No. 3 on Removal of Barricades in Laman Street	Council resolved to be briefed by ENSPEC on alternative risk management strategies and to receive a report on the Laman Street Trees Working Party through the Urban Planning and Design Strategic Advisory Committee
28/04/11		Memo in response to Councillor request regarding Laman Street Workshop and working party update.	
29/04/11		Memo to Councillors with history of branch failures in LGA.	
May 11	Councillors and UPDAC briefed by Dr Ken James of ENSPEC and Michael Dwon from DLA Piper.		
04/05/11	Media Statement - Memorial Grove design framework.		
16/05/11		Memo directing Councillors to copy of casebook of tree failures.	

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20/05/11	Laman Street and Public Safety sign attached to fences in Civic Park and Laman Street		
26/05/11		Memo in response to Councillor request regarding Laman Street Concept for Avenue Planting of Hills Figs.	
31/05/11		Memo to Councillors - Public Voice Presentation of 14 December 2010 by 'Save Our Figs' Group - Documentation provided to Dennis Marsden	
16/06/11		Memo to Councillors advising insurance coverage will cease from 31/08/11 (attaching copy of letter).	
21/06/11		Email to Councillors with a copy of the memo to Stateside Mutual regarding documentation provided.	
24/06/11		Memo to Councillors advising of Laman Street Working Party resignation.	
		Memo in response to Lord Mayor's request regarding the information presented to Laman Street Working Party in relation to the costs of ENSPEC proposal.	
27/06/11	Media Statement - Laman Street and ENSPEC Media Statement - Response to ENSPEC email		
05/07/11		Report to Council - Laman Street / Civic Park - Results of Public Exhibition of Civic Precinct Design Framework	<p>Council resolved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To endorse the draft design principles for the draft Laman Street – Civic Precinct Design Framework and to update the Civic and Cultural Precinct Masterplan to reflect

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			the endorsed design principles
06/07/11		Memo in response to Councillor request regarding Laman Street expenditure.	
11/07/11		Email from Acting General Manager (AGM) to Councillors providing a letter from Statewide Mutual stating the outcome of a meeting attended by the AGM and Lord Mayor.	
15/07/11		Memo to Councillors advising recent branch failures in Laman Street.	
18/07/11		Memo to Councillors regarding Laman Street Risk Identification and Management.	
		Memo in response to Councillor requests for information regarding the breakdown of the \$648,506 for Laman Street expenditure and QTRA carried out by Treelogic in 2009.	
19/07/11		Report to Council - Laman Street Fig Trees Assessment and Management of Risk	<p>Council resolved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To remove and replace, with regards to the Street Tree Masterplan, the 14 Fig Trees as soon as practical under section 88 of the <i>Roads Act 1993</i> (NSW) because Council is of the opinion that the Fig Trees are likely to cause danger to traffic, property and persons in the use of Laman Street and are a traffic hazard in severe weather events.
		Report to Council - Laman Street Fig Tree Dynamic Testing Proposal	Council resolved to not proceed with dynamic testing of the Laman Street Hills Fig trees.
			Submission - Petition to Save the Laman Street Fig Trees tabled at the Council meeting.

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20/07/11	Media Release - More risk measures for Laman Street Notice placed on fences surrounding Civic Park and Laman Street informing the community about the Laman Street Tree Removal resolution Media Statement - Court costs Media Statement - Security costs		
27/07/11	Media Statement - Laman Street visiting arborists		
28/07/11		Memo to Councillors regarding self insurance options available to Council.	
01/08/11	Media Statement - Tree removal to go ahead	Memo in response to Lord Mayor's request on behalf of a Cooks Hill resident regarding the Laman Street trees.	
		Amended memo in response to Lord Mayor's request on behalf of a Cooks Hill resident regarding the Laman Street Trees.	
02/08/11		LMM - Laman Street Figs re: Mediation	Council resolved to appoint a reference panel of four Councillors and the General Manager to confirm a suitable, mutually acceptable process for mediation with Save Our Figs in relation to the immediate future of the Laman Street trees, and to select representatives from that reference panel to represent Council in that mediation. Council adjourns the rescission motions until the outcome of the mediation is known.
		NOM - Rescission Motion - Laman Street Fig Trees -	Council adjourned this item as part of resolution for the Lord Mayoral Minute - Laman Street

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		Assessment and Management of Risk.	Trees.
		Memo in response to Councillor request regarding Laman Street Trees Operation Plan.	
		Memo in response to Lord Mayor's questions raised with the General Manager 1 August 2011 regarding Laman Street Hills Fig Trees.	
03/08/11		Memo to Councillors re: ability of LMM to rescind a decision of Council.	
		Councillors received a copy of Council's letter to Mr McHugh re: offer to conduct mediation.	
04/08/11	Signage prepared to inform the community about how to access the Art Gallery and Library (includes footprints on footpaths leading to the buildings)	Copy of Mr McHugh's email re: inability to assist with mediation sent to Councillors by General Manager.	
05/08/11		Copy of letter sent to Mr McHugh re: amended proposal for mediation sent to Councillors.	
08/08/11		Memo to Councillors from General Manager re: status of notified rescission motions given mediation is proceeding.	
10/08/11	Media Statement - Laman St reference group for mediation		
11/08/11		Agenda and Laman Street Working Party (LSTWP) 11/08/2011 and Minutes of previous meeting 14/07/11.	
		Agenda UPDAC 11/08/11 and Minutes of the Previous	

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		<p>Meeting of UPDAC 07/07/11.</p> <p>Update on LSTWP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mediation process being undertaken • Draft concept plan for Laman and Civic Precinct distributed <p>Resolution: the proposal from LSTWP re independent advice lay on the table pending the outcome of the mediation process.</p>	
15/08/11		Memo in response to Councillor request to distribute the Laman Street Concept Plan images as provided to the 11/08/2011 UPDAC meeting.	
16/08/11		NOM - Rescission Motion LMM Laman Street Trees 02/08/11	<p>Council resolved that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Lord Mayoral Minute be noted and Council wish the parties well with the mediation set down for Thursday 18 August 2011.
18/08/11	Media Statement - Joint Save Our Figs/Council mediation advising teams have agreed that the option of third party determination to resolve the issue of the risk posed by Laman Street Trees will be referred to the elected Council.	Mediation between Council and Save Our Figs Inc.	
23/08/11	Media Statement to <i>Newcastle Herald</i>		
24/08/11		Memo to Councillors setting out estimated costs for third party (non-binding) determination.	
25/08/11		Extraordinary Council Meeting Held - General Managers Report on outcome of Laman Street Trees Mediation - no recommendation proposed.	<p>Council resolved that the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report be received and noted.
		NOM - Rescission Motion - Laman Street Hills Fig	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motion of 5 parts from Clrs Osborne &

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		Tree Dynamic Testing Proposal NOM - Rescission Motion - Laman Street Fig Trees - Assessment and Management of Risk	Claydon defeated <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Manager's report on mediation received and noted • Rescission motion regarding dynamic testing vote 19 July defeated • Rescission motion regarding assessment and management of risk vote 19 July defeated
26/08/11	Media Release - Figs to be removed in Laman Street Media Statement - The Herald Laman Street		
29/08/11	Media Statement - Laman Street		
31/08/11		Memo to Councillors providing information relating to the ground penetrating radar and visual trenching investigations of the Laman Street Hills Fig Tree root plates.	
01/09/11		Memo to Councillors attaching Adrian Swan's response to Mark Hartley report.	
05/09/11	Media Statement - Street Insurance		
06/09/11		Late Item of Business - Reports to Council - Costs for Laman Street Fig Trees 'Councillor Nelmes indicated that due to the escalating cost regarding the Laman Street trees matter, she wished to pursue a motion for all ongoing costs associated with Laman Street trees be reported to Council for approval with no further funds to be committed by the Administration without prior Council	Motion defeated.

Laman Street Engagement Processes



		approval.	
09/09/11	Media Statement - Library and Gallery closure		
13/09/11		Memo in response to Lord Mayor's request regarding a number of questions relating to the Laman Street Trees.	
		NOM - Third party determination of the risk presented by the Laman Street Trees	<p>Council resolved to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proceed with third party determination matter with Save Our Figs to address questions identified in General Manager's Report on outcome of mediation. • Independent expert assessment involve the engagement of experts at a maximum cost of \$20,000 to Council with Save our Figs contributing an equal amount to Council. • Council's reference group appointed for mediation be delegated to negotiate and finalise specific details of a mutually acceptable independent and jointly engage to undertake independent assessment. • Above delegation be carried out without the need for further reference to the elected Council. • Findings and recommendations arising from assessment referred to Council for final determination. <p>At the Council Meeting a petition to Save the Laman Street Fig Trees was tabled.</p>
14/09/11	Updated Fauna Report provided noting that habitat not suitable for micro bats. Fauna Habitat Assessment - September Inspection.		
15/09/11		Agenda UPDAC 15/09/11 and Minutes of the Previous Meeting of UPDAC 11/08/11.	

Laman Street Engagement Processes



17/09/11	Interim injunction granted by Land and Environment Court following an application by Parks and Playground Movement		
19/09/11		Confidential legal advice re: validity of motions distributed to Councillors.	
20/09/11	Media Statement - General Managers responsibility to implement resolution	Late Item of Business - Legal Advice Circulated to Councillors - Laman Street Figs 'The Lord Mayor reported that an email and attachments was circulated by the General Manager on 19 September 2011 containing legal advice from Senior Counsel. The advice related to the validity of Council's resolution of 13 September 2011 regarding the Laman Street trees.'	Action Item: <ul style="list-style-type: none">In respect of confidential advice distributed by the General Manager to Councillors 19 September 2011 by Senior Counsel, confidentiality be lifted.
22/09/11		Memo to Councillors regarding Save Our Figs Petitions.	
23/09/11		Memo in response to Lord Mayor's request Laman Street Figs - clarification of number of trees and map.	
	Report by Dennis Marsden dated 23/09/11		
	The Sugar Factory provides update on tree status concluding that there has been no significant change to warrant revision of previous reports.		
	Arborist report The Sugar Factory - Review of the current condition of the Figs VTA stage 1 - There were no significant changes noted branch failures, additional growth of canopy both extensiona and epicormic, some deadwood.		
26/09/11		Memo to Lord Mayor, cc Councillors from Director City Engagement regarding cost and scope of works - Laman Street Trees.	
29/09/11	Media Statement - Southern footway closed		
30/09/11		Memo in response to Councillors requests for information about the cost of the legal opinions from Senior Council regarding the procedural issues relating to the Laman Street trees.	

Laman Street Engagement Processes



04/10/11		Memo to for an update on the independent assessment process.	
		NOM - Rescission Motion 13/09/11 Third Party Determination of the Risk Presented by the Laman Street Trees	Council rescinded its decision of 13/09/11 to proceed with independent assessment.
		NOM - Laman Street Fig Trees Review of Process General Manager's Report on NOM - Laman Street Fig Trees Review of Process	<p>Council resolved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council directs General Manager to conduct a review of Laman Street Fig Tree issue and provide a report evaluating processes adopted by Council, with recommendations for improving Council's engagement processes in respect to issues of major community significance. • The review will comprise an evaluation of the following, with regard to the Laman Street Fig trees: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the community consultation methodologies and processes used by Council - the scope of information supplied to Councillors and the community - methods of communication between the Council administration, Councillors, key stakeholders, community groups and the media - the function and operation of the Laman Street Fig Trees Working Party, relevant Advisory Committees and Council - any other communication or consultation elements considered relevant by the reviewer • The General Manager should table the completed report by February 2012

Laman Street Engagement Processes



05/10/11	Media Statement - Possible injunction	Email to Councillors regarding Laman Street - notice of application for injunction. (Note: injunction not applied for).	
06/10/11	Media Release - Laman Street figs will be removed tomorrow	Email to Councillors advising that injunction was not sought and that work would recommence on 07/10/11 at 6am.	
07/10/11	Tree works commence but are halted due to protest activity and safety concerns.		
11/10/11		Memo from General Manager to Lord Mayor, cc Councillors and The Hon Tim Owen MP regarding meeting held with Councillors and Tim Owen in City Hall on Laman Street.	
		Memo from General Manager to Councillors advising that a rescission motion is not possible until 25/11/11 and requesting their input regarding an alternative course of action.	
12/10/11	Media Statement - Abuse of Art Gallery staff Media Statement - GM Laman Street Signage prepared for closure of Art Gallery and Library Media Statement - Contracts for Laman St Security and tree removal	Memo from General Manager to Councillors stating that he had received a request from a majority of Councillors to invite an arborist from BCC to remove the material prepared by Council and SOF and would obtain legal advice about whether he could proceed that way. Councillors advised that Art Gallery and Library would remain closed for the time being.	
13/10/11	Media Statement - GM Laman Street	Memo from General Manager to Councillors attaching legal advice from John Griffiths SC. General Manager advised that in accordance with this advice he would continue to implement the resolution of Council to remove the trees.	

Laman Street Engagement Processes



17/10/11		Letter from General Manager to Councillors re: intention to seek agreement with SOF to arrange independent assessment of trees.	
19/10/11	Infrastructure Management Services review of Engineer PV - responds to claims made in PV.		
20/10/11	Media Statement - Laman Street Save Our Figs agreement signed Media Statement - Response to questions from Newcastle Herald	Council and SOF entered into agreement to procure independent assessment from the one consultant nominated by SOF	
21/10/11	Media Statement - Laman Street insurance update	Memo in response to Councillor request regarding Laman Street Figs - Impact of the delay in removing the trees on the proposed program.	
25/10/11	Media Statement - Laman Street update Media Statement - Laman Street update		
26/10/11	Media Statement - State Government offer of arborist Media Background - Laman Street General 7.30 Report Media Background - Laman Street Key messages 7.30 Report Media Statement - Anzac Centenary Place		
27/10/11	Media Statement - Impact of library and art gallery closure	Letter from General Manager to Councillors with update on independent assessment process: Brisbane City Council arborist not available, that removal will proceed and that Statewide has extended	

Laman Street Engagement Processes



		cover to 30 November 2011 to allow removal to proceed.	
31/10/11	Media Statement - Laman Street update		
01/11/11		Memo in response to Lord Mayor's request, on behalf of a resident, regarding a number of questions relating to Laman Street trees.	
		Memo in response to Councillor request regarding the line item for expenditure of \$750,000 on Laman Street.	
			Extraordinary Council Meeting does not make quorum after four Councillors walk out. Adjourned to 08/11/11.
02/11/11		Memo in response to a Councillor request for the presentation given to a group of architects, engineers and landscape artists in August.	
		Email from General Manager to Councillors (1.36pm) - interim injunction not yet received, no reason for work not to proceed.	
Works scheduled to commence. More protest activity including inside CAC. Injunction granted at 3.30pm.			
03/11/11	Media Statement - Laman Street Costs		
04/11/11	Media Statement - Reopening of Gallery and Library		
	Media Statement - Court Judgment		
08/11/11	Media Statement - Laman Street costs	Notice of motion to consider and respond to recent offer of assistance from the Premier in relation to the	Councillor Claydon gave NOM. Extraordinary Meeting fails to reach decision. Meeting adjourned.

Laman Street Engagement Processes



		Laman Street Fig Trees	
10/11/11		Memo to Councillors providing an update on the changed security arrangements for Laman Street.	
11/11/11	Parks and Playground Movement's application dismissed by the Land and Environment Court		
15/11/11		Consideration and Response to the Recent Offer of Assistance from the Premier, Barry O'Farrell in Relation to the Laman Street Trees	Council resolved the meeting be adjourned until after the 25 November 2011.
17/11/11	Media Statement - Interim Injunction		
18/11/11	Media Statement - City-wide fig fate		
26/11/11	Media Statement - Anzac Centenary		
28/11/11		Memo to Councillors regarding the WorkCover implications of events around Laman Street and Civic Park on 07/10/11.	
01/12/11		NOM Council recommended to Consider And Respond To The Recent Offer Of Assistance From The Premier, Barry O'Farrell In Relation To The Laman Street Fig Trees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The motion was defeated on the division of seven votes to four votes. Councillor Claydon withdrew her motion foreshadowed at the meeting of the 8 November 2011.
06/12/11		Late Item of Business - The Matter of Laman Street Trees	Councillor Claydon withdrew the motion.
09/12/11	Media Statement - Anzac Centenary Place		
15/12/11		Letter to Councillors from General Manager re: lack of availability of police support until after the Christmas and New Year period.	

Laman Street Engagement Processes



		Memo to Councillors from General Manager re: advice on lawfulness of motions lying on the table.	
2012			
06/01/12	Media statement – Laman Street update		
11/01/12	Media statement – Fig fact forum Media statement – Response to Lonsdale report		
12/01/12	Media statement – Australia Day awards and figs		
13/01/12	Director Liveable City writes a letter to the <i>Newcastle Herald</i> editor in response to Doug Lithgow's claim that there would only be one row of Fig Trees.		
17/01/12	Media release – 'Fig Fact Forum' light on facts' Media statement – Fig forum Invite Website notice – 'Fig Fact Forum light on facts'	Memo to Councillors – information regarding the plans for replacement of the trees in Laman Street.	
18/01/12	Media statement to NBN on figs	Memo to Councillors – response to claims made at the Fig Fact Forum held on Monday 16 January 2012. Memo to Councillors – information regarding removal of Hills Fig at the front of 21 Swan Street Cooks Hill and photos.	
24/01/12	Media statement - response to Ellison report Media statement – response to		

Laman Street Engagement Processes



	engineers presentation 19 July 2011		
25/01/12	Full page advertisement <i>Newcastle Herald</i> Media release – General Manager’s message to the community on Laman Street		
31/01/12	Media release – Laman Street tree removal underway Media release – GM statement Laman Street tree removal Media release – Safety concerns in Laman Street		
01/02/12	Media statement – Laman Street update	Memo to Councillors – information regarding hours of operation for the removal of the Laman Street trees.	
02/02/12	Media release – GM update Laman Street tree removal Media statement – Laman Street costs	Email to Councillors from GM – update re: Laman Street Media release emailed to Councillors by GM – update re: Laman Street	
03/02/12	Media statement- Library closing hours Media release – Laman Street update		
06/02/12	Media statement – Community service announcement- Art Gallery and Library closed for another day Media statement – Laman Street update to NBN Media statement – Is Council paying for police?	Email to Councillors from GM – update re: Laman Street Email to Councillors from GM – update re: Laman Street	

Laman Street Engagement Processes



	Media statement – What’s next? To NBN		
07/02/12	Media statement - Laman Street update	Media release emailed to Councillors by GM – update re: Laman Street Memo to Councillors – information regarding an indicative timetable for the replacement of the trees in Laman Street.	
08/02/12		Memo to Councillors – updated re: the Laman Street Fig Trees Review of Process Report.	
09/02/12	Media statement – Library and Gallery opening and Laman street update		
10/02/12		Memo to Councillors – information regarding the probabilities of failure for the Laman Street trees and comments related attributed to Professor Mark Stewart.	

Appendix B - Full Page Ad - Newcastle Herald 18/9/10

Laman Street Road closure and tree removal



Laman Street will be closed to traffic from Monday 20 September for around three weeks to allow tree removal works to start.

The activity follows a Council resolution on 17 August to remove the 14 Hill's Fig trees for public safety reasons and replace them with a central planting of Hill's Fig trees to ensure a quality public domain for future generations.

The Art Gallery and Library will be open

Access to the Art Gallery and Library will still be available during most of these works, however there will be impacts due to noise and short periods when the southern footway will be inaccessible. Council apologises for any inconvenience.

Tree removal process

Council will be removing the trees in stages to reduce any potential impact on local fauna.

The crown and upper branches of the trees will be removed first. Then the trunk sections where tree hollows are present will be removed. The final stage will be to grind the tree stumps and make the area safe for pedestrians and motorists.

Interim parking and place activation

After the trees are removed, Council will put interim parking measures in place in Laman Street to maximise access to the civic and cultural precinct while it is preparing for road construction work and tree planting.

Council is also working on a place activation program to offer activities and events in the street. The *Step Into the Cultural Precinct* program will run until the new trees are planted.

What are the issues/faults with trees?

Arborists have found the Laman Street Hill's Figs have a high likelihood of falling because:

- The tree root systems have been removed and damaged by the installation and maintenance of road, drainage and below ground infrastructure
- The root systems run in an east west direction which means the trees are vulnerable to winds blowing from the south
- Strong winds are captured by the large tree canopies which puts a significant pressure on the limited root systems.

After investigating the trees, four independent arborists came to the same conclusion: **the Hill's Fig trees in Laman Street pose a significant risk to public safety.**



Design for the Laman Street Civic Precinct

Council has started the detailed design process for parking and traffic based on the Laman Street and Civic Design Framework. There will be significant road construction works which need to be carefully planned. The design will be presented to Council in December this year. Construction is expected to take three to four months.

New Hill's Fig tree plantings

Council will plant eight new Hill's Fig trees in a central avenue during the growing season in April to May 2010. This follows arborist advice that removal and replacement of the trees as a group will secure the best long-term outcome. There are a number of services under the footpaths in Laman Street. To maximise the trees' ongoing health and longevity, the trees will be planted in special vaults in the centre of the road to allow for necessary growth with appropriate traffic flow arrangements.

Laman Street History Project

The Newcastle Region Library is coordinating a project to capture stories and emotions. You can make an appointment to talk to the Local Studies Librarians on 4974 5330. You can also write a message in the Legacy Books in the Art Gallery, Library and Council's Customer Enquiry Centre.

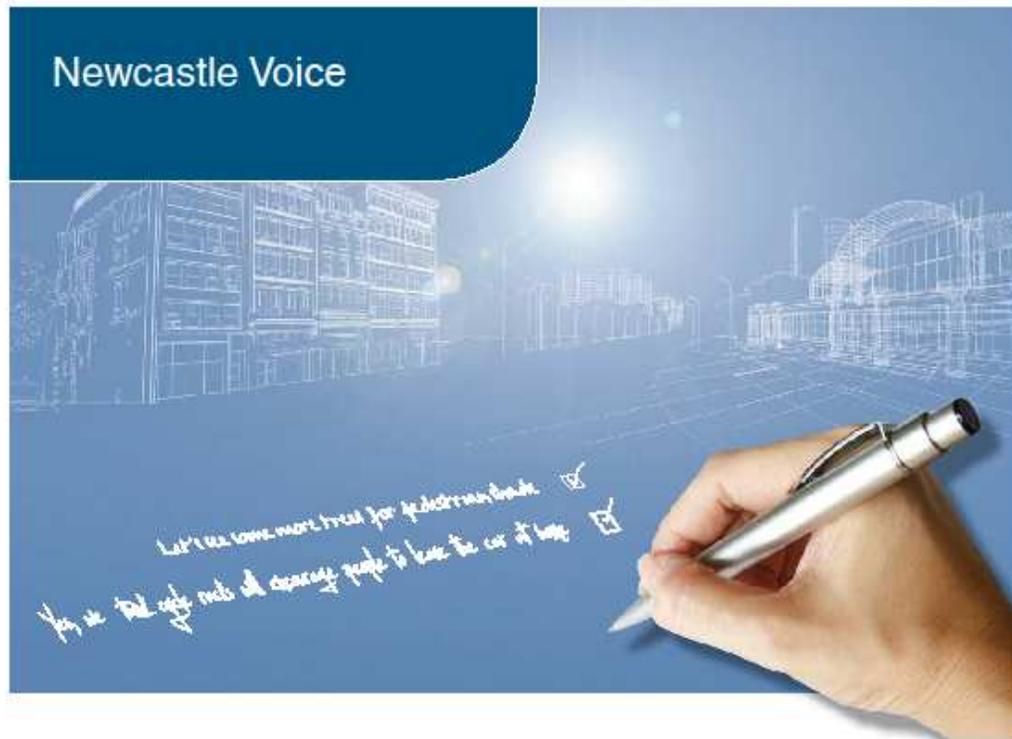
You can find reports and information on Council's website at:

www.newcastle.nsw.gov.au and search for *Laman Street*



Analysis and investigations	
2006	Root plate architecture of the Hill's Figs in Laman Street reviewed by consulting arborist Dennis Marsden MAIH, MISA, MNAAA
2007	Investigation into stability of three Hill's Figs along Laman Street by consulting arborist Dennis Marsden MAIH, MISA, MNAAA
2009	Assessment of Hill's Figs in the Civic and Cultural Precinct bringing together all previous assessments and useful life expectancy for all 14 trees by consulting arborist Dennis Marsden MAIH, MISA, MNAAA
	Assessment of Fig Trees in Laman Street by Tealogue Pty Ltd. identified the risk was unacceptable
	Laman Street Figs, Civic Precinct - Peer Review of Marsden report by Arboreport Vegetation Management Consultants
8 March 2010	Peer Review of Marsden Report Assessment of Hill's Weeping Fig <i>Ficus microcarpa</i> var. <i>Hilli</i> prepared by Integrated Vegetation Management
	Social Impact Assessment by Community Dimensions Pty Ltd. to inform the benefits of the trees to the community
9 March 2010	Laman Street Hill's Figs Risk Assessment and Review by Arboreport Vegetation Management Consultants following the implementation of Council's risk abatement strategy
	Heritage Assessment and Recommendations by Heritas Architecture
April 2010	Review of Arborist Reports by Earthscape - A Morton Consulting Arborist.
	Review provided as part of the design workshop.

Appendix C - Councillor Survey Results



Significant Community Issues

December 2011

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Prepared for: General Manager, The City of Newcastle

Prepared by: Newcastle Voice, The City of Newcastle

Executive Summary

The consultation was conducted as part of a resolution passed on 4 October 2011 which directed the General Manager to conduct a review of the Laman Street Fig Tree issue and provide a report evaluating processes adopted by Council, with recommendations for improving Council's engagement processes in respect to issues of major community significance.

The evaluation included reviewing the scope of information supplied to Councillors. Hence, the objective of the 16 question survey was to gather opinion from the thirteen Councillors regarding information provided to them and the function of the Laman Street Working Party. A total of 8 Councillors completed the survey.

When asked how satisfied, overall, they are with the community engagement activities undertaken by the administration regarding the Laman Street Figs, 63% of respondents indicated that they were 'very satisfied' or 'somewhat satisfied.'

When survey respondents were asked overall, how informed the administration had kept them regarding the Laman Street Figs, 63% said that they were 'very well informed' or 'well informed.'

Respondents were asked how satisfied they were with the level of information provided to them by the administration regarding Laman Street Figs. Two-thirds (75%) of respondents indicated that they were 'very satisfied' or 'somewhat satisfied'.

When survey respondents were asked to rate the relevance of the information provided to them by the administration regarding the Laman Street Figs, 75% indicated that the information was 'extremely relevant' or 'very relevant.'

Survey respondents were asked to rate twelve engagement tools on their usefulness. In order, the top three tools which received the highest combined responses for 'extremely useful' and 'very useful' are as follows:

Briefings (100% responses 'extremely useful' and 'very useful')
Advice and meeting with the GM (87.5% responses 'extremely useful' and 'very useful')
Memos (75% responses 'extremely useful' and 'very useful')

When asked how satisfied they were with the overall contribution of the Laman Street Working Party, 50% of survey respondents indicated that they were 'very satisfied' or 'somewhat satisfied.'

The information gained from this report will inform the General Manager's Laman Street Fig Tree Review report to Council in February 2011.

Introduction

There is an opportunity for the City of Newcastle to review the way we manage significant community issues. A responsible organisation is self-evaluative and acts internally to address aspects of operations which can be improved.

As an organisation dedicated to continuous improvement, it is important that Council objectively critiques aspects of the adopted process. This includes information provided to Councillors and the function of the Laman Street Working Party.

Methodology

Data Collection

A survey, using a structured questionnaire with a total of sixteen questions was created for distribution to the elected Councillors. There were several opportunities for open-ended comments. To control order bias, the Sparq system automatically rotated the presentation of items with certain questions on a random basis. A copy of the survey is provided in Appendix I.

An email was sent out to the Councillors with a link to the survey on Friday 16 December 2011. The survey's original closing date was Friday 30, December. This date was extended until midnight 6 January 2012 to provide the Councillors with additional time during this busy season to complete the survey.

No identifying data is collected or included in this report.

Sample Selection

All thirteen elected Councillors were invited to complete the survey.

Representation

Because the entire population is sufficiently small, with only thirteen individuals, all of the Councillors were included in the study. The process of determining a random sample was not necessary.

Data Handling

The data handling and analysis was carried out using Sparq software by staff in the Customer service, Communication and Consultation Service Unit. The topline report (raw data) is included as Appendix II.

All responses are treated in confidence to ensure the anonymity of respondents and edited only for grammar and spelling if inserted as comments in the body of the report. All comments are included in the body of the report and can also be found in Appendix III.

Response Rate

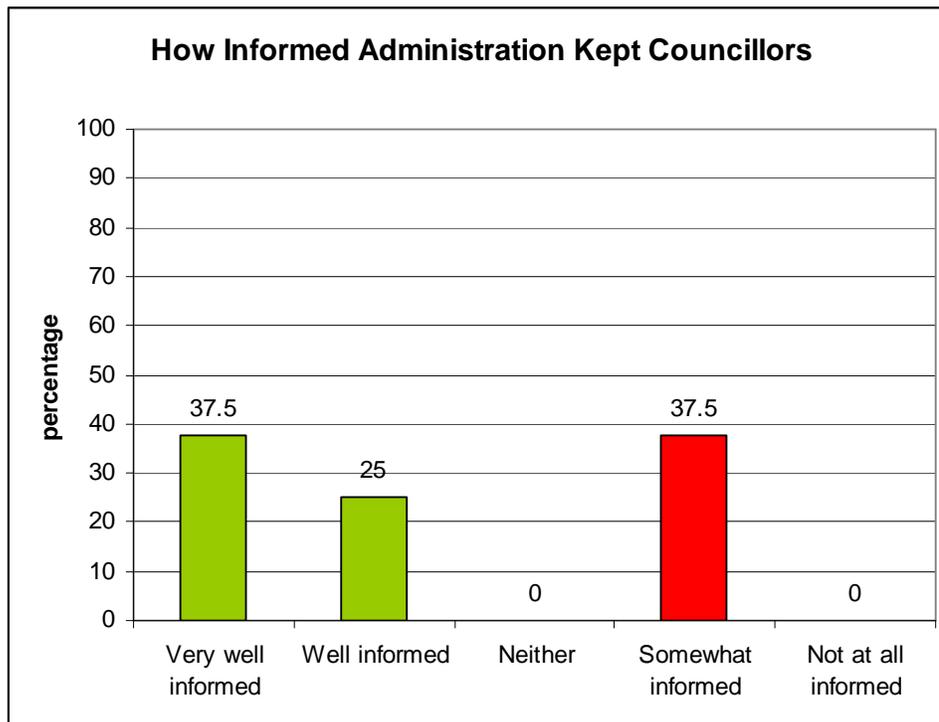
The survey had a 62% response rate (8 out of 13).

Findings

Informed by Administration

When survey respondents were asked overall, how informed the administration had kept them regarding the Laman Street Figs, 63% said that they were 'very well informed' or 'well informed.'

Graph1: How Informed Administration Kept Councillors



Below are the comments received which address why respondents believe the Councillors were well informed.

1. "I have received a large volume of information presenting the case for removal and copies of communications from those opposed. I see no evidence of deliberately skewed or withheld information."
2. "I have had access to information at all times. I am not aware of any information being hidden or withheld."
3. "Information is forthcoming when requested, briefings have been regular and memos issued promptly. There have been a couple of occasions when I have found out about new developments through the media first, but usually when I haven't been able to get to emails."
4. "Dedicated website page with all of the reports and information online."

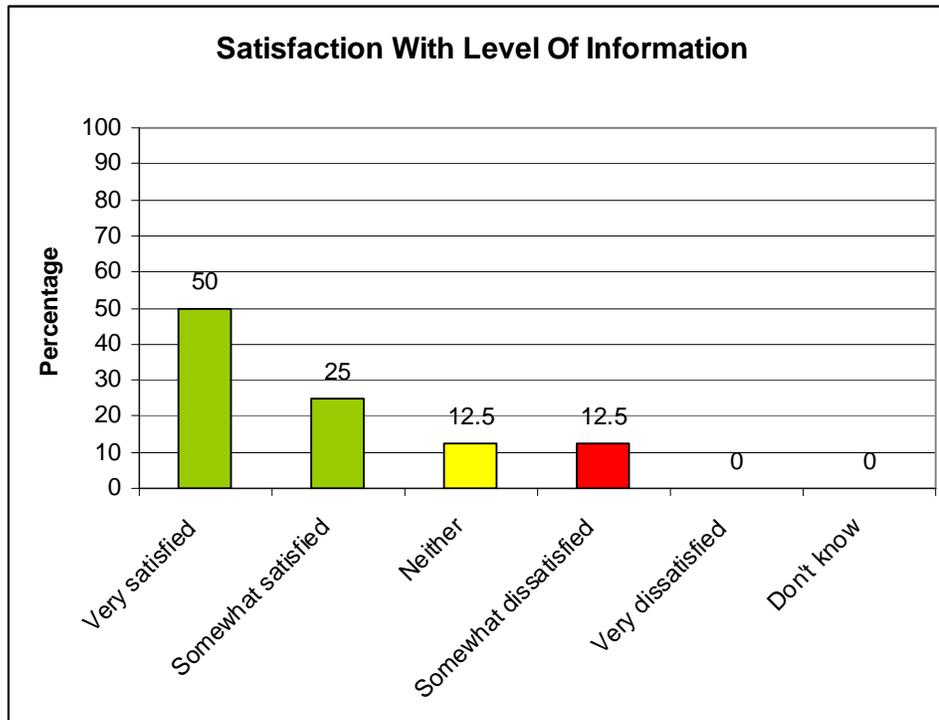
Respondents also commented on how the administration can improve, to ensure that they are better informed in the future:

1. "More timely information on logistics and timelines. More accurate synthesis of reports."
2. "Council appeared to be reactive to community issues rather than proactive in informing the community of the situation as it developed. As a result alternate views always appeared to be more correct."
3. "Updating during the Laman St Working Party was not as good as it could have been."

Satisfaction with Information Provided

Respondents were asked how satisfied they were with the level of information provided to them by the administration regarding Laman Street Figs. Two-thirds (75%) of respondents indicated that they were 'very satisfied' or 'somewhat satisfied'.

Graph 2: Satisfaction With Level Of Information



The comments illustrate that respondents were satisfied they had access to information and that the reports from experts were clear and detailed. Below are the comments received:

- "The production of clear reports from independent external arborists."
- "The level of detail provided has been good."
- "Access to information."

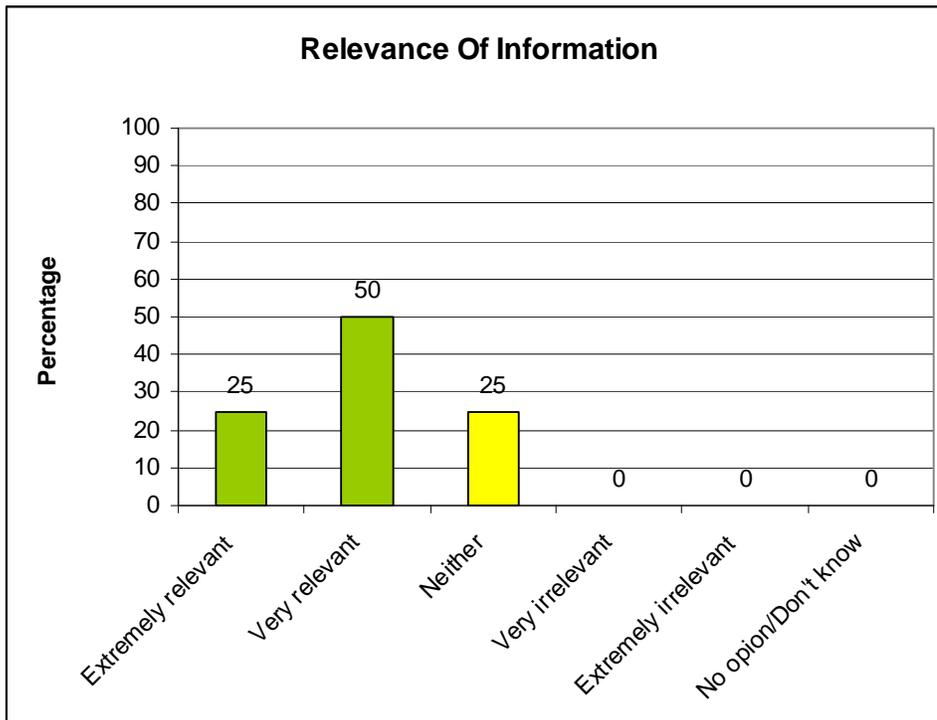
The following comments address changes that could be made by the administration to increase Councillor satisfaction:

- “The information about the costs involved in certain decisions has not been available as those decisions were made, hence costs have been higher than I would have liked.”
- “Council should clearly explain the reasons for reaching a decision rather than just announcing it. Information should be easily accessible (eg. "Laman Street Trees" on website was difficult to find and navigate). Council always appeared to be defending its position rather than actively promoting it.”
- “During the whole process there was a need for an independent committee, including Council Officers without voting rights.”

Relevance of Information Provided

When survey respondents were asked to rate the relevance of the information provided to them by the administration regarding the Laman Street Figs, 75% indicated that the information was ‘extremely relevant’ or ‘very relevant.’

Graph 3: Relevance Of Information



Engagement Tools Used

The following twelve tools were used to engage with Councillors during this significant community issue.

- Advice and meeting with the GM
- Council briefings
- Council workshops
- In Touch
- Media releases
- Mediation and meetings with members of Save our Figs (SOF)
- Memos
- Notice on Councillor Intranet
- Public Voice
- Quarterly Ward Forums
- Reports provided as part of Council meetings (including two Newcastle Voice consultation reports)

Survey respondents were asked to rate each of the above tools on their usefulness. In order, the top three tools which received the highest combined responses for 'extremely useful' and 'very useful' are as follows:

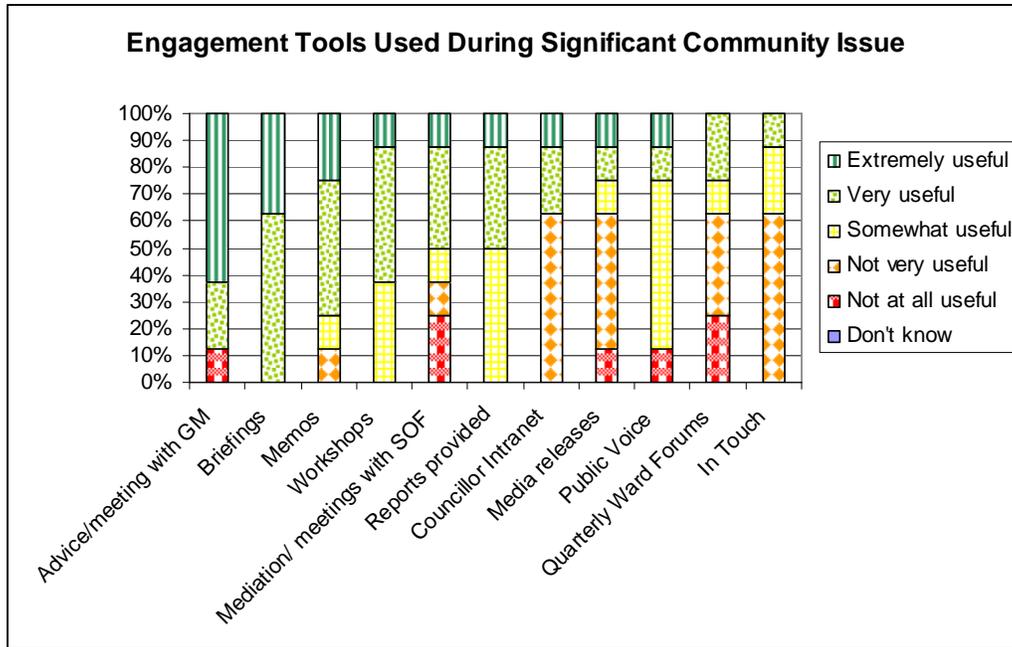
- Briefings (100% responses 'extremely useful' and 'very useful')
- Advice and meeting with the GM (87.5% responses 'extremely useful' and 'very useful')
- Memos (75% responses 'extremely useful' and 'very useful')

There are four tools that received the highest 'not at all useful' or 'not very useful'. All four of the tools rated equally.

- In Touch (62.5% responses 'not at all useful' or 'not very useful')
- Media Releases (62.5% responses 'not at all useful' or 'not very useful')
- Councillor Intranet (62.5% responses 'not at all useful' or 'not very useful')
- Quarterly Ward Forums (62.5% responses 'not at all useful' or 'not very useful')

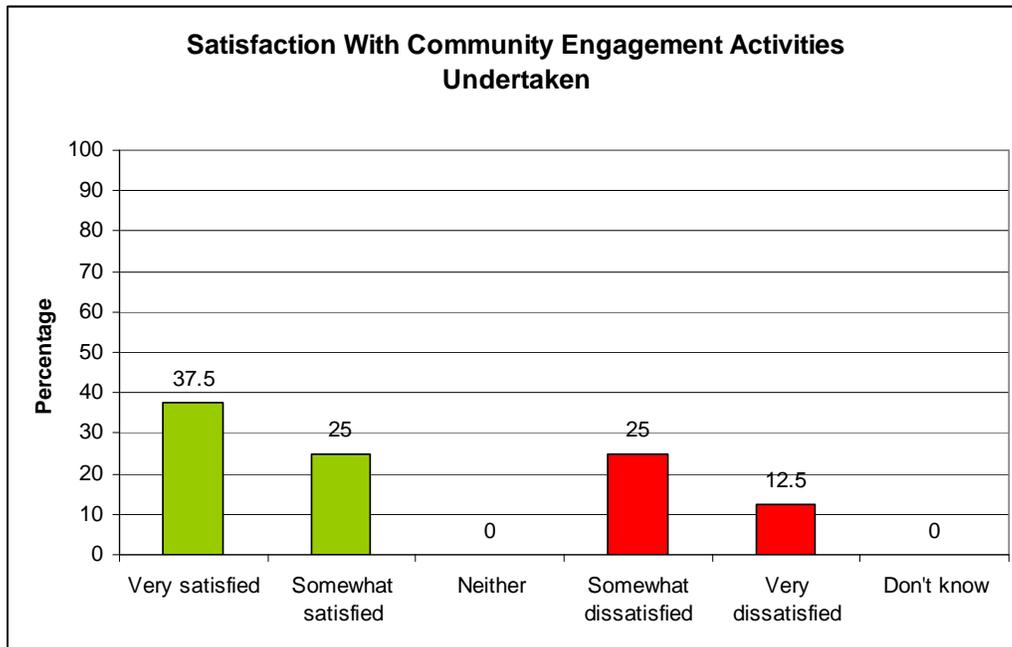
The graph below is sorted by 'extremely useful' followed by 'very useful'.

Graph 4: Engagement Tools Used During Significant Community Issue



When asked how satisfied, overall, they are with the community engagement activities undertaken by the administration regarding the Laman Street Figs, 63% of respondents indicated that they were 'very satisfied' or 'somewhat satisfied.'

Graph 5: Satisfaction With Community Engagement Activities Undertaken



Design Workshop and/or Plenary Session

A small proportion of respondents (37.50%) indicated that they had attended the Design Workshop and/or Plenary Session. Those who said that they had attended were asked how satisfied they were with the following six factors.

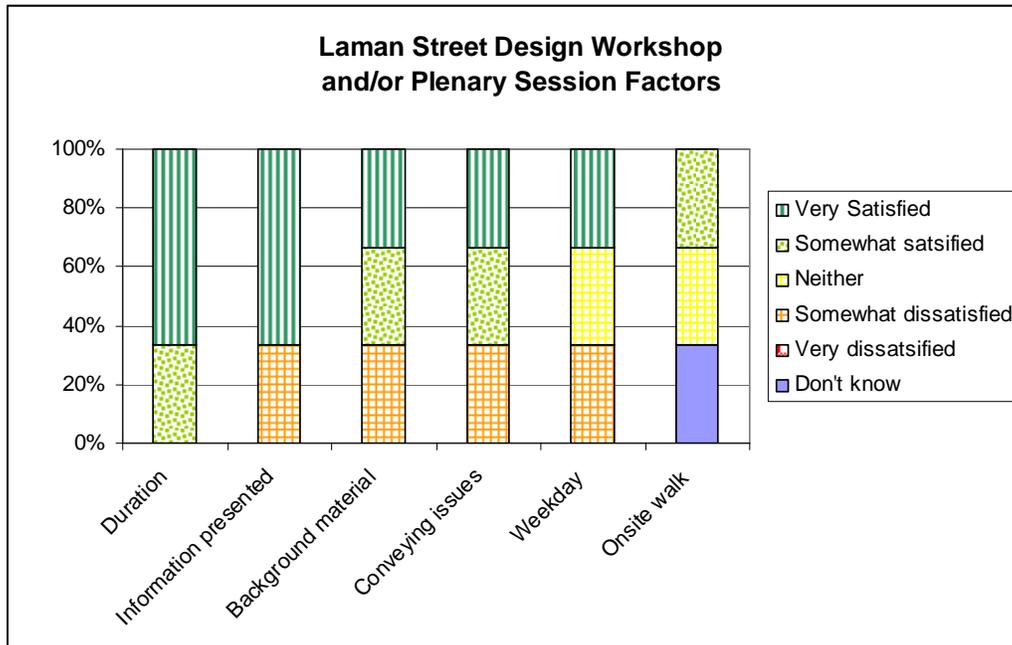
- Background material provided before the workshop
- Conveying issues during workshop
- Duration of workshop
- Information presented by staff/experts
- Onsite walk
- Sessions taking place on weekday

The graph below is sorted by 'very satisfied' followed by 'somewhat satisfied'.

Of the three respondents who had attended, the top factors which rated the highest for 'very satisfied' and 'somewhat satisfied' were as follows:

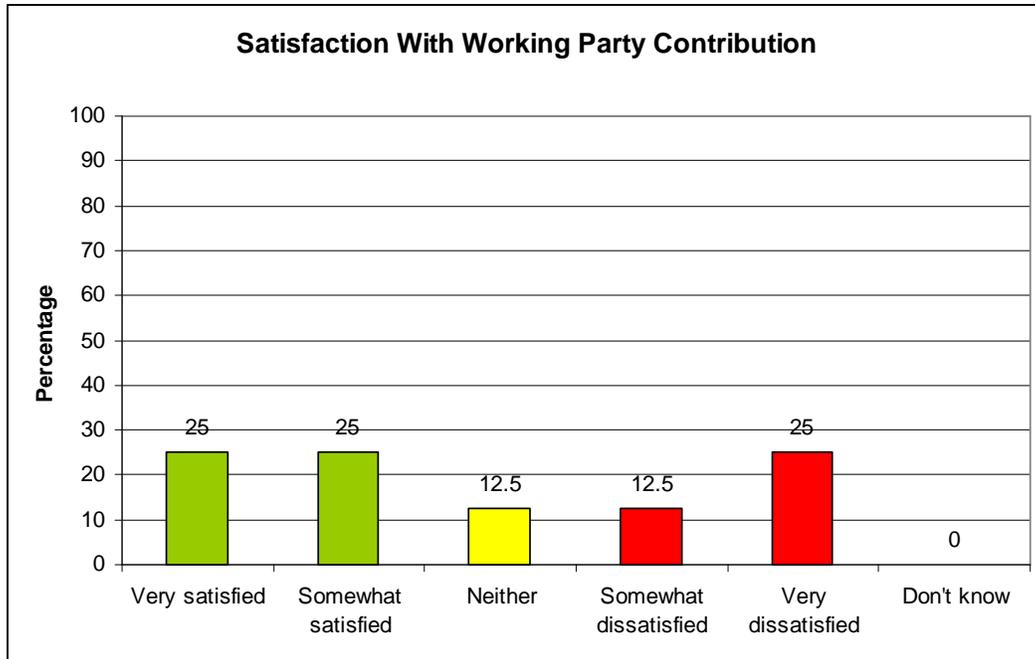
- Duration of workshop (100% responses 'very satisfied' and 'somewhat satisfied')
- Information presented by staff/experts (66.67% 'very satisfied' and 'somewhat satisfied')

Graph 6: Laman Street Design Workshop and/or Plenary Session Factors



When asked how satisfied they were with the overall contribution of the Laman Street Working Party, 50% of survey respondents indicated that they were 'very satisfied' or 'somewhat satisfied.'

Graph 7: Satisfaction With Working Party Contribution



Further Improvements

Respondents were asked to provide comments or suggestions about further improvements that can be made to better engage with Councillors on significant community issues in the future. Below are the comments received:

“Using this issue as an example, the information is available on the NCC website but it takes some digging. A clear link on the homepage would have helped, as would Q&A’s.”

“The workshop was a waste of money but forced upon the administration. The administration communication with the public was very poor. Their use of media releases was about the worse I have seen. The inability to see how some things would be perceived by the public was very disturbing. The use of military terms such as code names such as operation beanstalk or even command post was wrong. I know that senior officials were warned not to use such language and such warnings were ignored. The position that councillors were put in during the most recent meetings was unacceptable. Either basic thought was not put in or was ignored either is not acceptable.”

“Proper engagement with the community early in the process with clear, impartial and accurate information.”

“If an issue can be dealt with under delegation it should be done that way.”

“More contact with the General Manager regarding such significant community issues.”

“I would like to see a communications strategy outlined in future when issues of community significance are identified. Council was aware of the potential for the Figs to become a heated public issue, yet seemed to be continually reactive in terms of key messages and communications to the public. The engagement processes allowed people to have their say, but the communication strategy was not in place to deliver information and advice through key media channels. I would also like to see Executive facilitate honest and open discussion with councillors regarding key issues. While decisions can't be made at these workshops, they are important for gaining background info. The 'key issues' document is good, but probably needs a workshop each month dedicated to talking through the 2 or 3 main issues council is dealing with.”

“Council must be more proactive in putting its case for the basis of its decision making - active journalism as opposed to defensive public relations in its communications plan and actions. When SOF made incorrect statements, or publicly denigrated Council and its staff, there was scant response from our organisation which led to many community members assuming that SOF assertions must be correct. The lack of understanding of the engineering/technical problems associated with the trees, and Council's intention to replace the trees, is still very poorly understood in the community - a failure of our Communications plan and actions!”



Appendix I – Survey

Significant Community Issues Survey

There is an opportunity for the City of Newcastle to review the way we manage significant community issues. A responsible organisation is self-evaluative and acts internally to address aspects of operations which can be improved.

As an organisation dedicated to continuous improvement, it is important that Council objectively critiques aspects of the adopted process. This includes information provided to Councillors and the function of the working party.

Your feedback will help us better meet your needs and improve the quality of our service. Please take 5-10 minutes to complete this survey.

If you have any questions or want further information about this survey, please contact **Newcastle Voice** on (02) 4974 2823.

Q1. Overall, how informed has the administration kept you regarding Laman Street Figs?
Please select one response only.

Not at all informed	Somewhat informed	Neither	Well informed	Very well informed
<input type="checkbox"/> GoTo Q2	<input type="checkbox"/> GoTo Q4	<input type="checkbox"/> GoTo Q4	<input type="checkbox"/> GoTo Q3	<input type="checkbox"/> GoTo Q3

Q2. Please explain why you say that you have not been well informed by the administration.
Please be as specific as possible.

Q3. Please explain why you say that you have been well informed by the administration.
Please be as specific as possible.

Q4. Please explain what we could change so that you can be better informed by the administration. **Please be as specific as possible.**

Q5. Indicate how satisfied you are with the level of information provided to you by the administration regarding Laman Street Figs? **Please select one response only.**

Very dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Neither	Somewhat satisfied	Very satisfied	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/> GoTo Q7	<input type="checkbox"/> GoTo Q8	<input type="checkbox"/> GoTo Q8	<input type="checkbox"/> GoTo Q6	<input type="checkbox"/> GoTo Q6	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q6. What has satisfied you the most? **Please be as specific as possible.**

Q7. What is the main reason for your dissatisfaction? **Please be as specific as possible.**

Q8. What could we change to make you more satisfied? **Please be as specific as possible.**

Q9. How would you rate the relevance of the information provided to you by the administration regarding Laman Street Figs? **Please select one response only**

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Extremely irrelevant GoTo Q10	Very irrelevant GoTo Q10	Neither	Very relevant	Extremely relevant	No opinion/Don't know

Q10. Please explain why you say that the information provided by the administration was irrelevant. **Please be as specific as possible.**



Q11. The following tools were used to engage with you during this significant community issue. Please rate each of the following 12 tools on its usefulness. **Please select one response for each item.**

Tools	Not at all useful	Not very useful	Somewhat useful	Very useful	Extremely useful	Not sure/Don't know
Advice and meeting with the GM	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Council briefings	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Council workshops	<input type="checkbox"/>					
In Touch	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Media releases	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Mediation and meetings with members of Save our Figs	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Memos	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Notice on Councillor Intranet	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Public Voice	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Quarterly Ward Forums	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Reports provided as part of Council meetings (including two Newcastle Voice consultation reports)	<input type="checkbox"/>					

Q12. Did you attend the Design Workshop and/or Plenary Session? **Please select one response only**

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	No go to Q14

Q13. More about the Laman Street Design Workshop and/or Plenary Session. How **satisfied** are you with the following factors...? **Please select one response only**

	Very dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Neither	Somewhat satisfied	Very satisfied	Not sure/Don't know
Background material provided before the workshop	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Conveying issues during workshop	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Duration of workshop	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Information presented by staff/experts	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Onsite walk	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Sessions taking place on weekday	<input type="checkbox"/>					

Q14. How **satisfied** are you with the overall contribution of the Laman Street Working Party? **Please select one response only**

Very dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Neither	Somewhat satisfied	Very satisfied	Not sure/Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>					

Q15. Overall, how satisfied are you with the community engagement activities undertaken by the administration regarding the Laman Street Figs? **Please select one response only**

Very dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Neither	Somewhat satisfied	Very satisfied	Not sure/Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>					

Q16. Please provide any final comments/suggestions about further improvements that can be made to better engage with you on significant community issues in the future. **Please be as specific as possible.**

Thank you for being part of Newcastle Voice – and taking the time to complete this survey.



Appendix II – Topline Report

Q1. Overall, how informed has the administration kept you regarding Laman Street Figs?
Please select one response only.

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Not at all informed	0	0.00 %
O2	Somewhat informed	3	37.50 %
O3	Neither	0	0.00 %
O4	Well informed	2	25.00 %
O5	Very well informed	3	37.50 %

Q5. Indicate how satisfied you are with the level of information provided to you by the administration regarding Laman Street Figs? **Please select one response only.**

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Very Dissatisfied	0	0.00 %
O2	Somewhat Dissatisfied	1	12.50 %
O3	Neither	1	12.50 %
O4	Somewhat Satisfied	2	25.00 %
O5	Very Satisfied	4	50.00 %
O6	Don't Know	0	0.00 %

Q9. How would you rate the relevance of the information provided to you by the administration regarding Laman Street Figs? **Please select one response only**

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Extremely irrelevant	0	0.00 %
O2	Very irrelevant	0	0.00 %
O3	Neither	2	25.00 %
O4	Very relevant	4	50.00 %
O5	Extremely relevant	2	25.00 %
O6	No opinion/Don't know	0	0.00 %

Q11. The following tools were used to engage with you during this significant community issue. Please rate each of the following 12 tools on its usefulness. **Please select one response for each item.**

tools_0: Advice and meeting with the GM

QUESTION TOTAL: 8
NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Not at all useful	1	12.50 %
O2	Not very useful	0	0.00 %
O3	Somewhat useful	0	0.00 %
O4	Very useful	2	25.00 %
O5	Extremely useful	5	62.50 %
O6	Not sure/don't know	0	0.00 %

tools_1: Council briefings

QUESTION TOTAL: 8
NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Not at all useful	0	0.00 %
O2	Not very useful	0	0.00 %
O3	Somewhat useful	0	0.00 %
O4	Very useful	5	62.50 %
O5	Extremely useful	3	37.50 %
O6	Not sure/don't know	0	0.00 %

tools_2: Council workshops

QUESTION TOTAL: 8
NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Not at all useful	0	0.00 %
O2	Not very useful	0	0.00 %
O3	Somewhat useful	3	37.50 %
O4	Very useful	4	50.00 %
O5	Extremely useful	1	12.50 %
O6	Not sure/don't know	0	0.00 %

tools_3: In Touch

QUESTION TOTAL: 8

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Not at all useful	0	0.00 %
O2	Not very useful	5	62.50 %
O3	Somewhat useful	2	25.00 %
O4	Very useful	1	12.50 %
O5	Extremely useful	0	0.00 %
O6	Not sure/don't know	0	0.00 %

tools_4: Media releases

QUESTION TOTAL: 8

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Not at all useful	1	12.50 %
O2	Not very useful	4	50.00 %
O3	Somewhat useful	1	12.50 %
O4	Very useful	1	12.50 %
O5	Extremely useful	1	12.50 %
O6	Not sure/don't know	0	0.00 %

tools_5: Mediation and meetings with members of Save our Figs

QUESTION TOTAL: 8

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Not at all useful	2	25.00 %
O2	Not very useful	1	12.50 %
O3	Somewhat useful	1	12.50 %
O4	Very useful	3	37.50 %
O5	Extremely useful	1	12.50 %
O6	Not sure/don't know	0	0.00 %

tools_6: Memos

QUESTION TOTAL: 8
 NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Not at all useful	0	0.00 %
O2	Not very useful	1	12.50 %
O3	Somewhat useful	1	12.50 %
O4	Very useful	4	50.00 %
O5	Extremely useful	2	25.00 %
O6	Not sure/don't know	0	0.00 %

tools_7: Notice on Councillor Intranet

QUESTION TOTAL: 8
 NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Not at all useful	0	0.00 %
O2	Not very useful	5	62.50 %
O3	Somewhat useful	0	0.00 %
O4	Very useful	2	25.00 %
O5	Extremely useful	1	12.50 %
O6	Not sure/don't know	0	0.00 %

tools_8: Public Voice

QUESTION TOTAL: 8
 NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Not at all useful	1	12.50 %
O2	Not very useful	0	0.00 %
O3	Somewhat useful	5	62.50 %
O4	Very useful	1	12.50 %
O5	Extremely useful	1	12.50 %
O6	Not sure/don't know	0	0.00 %

tools_9: Quarterly Ward Forums

QUESTION TOTAL: 8

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Not at all useful	2	25.00 %
O2	Not very useful	3	37.50 %
O3	Somewhat useful	1	12.50 %
O4	Very useful	2	25.00 %
O5	Extremely useful	0	0.00 %
O6	Not sure/don't know	0	0.00 %

tools_10: Reports provided as part of Council meetings (including two Newcastle Voice consultation reports)

QUESTION TOTAL: 8

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Not at all useful	0	0.00 %
O2	Not very useful	0	0.00 %
O3	Somewhat useful	4	50.00 %
O4	Very useful	3	37.50 %
O5	Extremely useful	1	12.50 %
O6	Not sure/don't know	0	0.00 %

Q12. Did you attend the Design Workshop and/or Plenary Session? **Please select one response only**

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Yes	3	37.50 %
O2	No	5	62.50 %

Q13. More about the Laman Street Design Workshop and/or Plenary Session. How **satisfied** are you with the following factors...? **Please select one response only**

satisfied_workshop_0: Background material provided before the workshop

QUESTION TOTAL: 3
 NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Very Dissatisfied	0	0.00 %
O2	Somewhat Dissatisfied	1	33.33 %
O3	Neither	0	0.00 %
O4	Somewhat Satisfied	1	33.33 %
O5	Very Satisfied	1	33.33 %
O6	Not sure/Don't know	0	0.00 %

satisfied_workshop_1: Conveying issues during workshop

QUESTION TOTAL: 3
 NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Very Dissatisfied	0	0.00 %
O2	Somewhat Dissatisfied	1	33.33 %
O3	Neither	0	0.00 %
O4	Somewhat Satisfied	1	33.33 %
O5	Very Satisfied	1	33.33 %
O6	Not sure/Don't know	0	0.00 %

satisfied_workshop_2: Duration of workshop

QUESTION TOTAL: 3
NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Very Dissatisfied	0	0.00 %
O2	Somewhat Dissatisfied	0	0.00 %
O3	Neither	0	0.00 %
O4	Somewhat Satisfied	1	33.33 %
O5	Very Satisfied	2	66.67 %
O6	Not sure/Don't know	0	0.00 %

satisfied_workshop_3: Information presented by staff/experts

QUESTION TOTAL: 3
NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Very Dissatisfied	0	0.00 %
O2	Somewhat Dissatisfied	1	33.33 %
O3	Neither	0	0.00 %
O4	Somewhat Satisfied	0	0.00 %
O5	Very Satisfied	2	66.67 %
O6	Not sure/Don't know	0	0.00 %

satisfied_workshop_4: Onsite walk

QUESTION TOTAL: 3
NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Very Dissatisfied	0	0.00 %
O2	Somewhat Dissatisfied	0	0.00 %
O3	Neither	1	33.33 %
O4	Somewhat Satisfied	1	33.33 %
O5	Very Satisfied	0	0.00 %
O6	Not sure/Don't know	1	33.33 %

satisfied_workshop_5: Sessions taking place on weekday

QUESTION TOTAL: 3

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Very Dissatisfied	0	0.00 %
O2	Somewhat Dissatisfied	1	33.33 %
O3	Neither	1	33.33 %
O4	Somewhat Satisfied	0	0.00 %
O5	Very Satisfied	1	33.33 %
O6	Not sure/Don't know	0	0.00 %

Q14. How **satisfied** are you with the overall contribution of the Laman Street Working Party?
Please select one response only

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Very Dissatisfied	2	25.00 %
O2	Somewhat Dissatisfied	1	12.50 %
O3	Neither	1	12.50 %
O4	Somewhat Satisfied	2	25.00 %
O5	Very Satisfied	2	25.00 %
O6	Not sure/Don't know	0	0.00 %

Q

Q15. Overall, how satisfied are you with the community engagement activities undertaken by the administration regarding the Laman Street Figs? **Please select one response only**

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Very Dissatisfied	1	12.50 %
O2	Somewhat Dissatisfied	2	25.00 %
O3	Neither	0	0.00 %
O4	Somewhat Satisfied	2	25.00 %
O5	Very Satisfied	3	37.50 %
O6	Not sure/Don't know	0	0.00 %

Appendix III – Open Ended Questions

Q3. Please explain why you say that you have been well informed by the administration. Please be as specific as possible.

i have received a large volume of information presenting the case for removal and copies of communciatuions from those opposed. I see no evidence of deliberately skewed or withheld information
I have had access to information at all times. I am not aware of any information being hidden or with held
Information is forthcoming when requested, briefings have been regular and memos issued promptly. There have been a couple of occasions when I have found out about new developments through the media first, but usually when i haven't been able to get to emails..
Dedicated website page with all of the reports and information online

Q4. Please explain what we could change so that you can be better informed by the administration. Please be as specific as possible.

More timely information on logistics and timelines
More accurate synthesis of reports
Council appeared to be reactive to community issues rather than proactive in informing the community of the situation as it developed. As a result alternate views always appeared to be more correct.
Updating during the Laman St Working Party was not as good as it could have been.

Q6. What has satisfied you the most? Please be as specific as possible.

the production of clear reports from independent external arborists
Same as previous answer
The level of detail provided has been good. However, information about the costs involved in certain decisions has not been available as those decisions were made, hence costs have been higher than I would have liked.
Access to information

Q8. What could we change to make you more satisfied? Please be as specific as possible.

Council should clearly explain the reasons for reaching a decision rather than just announcing it. Information should be easily accessible (eg. "Laman Street Trees" on website was difficult to find and navigate). Council always appeared to be defending its position rather than actively promoting it.
During the whole process there was a need for an independent committee, including Council Officers without voting rights.

Q16. Please provide any final comments/suggestions about further improvements that can be made to better engage with you on significant community issues in the future. Please be as specific as possible.

<p>using this issue as an example, the information is available on the NCC website but it takes some digging. A clear link on the homepage would have helped, as would Q&As</p>
<p>The workshop was a waste of money but forced upon the administration. The administration communication with the public was very poor. Their use of media releases was about the worse I have seen. The inability to see how somethings would be perceived by the public was very disturbing. The use of military terms such as code names such as operation beanstalk or even command post was wrong. I know that senior officials were warned not to use such language and such warning were ignored. The position that councillors were put in during the most recent meetings was unacceptable. Either basic thought was not put in or was ignored either is not acceptable.</p>
<p>I would like to see a communications strategy outlined in future when issues of community significance are identified. Council was aware of the potential for the Figs to become a heated public issue, yet seemed to be continually reactive in terms of key messages and communications to the public. The engagement processes allowed people to have their say, but the communication strategy was not in place to deliver information and advice through key media channels. I would also like to see Executive facilitate honest and open discussion with councillors regarding key issues. While decisions can't be made at these workshops, they are important for gaining background info. The 'key issues' document is good, but probably needs a workshop each month dedicated to talking through the 2 or 3 main issues council is dealing with.</p>
<p>proper engagement with the community early in the process with clear, impartial and accurate information</p>
<p>Council must be more proactive in putting its case for the basis of its decision making - active journalism as opposed to defensive public relations in its communications plan and actions.</p>
<p>When SOF made incorrect statements, or publically denigrated Council and its staff, there was scant response from our organisation which led to many community members assuming that SOF assertions must be correct. The lack of understanding of the engineering/technical problems associated with the trees, and Council's intention to replace the trees, is still very poorly understood in the community - this a failure of our Communications plan and actions!</p>
<p>If an issue can be dealt with under delegation it should be done that way.</p>
<p>More contact with the General Manager regarding such significant community issues.</p>

Appendix D - IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum

Council activities in relation to the Laman Street trees aligned with the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum are identified in the table below.

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Goal	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
Promise	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to acknowledge concerns and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
Council Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advertising - Council e-newsletter - Council meetings - Council website - Media conference - Media releases - Media statements - MyVoice newsletter - Printed Materials - Public Voice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Design Framework public exhibition - Newcastle Voice survey: Laman St & Civic Precinct (2010) - Newcastle Voice survey: Laman St & Civic Precinct (2011) 	Laman Street Tree Working Party	Design workshop & plenary session	

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 1 IAP2 – refer website: <http://www.iap2.org.au/spectrum.pdf>

Appendix E - Independent Expert Advice

The following independent expert advice was provided to Councillors and is publicly available on Council's website:

- Review of the root plate architecture of Hills Figs in Laman Street (Dennis Marsden, December 2006)
- Wind loading report in Laman Street (L Djenidi, 2007)
- Investigation into stability of three Hill's Weeping Figs along Laman Street, Newcastle (Dennis Marsden, 11 July 2007)
- Assessment of Hill's Weeping Figs in the Civic Cultural Precinct, Laman Street (Dennis Marsden, 7 August 2009)
- QTRA¹ Fig Trees risk assessment of Fig Trees in Laman Street, Cooks Hill (Tree Logic, 2 September 2009)
- Peer review of Marsden Report (Integrated Vegetation Management, 10 December 2009)
- Peer review of Marsden Report (Arboreport, 11 December 2009)
- Social impact assessment stage 1 – Hills Figs Trees, Laman Street, Newcastle (Community Dimensions, 8 March 2010)
- Laman Street Hills Figs QTRA Review (Arboreport, 9 March 2010)
- Heritage assessment and recommendations (Heritas Architecture, 9 March 2010, revised 16 March 2010)
- Quantified Tree Risk Assessment and Review (Arboreport, July 2010)
- Presentation at the Laman Street Civic Precinct community design workshop (Earthscape Horticultural Services, 19 March 2010)
- Feasibility Study – Tree Restraint (Total Height Safety Pty Ltd – Tree Restraint Division, 9 July 2010)
- Additional Trenching Investigation of Hills Weeping Fig #12025 (Dennis Marsden, 12 August 2010)
- Fauna Habitat Assessment (Forest Fauna Surveys Pty Ltd, 13 September 2010)
- Court Judgment - Parks and Playgrounds Movement Inc v Newcastle City Council (Land and Environment Court of NSW, 11 November 2010)
- Feasibility Study for Pull Testing the Laman Street Fig Trees (Total Height Safety Pty Ltd – Tree Restraint Division, 10 December 2010)

¹ Quantified Tree Risk Assessment



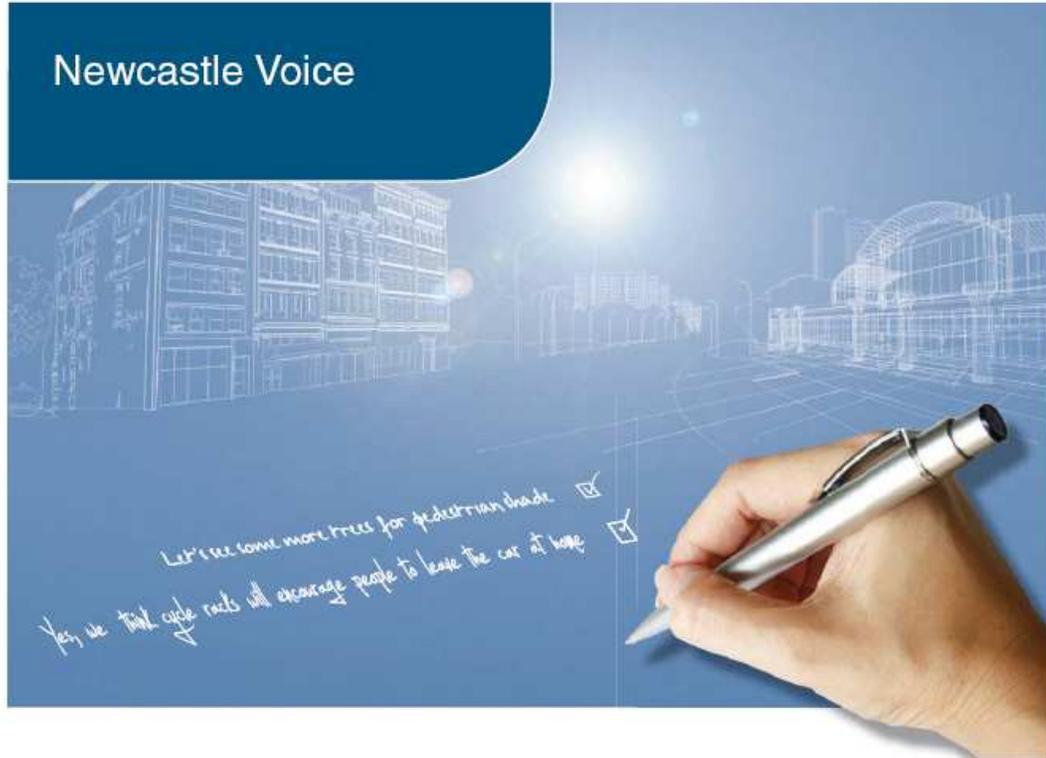
- Fauna Habitat Assessment (Forest Fauna Surveys Pty Ltd, 14 September 2011)

Appendix F - Resolutions from LSTWP and UPDAC

Laman Street Trees Working Party (LSTWP) Resolution	Urban Planning and Design Strategic Advisory Committee (UPDAC) Resolution
<p>That the LSTWP recommend through the UPDAC that Council invite ENSPEC to submit a proposal to monitor the response of each tree in Laman Street to wind events and outline the outcomes Council can expect to achieve.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) That the UPDAC endorse the development of the overall vision for the Laman Street Civic Precinct which includes addressing the vision for the hills figs, for presentation to Council 2) That Council seek further clarification from ENSPEC relating to the proposal for monitoring the 14 Hills figs in Laman Street and that a report and recommendation be considered at the next meeting of the LSTWP 3) That the LSTWP consider the revised proposal from ENSPEC and present a recommendation to the next meeting of the UPDAC for consideration and referral to Council. 4) That the UPDAC endorse the development of a decision tree relating to the future of the 14 Hills figs in Laman Street.
<p>That the LSTWP:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Receive the report on the ENSPEC Proposal; and 2) Recommend through the UPDAC that Council not proceed with the ENSPEC testing as set out in the proposal 	<p>That the UPDAC:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Note the report of the LSTWP; and 2) Endorse the recommendation that Council not proceed with the ENSPEC testing as set out in the proposal
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Council engage independent advice from a party or parties with appropriate professional expertise to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Review the comparative appropriateness of QTRA as a method for assessing the level of risk from the Laman Street trees in relation to other available methodologies and in the light of Council's tree preservation objective b) Review the assumptions and consequent conclusions in previous QTRA assessments of the Laman Street trees, especially in relation to assumptions of previous tree failure and c) To advise Council as to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i) any consequent actual or potential deficiencies in the current risk assessments available to Council on the Laman Street trees and ii) The most appropriate method or combination of methods to assess the level of risk presented by the Laman Street trees in the context of 	<p>That the UPDAC note:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The LSTWP notice of motion relating to proposed QTRA testing from the Working Party meeting held on 22 June 2011 2) That Council's tree risk assessment methodologies are appropriate; and 3) The reported internal review of available tree risk assessment methodology and not recommend to Council further expenditure in independent review and investigation

Laman Street Trees Working Party (LSTWP) Resolution	Urban Planning and Design Strategic Advisory Committee (UPDAC) Resolution
<p>Council's tree preservation objective, and potential ways that Council might manage such risk in a way that recognised and enhances the social, environmental, heritage and economic values of the trees.</p> <p>2) The Working Party be consulted in relation to engaging suitable expertise for this purpose.</p>	
<p>That the LSTWP:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Recommend through UPDAC that Council seek advice from Statewide Mutual as to what were the baseline minimum requirements 2) Council send document suite as provided to members on 21 June 2011 to Statewide Mutual for consideration 3) Conduct the workshop on 26 June 2011 in the spirit of finding solutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members agreed the motion was not necessary • That the UPDAC provide a report to the LSTWP on its discussions and recommendation to Council
<p>That the Working Party:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Note that the UPDAC did not adopt this Working Party's recommendation in relation to a rigorous independent review of Council's current risk assessments of the Laman St trees and investigating the potential appropriateness of other risk assessment methods 2) Express its disappointment with the Committee's rejection of a proposal from the Working Party that has the potential to initiate a process that could provide an additional expert approach on the risk presented by the trees that has been requested by Council's insurer 3) Refer the motion to the Committee again for its urgent re-consideration and strongly urge voting members of the committee to give it more favourable consideration 4) Request that the Chair of the UPDAC advise Council, at its meeting on 19 July 2011, of the resolution of this Working Party 5) Request that the General manager advise members of the UPDAC of the Engineers Australia presentation to Council on Tuesday 19 July 2011 and invite them to attend the meeting. <p>DIVISION OF VOTE RECORDED</p>	<p>That the proposal from the LSTWP on the engagement of independent advice lay on the table pending the outcome of the current mediation process.</p>

Appendix G - Community Survey Results



Significant Community Issues
Newcastle Voice

February 2012

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Prepared for: **General Manager, The City of Newcastle**
Prepared by: Newcastle Voice, The City of Newcastle

Executive Summary

The survey was conducted as part of a resolution passed on 4 October 2011 which directed the General Manager to conduct a review of the Laman Street Fig Tree issue and provide a report evaluating processes adopted by Council, with recommendations for improving Council's engagement processes in respect to issues of major community significance.

The evaluation included reviewing the scope of information supplied to the community. A six question survey was sent to 2,283 online Newcastle Voice members. A total of 982 community reference panel members completed the survey, with 671 comments received.

When asked how satisfied, overall, they were with the tools used to communicate and consult during this significant issue, 44.20% indicated that they were 'very dissatisfied' with the communication and consultation activities undertaken, with 21.08% indicating that they were either 'very satisfied' or 'somewhat satisfied.'

When survey respondents were asked overall, how informed Council kept them regarding the Laman Street Figs, the majority of respondents (72.30%) indicated that they were 'somewhat informed' or 'not at all informed.'

Survey respondents were asked to rate 16 methods that would be useful in keeping the community informed and involved about significant community issues when they arise in the future. In order, the top five tools which received the highest combined responses for 'extremely useful' and 'very useful' are as follows:

1. Local paper (62.12% combined 'extremely useful' and 'very useful')
2. TV news (61.30% combined 'extremely useful' and 'very useful')
3. Local radio (56.31% combined 'extremely useful' and 'very useful')
4. Newcastle Voice (49.79% combined 'extremely useful' and 'very useful')
5. Council information with rate notices (43.38% combined 'extremely useful' and 'very useful')

A wide variety of constructive comments were received regarding how Council can make improvements to better engage with the community on significant community issues in the future. Four broad themes were identified, relating to consultation, communication, the information the people want, and the function and performance of Council.

The key areas that emerged were in regard to Council process, transparency, and lack of trust in the Council. Respondents indicated that they expect a 'just do it approach' from Council, where significant issues are decided on and actioned swiftly without the use of excessive funds or resources. Respondents commented on the need for the information to be completely transparent, where they are provided with simple, honest, easy to understand facts from the onset. Mass media is the preferred vehicle for delivery of such information, though several respondents noted the potential for media bias and that paid Council advertisement may be a better alternative. Online methods of communication emerged as being complementary to traditional media sources and the need for a single spokesperson, such as the General Manager, was also mentioned.

Lack of trust in Council was also a key theme, with a notable proportion of respondents commenting that they believed Council had a hidden agenda in felling the Laman Street Figs.



This may in part have been driven by the strong presence of the community interest group Save our Figs (SOF), with a number of respondents commenting that SOF had hijacked the situation and that Council had 'pandered' to the minority.

The information gained from this report will inform the General Manager's Laman Street Fig Tree Review report to Council in February 2011.

Introduction

There is an opportunity for The City of Newcastle to review the way we manage significant community issues. A responsible organisation is self-evaluative and addresses operations which can be improved.

As an organisation dedicated to continuous improvement, it is important that Council objectively critiques aspects of the adopted process. This includes information provided to Councillors and the function of the Laman Street Working Party.

Methodology

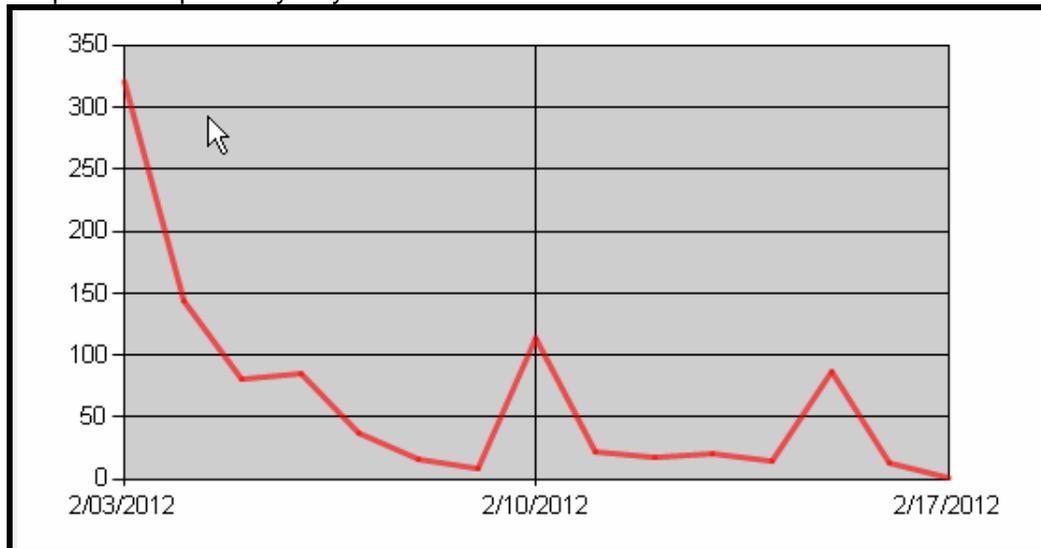
Data Collection

A survey, using a structured questionnaire with a total of six questions was created for distribution to all online Newcastle Voice members. There was an opportunity for open-ended comments. To control order bias, the Sparq system automatically rotated the presentation of items with certain questions on a random basis. A copy of the survey is provided in Appendix I.

A survey invitation and link to the online survey was sent on Friday 3 February. Electronic reminders to those online members who had not yet completed the survey were sent on 10 February and 15 February 2012.

The survey closed at midnight on 17 February.

Graph 1: Completes by Day



Survey Area

Residents and ratepayers from the Newcastle City Council LGA were consulted, through the Newcastle Voice community reference panel. The breakdown of the demographics of the sample and respondents is provided in Appendix II.

Sample Selection

A total of 2,283 Newcastle Voice members were surveyed. This number represents all active online panel members.

Representation

Although sampling 2,283 panel members represents over 1.7% of the Newcastle LGA population, the sampling frame for this survey was not statistically representative of the population. This is due to the fact that all active online Newcastle Voice members were surveyed. With the exception of Inner City South and Inner City North, the other planning districts are under represented. Responses are over represented from Ward 1 and Ward 2, while they are under represented in Ward 3 and Ward 4. Furthermore, panel members in the 16-24 and 70+ age brackets are also under represented.

Participants

The breakdown of the demographics by gender, age and employment status is provided for the sample as well as for the respondents in Appendix II. The demographic information is managed in Sparq. In brief, the results show that:

- 10.82% of respondents live in Merewether, 8.31% in Hamilton, 7.99% in Newcastle, 7.84% in Mayfield , 5.17% in New Lambton, 4.70% in Wallsend and 4.39% in Cooks Hill
- A relatively even proportion of respondents were 25-39 years old, 40-54 years old or 55-69 years old (24%, 36%, 32% respectively)
- 69% of respondents are employed full or part-time
- 66% of respondents have lived in the Newcastle LGA for more than 10 years
- The gender split was 48% male and 52% female

It should be noted that being a Newcastle Voice member is voluntary, and therefore participation in its activities is also voluntary. The survey was open to online Newcastle Voice members only.

Data Handling

The data handling and analysis was carried out using Sparq software by staff in the Customer Service, Communication and Consultation Service Unit. The topline report (raw data) is included as Appendix II.

All responses are treated in confidence to ensure the anonymity of respondents and edited only for grammar and spelling if inserted as comments in the body of the report. Please note, in many cases the respondents provided answers that fell under multiple categories and respondents were including in all categories that were mentioned. All comments are included in the body of the report and can also be found in Appendix III.

'Response Rate & Survey Design

The survey had a 43% response rate (982 out of 2,283) and a 47% participation rate (1,061 out of 2,283). That means that 47% of respondents started the survey, but 4% did not complete it (79 out of 2,283). Of those who chose not to complete the survey (4%), 48% dropped out before reaching the first question.

Due to time constraints and the need to have the Laman Street Review report to Council on 6 March 2012, the open ended question had a 50 word limit. This ensured that proper trend analysis was conducted from the open-ended question, in a timely manner. All responses are treated in confidence to ensure the anonymity of respondents, and edited only for grammar and spelling if inserted as comments into the body of the report. The complete record of all comments received is included as Appendix IV. Although comments were received about the word limit, no respondent dropped out at the open ended question, with 671 comments received.

- “If you wanted real opinions why limit it to 50 words?”
- “Limiting this open feedback to 50 words is an insult to the engagement that you are attempting.”
- “I rewrote this several time. No mater how truncated I needed 55 words. As this is still too many. I decline to say anything.”

This survey attained a response rate of 43% which may be due to a number of factors:

- Timing; The Laman Street Trees were cut down the week of 31 January and Council is not seen in a favourable light by many in the community.
- Timing; Although the survey's aim is to identify recommendations on how to better engage with the community on significant community issues in the future, conducting a survey after the trees have been cut may be seen by many in the public as too late in the process.
- Panel fatigue; Newcastle Voice conducted the We Love Our Coast: South Stockton Reserves survey concurrently.

The following comments illustrate the points above:

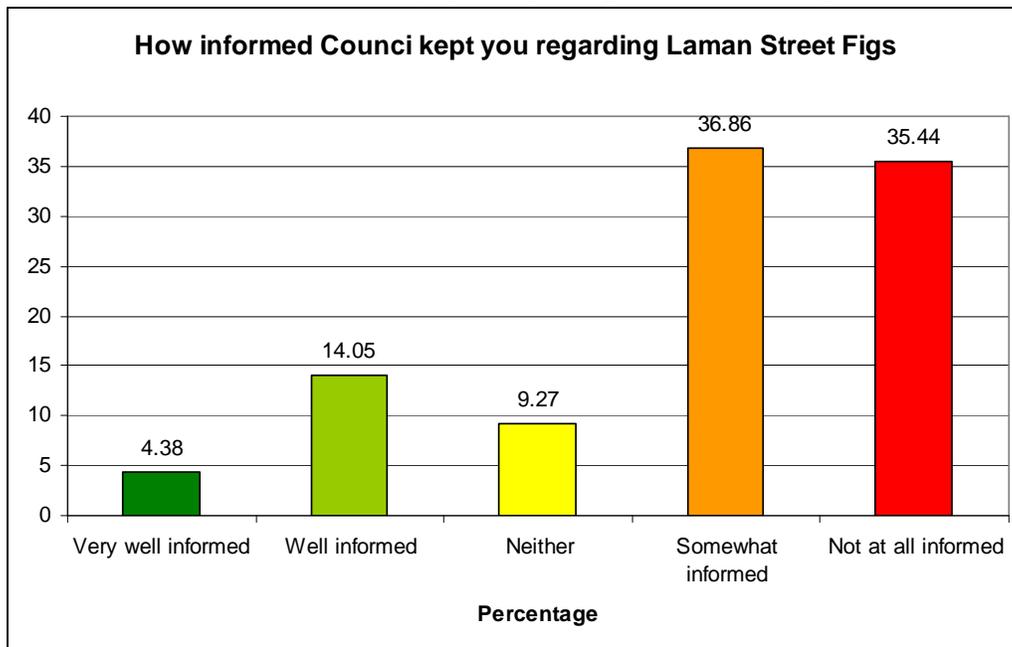
- “50 word limit. Today is the most shameful event I have witnessed in this city. You would have to be kidding asking me to comment on consultation. Hadn't council staff decided what they were doing before the consultation?”
- “Survey way too late. No community consultation done. No willingness to find a better solution. No compassion or consideration for community. Investigation should be launched immediately. Council staff should be sacked. Community should be consulted about what is planned for Laman St. Let's hope it doesn't look like Wheeler Place.”
- “Senior administration could start telling the truth. It is an insult to conduct such a survey AFTER the figs have been chopped.”
- “This survey at this time beggars belief!!”

Findings

Information Sources

When asked overall how informed they believe Council have kept them regarding the Laman Street Figs, the majority of respondents (72.30%) indicated that they were 'somewhat informed' or 'not at all informed.'

Graph 2: How informed Council kept you regarding Laman Street Figs



- "... the problem is not the dissemination of material, but the integrity, reason and good will of Council officers and Councillors to work effectively with (not against) the wider community."
- "Communication Strategy failed to manage extremist interest groups and misinformation. Councillors and Council staff have communicated very poorly and their reputation is now in tatters."
- "Council and our elected Councillors need to better communicate the positives and long term community gains of such projects rather than dropping the ball and therefore being relegated to providing reactive responses to a mostly misinformed argument. Promote what is gained rather than what is to be lost."
- "We need straight forward information provided in both summary form (dot points) and in full detail for further analysis. People need all the information to make informed choices, decisions & opinions."
- "As a resident, more facts and figures at an earlier stage of the significant event (and repeated if necessary) rather than towards the final stages. The full page advertisement in the Herald of the formal responses to SOF claims and facts about the issues was very helpful."

Respondents were asked from which source they got most of their information about the Laman Street Figs, out of a list of 17 options:

- Council e-newsletters
- Council meetings
- Council News – quarterly newsletter delivered to households
- Council staff
- Council’s website
- Design workshop (as a participant)
- Elected Councillors
- Flyers
- Free newspapers (*Star*)
- Laman Street Tree Working Party (as a participant)
- Local newspapers (*Newcastle Herald*)
- Newcastle Voice
- Quarterly Ward Forums
- Signage
- Word-of-mouth: friends and family
- Other (Please specify) _____
- None of these

Respondents were asked to select all the sources that apply to them, which is why the results add up to more than 100%. Below are the top five most popular sources of information, when dealing with the Laman Street Figs.

1. Local newspapers (*Newcastle Herald*) (80.45%)
2. Word of mouth (41.34%)
3. Other (32.59%)
4. Free newspaper (*Star*) (18.74%)
5. Council’s website (10.90%)

Looking at the ‘other’ category, 47% of respondents mentioned getting their information during the news on television, with another 29% stating that radio was used to obtain information on the Laman Street Figs. The ‘other’ category also comprises of the community interest group (*Save our Figs*) representing 12% and social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube representing 11%.

Comparatively, the least popular sources of information when dealing with the Laman Street Figs are as follows:

12. Quarterly Ward Forums (0.31%)
13. Design workshop (as a participant) (0.81%)
14. Laman Street Tree Working Party (as a participant) (1.43%)
15. Council e-newsletter (4.28%)
16. Signage (5.50%)
17. Council meetings (5.80%)

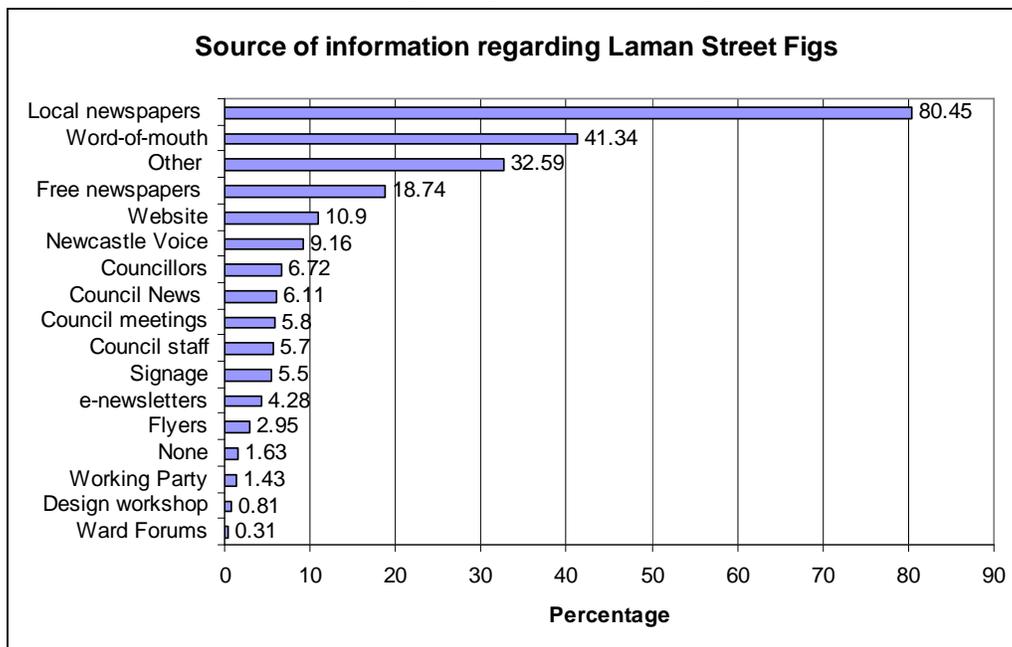
The change to Ward Forums in 2009 enabled community members to attend an annual meeting in their ward to discuss their ward or LGA issues. Between 2009 and 2011, 12 quarterly ward forums have taken place with a total of 808 people attending. The topic of the Laman Street was discussed during some of these Ward Forums, as nominated by attendees.

- “I have attended Council forums on various issues and find they do not result in any policy changes. The way the fig issue was handled is disgraceful.”
- “None of the methods listed are useful unless they are truthful & unbiased. Ward Forums: Never been informed.”

Having a limited number of community members as participants at the Design workshop and on the Laman Street Tree Working Party, who are also Newcastle Voice panel members, may explain the low response rate related to both of these engagement tools.

- “Laman Street Working Party must not have staff voting. Under 'tools to communicate and consult' community, where is reference to the Lord Mayor Working Party? I'd like to have conveyed its 'lack' of usefulness. “

Graph 3: Source of information regarding Laman Street Figs



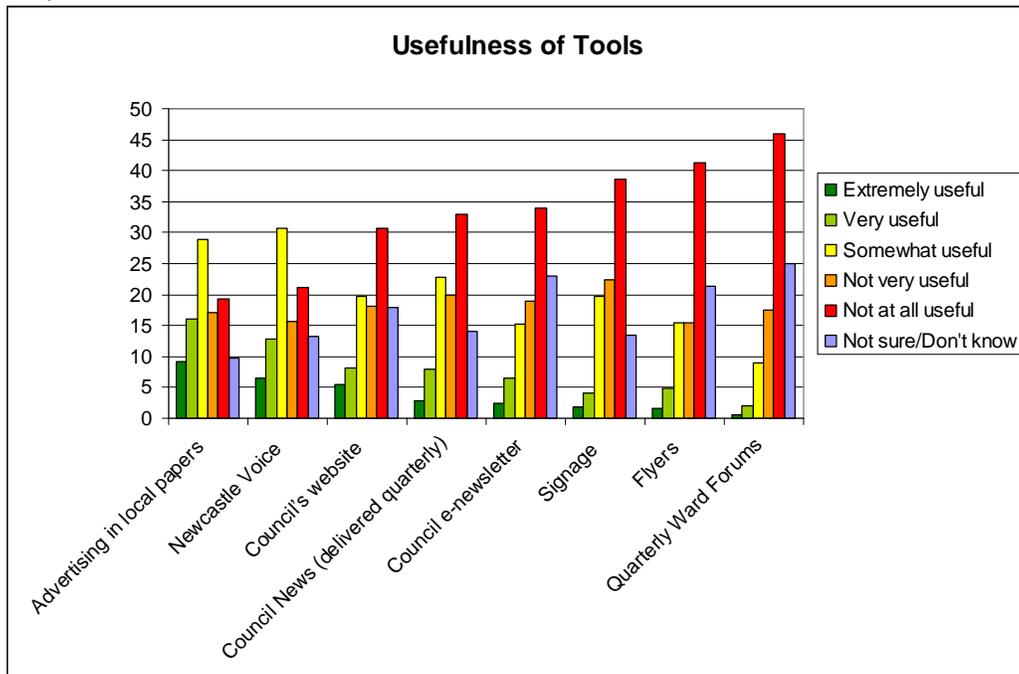
The following tools were used by the Council administration to communicate and consult with the community during this significant community issue:

- Advertising in local papers
- Council e-newsletter
- Council News (delivered quarterly)
- Council’s website
- Flyers
- Newcastle Voice
- Quarterly Ward Forums
- Signage

Respondents were asked to rate how useful they found the eight different communication channels. Below is the list sorted by those the respondents identified as ‘extremely’ useful and further sorted by those identified as ‘very’ useful.

1. Advertising in the local papers
2. Newcastle Voice
3. Council’s website
4. Council News
5. Council e-newsletter
6. Signage
7. Flyers
8. Quarterly Ward Forums

Graph 4: Usefulness of Tools

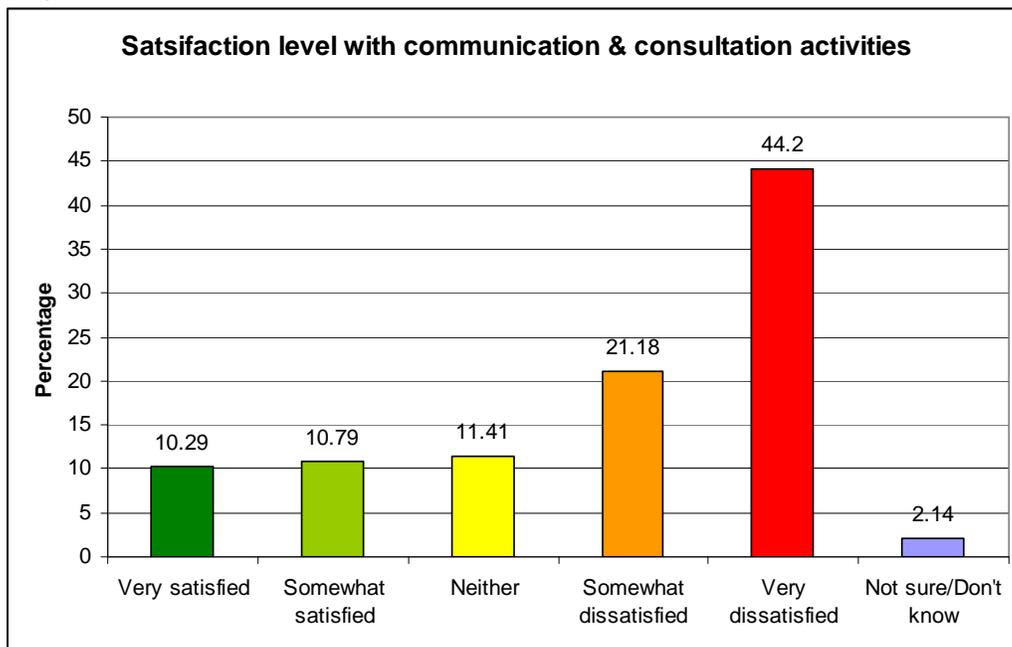


Satisfaction Level

Newcastle Voice respondents were asked how satisfied they are with the communication and consultation activities undertaken by Council regarding the Laman Street Figs. Of the 982 respondents, 44.20% indicated that they are 'very dissatisfied' with the communication and consultation activities undertaken, with 21.08% indicating that they were either 'very satisfied' or 'somewhat satisfied.'

There may be some confusion around the definition of 'consultation', where respondents may refer to 'consultation' when they are actually meaning that they would have liked to have been better informed.

Graph 5: Satisfaction level with communication & consultation activities



- "I am not so sure that the that the issue is engagement. In relation to the fig tree issue there was plenty of engagement. It was just that some people didn't agree with the Council's decision. Improved engagement won't make any difference in the future if the same thing happens again."
- "The Laman St figs were located in the Civic District, yet proximity to Ward 1 ratepayers was not considered. With loss of those trees my property has been diminished. Failure to permit independent State assessment was rejected and the community was further split. I do not feel ratepayers were respected."
- "The council has suitable methods to engage the community. Via the various engagements, good proposals were put forward to resolve the issue but not acted on. Improvement action should focus on what do with the outcomes not new methods to get input that won't be acted on."

Preferred Engagement Methods

Respondents were asked to indicate the usefulness of the following 16 methods to keep them informed and involved about significant community issues in they arise in the future:

- Council brochures
- Council e-newsletters
- Council information with rates notices
- Council meetings & workshops
- Council News (delivered quarterly)
- Council's website
- Displays and noticeboards at libraries and other Council venues
- Local paper
- Local radio
- Local TV news
- Lord Mayor's column in free weekly newspaper
- Newcastle Voice
- Online discussions
- Quarterly Ward Forums
- Signage and billboards
- Social media (eg. Facebook)

Respondents indicated that their preferred methods were the local papers, followed closely by television news, and the local radio. A relatively large proportion of respondents support regular, paid advertising using mass media channels, such as the local newspaper or television stations, with regular updates from Council. The top five methods are ranked in order by those which received the highest combined responses for 'extremely useful' and 'very useful' are as follows:

1. Local paper (62.12% combined 'extremely useful' and 'very useful')
2. TV news (61.30% combined 'extremely useful' and 'very useful')
3. Local radio (56.31% combined 'extremely useful' and 'very useful')
4. Newcastle Voice (49.79% combined 'extremely useful' and 'very useful')
5. Council information with rate notices (43.38% combined 'extremely useful' and 'very useful')

Although mass media is of most interest, there is the need for multiple communications channels, with information tailored to each channel. There is a common wish from respondents for information to be delivered, rather than sought out.

Newcastle Voice is a relatively new communication channel and has a specific purpose - to consult with stakeholders and the community. There is some interest for Newcastle Voice to be the channel for information about significant community issues (not simply about consultations). However, respondents did mention that consultation was not always appropriate or expected.

- "... also if there is only one option – i.e. removing the trees, then Council shouldn't undertake any consultation."

In regard to information with rate notices, respondents identified this as an efficient means of reaching all ratepayers:

- “...the plans should be exhibited for longer periods and all rate payers in the suburb should be notified via their rates notices.”
- “Getting to each household without extra cost such as rate notices would ensure that everyone is informed.”

The least preferred methods of engagement with Council were quarterly Ward Forums, social media and the Lord Mayor’s column in the free weekly newspaper. The bottom five methods which received the highest combined responses for ‘not at all useful’ and ‘not very useful’ are as follows:

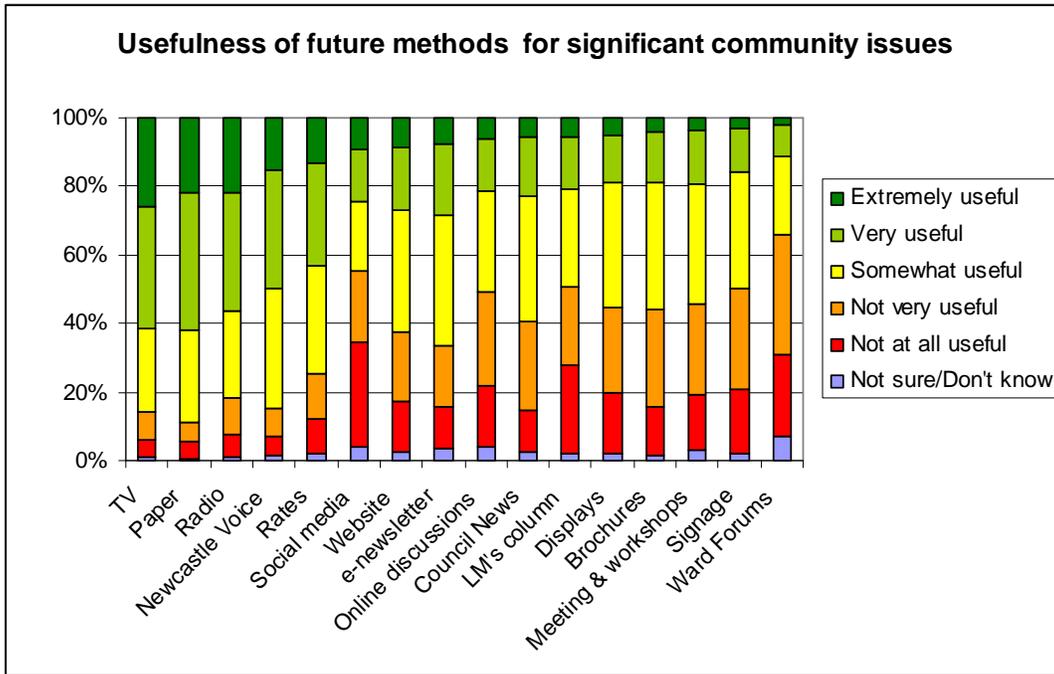
1. Quarterly Ward Forums (59.06%)
2. Social media (eg. Facebook) (51.32%)
3. Lord Mayor’s column in the free weekly newspaper (48.47%)
4. Signage (48.06%)
5. Online discussion (45.01%)

When asked how useful quarterly Ward Forms would be to keep the community informed and involved about significant community issues when they arise in the future, 59.06% of Newcastle Voice respondents indicated that they would be ‘not very useful’ or ‘not at all useful’, with a relatively small number (11.30%) stating that they are ‘very useful’ or ‘extremely useful.’

- “Reintroduce the original concept and meeting cycle and procedures for ward Forums. I find the current format to be totally useless and nothing more than a staged managed circus.”
- “... Ward meetings are too pompous for the average person to express their views.”
- “Workshop style needs review. Structure has become superficial.”
- “Please keep in mind that many people do not receive free newspapers or flyers due to “no junk mail” and ‘no free papers’ signage on letterboxes. Local radio, local TV, email and social media would be preferred methods of communication.”
- “I find that Newcastle Voice does engage with me well regarding the issues chosen. My problem is that there is not enough signage in area e.g. shopping centres, railway stations, as well as Libraries, and Council Chamber, in regard to the future develop of Newcastle.”

The graph below is sorted by ‘extremely useful’ followed by ‘very useful’ and suggests that Council should dedicate resources to ensure that the community is informed using mass media.

Graph 6: Usefulness of future methods for significant community issues



Comparing Methods – Today Verses Tomorrow

There is a marked difference when comparing the methods that respondents used to get most of their information regarding the Laman Street Figs with the methods perceived as being most useful for them to be kept informed and involved about significant community issues in the future. The top and bottom five methods are displayed in the tables below.

Table 1: Top 5 methods (today vs tomorrow)

Laman Street Figs	Future Significant Community Issues
1. Local newspapers	1. Local paper
2. Word of mouth	2. Television news
3. Other (TV, radio, community interest group, social media)	3. Local radio
4. Free newspaper	4. Newcastle Voice
5. Council's website	5. Council information with rate notices

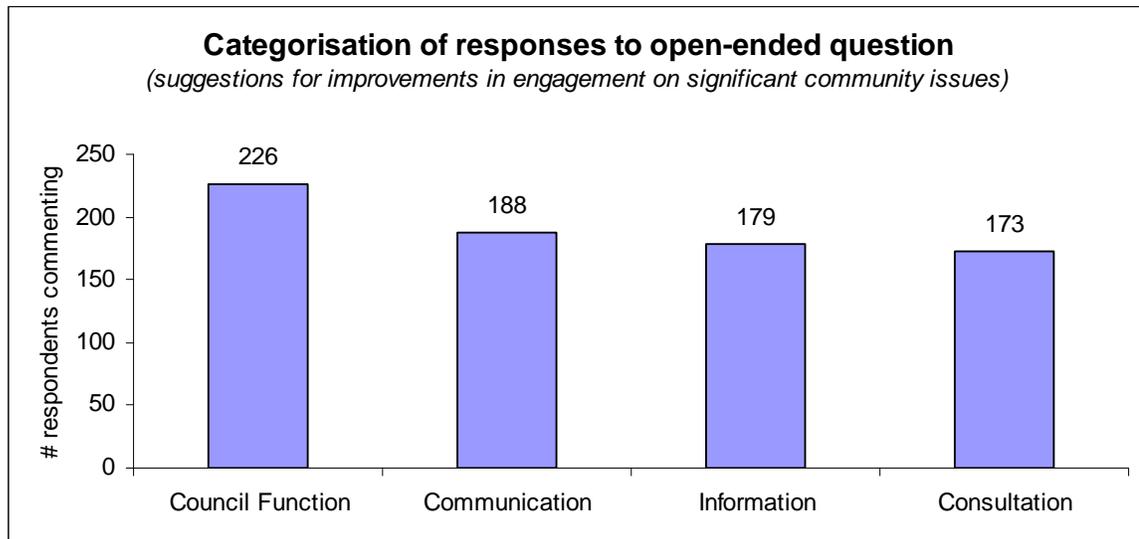
Table 2: Bottom 5 methods (today vs tomorrow)

Laman Street Figs	Future Significant Community Issues
1. Quarterly Ward Forums	1. Quarterly Ward Forums
2. Design workshop	2. Social media (eg. Facebook)
3. Laman Street Tree Working Party	3. Lord Mayor's column in the free weekly newspaper
4. Council e-newsletter	4. Signage
5. Signage	5. Online discussion

Further Improvements

Through the use of an open-ended question, respondents to the survey were given the opportunity to provide comments and/or suggestions for improvements in Council engagement on future significant community issues. In total, 671 respondents provided comment, with the broad topics mentioned summarised in the graph below. The following graph demonstrates that improving the way Council currently functions is of primary concern, at 34% of all respondents' comments. Each of these categories is discussed further below.

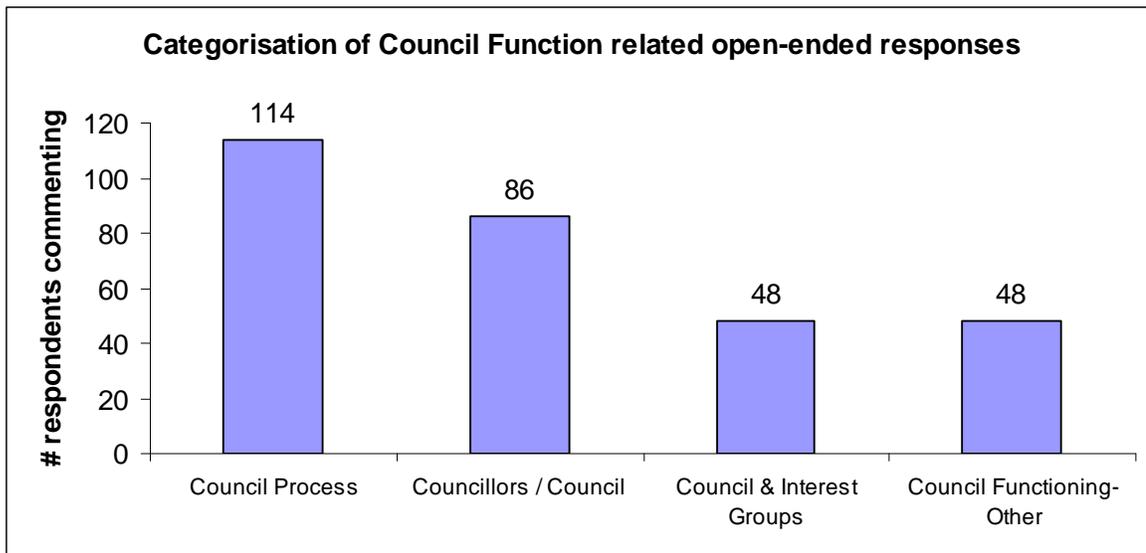
Graph 7: Categorisation of responses to open-ended question



Council Function

The 226 responses relating to the function and process of Council and relevant persons were sub-categorised into five areas as summarised in the graph on the following page.

Graph 8: Categorisation of Council function related to open-ended responses



The strongest theme that emerged was in regard to Council process. Here, 114 respondents left comments primarily relating to Council getting the job done once a decision is made, the amount of time and cost dedicated to the Laman Street Fig issue, and Council's focus being drawn away from other important community issues. The following comments illustrate:

- "...I am more concerned about decisions that are made and not carried through for what seems like ages..."
- "You are elected to represent & make decisions. All the people don't agree with those decisions but you have embarrassed yourselves and the city by this fiasco. Get on with the job you were elected to do & stop carrying on like prima donnas....after all you are merely public servants"
- "...The council made the decision (that is what they were elected for) and then flipped and flopped for too long."
- "...Some things just need a decision made and actions carried out, without debate. Thanks for getting on with it!"
- "Why do our councillors let issues such as the removal of figs linger on unresolved for months? This leads to community misinformation, innuendo, unrest, near riots and is a big fat waste of our Council rates. 2+million \$ wasted which could have been spent on keeping pre-schools open. A disgrace."
- "I was ambivalent about the trees. The waste of money and the divisive behaviour of the Lord Mayor were disgusting. Council has lost a lot of credibility with me. This should never have been allowed to drag on for as long as it did."
- "Stop wasting money on trees, there's more things in our area that need attention! Don't forget western Newcastle!"

Under the theme of Councillors and Council, 86 respondents provided comments suggesting that the community perceives the Councillors and the Lord Mayor as following their own personal or political agendas. Respondent comments relating to perceived infighting and the

call for some Council officers to be dismissed were also included in this category. Comments illustrate:

- “...Comments from the Mayor or councillors are linked to their political leanings...”
- “...Have councillors represent/implement the wishes of the ratepayers, NOT dictate their personal desires...”
- “...Regardless of personal views and political ambitions, all Councillors should be acting only in the best interests of Newcastle.”
- “...The Fig saga was disastrous with political in fighting...”
- “Decisions made by Council should be PUBLICLY SUPPORTED by the (Lord) Mayor, no matter if he/she agrees with them or not. The formal process of Council should be ISOLATED from party or personal politics....”
- “...the issue became a debacle, a forum for political grandstanding; our elected Councillors seem to have found themselves lost/out of their depth between a rock and a fig tree!”
- “Not have the Mayor set the counsellors to vote one way on issues without his vote. Then when their opposition to that vote in Council from the general public he can then go to the media and cry crocodile tears, and blame the other counsellors.”

Respondents (48) also provided a number of comments in regard to community interest groups (specifically, Save our Figs [SOF]) and their impact on the Laman Street Fig issue. Overall, 45 respondents wrote that Council spent too much time focused on pandering to the needs of SOF, when they held a minority viewpoint. Similarly, comments also reflected on the perception that SOF hijacked or controlled the Laman Street Fig issue. Indicative comments obtained are as follows:

- “...To keep the community informed is one thing but to have these minorities hijack every decision that Council make is just ridiculous.”
- “Council seems out of touch with the Newcastle community and appears to focus on the loud minority, the likes of Tony Brown and the Save Our Rail and Save Our Figs. They receive too much of Council’s time and resources.”
- “...they should not be held ransomed to by a vocal minority.”
- “...Don’t over-engage with outspoken minorities - get on with the job.”
- “The whole Laman Street Figs fiasco was a mess controlled by a small radical group of disruptive people. Council should have carried out it’s decision promptly to remove the trees.”

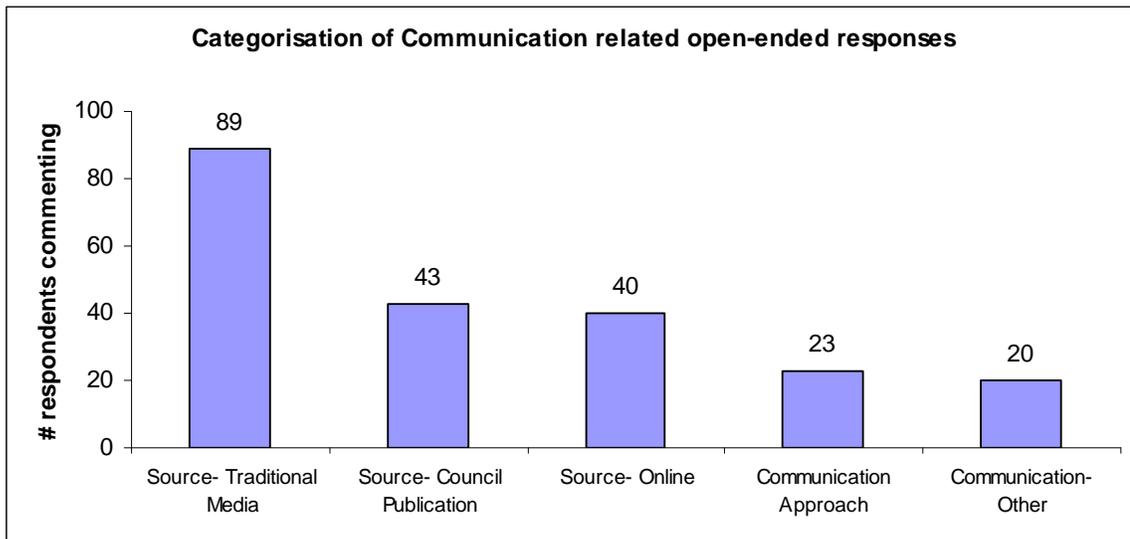
Other themes relating to Council function were concentrated around Council’s shameful and reprehensible behaviour or the understanding that Council will never be able to please everybody. Comments illustrate below:

- “This whole saga is nothing short of disgusting and will harm Council/ratepayer relationship for many years to come.”
- “I am ashamed of the way Council conducted themselves in this affair using a campaign of fear and misinformation. Shame on all involved. It has set a sad precedent for Newcastle.”
- “This issue has been an absolute fiasco and has shown Council's absolute disrespect for the community. I am ashamed of Newcastle and NCC.”

Communication

The 188 responses relating to Communication were sub-categorised into five areas as summarised below in the graph below. Broadly, the comments provided by respondents could be classified as communication sources currently used and/or would use and Council’s communication approach.

Graph 9: Categorisation of Communication related open-ended responses



In regard to traditional media as communication sources, the majority of respondents made reference to radio, television, and newspapers (71 respondents). However it should be noted that some respondents also commented that such media can be bias and sensationalise a given topic. In line with this, respondents also noted that paid advertisements placed by Council in the local media would be beneficial, as would be having a single Council spokesperson such as the General Manager. These themes are demonstrated in the respondent quotes below:

- “Radio and television are the most useful ways for me to get the information as we don't often get the free paper and are NOT regular purchasers of the Newcastle Herald.”
- “The General Manager should be at the forefront of any communication on significant issues....”
- “Try to ignore local news media since I find it is too biased towards certain elements of a vocal community which does not represent views held by the silent (unfortunately) majority.”
- “If Council passes a recommendation it should then speak with ONE voice. Using local radio or free newspapers to spread the official word, rather than opinion pieces, would do us all good!”
- “The public were continually bombarded with sensationalist, inaccurate rubbish by local media”
- “The General Manager should be in charge of news items – not all the different so called managers of different departments domiciled in the roundhouse!!”
- “The figs had outlived their usefulness ... became a significant community debate because safety was blamed for their demise and the media blew it up into an emotive problem.”
- “The only information we received was from the press and radio. The most efficient form of communications would be to do press conference with the local media.”
- “I didn't feel that the media was providing a balanced view on the issue. In future I would prefer to have the facts presented in the paper just as it has been recently by Council taking out a full page ad informing the community what is happening and why.”

Aside from traditional media, 43 respondents noted Council publications as a means to keep the community informed, including the Newcastle Voice newsletter, an insert with rates, and a mail dropped flyer or brochure. However, like with traditional media, some respondents also noted that Council publications may be bias / not believable. Comments illustrate:

- “More appropriate is mass media and direct to consumer (flyers with rate notices, letterbox drops etc).”
- “For me, electronic media works best, along with info in council rates notices. Of all council's communication devices, I find Newcastle Voice to be the most informative and useful.”
- “Getting to each house hold without extra cost such as rate notices would ensure that everyone is informed....”
- “Anything that comes from the Council itself, in my opinion, must be viewed as having the potential for bias.”

Forty respondents commented that using online sources, such as email (e-news), social media and the Council website was an appropriate communication avenue. It is worth noting that some respondents who referenced online sources in their response also made reference to traditional media, suggesting that the online avenue is perceived complementary to traditional media and not a replacement to traditional media. The following comments illustrate:

- “Email is my preferred method of receiving and sending information.”
- “...Provide detailed information on council website in a way that is easily searchable. Facebook/twitter etc could link to this part of Council website ...”
- “Use social media and internet as much as possible to engage young to middle aged people. In addition to traditional means.”
- “...local radio, local TV, email and social media would be preferred methods of communication...”

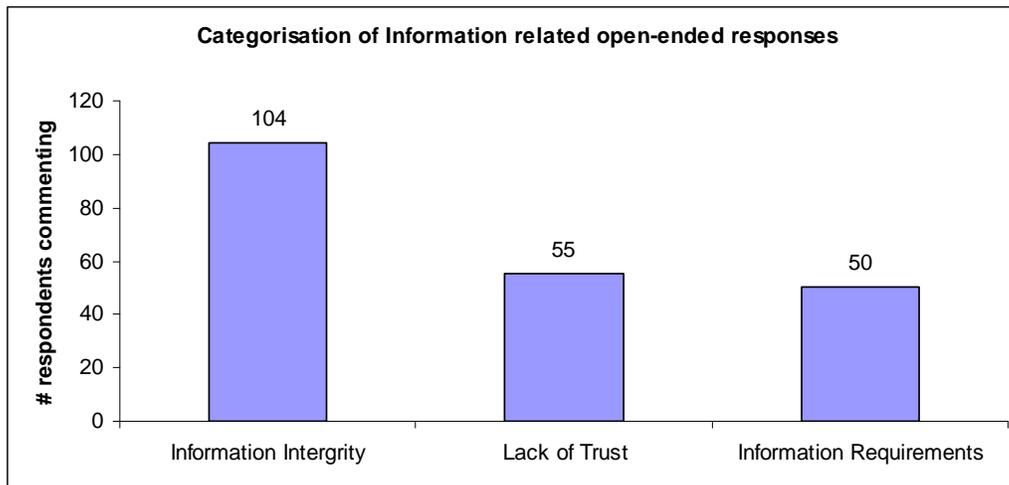
While the majority of responses categorised under the theme ‘communication’ referred to communication method, 23 respondents noted that the communication tools used by Council were not the issue, and that the message being communicated was of greater importance, and/or that the Council needs to be more proactive in it’s overall communication approach.

- “The communication was fine but I was a bit confused by the message; it was inconsistent...”
- “The issue is the quality of the communication not the mediums used by Council. It was not transparent, we were fed dribble....”
- “Council needs to be more pro-active with explaining to rate payers what is happening and what will occur instead of having a distorted one sided opinion being presented by in this case the SOF group.”
- “Don’t allow a void to develop, be pro active from the start & get the information out as quickly as possible ...”

Information

The 179 comments relating broadly to information were sub-categorised into three areas as summarised the graph below.

Graph 10: Categorisation of information related open-ended responses



Information integrity was the theme of 104 comments. Respondents expressed the need for Council to be honest; truthful; open and upfront. Fifty-two respondents stated that they expected Council to be more transparent when imparting information or during the decision making process, making this one of the strongest themes identified in the analysis.

- “Council must always be transparent to ratepayers with clear, concise & honest communication providing all of the facts, in the first instance....”
- “Full transparency, consistent story, full disclosure. The Laman St debacle is an epic failure of accountability, judgement, management and communication.”
- “Council needs to be transparent, why not allow an independent assessment at no cost to Council on the fig trees issue?”
- “Transparency is crucial. The anger in the community is largely because of the belief that there is a hidden agenda or something we are not being told.”
- “Be open, honest from beginning. There is too much distrust surrounding decisions made.”
- “Council needs to be open and honest about their objectives and listen to the people who object to proposals without all the drama.”

In line with the call for honesty, truth and transparency, 55 survey respondents referred to a lack of trust in Council with comments touching on Council's failure to disclose the truth and having a hidden agenda. Some respondents commented about Council plans for the library and/or art gallery as the 'motive' behind the felling of the Laman Street Figs. This theme 'lack of trust' was one of three strong themes identified in the analysis.

- "The truth being told from the beginning. The real agenda for certain actions. Those trees were no more dangerous than the hundreds of other fig trees around Newcastle."
- "It would have been useful if the Council had given the real reason for the tree removal from the start. Redevelopment of the area was the reason, why not say it?"
- "Council has not produced any evidence that all the figs had to be removed for safety reasons - freedom of information and history may record council administration has another agenda or is an insurance company running this city ?"
- "It doesn't matter what form of communications council uses. I don't trust anything the council has said on this issue. I have the strong impression that the administration has an agenda for the art gallery and Laman Street which it has not disclosed to the public or even the councillors."
- "Honesty is the best policy as is the clarity of the statements issued about a proposal eg if you want a promenade area and to extend the Art Gallery & so need to remove fig trees: say that rather than something is wrong with the trees."

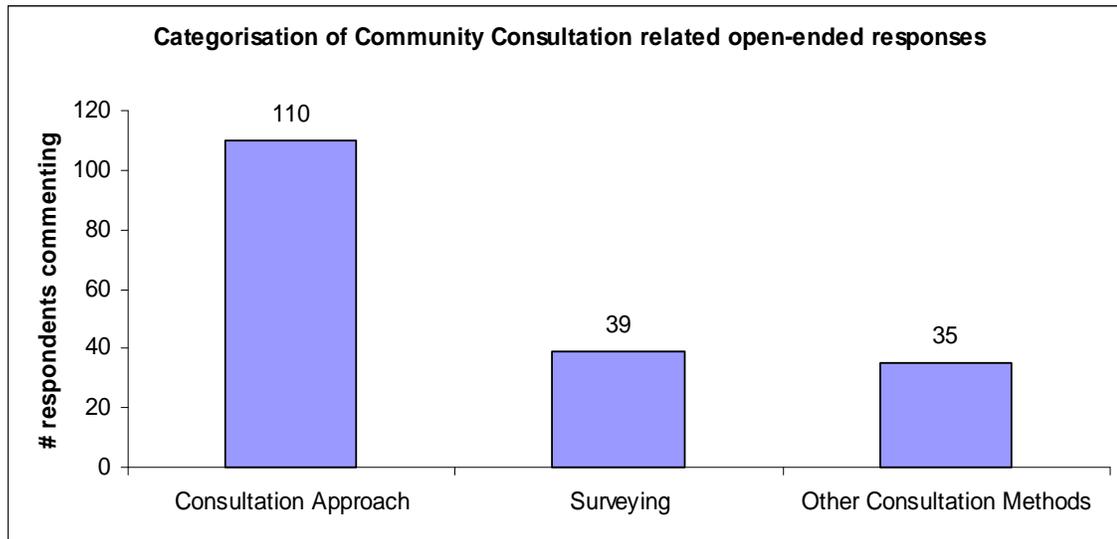
In terms of the information requirements, 50 respondents commented that they would like to have access to independent opinions and/or simple, succinct, easy to read facts being communicated. Indicative comments:

- "Actual factual information needs to be made public e.g. the results of the independent surveys, and the future plans for the area."
- "When something as divisive as the fig issue arises, an independent arborist should have been called in, instead of Council looking as if it had something to hide."
- "Be transparent and provide factual reports on the situation if the media is not going to report the full story due to wanting to increase their sales."
- "Perhaps the Council should have published the facts for the decision for cutting down the trees in very simple terms so that everyone could examine the issue with objectivity."
- "Most of the information coming from Council is in generalities and reinforcing a position. That correspondence needs to have more specific and clear information - simple facts"

Community Consultation

The 173 responses relating to Community Consultation were sub-categorised into five areas as summarised the graph below.

Graph 11: Categorisation of Community Consultation related open-ended responses



Overall, 110 respondents referred to consultation approach in their comments. Key topics provided by respondents were listening to the community; consulting before decisions are made; ensuring consultation is a two-way, open and transparent process; and an acknowledgement that it is the action after the consultation that is important. Although the comments refer to 'consultation' for many it refers to being informed – to provide the community with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.

- “Be truthful & open in consultation & actually listen to the community!! 'Consultation' wasn't the problem with the figs, it was actually respecting the community by listening and doing as they asked.”
- “Council needs to consult before taking such drastic action even if there are safety issues.”
- “Consult before making a decision and let Councillors know results of consultation before presenting to Council for a decision.”
- “More public consultation and actually listening to the results. It should be accessible and notice should be paid to the results. It is no good consulting/communicating if the communication is only going one way...”
- “...Councillors to LISTEN to rate payers and engage in meaningful dialogue.”
- “Demonstration that Council will be prepared to act on the feedback it receives, not just go through the motions of having people say their piece then ignore it.”
- “My concern is not about the number of opportunities to be consulted, but regarding whether or not Council took that consultation seriously or just treated it a means of pacifying dissent”

On the contrary, other respondents commented that in regard to the Laman Street Fig issue community views were dismissed and Council just did what it wanted to do, so there is no point in consulting. Below are illustrative comments:

- “The Council totally ignored a ratepayer petition of 11,000 signatures.”
- “Since it seems council were intent on their action anyway I don't see how much purpose was served by community consultation.”
- “Had the feeling that the Laman Street Figs demise was already decided and any further talks would not have mattered.”
- “I feel that council engagement is just 'a tick a box exercise and opinions other than those held by Council officers are ignored. The increase of rates survey of 500 people was significant but a petition of 11000 names was ignored - go figure!!!!”

Surveying emerged as a clear theme in regard to community consultation. Here, 39 respondents wrote comments relating to Newcastle Voice (positive & negative); independent surveys; online polls; and availability of survey results. The following comments illustrate the range:

- “Next time, use the Newcastle Voice to ask us for input, and then publish the results.”
- “Use Voice or other means to conduct independent plebiscite (referendum) before proceeding with someone's grand idea which may not be generally seen as worthwhile expenditure.”
- “Having an informal opinion poll through Newcastle Voice would have been very useful”
- “In my opinion Newcastle Voice will give a distorted view of this issue and feedback to Council and a broader, more representative community response would be very different.”
- “An online poll, available to the whole community, would highlight the actual community views and give a level of comfort to decision making.”
- “...the results of that consultation should be factored into any decision. The results need to be in the papers, on tv/radio, to ensure people are informed of how the community feels...”

In terms of other consultation methods theme, 35 respondents suggested that referendums or public forums (either at the ward or suburb level) would be suitable tools in consultation on significant community issues.

- “An online avenue for all ratepayers to vote on significant issues unresolved after 3 meetings. Registration would be mandatory and if a determined percentage has voted then the result would be final. Councillors would not be allowed to overturn the result.”
- “You need to involve ALL ratepayers in these type of events”
- “Reintroduce the original concept and meeting cycle and procedures for Ward Forums.”
- “...restarting forums for each suburb...”
- “More public meetings.”



Appendix I - Questionnaire

Significant Community Issues Survey

A resolution was passed by Council requesting that the General Manager conduct a review of the communication and consultation processes for the Laman Street Fig Tree issue and provide recommendations for improving Council's processes in the future.

You are being asked to provide us with your feedback to help us better meet your needs and identify areas for improvement in the process Council adopts to manage key issues in the future. Please take 10 minutes to complete this 6 question survey.

Q1. Overall, how informed has Council kept you regarding Laman Street Figs? **Please select one response only.**

- | | | | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| Not at all informed | Somewhat informed | Neither | Well informed | Very well informed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Q2. From which of the following sources did you get **most** of your information regarding Laman Street Figs? **Please select all that apply.**

<input type="checkbox"/>	Council e-newsletters
<input type="checkbox"/>	Council meetings
<input type="checkbox"/>	Council News – quarterly newsletter delivered to households
<input type="checkbox"/>	Council staff
<input type="checkbox"/>	Council’s website
<input type="checkbox"/>	Design workshop (as a participant)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Elected Councillors
<input type="checkbox"/>	Flyers
<input type="checkbox"/>	Free newspapers (<i>Star</i>)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Laman Street Tree Working Party (as a participant)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Local newspapers (<i>Newcastle Herald</i>)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Newcastle Voice
<input type="checkbox"/>	Quarterly Ward Forums
<input type="checkbox"/>	Signage
<input type="checkbox"/>	Word-of-mouth: friends and family
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (Please specify) _____
<input type="checkbox"/>	None of these

Q3. The following tools were used to communicate and consult with you during this significant community issue. Please rate each of the following tools on its usefulness. **Please select one response for each item.**

Tools	Not at all useful	Not very useful	Somewhat useful	Very useful	Extremely useful	Not sure/Don't know
Advertising in local papers	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Council e-newsletter	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Council News (delivered quarterly)	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Council's website	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Flyers	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Newcastle Voice	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Quarterly Ward Forums	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Signage	<input type="checkbox"/>					

Q4. Overall, how satisfied are you with the communication and consultation activities undertaken by Council regarding the Laman Street Figs? **Please select one response only**

Very dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Neither	Somewhat satisfied	Very satisfied	Not sure/Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>					

Q5. In the future, how useful would you find each of the following methods to keep you informed and involved about significant community issues when they arise? **Please select one response only**

Tools	Not at all useful	Not very useful	Somewhat useful	Very useful	Extremely useful	Not sure/Don't know
Council brochures	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Council e-newsletters	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Council information with rates notices	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Council meetings & workshops	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Council News (delivered quarterly)	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Council's website	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Displays and noticeboards at libraries and other Council venues	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Local paper	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Local radio	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Local TV news	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Lord Mayor's column in free weekly newspaper	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Newcastle Voice	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Online discussions	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Quarterly Ward Forums	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Signage and billboards	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Social media (eg. Facebook)	<input type="checkbox"/>					

Q6. Please provide any final comments/suggestions about further improvements that can be made to better engage with you on significant community issues in the future. **Please be as specific as possible. (50 word limit)**

Thank you for and taking the time to complete this survey.

Appendix II – Demographics

General Characteristics of Sample

Length of Time Lived in Newcastle, LGA

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Less than a year	87	4.09 %
O2	1 - 3 years	223	10.48 %
O3	4 - 10 years	493	23.17 %
O4	11 - 25 years	513	24.11 %
O5	More than 25 years	812	38.16 %

Gender

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Male	1064	46.61 %
O2	Female	1219	53.39 %

Age

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	16-24	118	5.17 %
O2	25-39	714	31.27 %
O3	40-54	788	34.52 %
O4	55-69	585	25.62 %
O5	70+	78	3.42 %

Employment Status

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Employed full time	1216	54.90 %
O2	Employed part time	442	19.95 %
O3	Looking for work	57	2.57 %
O4	Studying	207	9.35 %
O5	Domestic activities/caring	150	6.77 %
O6	Retired	301	13.59 %
O7	Other [specify]	145	6.55 %
O8	Prefer not to answer	29	1.31 %

Suburb of Residence

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Adamstown	43	2.68 %
O2	Adamstown Heights	32	2.00 %
O3	Bar Beach	31	1.93 %
O4	Beresfield	9	0.56 %
O5	Birmingham Gardens	13	0.81 %
O6	Blackhill/ Lenaghan	0	0.00 %
O7	Broadmeadow	25	1.56 %
O8	Callaghan	4	0.25 %
O9	Carrington	23	1.43 %
O10	Cooks Hill	76	4.74 %
O11	Elmore Vale	26	1.62 %
O12	Fletcher	29	1.81 %
O13	Georgetown	23	1.43 %
O14	Hamilton	59	3.68 %
O15	Hamilton East	12	0.75 %
O16	Hamilton North	9	0.56 %
O17	Hamilton South	40	2.50 %
O18	Hexham	0	0.00 %
O19	Islington	49	3.06 %
O20	Jesmond	15	0.94 %
O21	Kooragang	0	0.00 %
O22	Kotara	47	2.93 %
O23	Lambton	59	3.68 %
O24	Maryland	29	1.81 %
O25	Maryville	44	2.74 %
O26	Mayfield	90	5.61 %
O27	Mayfield East	19	1.19 %
O28	Mayfield West	15	0.94 %
O29	Merewether	171	10.67 %
O30	Merewether Heights	21	1.31 %
O31	Minmi	7	0.44 %

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O32	New Lambton	75	4.68 %
O33	New Lambton Heights	17	1.06 %
O34	Newcastle (CBD)	82	5.12 %
O35	Newcastle East	33	2.06 %
O36	Newcastle West	9	0.56 %
O37	North Lambton	20	1.25 %
O38	Rankin Park	8	0.50 %
O39	Sandgate	0	0.00 %
O40	Shortland	21	1.31 %
O41	Stockton	40	2.50 %
O42	Tarro	8	0.50 %
O43	The Hill	39	2.43 %
O44	The Junction	29	1.81 %
O45	Tighes Hill	36	2.25 %
O46	Wallsend	76	4.74 %
O47	Warabrook	4	0.25 %
O48	Waratah	32	2.00 %
O49	Waratah West	9	0.56 %
O50	Wickham	18	1.12 %
O51	I don't live in the Newcastle area.	27	1.68 %

Ward

	PD as % LGA	Survey sample %
Ward 1 (Carrington, Cooks Hill, Islington, Kooragang, Maryville, Mayfield, Mayfield East, Mayfield West, Newcastle (CBD), Newcastle East, Newcastle West, Stockton, The Hill, Tighes Hill, Warabrook, Wickham)	25	36
Ward 2 (Adamstown, Adamstown Heights, Bar Beach, Broadmeadow, Hamilton, Hamilton East, Hamilton North, Hamilton South, Merewether, Merewether Heights, The Junction)	25	29.45
Ward 3 (Georgetown, Jesmond, Kotara, Lambton, New Lambton, New Lambton Heights, North Lambton, Waratah, Waratah West)	25	18.53
Ward 4 (Beresfield, Birmingham Gardens, Blackhill / Lenaghan, Callaghan, Elermore Vale, Fletcher, Hexham, Maryland, Minmi, Rankin Park, Sandgate, Shortland, Tarro, Wallsend)	25	14.35

Planning District

	PD as % LGA	Survey sample %
Inner City South	15.8	30.63
Inner City North	8	13.10
Hamilton	18	16.66
Mayfield	10.1	7.99
Lambton	19.5	14.66
Jesmond	6.2	3.31
Wallsend	13.5	6.86
Blue Gum Hills	7.2	4.06
North West	3.4	1.06

General Characteristics of Respondents

Length of Time Lived in Newcastle, LGA

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Less than a year	30	3.24 %
O2	1 - 3 years	87	9.39 %
O3	4 - 10 years	200	21.57 %
O4	11 - 25 years	218	23.52 %
O5	More than 25 years	392	42.29 %

Gender

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Male	471	47.96 %
O2	Female	511	52.04 %

Age

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	16-24	19	1.93 %
O2	25-39	240	24.44 %
O3	40-54	357	36.35 %
O4	55-69	314	31.98 %
O5	70+	52	5.30 %

Employment Status

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Employed full time	488	50.62 %
O2	Employed part time	180	18.67 %
O3	Looking for work	17	1.76 %
O4	Studying	52	5.39 %
O5	Domestic activities/caring	64	6.64 %
O6	Retired	190	19.71 %
O7	Other [specify]	71	7.37 %
O8	Prefer not to answer	16	1.66 %



Suburb of Residence



	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Adamstown	18	2.82 %
O2	Adamstown Heights	14	2.19 %
O3	Bar Beach	14	2.19 %
O4	Beresfield	5	0.78 %
O5	Birmingham Gardens	5	0.78 %
O6	Blackhill/ Lenaghan	0	0.00 %
O7	Broadmeadow	10	1.57 %
O8	Callaghan	1	0.16 %
O9	Carrington	9	1.41 %
O10	Cooks Hill	28	4.39 %
O11	Elermore Vale	7	1.10 %
O12	Fletcher	11	1.72 %
O13	Georgetown	7	1.10 %
O14	Hamilton	28	4.39 %
O15	Hamilton East	4	0.63 %
O16	Hamilton North	5	0.78 %
O17	Hamilton South	16	2.51 %
O18	Hexham	0	0.00 %
O19	Islington	25	3.92 %
O20	Jesmond	6	0.94 %
O21	Kooragang	0	0.00 %
O22	Kotara	21	3.29 %
O23	Lambton	19	2.98 %
O24	Maryland	13	2.04 %
O25	Maryville	9	1.41 %
O26	Mayfield	37	5.80 %
O27	Mayfield East	7	1.10 %
O28	Mayfield West	6	0.94 %
O29	Merewether	69	10.82 %
O30	Merewether Heights	9	1.41 %
O31	Minmi	3	0.47 %



	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O32	New Lambton	33	5.17 %
O33	New Lambton Heights	9	1.41 %
O34	Newcastle (CBD)	29	4.55 %
O35	Newcastle East	20	3.13 %
O36	Newcastle West	2	0.31 %
O37	North Lambton	4	0.63 %
O38	Rankin Park	4	0.63 %
O39	Sandgate	0	0.00 %
O40	Shortland	4	0.63 %
O41	Stockton	19	2.98 %
O42	Tarro	3	0.47 %
O43	The Hill	11	1.72 %
O44	The Junction	17	2.66 %
O45	Tighes Hill	13	2.04 %
O46	Wallsend	30	4.70 %
O47	Warabrook	2	0.31 %
O48	Waratah	10	1.57 %
O49	Waratah West	2	0.31 %
O50	Wickham	6	0.94 %
O51	I don't live in the Newcastle area.	14	2.19 %

Ward

	PD as % LGA	Survey sample %
Ward 1 (Carrington, Cooks Hill, Islington, Kooragang, Maryville, Mayfield, Mayfield East, Mayfield West, Newcastle (CBD), Newcastle East, Newcastle West, Stockton, The Hill, Tighes Hill, Warabrook, Wickham)	25	39.80
Ward 2 (Adamstown, Adamstown Heights, Bar Beach, Broadmeadow, Hamilton, Hamilton East, Hamilton North, Hamilton South, Merewether, Merewether Heights, The Junction)	25	27.12
Ward 3 (Georgetown, Jesmond, Kotara, Lambton, New Lambton, New Lambton Heights, North Lambton, Waratah, Waratah West)	25	18.03
Ward 4 (Beresfield, Birmingham Gardens, Blackhill / Lenaghan, Callaghan, Elernmore Vale, Fletcher, Hexham, Maryland, Minmi, Rankin Park, Sandgate, Shortland, Tarro, Wallsend)	25	12.85

Planning District

	PD as % LGA	Survey sample %
Inner City South	15.8	31.18
Inner City North	8	12.70
Hamilton	18	18.18
Mayfield	10.1	8.15
Lambton	19.5	13.17
Jesmond	6.2	2.51
Wallsend	13.5	6.43
Blue Gum Hills	7.2	4.23
North West	3.4	1.25



Appendix III – Topline

Q1. Overall, how informed has Council kept you regarding Laman Street Figs? **Please select one response only.**

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Not at all informed	348	35.44 %
O2	Somewhat informed	362	36.86 %
O3	Neither	91	9.27 %
O4	Well informed	138	14.05 %
O5	Very well informed	43	4.38 %

Q2. From which of the following sources did you get **most** of your information regarding Laman Street Figs? **Please select all that apply.**

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Council e-newsletters	42	4.28 %
O2	Council meetings	57	5.80 %
O3	Council News - quarterly newsletter delivered to households	60	6.11 %
O4	Council staff	56	5.70 %
O5	Council's website	107	10.90 %
O6	Design workshop (as a participant)	8	0.81 %
O7	Elected Councillors	66	6.72 %
O8	Flyers	29	2.95 %
O9	Free newspapers (Star)	184	18.74 %
O10	Laman Street Tree Working Party (as a participant)	14	1.43 %
O11	Local newspapers (Newcastle Herald)	790	80.45 %
O12	Newcastle Voice	90	9.16 %
O13	Quarterly Ward Forums	3	0.31 %
O14	Signage	54	5.50 %
O15	Word-of-mouth: friends and family	406	41.34 %
O16	Other	320	32.59 %
O17	None of these	16	1.63 %

Q3. The following tools were used to communicate and consult with you during this significant community issue. Please rate each of the following tools on its usefulness. **Please select one response for each item.**

Q3_0: Advertising in local papers

QUESTION TOTAL: 982
NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Not at all useful	189	19.25 %
O2	Not very useful	167	17.01 %
O3	Somewhat useful	283	28.82 %
O4	Very useful	158	16.09 %
O5	Extremely useful	89	9.06 %
O6	Not sure/Don't know	96	9.78 %

Q3_1: Council e-newsletter

QUESTION TOTAL: 982
NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Not at all useful	334	34.01 %
O2	Not very useful	186	18.94 %
O3	Somewhat useful	150	15.27 %
O4	Very useful	63	6.42 %
O5	Extremely useful	24	2.44 %
O6	Not sure/Don't know	225	22.91 %

Q3_2: Council News (delivered quarterly)

QUESTION TOTAL: 982
NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Not at all useful	323	32.89 %
O2	Not very useful	195	19.86 %
O3	Somewhat useful	223	22.71 %
O4	Very useful	77	7.84 %
O5	Extremely useful	27	2.75 %
O6	Not sure/Don't know	137	13.95 %

Q3_3: Council's website

QUESTION TOTAL: 982
NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Not at all useful	302	30.75 %
O2	Not very useful	177	18.02 %
O3	Somewhat useful	193	19.65 %
O4	Very useful	80	8.15 %
O5	Extremely useful	54	5.50 %
O6	Not sure/Don't know	176	17.92 %

Q3_4: Flyers

QUESTION TOTAL: 982
NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Not at all useful	406	41.34 %
O2	Not very useful	152	15.48 %
O3	Somewhat useful	151	15.38 %
O4	Very useful	48	4.89 %
O5	Extremely useful	16	1.63 %
O6	Not sure/Don't know	209	21.28 %

Q3_5: Newcastle Voice

QUESTION TOTAL: 982
NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Not at all useful	207	21.08 %
O2	Not very useful	154	15.68 %
O3	Somewhat useful	301	30.65 %
O4	Very useful	126	12.83 %
O5	Extremely useful	64	6.52 %
O6	Not sure/Don't know	130	13.24 %

Q3_6: Quarterly Ward Forums

QUESTION TOTAL: 982
NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Not at all useful	451	45.93 %
O2	Not very useful	172	17.52 %
O3	Somewhat useful	87	8.86 %
O4	Very useful	20	2.04 %
O5	Extremely useful	7	0.71 %
O6	Not sure/Don't know	245	24.95 %

Q3_7: Signage

QUESTION TOTAL: 982
NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Not at all useful	380	38.70 %
O2	Not very useful	219	22.30 %
O3	Somewhat useful	193	19.65 %
O4	Very useful	40	4.07 %
O5	Extremely useful	18	1.83 %
O6	Not sure/Don't know	132	13.44 %

Q4. Overall, how satisfied are you with the communication and consultation activities undertaken by Council regarding the Laman Street Figs? **Please select one response only**

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Very dissatisfied	434	44.20 %
O2	Somewhat dissatisfied	208	21.18 %
O3	Neither	112	11.41 %
O4	Somewhat satisfied	106	10.79 %
O5	Very satisfied	101	10.29 %
O6	Not sure/Don't know	21	2.14 %

Q5. In the future, how useful would you find each of the following methods to keep you informed and involved about significant community issues when they arise? **Please select one response only**

Q5_0: Council brochures

QUESTION TOTAL: 982
NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Not at all useful	137	13.95 %
O2	Not very useful	281	28.62 %
O3	Somewhat useful	362	36.86 %
O4	Very useful	147	14.97 %
O5	Extremely useful	39	3.97 %
O6	Not sure/Don't know	16	1.63 %

Q5_1: Council e-newsletters

QUESTION TOTAL: 982
NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Not at all useful	118	12.02 %
O2	Not very useful	178	18.13 %
O3	Somewhat useful	371	37.78 %
O4	Very useful	206	20.98 %
O5	Extremely useful	74	7.54 %
O6	Not sure/Don't know	35	3.56 %

Q5_2: Council information with rates notices

QUESTION TOTAL: 982
NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Not at all useful	100	10.18 %
O2	Not very useful	129	13.14 %
O3	Somewhat useful	305	31.06 %
O4	Very useful	297	30.24 %
O5	Extremely useful	129	13.14 %
O6	Not sure/Don't know	22	2.24 %

Q5_3: Council meetings & workshops

QUESTION TOTAL: 982
 NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Not at all useful	160	16.29 %
O2	Not very useful	257	26.17 %
O3	Somewhat useful	347	35.34 %
O4	Very useful	152	15.48 %
O5	Extremely useful	36	3.67 %
O6	Not sure/Don't know	30	3.05 %

Q5_4: Council News (delivered quarterly)

QUESTION TOTAL: 982
 NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Not at all useful	122	12.42 %
O2	Not very useful	256	26.07 %
O3	Somewhat useful	355	36.15 %
O4	Very useful	170	17.31 %
O5	Extremely useful	56	5.70 %
O6	Not sure/Don't know	23	2.34 %

Q5_5: Council's website

QUESTION TOTAL: 982
 NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Not at all useful	144	14.66 %
O2	Not very useful	201	20.47 %
O3	Somewhat useful	346	35.23 %
O4	Very useful	179	18.23 %
O5	Extremely useful	86	8.76 %
O6	Not sure/Don't know	26	2.65 %

Q5_6: Displays and noticeboards at libraries and other Council venues

QUESTION TOTAL: 982

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Not at all useful	176	17.92 %
O2	Not very useful	244	24.85 %
O3	Somewhat useful	358	36.46 %
O4	Very useful	135	13.75 %
O5	Extremely useful	50	5.09 %
O6	Not sure/Don't know	19	1.93 %

Q5_7: Local paper

QUESTION TOTAL: 982

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Not at all useful	48	4.89 %
O2	Not very useful	57	5.80 %
O3	Somewhat useful	260	26.48 %
O4	Very useful	396	40.33 %
O5	Extremely useful	214	21.79 %
O6	Not sure/Don't know	7	0.71 %

Q5_8: Local radio

QUESTION TOTAL: 982

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Not at all useful	69	7.03 %
O2	Not very useful	101	10.29 %
O3	Somewhat useful	251	25.56 %
O4	Very useful	339	34.52 %
O5	Extremely useful	214	21.79 %
O6	Not sure/Don't know	8	0.81 %

Q5_9: Local TV news

QUESTION TOTAL: 982

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Not at all useful	52	5.30 %
O2	Not very useful	78	7.94 %
O3	Somewhat useful	241	24.54 %
O4	Very useful	349	35.54 %
O5	Extremely useful	253	25.76 %
O6	Not sure/Don't know	9	0.92 %

Q5_10: Lord Mayor's column in free weekly newspaper

QUESTION TOTAL: 982

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Not at all useful	251	25.56 %
O2	Not very useful	225	22.91 %
O3	Somewhat useful	283	28.82 %
O4	Very useful	147	14.97 %
O5	Extremely useful	55	5.60 %
O6	Not sure/Don't know	21	2.14 %

Q5_11: Newcastle Voice

QUESTION TOTAL: 982

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Not at all useful	53	5.40 %
O2	Not very useful	84	8.55 %
O3	Somewhat useful	341	34.73 %
O4	Very useful	339	34.52 %
O5	Extremely useful	150	15.27 %
O6	Not sure/Don't know	15	1.53 %

Q5_12: Online discussions

QUESTION TOTAL: 982
NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Not at all useful	172	17.52 %
O2	Not very useful	270	27.49 %
O3	Somewhat useful	289	29.43 %
O4	Very useful	153	15.58 %
O5	Extremely useful	58	5.91 %
O6	Not sure/Don't know	40	4.07 %

Q5_13: Quarterly Ward Forums

QUESTION TOTAL: 982
NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Not at all useful	236	24.03 %
O2	Not very useful	344	35.03 %
O3	Somewhat useful	222	22.61 %
O4	Very useful	90	9.16 %
O5	Extremely useful	21	2.14 %
O6	Not sure/Don't know	69	7.03 %

Q5_14: Signage and billboards

QUESTION TOTAL: 982
NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Not at all useful	181	18.43 %
O2	Not very useful	291	29.63 %
O3	Somewhat useful	335	34.11 %
O4	Very useful	124	12.63 %
O5	Extremely useful	30	3.05 %
O6	Not sure/Don't know	21	2.14 %

Q5_15: Social media (eg. Facebook)

QUESTION TOTAL: 982
NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Not at all useful	300	30.55 %
O2	Not very useful	204	20.77 %
O3	Somewhat useful	202	20.57 %
O4	Very useful	147	14.97 %
O5	Extremely useful	90	9.16 %
O6	Not sure/Don't know	39	3.97 %



Appendix IV – Open-ended Question

Q2. From which of the following sources did you get most of your information regarding Laman Street Figs? Other (Please specify)

Subject Category	Q2_16_other
Community Events	involvement in community events
Community Interest Group	Save our Figs
Community Interest Group	Save our figs website and meetings
Community Interest Group	Email from save the figs
Community Interest Group	community group
Community Interest Group	informed community groups
Community Interest Group	save our figs
Community Interest Group	Independent external experts; community meetings
Community Interest Group	save our figs
Community Interest Group	Community emails
Community Interest Group	Save The Figs
Community Interest Group	Save our figs media campaign
Community Interest Group	Save our Figs
Community Interest Group	save our figs
Community Interest Group	Community Groups ie "Save Our Figs" etc
Community Interest Group	community groups opposing removal of the Figs
Community Interest Group	Save Our Figs
Community Interest Group	Save our figs
Community Interest Group	Save our figs
Community Interest Group	Friends of the figs
Community Interest Group	local community group
Community Interest Group	Save our figs
Community Interest Group	save our figs
Community Interest Group	Save our Figs FB page
Community Interest Group	TV news, talking to community members with petition
Community Interest Group	emails, facebook, meetings at the figs
Community Interest Group	Save the Figs
Community Interest Group	save our figs
Community Interest Group	The save the figs people
Community Interest Group	SOF
Community Interest Group	Save the figs people
Community Interest Group	Save Our Figs Inc, Facebook,
Community Interest Group	Save Our Figs
Community Interest Group	Save our Figs
Community Interest Group	idiots from Save Our Figs
Community Interest Group	Save our Figs
Community Interest Group	save our figs members
Community Interest Group	fig-friendly community gatherings
Community Interest Group	save our figs group
Council staff	asking questions to Council and others
Council staff	Novopulse
Council staff	NCC Intranet
Council staff	Husband (architect) met with council staff
Council staff	library
Councillors	Newcastle Greens
Councillors	Attending Council meetings
Councillors	Save Our Figs via The Greens

Councillors	Greens
Newsletter	Environmental Group News Letters
Newspaper	The Post
Newspaper	Facebook, Herald Comments, Commonwealth Government Site
Newspaper	Newspaper, local tv news
Newspaper	Sydney tv news and newspapers
Newspaper	Newcastle Herald
Newspaper	mostly radio and news paper
Newspaper	TV, radio and Newcastle Herald
Newspaper	newcastle herald
Newspaper	newspapers, radio, tv
Newspaper	Newspaper, Concerned Community
Newspaper	newspapers
Observation	Local TV News, Personal observation
Observation	By choice I bypassed 95% of media and ther information as I was dissappointed and alarmed that the whole matter became such a mess.
Observation	Jan mtg at Town Hall, Personal visit to inspect trees
Observation	Visiting the site
Observation	Looking at the trees
Radio	ABC1233 Radio
Radio	ABC local radio
Radio	ABC Radio
Radio	radio station and TV
Radio	ABC Radio 1233
Radio	1233 ABC Radio
Radio	Local Radio
Radio	Local media: Radio & Television
Radio	ABC radio
Radio	Radio
Radio	Radio
Radio	Radio & TV
Radio	ABC 1233
Radio	radio
Radio	Local radio and TV
Radio	Abc local
Radio	ABC local radio
Radio	Radio ABC
Radio	Local Radio
Radio	Local radio
Radio	radio 1233
Radio	Radio, TV
Radio	Radio
Radio	Radio
Radio	radio 2NC
Radio	ABC 1233
Radio	radio and television
Radio	ABC Radio, NBN TV
Radio	Radio, Television
Radio	Local radio
Radio	Radio

Radio	radio
Radio	TV, radio
Radio	local radio
Radio	ABC Radio News
Radio	Radio discussions
Radio	1233 ABC Radio
Radio	TV and Radio
Radio	Radio & TV
Radio	NBN News; ABC1233 Radio
Radio	mostly radio and news paper
Radio	Radio
Radio	ABC Radio, NBN news
Radio	ABC radio
Radio	ABC Radio
Radio	ABC Radio
Radio	radio that they just cut them
Radio	Radio and TV
Radio	Radio/TV News
Radio	TV, radio and Newcastle Herald
Radio	radio news
Radio	Radio Station - KOFM
Radio	radio & tv
Radio	1233 ABC Newcastle
Radio	Television, Radio
Radio	TV, Radio
Radio	ABC Radio
Radio	ABC local radio
Radio	ABC
Radio	radio
Radio	abc radio, TV
Radio	local radio
Radio	radio and tv
Radio	radio & tv
Radio	2NC Radio
Radio	radio
Radio	radio media
Radio	Radio
Radio	Talk Back Radio Stations
Radio	radio
Radio	media - TV, radio
Radio	Radio/news
Radio	radio abc
Radio	1223 radio
Radio	Radio 1233
Radio	radio abc1233
Radio	local ABC radio 1233
Radio	TV/Radio
Radio	newspapers, radio, tv
Radio	radio news
Radio	RAdio (ABC Local 1233)
Radio	Radio

Radio	TV, Radio
Radio	news stories on radio and tv
Radio	ABC1233
Radio	radio and television
Radio	1233 ABC radio
Radio	Radio News
Radio	ABC1233 radio
Radio	radio & media
Radio	Radio
Radio	Abc radio
Radio	Radio
Radio	local radio
Research	Own research into trees
Research	my own research
Research	Independent assessments
Social media (Facebook, YouTube)	Facebook- "Save our funds" and "Who gives a fig etc" groups. Plus Bob Cook's internet postings. Plus various arbourist forums detailing the history. required a bit of digging to find the info.
Social media (Facebook, YouTube)	Television news & Facebook
Social media (Facebook, YouTube)	Facebook
Social media (Facebook, YouTube)	FACEBOOK comments
Social media (Facebook, YouTube)	social media
Social media (Facebook, YouTube)	ONLINE NEWS
Social media (Facebook, YouTube)	media
Social media (Facebook, YouTube)	Facebook, Herald Comments, Commonwealth Government Site
Social media (Facebook, YouTube)	facebook (not council)
Social media (Facebook, YouTube)	facebook
Social media (Facebook, YouTube)	facebook
Social media (Facebook, YouTube)	text messages
Social media (Facebook, YouTube)	Facebook and twitter
Social media (Facebook, YouTube)	Online sources
Social media (Facebook, YouTube)	youtube
Social media (Facebook, YouTube)	facebook
Social media (Facebook, YouTube)	facebook
Social media (Facebook, YouTube)	Facebook sites
Social media (Facebook, YouTube)	facebook
Social media (Facebook, YouTube)	social media- Facebook

YouTube)	
Social media (Facebook, YouTube)	Facebook (friends)
Social media (Facebook, YouTube)	twitter and facebook
Social media (Facebook, YouTube)	SOF website
Social media (Facebook, YouTube)	emails, facebook, meetings at the figs
Social media (Facebook, YouTube)	Facebook and Save Our Figs websites.
Social media (Facebook, YouTube)	community email networks
Social media (Facebook, YouTube)	facebook, open online forums - what happened to mynewcastlevoice2.com ? too open and transparent?
Social media (Facebook, YouTube)	Blogs / Twitter
Social media (Facebook, YouTube)	Facebook
Social media (Facebook, YouTube)	Save Our Figs Inc, Facebook,
Social media (Facebook, YouTube)	facebook
Social media (Facebook, YouTube)	Newcastle Herald online forums for readers comments
Social media (Facebook, YouTube)	Facebook
Social media (Facebook, YouTube)	Facebook
Social media (Facebook, YouTube)	facebook
Social media (Facebook, YouTube)	internet
Stakeholder meeting	stakeholders meeting
Stakeholder meeting	Jan mtg at Town Hall, Personal visit to inspect trees
Stakeholder meeting	Veterans organisations
Stakeholder meeting	Institute of Engineers
State Government	TV & state gov
Television	NBN TV news coverage
Television	Television news & Facebook
Television	TV news
Television	NBN
Television	tv news
Television	Television News
Television	tv news
Television	tv news
Television	TV
Television	tv
Television	radio station and TV
Television	NBN3 news
Television	tv
Television	Local media: Radio & Television
Television	TV News NBN
Television	TV

Television	NBN TV
Television	TV
Television	NBN nightly news broadcast
Television	Radio & TV
Television	TV
Television	Local radio and TV
Television	TV
Television	Tv
Television	TV News
Television	TV News
Television	television
Television	Radio, TV
Television	Tv NBN
Television	Newspaper, local tv news
Television	TV News
Television	The news
Television	Television news
Television	NBN Channel 3 TV local news
Television	Local TV News, Personal observation
Television	TV
Television	NBN News
Television	tv reports
Television	tv
Television	TV NBN
Television	Television news
Television	Local tv
Television	TV news
Television	TV News
Television	tv
Television	News
Television	radio and television
Television	ABC Radio, NBN TV
Television	nbn
Television	Radio, Television
Television	TV News
Television	Abc Newcastle
Television	tv news
Television	TV
Television	TV
Television	TV, radio
Television	Channel 3
Television	NBN TV
Television	TV
Television	tv
Television	tv
Television	Television News
Television	Tv
Television	Sydney tv news and newspapers
Television	television - NBN and Prime
Television	TV and Radio
Television	nbn news

Television	Radio & TV
Television	NBN News; ABC1233 Radio
Television	tv
Television	ABC Radio, NBN news
Television	tv news
Television	tv
Television	Radio and TV
Television	NBN News
Television	news
Television	NBN
Television	tv
Television	Television
Television	Radio/TV News
Television	nbn news
Television	TV
Television	TV
Television	Television reports
Television	TV
Television	NBN nightly news broadcast - 6 pm
Television	NBN
Television	t.v.news
Television	television
Television	TV, radio and Newcastle Herald
Television	TV
Television	NBN Television
Television	local TV
Television	NBN news and headlines
Television	NBN TV
Television	TV & state gov
Television	TV news, talking to community members with petition
Television	Local News
Television	TV news
Television	NBN News
Television	NEWS TV
Television	TV media
Television	radio & tv
Television	NBN News
Television	NBN News
Television	NBN TV News
Television	Television, Radio
Television	television news
Television	TV
Television	nbn news
Television	NBN News
Television	TV, Radio
Television	tv
Television	nbn news
Television	TV news
Television	abc radio, TV
Television	nbn news
Television	radio and tv

Television	radio & tv
Television	NBN
Television	TV
Television	Media
Television	NBN
Television	NBN TV news
Television	tv news
Television	Nightly news
Television	Tv
Television	TV news
Television	media - TV, radio
Television	TV/Radio
Television	newspapers, radio, tv
Television	NBN TV like most people
Television	News items on TV
Television	tv
Television	TV news
Television	NBN
Television	NBN television
Television	local TV (NBN)
Television	tv
Television	TV, Radio
Television	news tv
Television	TV News
Television	news stories on radio and tv
Television	radio and television
Television	NBN News
Television	local tv
Television	tv news
Television	local news
Television	TV coverage
Television	television news
Television	tv
University	university of newcastle researchers who work in area of risk assessment and management
Word of mouth	friends
Word of mouth	Friends
Word of mouth	People complaining
Word of mouth	Newspaper, Concerned Community
Word of mouth	community members

Q6. Please provide any final comments/suggestions about further improvements that can be made to better engage with you on significant community issues in the future. Please be as specific as possible. (50 word limit)

Subject Category	Q6 open-ended response
Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Listening to what the community wants would be a good start. - Transparency of process. - NCC needs to understand the import of cultural heritage vs a risk adverse insurance culture.
Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Tell the truth. * Listen to and heed the community and knowledgeable external experts. * Engage with good faith and genuine responsiveness. * Admit mistakes and deficiencies and redress them. * Be genuinely open and honest with the community. * Take action against council staff who are dishonest.
Information	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. DO not lie to the community 2. Accept properly resourced and valid consultant reports and re-evaluate position regarding their information when shown flawed 4. Sack Frank C for deception, failing to inform any public/staff of alternative information from world experts and professionals, Such failure suggesting corruption
Information	<p>1. More transparency with the arborist's results on the stability of the trees would have been appreciated.</p> <p>However, the Council has the right to its decision therefore should have acted on it straight away without letting other groups interfere to the point they did.</p>
Information	<p>A truthfull disclosure of the facts would be a good start.</p> <p>There appears to be a problem with selection of suitable experts to give opinions on council projects.</p>
Information	<p>Actual factual information needs to be made public e.g the results of the independent surveys, and the future plans for the area. oO much speculation and misinformation in the media and the constant fighting of council has been a huge problem</p>
Information	<p>After all the news reports, discussions with friends, etc etc I still have to say that I really don't know why the trees had to go. The feeling is that there is some "hidden agenda"; that if this is the case, the council would have been better off being honest.</p>
Information	<p>All Communication needs to be honest and transparent. Listen to community groups and respect their opinion as representative of a community. Council does not have the right to make decisions on their own. Disengage from authoritarianism.</p>
Information	<p>All very well to put stuff in the library when it was closed for a number of weeks.</p> <p>I think most people in Newcastle think this was badly handled. a bit more transparency, less in fighting and some actual action might have helped.</p>

Information	An independent assessment of the health of the trees would have removed any doubt over the need to fell them. What is the point of consulting with the community on this issue? The issue was whether the trees were 'safe' in which case they should have been left alone.
Information	As a resident more facts and figures at an earlier stage of the significant event (and repeated if necessary) rather than towards the final stages ie the full page advert in the herald of the formal responses to SOF claims and facts about the issues was very helpful.
Information	As there has been a hidden agenda as to the removal of the Laman Street Figs (the desire to build an carpark) I feel that this questionnaire is a farce. The beauty and grandeur of the trees have been sacrificed because of omniverous development what more can be said.
Information	Basically the community wanted something and council have not given it to them - who does council stand for then if not the community??? With Tyrrel street figs the council was dishonest to the residents so i don't blame the community not believing them in the Laman street case.
Information	Be absolutely truthful
Information	Be frank rather than biased when reporting.
Information	be frank,honest and truthful forget the politics-do what is best for the future of Newcastle
Information	Be honest about the purpose behind the decision and communicate that. Keep the message simple and don't get lost in your own council language, or reasons defending your decision.
Information	Be more aware of people's perceptions. Being more transparent and matching the publicity to mainstream media that the protesters had would have helped the council keep more backing in this situation. If people trusted that the longterm goal was one they'd be happy with, things would have been easier.
Information	BE MORE HONEST, RESPECT COMMUNITY VIEW POINTS, ENGAGE IN CONSULTATION, NOT SPEAK DOWN TO THE COMMUNITY AS IF COUNCIL KNOWS BEST. COUNCIL NEEDS TO BE TRANSPARENT IN ITS DECISION MAKING PROCESS AND TRY AND REGAIN A MODICUM OF CREDIBILITY, HOWEVER THERE ACTIONS IN THIS AND OTHER MATTERS SUGGESTS OTHERWISE
Information	Be more open and honest about what is really going on
Information	Be OPEN & HONEST Decisions made by Council should be PUBLICALLY SUPPORTED by the (Lord) Mayor, no matter if he/she agrees with them or not. The formal process of Council should be ISOLATED from party or personal politics. Then the public might trust the Coucil more.
Information	Be open and transparent in all matters. Be willing to accept public opinion. Get proper independent assessment. Look at other options. 'Public Risk' is becoming overkill.

	<p>More large trees should be planted in this city to give it beauty and a sense of welcome rather than starkness.</p>
Information	<p>Be open, honest from beginning. There is too much distrust surrounding decisions made. Why fight the independent arborist - that made you look like there was a hidden agenda.</p>
Information	<p>Be open,honest and upfront and don't try to keep everyone happy - you never will</p>
Information	<p>Be truthful & open in consultation & actually listen to the community!! 'Consultation' wasn't the problem with the figs, it was actually respecting the community by listening and doing as they asked.</p>
Information	<p>be truthful! I don't trust council publications/propaganda. Council had an agenda known only to itself. Figs were slaughtered because a bunch of men had to demonstrate that their word was law - how dare anyone question them. Newcastle is so patriarchal and just another characterless cookie cutter sydney suburb. despicable</p>
Information	<p>Brief, easy speak, honesty</p> <p>When in the future there is an issue that has the possibility of being solved by engaging external experts - do it straight away .</p> <p>The funds being used and wasted belong to the city, not to the officers or councillors.</p>
Information	<p>Certainly workshop and forums are very useful as well as information on website and literature sent by Council. The local forums that were stopped would have be an excellent way to communicate information.</p> <p>There should be better transparency in the future by Council on such projects.</p>
Information	<p>Communication needs to be clear and succinct. It should be eye-catching with not too much print for a start with clear instructions about how to access additional information if the topic is one I find interesting.</p>
Information	<p>Communication/consultation is totally meaningless without transparency.</p> <p>Communications are now a waste of time and further rate payers money when evidence shows this has little or no effect on imcompetent decision making processes. The woefully ineffectual implementation of any decisions once made, is further proof of need for major structural reform.</p>
Information	<p>Council deliberately misinformed the community about why the trees should die.</p> <p>standing in front of riot squad police i looked at their tasers, capsicum spray, guns and other weapons. dressed to smash a resistance purely vocal: young, old, men women, mothers and children</p> <p>shame newcastle council shame</p>
Information	<p>Council generated information is only useful when it is factual and unbiased - not merely designed to promote the council- and when it addresses the questions raised and is not merely political speak.</p>
Information	<p>council has not produced any evidence that all the figs had to be removed for safety reasons - freedom of information and history may record council admin has another agenda/ or is an insurance company running this city ?</p>

Information	Council must always be transparent to ratepayers with clear, concise & honest communication providing all of the facts, in the first instance. Provide many opportunities for community consultation & communication allowing ratepayer input & alternative solutions must be investigated. DON'T withhold any information about community issue. Be proactive not reactive.
Information	Council needs to be completely transparent with the community as to why it has taken important decisions, e.g. in this case it was never satisfactorily explained why Council did not take up the Premier's offer to provide an independent arborist, nor other offers from independent arborists.
Information	Council needs to be more open and transparent, acknowledging opposing views. In fighting in Council also greatly diminishes the effectiveness of any message it tries to express. Get your house in order and then speak in a clear coherent non belligerent manner to your constituents.
Information	Council needs to be open and honest about their objectives and listen to the people who object to proposals without all the drama.
Information	Council needs to be transparent, why not allow an independent assessment at no cost to Council on the fig trees issue? Survey conducted for increase in land rates; why not get a true reflection from rate payers by enclosing the survey in rate notices, rather than phoning a selected few.
Information	Council process is not transparent and not to be trusted. Community not consulted on important matters, questions in this survey are irrelevant because the problem is not dissemination of material, but the integrity, reason and good will of council officers and Councillors to work effectively with (not against) the wider community.
Information	Council should be prepared that novocastrians would be extremely opposed to the demolition of the fig trees. Council should have 3 arborists from around the world for their assessment this would have cost a lot less in accommodation and flights/wages etc than the millions dollars wasted. Council has wasted this money again another fiasco like surf house.
Information	Council should have exhibited its Civic Precinct Plan of Management and called for public submissions and held a Public Hearing as required by law. Waste of time now because the principal landscape feature of the Precinct has been trashed by the dishonest way the Council has proceeded in this matter.
Information	Council should seek comments regarding specific details of what it is proposing, rather than asking vague questions with multiple choices. Council encouraged negative responses to the fig issue by not ensuring that the process was transparent from the outset and that the advice received was beyond reproach!
Information	Council staff made a grave error in not being open about submissions being made to Fed. Govt re Anzac Centenary funding. Openness and transparency at all levels and stages is the key requirement for local govt.
Information	Council will appear to be more open and honest when making decisions for the community if they provide background information regarding the factors that dictated the decision.
Information	Council's handling of Figs Issue was appalling - left a demonised, divided, hurt and angry community. Suggestions? You need to be more transparent and honest in your information to community. People make places, not 'placemakers', and you have vandalised a beautiful one. Put the community first, lawyers second.
Information	Council's handling of the Laman figs issue was worse than appalling and a disgrace to its officials. Helpful would be some transparency, willingness to genuinely consider other points of view, external review of controversial decisions and achievement of consensus rather than using police and sheer physical force.

Information	<p>Deliberate, democratic and transparent process from the outset - too much time spent debating and politicising.</p> <p>Get an internal assessment and independent review for all significant community issues and then make a decision and stick with it.</p>
Information	<p>Don't LIE to the community. Be completely upfront and honest and fair as to the reasons for all proposals concerning Heritage and common community areas.</p>
Information	<p>For the Council to communicate truthfully and openly with the community which has not happened for the last 7-8 years.</p>
Information	<p>Full disclosure of the PROCESS by which a significant community issue will be handled is an essential FIRST step to communicating with the community. The fig fiasco occurred largely because Council was perceived as having LIED to the community about why the Laman St figs had to be removed.</p>
Information	<p>Full transparency, consistent story, full disclosure. The Laman St debacle is an epic failure of accountability, judgement, management and communication. Hopeless.</p>
Information	<p>Genuine independent opinion about contentious topics, and honest and transparent consultation. The Council Officers' and Councillors' resistance to an independent review of the WHOLE Laman street issue, and the misuse of the public liability issue as a way to bypass appropriate decision-making, was reprehensible. (And I am NOT a greenie!)</p>
Information	<p>Getting to each house hold without extra cost such as rate notices would ensure that everyone is informed. The truth and both sides of arguments need to be presented fairly.</p>
Information	<p>Give the people the facts clearly and truthfully to prevent small groups of people causing costly delays. The politics of every decision in this city always get in the way of progress.</p>
Information	<p>HONEST & REAL community consultation.</p> <p>Q4: None of the methods listed are useful unless they are truthful & unbiased.</p> <p>Ward Forums: Never been informed.</p> <p>MONTHLY Council news.</p> <p>Replying to emails and letters from community.</p> <p>Adhering to proper council processes and policies for proposals and informing community.</p>
Information	<p>Honest communication TV Newspapers to ratepayers, tell us what is really happening and make the Council respect ratepayers comments and be honest with plans for our city.</p>
Information	<p>Honest, consistent information would be appreciated</p>
Information	<p>Honesty and Transparency, not after the event,</p> <p>Listen to residents, Council officers honest with councillors. Web site must be searchable.</p> <p>HONESTY main thing for residents rate payers.</p>
Information	<p>Honesty by council staff and honest not biased reporting by council staff who have previously shown they have their own agendas</p> <p>and consistently leak information to their own ends</p>

Information	Honesty essential. Council arborists reports so unbalanced they were obviously rigged. Transparency essential. Role of administration needs clarification and openness. Even non tree-huggers realize Laman figs not destroyed because of safety issues: more like a power play within Council. Sad! VERY sad.
Information	Honesty is the best policy as is the clarity of the statements issued about a proposal eg if you want a promenade area and to extend the Art Gallery & so need to remove fig trees: say that rather than something is wrong with the trees.
Information	How can I trust any methods of Council's communication when I believe the council has been dishonest? This issue has been an absolute fiasco and has shown Council's absolute disrespect for the community. I am ashamed of Newcastle and NCC.
Information	How does the council do this? I don't really know but please let common sense prevail and put a time limit on objections, check the facts, reassess, then make decision based on new evidence and stick to it.
Information	How many different ways can I say what you don't want to hear... The council looks suspect: because of the timing of the initial announcement of the removals (library development plans) to the reluctance to get an independent arborist... All that expense and now the distrust
Information	i am absolutly offended that without no actual proof that these trees need to be destroyed that the council who is voted by the people spent so much money on continually trying to have them destroyed. When so many novacastrians wanted them to stay. At least a roadclosure worked
Information	I didn't feel that the media was providing a balanced view on the issue. In future I would prefer to have the facts presented in the paper just as it has been recently by Council taking out a full page ad informing the community what is happening and why.
Information	I dismay at what is happening to this "liveable city", let alone our "future city". If council wants to "engage" it could show good faith and roll Laman st into Civic Park and have an open honest discussion with the community about the precincts' development, including the art gallery additions.
Information	I do not have a firm view on the issue either way, however, at present I do not believe I am well informed as to the reasons for the removal of the trees. I would suggest far greater transparency on the part of the council in these types of decisions.
Information	I don't feel as a ratepayer that my views are being listened to: I have lost confidence in NCC Council processes there is very little transparency when a plan for the Laman Street area was not exhibited I am so disappointed that Newcastle made International News for the wrong reasons.
Information	I feel as though the information was kept secret. Very little information was provided early on in the process. It was near impossible to sort through and find the information and it was too late to contribute to the decision making process
Information	I feel that the Council position was clearly identified once they voted for the 7th time. The facts were not properly advertised in any of the local media and the only decent coverage was from SOF who actually need to get a life and save some real people.
Information	I really dont know if what was delivered in media was accurate.if the agenda to remove the trees was purely OH&S or for other works in relation to the Art Gallery. If it was for future works in relation to the Art Gallery then all media used was pointless
Information	I somehow missed an honest open statement from council with both sides of the debate and the reasons councillors gave for their decisions. this lead me and others to presume a hidden agenda

Information	I still don't know why they chopped the trees. They didn't need chopped. I bet there is some nice land speculation going. I bet something big is going to be built where they were. Mark my words.
Information	I suggest there is a lack of trust between the citizens of Newcastle and their council. I do not believe there was anything wrong with the trees. This is the issue that needs to be addressed rather than any problems of communication. We simply do not believe the message!
Information	I think the council /council officers need to be more honest with people. If the trees had to go because of some grand vision for the city? so be it. Don't bang on about danger when we can now see quite clearly the trees are pretty healthy.
Information	I was hearing council's views on the figs but it lacked credibility that they were being so stupid. Extra communication of a foolish message just makes it worse.
Information	I would have liked to see more consultation on the Fig issue. It seemed to be handled badly by Council and with little regard for the opinion voiced by the local community. I feel let down by Council and devastated by the result. I don't understand Council's destructive response.
Information	I would like to be told the truth in relation to the health of the trees and the real agenda for Laman St. I am disgusted by the councillors who refused to have the trees independently assessed, The actions of this council show the need for an administrator.
Information	If an issue calls for independent assessment make sure it is genuinely INDEPENDENT [use our uni] and then STICK with the decision regardless.
Information	If council got ONE INDEPENDANT assessment of the figs and went with their advice and then made a decision without worrying about minority groups opinions, it would have saved ratepayers money. Disgusting management of a situation.
Information	if independent assessment of the situation had been granted that would have eased the skepticism of the general public, all councillors should declare their business assets land holdings and chair and executive involvement so we know who and what we are voting for.
Information	If the council has certain planned projects, they should be up front and sell those ideas to the rate payers.
Information	If there is a controversial or divisive issue, then the council should place all the facts in the public domain which will allow people to make an informed opinion rather than relying on spin-doctors on both sides of the issue making emotional arguments.
Information	I'm totally opposed to and disgusted by Council's decision to destroy the figs. None of the information has provided any credible justification for the destruction. Shame on Council!
Information	Independent assessment central to most of Fig Angst Wasnt until the trees were coming down Council took out add in TheHerald & claimed there'd been 4 "assessments" Where can I find these to form my own opinion? Council should have been more proactive and consultative at earliest signs of discontent.
Information	Information should be indisputable Councillors to ensure all information acted upon has been debated and the outcomes transparent. All arguments rendered by Council staff management should be the optimum solution. If the Community can smartly defend against Council information then a sloppy job had been done in the first place.

Information	Issues such as this one are not only about informing the community but also about engaging with it. The fact that there was so much community frustration about the process shows a complete failure on the council's part. It would not have been hard to satisfy the community with proper consultation, independent advice, and a willingness to find a compromise.
Information	It doesn't matter how much information is sent out if the process used by Council is wrong. There is no doubt that council has sanitised and manipulated information that it has brought forward. If in the future Council wants to regain its credibility it has to be truthful and open.
Information	It doesn't matter what form of communications council uses. I don't trust anything the council has said on this issue. I have the strong impression that the administration has an agenda for the art gallery and Laman Street which it has not disclosed to the public or even the councillors.
Information	It seems that deception was used from the start. Even if that is not so it is the impression of such an abuse of process that is the major problem and causes conflict.
Information	It would have been more powerful to provide the detailed information, in a plain english style when the issue arose and continue the saturation throughout.
Information	It would have been useful if the council had given the real reason for the tree removal from the start. Redevelopment of the area was the reason, why not say it?
Information	It's unfortunate that on major issues - like the figs - Council seems to keep info close to its chest and only engages the community when faced with a strong community response.
Information	Just be more upfront with the general public who are passionate about a cause. I found with the fig saga that if the council had not taken the approach 'that what we say goes' then maybe events would have progressed differently. They have just destroyed one of Newcastle grandest streets.
Information	lack of transparency in the council's info to the voters i.e. the health of the trees/ or not; the use to which Laman St was to be put e.g. widened to allow extension of the art gallery.. No voter knew the truth and no councillor was saying.
Information	Laymen St. on my understanding of the history there were a number of problems with the trees. Public safety was the sole reason given as to the decision to remove, not allowing independent assessment gave rise to the opponents. Not clear to the public that all things were considered
Information	Let everyone know both sides of the story council should be more transparent
Information	Let's me make this clear. I am not a member of Save our Figs and wasn't particularly interested in their public demonstrations. However, I think the fiasco over the figs became quite independent of whether the figs posed a public safety threat or not. The management of the whole process was terrible - and that lies very much with the Council. Regardless of how various people and groups who came forward from the community presented themselves, the council's communication, the behaviour of our elected officials, all showed lack of respect for community. The tone from the outset was adversarial and that made me lose any interest in this forum. Personally, although sad to see the figs go, if provided proof to my satisfaction that there was a need for them to be removed, I would have supported the removal of the figs. It was the stupid waste of money, the bullying, nasty comments from some elected members of council and the unwillingness to compromise about the independent assessment that disgusted me and made me lose faith that the original decision was for the community's best interest. I feel that the council's communication strategy was about justifying the decision and not engaging in an honest dialogue with the community. I no longer believe that this forum (Newcastle Voice) is an honest attempt to gain insight from and consult with the community. I feel that Newcastle Voice is nothing more than a PR exercise in appearances to make it look like the council gives a shit when it clearly doesn't. I have no interest in this forum anymore. I really wish it was law that

	<p>our elected representative could be charged for the money they waste on proving their petty points and on whose ego's are biggest. I am wondering if it would be cheaper for the public is we paid for penis enlargement surgery and viagra for some of the male members of council. Pun intended.</p>
Information	Listen to your constituents, be honest and up front.
Information	<p>Many residents no confidence in the council decisions remove trees and refuse independent assessment.</p> <p>Useful for public information meeting. Councilors present, independent facilitator. Council's relevant experts + experts with different views (present or by videolink) answer questions chosen by facilitator (submitted by public and councillors).</p>
Information	<p>More detail for the reasons behind decisions. Via the any means of communication. How people can get works done in their area? 'Low on the priority list' will not help. Set up of kiosk type locations in local shopping centres as a means of getting feedback from and interaction with the community.</p>
Information	More honest councillors
Information	More public meetings.
Information	<p>Most information from council was about spin, after the event. There was no consultation prior to the decision that the figs had to go. My main issue was the lack of process, and hidden agenda from council</p>
Information	<p>most of the information coming from council is in generalities and reinforcing a position. That correspondance needs to have more specific and clear information - simple facts</p>
Information	<p>need access to ALL info. not just part of story or "dumbed down" flyers/newsletters.</p> <p>let us decide for ourselves what is important and what should/shouldnt be done....</p> <p>research in the field tells a different story to that presented in council flyers, newsletters, etc</p>
Information	<p>Newspaper ads, flyers, brochures, email. Anything that comes direct to the people without all the bullshit emotional spin of "journalism". As long as the process is transparent, thorough, and balanced, rational people will accept it. The figs (and the rail) sagas are just embarrassing to Newcastle</p>
Information	<p>now that the trees are gone, it will be interesting to discover the real agenda behind their removal.</p>
Information	<p>Open and honest communication. Anger is the only word that can describe council processes shrouded in secrecy with bogus reasoning to justify developments.</p> <p>Cut the political speak "urban renewable corridors", "vibrant entertainment precincts" and " The master plan". Just be honest and lock in the one plan, but show us.</p>

Information	Openness and honesty. Make a decision and have the courage to stick to it so much money is not wasted
Information	People need to be heard. We need honesty and transparency. If an independent assessment is required to keep everyone content with big decisions it is worth doing. Please respect each person's opinion. My family is very sad to lose our trees. Allow this sadness without criticism. More trees are essential.
Information	Perhaps the Council should have published the facts for the decision for cutting down the trees in very simple terms so that every one could examine the issue with objectivity.
Information	Please be honest and transparent with all information and in all consultation.
Information	Please state the correct matter of affairs at all times. Be transparent and provide factual reports on the situation if the media is not going to report the full story due to wanting to increase their sales. Use alternatives to just one newspaper.
Information	Please try to have all information succinctly and carefully put up front. The lack of clarity and openness with the fig issue was appalling.
Information	Provide additional context on reasons for Council decisions, some arguments made against council are unfounded, but appear to have merit when considered without context. Hold a community question and answer event, utilising if required a third party to vet and consolidate questions. Transparently publish the results of this.
Information	Provide as much factual information to the public as is humanly possible via radio, tv and the newspapers. Preferably delivered to the public by the professionals who do the studies stating clearly the reasons for the decision. Don't allow special interest groups to hijack council decisions.
Information	Provide full truth, eg. reason for figs removal was to make way for precinct redevelopment as planned prior to declaring the trees "unsafe". Use Voice or other means to conduct independent plebiscite before proceeding with someone's grand idea which may not be generally seen as worthwhile expenditure. Ward section consultation.
Information	Provide honest feedback on situations. Do not waste tax payers money on issues that could be resolved. Provide open discussion forums not fruitless sessions that resolve nothing.
Information	Provide maps. Provide concise factual summary, eg 1. figs are diseased and a danger; 2. figs are not diseased but some limbs are dangerous; 3. figs are not weak but insurance companies will not cover; 4. why ? 5. cost of making safe to insurance standards is xxxx.
Information	Provide more convincing evidence that experts have been involved in decisions. Councillors need to engage with relevant professionals to the issues. I for one would be more supportive of council if I thought that relevant experts had informed the votes.
Information	Public exhibition, public consultation, due consideration to heritage and green spaces, open and transparent communication with the greater community

Information	Regarding the Fig issue, the council was not interested in engaging in community consultation. This has been extremely badly handled by council and the councilors behaviour appalling. The community has been left divided and a row of beautiful trees has been butchered. The process was not open and transparent.
Information	Regardless of the medium to convey information, the council officers should be more transparent in their comments and speak truthfully.
Information	<p>Release of actual and factual information without hidden agendas and highly emotive bickering of councilors ie Cooke.</p> <p>The embarrassing effort of council (Management within Bee Hive) covering ones rear with Bob assistance.</p> <p>Audits focused on facts not fiction build credibility in the community -</p> <p>Unablbe to answered in 50 words.</p>
Information	Simple, be completely honest, open and transparent and be prepared to admit to mistakes. Genuinely engage with community before critical decisions made in secret and demonstrate an intelligent approach when addressing controversial issues, instead of keep treating the community as uninformed idiots.
Information	Start being honest and transparent with the public. You now have a huge job to try and get back the public's trust. Even people who didn't have strong feelings about the Fig trees, have very strong feelings about how the issue has been handled and these feelings are very negative.
Information	Still don't know enough about the detailed facts and reasons for figs removal to form an opinion about whether they should have stayed or been removed. In future the council should provide the community with all the facts and fully explain why they are making decisions on significant community issues.
Information	Tell the truth
Information	tell the truth and resolve the issue quickly instead of wasting ratepayers money
Information	<p>Tell the truth in newspaper advertisements instead of deceitful misinformation. Employ managers that have reasonable background in and respect for local government.</p> <p>No confidential meetings or briefings except those allowed for under them LG Act.</p> <p>Meetings to be held in the chamber.</p> <p>No more unoficial private meetings.</p>
Information	The communication was fine but I was a bit confused by the message; it was inconsistent. I still don't feel like I really know the "real story". Some things just need a decision made and actions carried out, without debate. Thanks for getting on with it!
Information	The community has never been so engaged with a local issue. As a result we were lied to and betrayed by this council in its blatant refusal to step down on the issue. What is the point of "engagement" when informed public opinion ultimately does not count?
Information	<p>The Council could have accepted the State Govt. and expert help, instead of just cutting down all the perfectly healthy trees.</p> <p>If people knew from the beginning, the real issues that were about. Truth. that would certainly help communications.</p>
Information	The Council may well have made the correct decision in removing the trees but they could have explained their reasons for the action. There seemed to be a fairly high level of doubt. I hope the process will be more transparent next time around.

Information	The council went on a campaign to deceive and to lie and that is out of line and because of that they have wasted my rates and that annoys me. The trees were in the way and they were very healthy we need to stop lieing
Information	The council would be better advised to be honest about its decisions. When decisions create significant anger, council should not engage in disinformation in order to protect Councillors and council staff. In the end, the council exists to further the needs of the community and not the other way around.
Information	The decision of the council NOTY to get an independent assessment from the State Government was extremely disappointing. This would have been a truely independent voice. Also 50 words is not much space to add additional comments.
Information	The handling of the Laman street figs is a complete and utter disgrace. Council manipulated information and did not listen to the community. Senior council directors should resign if they have any integrity
Information	The issue is the quality of the communication not the mediums used by council. It was not transparent, we were feed dribble. The simple question most people want answered is why were those figs so dangerous compared to all the other figs overhanging roads, houses and schools in the area.
Information	The Laman St figs were located in the Civic District, yet proximity to Ward 1 ratepayers was not considered. With loss of those trees my property has been diminished. Failure to permit independent State assessment was rejected and the community was further split. I do not feel ratepayers were respected.
Information	The major issue was always the lack of transparency by the council. Its insulting that the people of Newcastle were treated like fools. It was always about show us the Music...Which never happened. Disgusting!!!
Information	The Merewether Beach Car Park is a disgrace on how long the project has taken and the reduction of car spaces in a city with limited public transport. There's no point in asking public opinion if the Council already has a planned agenda that they are not going to change.
Information	The most important improvement would be to be honest and upfront about any issues. And to listen to and cooperate with the community.
Information	The only information we received was from the press and radio. The information from the council and could not be trusted and was bias. The most effcent form of communications would be to do press conference with the local media.
Information	The problem with this issue is that I like so many other novocastrians felt that there may well have been other agendas regarding the figs - safety not really being the real reason those beautiful trees were cut down.
Information	The survey focus should be about the content of the communication not the tools used. The communications were disjointed, lacked integrity, honesty and transparency and were inconsistent given the differing views between Council and councilors. Get the information right and the communication method will be less of an issue.
Information	The truth about the real reasons council wants to do something would be a good start. Disgusting amount of money wasted on to-ing and fro-ing on this issue. It could have built the new Surf Club we so badly need!

Information	The truth being told from the beginning. The real agenda for certain actions. Those trees were no more dangerous than the hundreds of other fig trees around Newcastle.
Information	The whole process has been conducted behind closed doors. Where is the approved plan for Laman St? Why wasn't there a slow replacement process? Why agree to go to mediation and then refuse to carry out the agreed outcome of an independent assessment?
Information	The wider community lacked a lot of facts regarding the figs and the reasons behind the removal. This resulted in poorly informed opinions based on a vocal minority group's emotional rantings. The community needed more fact based info in the media to balance the hype and sensationalism.
Information	There has been a failure to seek opinions of experts who have a different view of the health of these trees. It is not a communication failure. It is a failure of intellect on the part of the council and a failure to listen to the people they represent.
Information	There is absolutely no point in utilizing any of the methods of communication unless council administration is committed to telling the community the truth; not council propaganda cooked up to manipulate an outcome. Stop abusing your power. Serve the community that pays your wages. It can't be that hard.
Information	There were obviously side issues kept from the public. Why should we have to pay more rates when the Council spent \$1m+ and now have to pay extra rates to keep the same incompetent people in place? SYNOPOSIS - GET RID OF THE INCOMPENTENTS. The Council's public relations is a joke.
Information	This will be difficult as the council has lost the trust of the community. There is the perception that the council has a hidden agenda yet again. Who will it be who gets the lucrative contract to build/ rejuvenate this area??
Information	Thorough and complete disclosure of plans to all residents in an efficient and timely manner would expedite development/renewal. Not the steem-rolling, make-it-up-as-you-go planning process, illustrated by the eleventh hour fig-tree-succession plan. Where was that plan earlier, when it may have helped the caused?
Information	To be truthful, we heard about the figs on the news and by word of mouth. I don't believe we received any information from the council in our letter boxes regarding this. We read the council quarterly when we receive it and i don't recall seeing info in that??
Information	Total transparency is the only way. Council meetings should never be 'closed' and secret. They should be televised and publicly broadcast on the net for all to see what is said by whom and when. Lying is totally unacceptable.
Information	Transparency in the Council for the rate pasyers
Information	Transparency is crucial. The anger in the community is largely because of the belief that there is a hidden agenda or something we are not being told. There are a lot more fig trees and other trees in the inner city that are far less healthy. Newcastle voice?
Information	Transparency needed: Don't understand how the decision to remove figs went to vote. If deemed dangerous by expert opinion, then they need removing. No vote necessary. I'm also appalled by processes length. We need clear, definite processes for 1) council decisions and 2) for people to appeal/protest against those decisions.
Information	Transparency of actions (better communication of reasons why things are done) upfront rather than playing "catch-up". More positive reporting of actions through radio, newspapers. Council to act on decisions and not be so susceptible to minority groups. Lord Mayor to support Council decisions.

	SHOW LEADERSHIP
Information	TRANSPARENT, DETAILED & WELL-PUBLICISED information should be provided that allows appropriate time for GENUINE, RECIPROCAL COMMUNITY CONSULTATION. Then community could be PARTICIPANTS in the ENTIRE planning process, not just survey respondents. Transparency & GENUINE DIALOGUE would engender engaged trust rather than community mistrust & resistance that we have now.
Information	Trust needs restoring in the NCC. I don't trust nor believe what NCC says. needs to be TOTALLY transparent, to listening to the community, not continue to have the NCC officers and staff run the show. NCC Staff are rude and arrogant and act as if they detest the public.
Information	Truth, Honesty, no hidden agenda by Council Staff / some councillors
Information	Truthful notification of the background intentions of the Council in these important matters would be novel. Look at the library and art gallery from Civic Park and see how dreadful was the Council's decision. Who was right -the council or the protestors. The Council should be ashamed
Information	Until Council is honest there is no point communicating with the public at all. Stop pretending to be open and transparent when you aren't. Don't produce papers such as the Urban Forest Background paper without supporting them. Sack Frank and Judy that would be a great start.
Information	Very disappointed that politics gets in the way of proper community consultation. Very disappointed that a sensible, cost effective, transparent resolution did not seem to be Councils goal.
Information	We need straight forward information provided in both summary form (dot points) & in full detail for further analysis. People need all the information to make informed choices, decisions & opinions
Information	What a whitewash. Appeared council had some agenda that required the removal of the figs and council ensured that everything supported their removal. Figs could have been removed and replaced individually over time. Replace hard surfaces with eg egg grating would have allowed water and nutrients to the figs
Information	Whatever means of communication used, I like to: * Hear, Read or See CLEAR HEADINGS: 1. (THE ISSUE) 2. (INFORMATION) - Unbiased - succinct & in point form - in clear plain English 3. (CURRENT STATUS of the issue) 4. (CONTACT INFORMATION CLEARLY PROVIDED) OTHERWISE I SWITCH OFF!!!!!!

Information	When an issue provokes strident emotional opposition, address misconceptions and the major stated reasons for opposition with a comprehensive written statement of facts before proceeding. Truth will out and the dust will settle.
Information	When community requests information from staff and/or through Councillors that it is brought forward without hesitation and censure. There is much work to do for council staff and elected Councillors to restore public confidence in council processes.
Information	when something as divisive as the fig issue arises, an independent arborist should have been called in, instead of council looking as if it had something to hide. A lot of trees in the Newcastle area should never have been planted, as they are not native to this area.
Information	With highly divisive issues it would be more than useful for council to engage independent researchers, consultation without a perception of having a predetermined outcome, and stop Councillors from politicising issues and demeaning others in public and private forums. Democracy is a process not just an outcome.
Information	Would like to see the council giving more honest information. I feel it's hard to trust the council staff now.
Information	You should look at what's useful for the majority, not the "interested" minority doing these surveys. If decisions made and processes carried-out by Newcastle Council didn't always defy logic, they wouldn't need to communicate so-much. In the case of Laman st the problem isn't lack of communication, it's the glaringly obvious ulterior motives and feeble excuses for not taking the correct action. If U wanted real opinions why limit it to 50 words?

Subject Category	Q6 open-ended response
Council Functioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Listening to what the community wants would be a good start. - Transparency of process. - NCC needs to understand the import of cultural heritage vs a risk adverse insurance culture.
Council Functioning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. DO not lie to the community 2. Accept properly resourced and valid consultant reports and re-evaluate position regarding their information when shown flawed 4. Sack Frank C for deception, failing to inform any public/staff of alternative information from world experts and professionals, Such failure suggesting corruption
Council Functioning	<p>1. More transparency with the arborist's results on the stability of the trees would have been appreciated.</p> <p>However, the Council has the right to its decision therefore should have acted on it straight away without letting other groups interfere to the point they did.</p>
Council Functioning	<p>100+ upset community members wanted to speak to Phil Pearce today. 20+ police barrier between community and it's elected council disgraceful. Two people asked to speak to him were refused!! What happened to NCC? Not rocket science, LISTEN TO THE PEOPLE!!! Stop charade, sack 7 councillors, and sack puppeteers.</p>
Council Functioning	<p>A greater investment in and council to care about significant community issues in the western LGA.</p> <p>Communication improved when elected counsellors became involved, there are communications issues from the council staff. I am sure there are brilliant council workers however the staff involved in Laman Figs were poor in communicating.</p>
Council Functioning	<p>A vocal minority were given excessive involvement in decision making. The broader community did not support Save Our Figs but Council negotiated with them rather than involving the broader community. Save Our Figs also were successful at cutting out the broader community, which Council should have managed better.</p>
Council Functioning	<p>Action to be taken when decisions are made. Keep community informed of actions. Not bow to minority groups.</p>
Council Functioning	<p>Actually listen to what people have to say, make a decision and then stick to it</p>
Council Functioning	<p>All the councillors should be sacked</p>
Council Functioning	<p>All very well to put stuff in the library when it was closed for a number of weeks.</p> <p>I think most people in Newcastle think this was badly handled. a bit more transparency, less in fighting and some actual action might have helped.</p>
Council Functioning	<p>Allowing more access to the public addressing council meetings. Making the administration more accountable to the public. There is a feeling in the community that the admin staff work independently of anybody, I think the entire NCC should be put into administration as the accountability has been so poor,</p>

Council Functioning	<p>As a priority, city local council members including our Mayor gain decision making attributes and skills.</p> <p>This hole process have been a farce.</p>
Council Functioning	<p>At last the trees are gone!! This has been one of the most ridiculous council issues in recent years and an embarassment to Newcastle. I think NCC was too indecisive in taking action. The trees needed to go - so why didn't the council just do it?</p>
Council Functioning	<p>Be OPEN & HONEST</p> <p>Decisions made by Council should be PUBICALLY SUPPORTED by the (Lord) Mayor, no matter if he/she agrees with them or not.</p> <p>The formal process of Council should be ISOLATED from party or personal politics.</p> <p>Then the public might trust the Coucil more.</p>
Council Functioning	<p>Brief, easy speak, honesty</p> <p>When in the future there is an issue that has the possibility of being solved by engaging external experts - do it straight away .</p> <p>The funds being used and wasted belong to the city, not to the officers or councillors.</p>
Council Functioning	<p>By their impotence the council bureaucracy failed to lead in communication and as such allowed SOF the leverage to waste my rates. The councillors are not to blame, they were elected to vote, they did, the council failed them. Get leadership, get managers, show some integrity. Fix Laman St Now!</p>
Council Functioning	<p>By thinking that once they are appointed by council or elected to Government that they are than absolved from listening to the electorates wishes they fail in their civic duty . By then ignoring the issues in their subsequent communications they only create a culture of suspicion.</p>
Council Functioning	<p>communication is not the problem.</p> <p>we can only rely on NCC to waste money.</p> <p>it was what, why and how NCC did it that annoys everyone. unnecessary waste! NCC spend our \$ to make our city ugly. you destroy what we need and most lack. NCC is untrustworthy.</p>
Council Functioning	<p>Communication is not the real issue with the figs. The main concern was the decision making process.</p>
Council Functioning	<p>Communicaton strategy failed to manage extremist interest groups and misinformation. Councillors and council staff have communicated very poorly and their reputation is now in tatters.</p>
Council Functioning	<p>Council are elected to make decisions for the community. They can't keep everybody happy on all issues. My understanding is that their role is to help the city move forward.</p> <p>Lets not waste so much money trying to make decisions.</p>
Council Functioning	<p>Council communication with the ratepayers is very poor. Telephone concerns are never addressed well and staff answering phone services do not know the Street names or suburbs in the area. Complaints should not escalate from a telephone call to general dissatisfaction with the Duty of Care of an uncaring staff.</p>

Council Functioning	council has not produced any evidence that all the figs had to be removed for safety reasons - freedom of information and history may record council admin has another agenda/ or is an insurance company running this city ?
Council Functioning	<p>Council lost control of the message.</p> <p>The message should not have been about how lovely they were, and how green and aware the save fig members were but rather risk.</p> <p>Dont be afraid to get your message out there, even at a cost, the alternative costs more</p>
Council Functioning	Council need to be tough and make the hard decisions that benefit all the community and be aware off the cost involved in procrastinating, wasting valuable time and Money.
Council Functioning	<p>Council need to employ professional marketing companies to sell such decision to the general public. All incorrect statements made to the media require immediate replies to prevent the "snowball" effect.</p> <p>Also it is most unproductive when the Mayor actively campaigns against the decisions made by Council.</p>
Council Functioning	Council needs to find methods of polling yhe silent majorities position on issues so that vocal small majority interest groups don't control the agenda as witnessed in the case of the figs.
Council Functioning	<p>Council needs to remember many ratepayers live away from the CBD and feel ignored because of the figs. The concentration on this issue to the detriment of other issues needed to be addressed.</p> <p>At this stage I have little awareness of what is otherwise happening.</p>
Council Functioning	Council seemed to be bloody minded with teh figs. the management of the fig issue was an expensive farce. i have given up on trying to go to the library and art gallery. I wouldnt know if access is still blocked as i have not seen any communication.
Council Functioning	Council seems out of touch with the Newcastle Community. And appear to focus on the loud minority, the likes of Tony Brown and the save our rail and save our fig people are minority who receive to much of councils time and resources.
Council Functioning	<p>Council senior management are arrogance towards ratepayers. Management are full of their own importance and are unwilling to listen to ratepayers. I am not a member of the save figs group. The council totally ignored a ratepayer petition of 11,000 signatures.</p> <p>Until culture changes, council management will not be trusted.</p>
Council Functioning	Council should ascertain whether issues have a POTENTIAL to damage community morale. Once the trees were deemed unsafe, the council had to remove the trees. THIS point was too late. The iconic WORTH of the trees was never taken into account and should have been assessed in initial stages.
Council Functioning	Council should do more to proactively promote positive contributions they are making to the community. The Councillors should not listen to minority groups and waste public moneys on petty causes.
Council Functioning	council should represent views, direction of the community rather than persuing own agenda. I am embarrassed to say I live in the NCC area. I was applying for a job with the council, I decided not to apply as my personal values don't align with NCC.

Council Functioning	Council should tell us the whole story if they want anything changed eg the fig saga....I feel this was more to do with improving the buildings near them ...if so say so they would have had a better response to the truth! Listen to the general public not just minority groups
Council Functioning	Council staff has been appropriate with the figs matter. The Lord Mayor & Crs need to rethink their role as civic leaders. The Lord Mayor has not been a civic leader and has only increased costs. Very bad PR exercise for the Council and the local government industry.
Council Functioning	council work should be done on a more practical level, not philosophical. just do the job, don't beat around the bush.
Council Functioning	Council, general manager and to do the job they are legally elected to do
Council Functioning	Councillors did not appear firm in their commitment. Unnecessary angst came with councillors vacillations. Are councillors able to attend training with the Local Govt Department?
Council Functioning	Councillors need a code of conduct and be skilled at negotiation to be able to engage in credible communication. Any communication strategy would work if credible information was presented to raise debate and inform the community. The adversarial way this matter has been handled smacks of self interest and belligerence.
Council Functioning	Councillors are elected by ratepayers/residents to make decisions on behalf of the people. Not a bunch of "greenies" Hopefully Council will learn that large trees should not be planted adjacent to footpaths, roads and services. Maybe council should sue the "greenies" to compensate ratepayers for the costs they have incurred.
Council Functioning	Council's attempts and actions to communicate is not the issue. It would be extremely wrong to interpret the circumstances concerning the fig tree fiasco as a failure to communicate. It was about decision making, leadership and action which has little to do with communication in its practical form.
Council Functioning	Council's behaviour around the 'Figs' issue was disgusting and should never be repeated. The removal of these trees was not what the people of Newcastle wanted.
Council Functioning	Council's handling of Figs Issue was appalling - left a demonised, divided, hurt and angry community. Suggestions? You need to be more transparent and honest in your information to community. People make places, not 'placemakers', and you have vandalised a beautiful one. Put the community first, lawyers second.
Council Functioning	Council's handling of the Laman figs issue was worse than appalling and a disgrace to its officials. Helpful would be some transparency, willingness to genuinely consider other points of view, external review of controversial decisions and achievement of consensus rather than using police and sheer physical force.
Council Functioning	Council's views chopped and changed making the logic behind the decision-making process difficult to understand. In contrast, SOF had one message only, which was conveyed loudly and consistently. Get Council to stick to their guns and get a clear message out as to why their decisions will benefit the community.
Council Functioning	Decisions need to be made and then adhered to. Not changed on the whim of either party. Rates have been wasted on the fig tree debacle which was an exercise in extravagant waste and procrastination when Council should have taken the decision on professional advice and then stuck to it.

Council Functioning	<p>Deliberate, democratic and transparent process from the outset - too much time spent debating and politicising.</p> <p>Get an internal assessment and independent review for all significant community issues and then make a decision and stick with it.</p>
Council Functioning	Disband the present council.
Council Functioning	Do not listen to minorities.
Council Functioning	Engage community, get community opinion, and follow it PRIOR to these decisions. Stop putting council commerce before community's well being, life style, mental, physical health and community needs. Laman St figs, Dyke Point redevelopment, Lynch's prawn shop site, Kings Cross crime bosses businesses and hotels, clubs; public drinking, violence.
Council Functioning	Engaging the public is not the issue here as I understand, it's the fact our council is usable to make a decision and stand NO MATTER WHAT. The time and money taken to have the matter delt with is nothing short of degraeful.
Council Functioning	Escalation of the issue divided the city. Information distributed was not timely - too little too late. Council meetings VERY disappointing. Councillors blocked discussion. One councillor turned his back and worked on his laptop during a meeting. Expert advice was ignored by Council Officers and used information selectively.
Council Functioning	Expediture of ratepayers funds also needs to be adressed, the current bill for the fig fiasco seems quite high. A simple lopping may well have been sufficient. I do wonder how much wood rot etc was actually discovered in end.
Council Functioning	Fig protesters have cost our community a heap of money that could have been used elsewhere. They attempted to deny my elected representatives and the voting public their democratic rights.At the end of the day was it all a Greens Party stunt???????
Council Functioning	<p>FIGS: once the decision was made to cut them down 2 years ago that should have been final it was ridiculous to have several consultations after there had been independent assessments of the root systems. Too much consultation causes stagnation and bad feeling on every side.</p> <p>General: rates notices.</p>
Council Functioning	For the Council to make a decision and stick with it. For the Lord Mayor to act in a manner befitting the position. Don't over-engage with outspoken minorities - get on with the job. Over-consultation is a real problem!
Council Functioning	<p>For to long we have been plagued by minority groups, Parsons,Lithgow,Henry greens and every other bastard who has an hidden agenda.</p> <p>Council is elected to do a job so do it. Get rid of Tate, stop wasting our money.This council is the worst in my history and I am 70</p>
Council Functioning	Full transparency, consistent story, full disclosure. The Laman St debacle is an epic failure of accountability, judgement, management and communication. Hopeless.
Council Functioning	<p>Generally speaking this council under John Tate has proved to be disfunctional.</p> <p>I think they all should be kicked out & an administartor be appointed. I would expect an administrator to sack any dept manager who relied on consultants. Employ more "doers" ie workers, less managers.</p>

Council Functioning	Genuine independent opinion about contentious topics, and honest and transparent consultation. The Council Officers' and Councillors' resistance to an independent review of the WHOLE Laman street issue, and the misuse of the public liability issue as a way to bypass appropriate decision-making, was reprehensible. (And I am NOT a greenie!)
Council Functioning	Get rid of current council. They don't stop bickering amongst themselves!!!!!!
Council Functioning	get rid of the councillors and the save our figs group - the behaviour of both was disgraceful and embarrassing
Council Functioning	Have councillors represent/implement the wishes of the ratepayers, NOT dictate their personal desires.SACK Frank C.This whole saga is nothing short of disgusting and will harm council/ratepayer relationship for many years to come.
Council Functioning	Have felt deeply for councillors I consider of good will, also feel for the council employees. The mayor's backflips and politicising of the issue has cost the community a lot of money and contributed to the divisiveness of the issue. The street has been embarrassing for visitors to encounter.
Council Functioning	Hopefully next time, criminal minority cult groups like save our figs will not be entertained, rates will not be wasted on them and the required work will just be done.
Council Functioning	How can I trust any methods of Council's communication when I believe the council has been dishonest? This issue has been an absolute fiasco and has shown Council's absolute disrespect for the community. I am ashamed of Newcastle and NCC.
Council Functioning	I am afraid most of what council put forth was misinformation. I am ashamed of the way council conducted themselves in this affair using a campaign of fear and misinformation. Shame on all involved. It has set a sad precedent for Newcastle.
Council Functioning	I am angry the process took so long. Council wasted a lot of money overall on this issue due to the protracted timeframe. Looking into better communication and engagement is pointless when council is obviously so easily stalled by a vocal minority. I would prefer a strong and proactive council.
Council Functioning	I am not happy with the outcome of the fig trees-caused much unrest in the community. communication was available.I just did not agree with the end result or the money that has been spent. I would prefer if you scrubbed the mall, reduced the parking meeting costs, cleaned up our city.
Council Functioning	I am not so sure that the issue is engagement. In relation to the fig tree issue there was plenty of engagement. It was just that some people didn't agree with the Council's decision. Improved engagement won't make any difference in the future if the same thing happens again.
Council Functioning	I am pleased trees have gone and finished waste of money caused by radicals who cannot accept change. New trees will grow in their place. SOF greenies refused to accept that trees have fallen over in the near past. Is Newcastle Voice a representative sample of the rate paying community.
Council Functioning	I am very dissatisfied with Newcastle Council they should work as a team for Newcastle not as individuals. I don't know how things can improve without them making the first step.

	WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU HEARD SOMEONE SAY I AM A PROUD NOVOCASTRIAN years.
Council Functioning	I and my circle of friends dont regard the Laman Street Figs as a significant community issue. It appears to have been hijacked by a fanatical fringe group. NCC seem to have been very patient listening to their views.
Council Functioning	I believe council operated well in this situation but it was significantly undermined by councillors lack of consensus.pragmatically council has no option but to remove trees given insurance coverage problems and this point needed to be better reiterated
Council Functioning	I cant see the point informing rate payers when council dont listen. The Lord Mayor is spineless & should have resolved this problem months ago, all this money for nothing, wasteful, shameful, he is a disgrace and needs to find a more useful job
Council Functioning	I cant understand how Council could not work together as a team to decide whether or not to remove the figs. It seemed that each Councillor had their own opinions which was not good for the image of Newcastle City Council.
Council Functioning	I dont know how you can improve this as the Council seems to spend most of its time fighting with each other rather than doing the best for Newcastle.
Council Functioning	I don't like politics and therefore don't take much interest. Although I think a lot of money was wasted
Council Functioning	I expect the local elected council to make decisions and act on them. This is not a consensus situation, make the hard decisions and stick by them, at the same time keeping the public informed and bearing in mind that you can't please everybody all the time.
Council Functioning	I feel Council made very possible attempt to engage with the community regarding the issue, with on-line polls showing overwhelming support for the decision made by Council. Unfortunately, the squeaky wheel minority wasted rate payers money.
Council Functioning	I feel that that there are plenty of opportunities to be informed about issues that are happening. I am more concerned about decisions that are made and not carried through for what seems like ages.
Council Functioning	I feel totally violated by council and certain highly aggressive councilors who completely ignored the community on this occasion, by not allowing sufficient consultation. Additionally the offer from the state government was not taken up, and therefore there was not an open and transparent process. Disgraceful behavior!
Council Functioning	I find it very hard to trust the council because of the fig tree debarcle . I I think that the council should realise when things are important to novacastrians then they should work for an outcome that suits the population not the "pen pushers"
Council Functioning	I find the money wasted on the fig issue to be offensive. If a private business wasted money like this they would be bankrupt. Don't give in to the green minority when engaging the community on such issues, it is wasteful, and not how democracy is supposed to work.
Council Functioning	I guess those that are concerned about a council decision or matter will seek the information from where ever they can get it, those that say they didnt know would never look or find it anyway, you wont get 100% coverage of the community.

Council Functioning	I have completely lost trust in the council and it's processes over this issue. Until management is changed I am entirely cynical over this process of mock consultation. Shame on you. I can see no way of resolving this., as you have subverted the whole democratic process.
Council Functioning	I heard nothing from council so assumed they made mistakes by not acting on ratepayers behalf. Tress should have stayed, but once removal was somehow decided, action should have followed quickly. Council wasted valuable time, money and resources on a place that few citizens go to. Shame
Council Functioning	I live in Port Stephens with limited NCC notices. The fig issue was widely reported and left the impression of a council unable to commit to a decision. The end result was obvious right from the start and should have been carried out as soon as the decision was made.
Council Functioning	I reside in the lake Macquarie council area but am still a Newcastle citizen and proud of it. I love our city and please let sense prevail to make our city move forward. When you make a decision act on it!
Council Functioning	I think consulatation is important to the democratic process TO A POINT. Pandering to the vocal minority, however, is a waste of time and money.
Council Functioning	I think more media input from the General Manager would be very useful. Comments from the Mayor or councillors are linked to their political leanings. The community would benefit from the General Manager talking directly to our community. the Fig tree situation was disturbing and wasteful.
Council Functioning	I think that the problem with this particular issue was that a vocal minority tried to hijack a council resolution. The general manager should have implemented the resolution months ago instead of allowing more and more talk when we could all see the inevitable outcome.
Council Functioning	I think the councillors are voted in to make decisions, and they should MAKE the decisions without all the disgusting behaviour that has been shown over the Fig trees. I think the Lord Mayor showed deplorable leadership in this matter.
Council Functioning	I think the general public were very tired of the comings and going of the debate. I'm personally glad it is all over, I know it had to be done (the tree removal), I wish it could have happened much much quicker.
Council Functioning	I think the whole Laman St issue was very poorly dealt with and will vote against the councillors who disregarded the voters requests not to chop - disgrace by NCC.
Council Functioning	I think this was the perfect example of a failure of communication. The delays, the councillors who neglected to turn up to meetings and the 5am chopping were poor form.
Council Functioning	I think we need a new council with new councillors, to replace the councillors who lead to the destruction of the Laman St Figs, which was a wonderful asset, forever lost.
Council Functioning	I was ambivalent about the trees. The waste of money and the divisive behaviour of the Lord Mayor were disgusting. Council has lost a lot of credibility with me. This should never have been allowed to drag on for as long as it did.
Council Functioning	I would become better engaged if I could be sure that the Council would make responsible, fact based decisions and to stick to them. Councillors should "man up". Regardless of personal views and political ambitions, all Councillors should be acting only in the best interests of Newcastle.

Council Functioning	I would like information about the development of dedicated cycleways between the city and the University.
Council Functioning	If a democratic vote is reached by Council, please ensure adherence to that decision. I object to \$1.5 million being spent on delaying decisions re Laman St Figs, tying up police time, etc. We elected the councillors.
Council Functioning	if all avenues have been explored and the local community consulted and a decision has been made then it needs sticking to. More respect and positive action would gained this way.
Council Functioning	if council decides to do something they should follow through and not waste millions. they should not be held ransomed to by a vocal minority. this issues affected more then those people who were against the removal. access to the gallery and library were impacted by this mess
Council Functioning	If council got ONE INDEPENDANT assessment of the figs and went with their advice and then made a decision without worrying about minority groups opinions, it would have saved ratepayers money. Disgusting management of a situation.
Council Functioning	If Council passes a recommendation it should then speak with ONE voice. Using local radio or free newspapers to spread the official word, rather than opinion pieces, would do us all good!
Council Functioning	If only the press would stop sensationalising every small issue... wishful thinking. This however wasn't helped at all by having the Lord Mayor inciting the angry mob to continue their vitriol over a non-issue. Why give these vocal self interest groups any coverage? There are bigger issues to discuss.
Council Functioning	If the decision is justified - just get on with the job. Dont waste money pandering to minority groups. A full explanation of the reasons for the project by the General Manager in the local media would be sufficient in most cases.
Council Functioning	If you are interested in elector ideas 50 words as the council officers are is a joke ...shame....Unelected officers of council appear to be running the council
Council Functioning	I'm fine with the trees getting chopped down and the area being renewed. But get on with it sooner.
Council Functioning	In my opinion council does whatever council wants seemingly with inconsistent R&R. Seems council holds all the power in any given scenario but this fair or just? Why were Layman Street figs removed leaving older trees still standing? Why were so much of our City's funds waisted on this endeavour?
Council Functioning	In my opinion too much time and money was wasted by council on the laman street fig issue due to a minority of extremists. Council was always going to look bad on this issue. Do not waste any more time nor money on this issue.
Council Functioning	Initial decision remove figs - the ensuing debacle would not have been necessary. Decision made by majority vote then do it. I love trees they are being replaced so do it. All the communication in the world won't change the damaged reputation of NCC
Council Functioning	Issues such as this one are not only about informing the community but also about engaging with it. The fact that there was so much community frustration about the process shows a complete failure on the council's part. It would_not have_been hard_to satisfy_the community_with proper_consultation, independent_advice, and

	a_willingness to_find a_compromise.
Council Functioning	It is disconcerting to see the amount of time and money, not to mention the mixed messages and motives of council when we all knew what the outcome would be. Its a strange modus operandus, and not at all acceptable. How wasteful, disappointing and how ashamed I am.
Council Functioning	It will be a terrible job sifting through the responses to these question. I think Council undertook a difficult but necessary task in a democratic (ultimately overly democratic) process and regardless of what information council put out those against the concept could not accept the process or the outcome.
Council Functioning	It would be far better if councillors made a decision after whatever consultation deemed necessary and then implemented any action without political grandstanding and personal promotion
Council Functioning	It would be great if the council could stop wasting our rate money and make a decision. The mayor still hasn't made a commitment and we have paid out millions. Aren't we paying the elected council members to make decisions on the our behalf?
Council Functioning	It would be lovely if council member's could leave their "personalities" at home and speak for the community members they were elected to represent.
Council Functioning	It's inappropriate that a small group can have such influence on council. No matter the method of communication this group would never have accepted it. Please now fix up Civic Park, extend the art gallery and make it all worth while. Most people were sick of hearing about it.
Council Functioning	Laman Street issue was handled very poorly.The council has lost a lot of community respect. The city needs a revamp and council has wasted thousands of dollars through being indecisive. After visiting,Port Macquarie and the Illawarra, Newcastle rates way below both as far as green street appeal.
Council Functioning	Let's me make this clear. I am not a member of Save our Figs and wasn't particularly interested in their public demonstrations. However, I think the fiasco over the figs became quite independent of whether the figs posed a public safety threat or not. The management of the whole process was terrible - and that lies very much with the Council. Regardless of how various people and groups who came forward from the community presented themselves, the council's communication, the behaviour of our elected officials, all showed lack of respect for community. The tone from the outset was adversarial and that made me lose any interest in this forum. Personally, although sad to see the figs go, if provided proof to my satisfaction that there was a need for them to be removed, I would have supported the removal of the figs. It was the stupid waste of money, the bullying, nasty comments from some elected members of council and the unwillingness to compromise about the independent assessment that disgusted me and made me lose faith that the original decision was for the community's best interest. I feel that the council's communication strategy was about justifying the decision and not engaging in an honest dialogue with the community. I no longer believe that this forum (Newcastle Voice) is an honest attempt to gain insight from and consult with the community. I feel that Newcastle Voice is nothing more than a PR exercise in appearances to make it look like the council gives a shit when it clearly doesn't. I have no interest in this forum anymore. I really wish it was law that our elected representative could be charged for the money they waste on proving their petty points and on whose ego's are biggest. I am wondering if it would be cheaper for the public is we paid for p***s enlargement surgery and viagra for some of the male

	members of council. Pun intended.
Council Functioning	Listen to the community when they tell you they don't want the figs destroyed. COUNCIL OFFICERS HAVE A SET AGENDA AND ARE NOT INTERESTED IN WHAT THE PUBLIC THINK. People I have spoken to in the community, not the people at rallies think THAT WE NO LONGER HAVE A VOICE.
Council Functioning	Make a decision and act on it. Whilst we love the trees anything is better than the barricades that are currently around the trees making Beautiful Laman St unsightly. This arguement has gone on too long just like the train line debacle.
Council Functioning	make a decision and act upon it.
Council Functioning	Make a decision and get on with it, stop procrastinating and act like mature adults.
Council Functioning	Make a decision and stick to it. Don't let minority take over and cost us millions of dollars and make fools of you in the process...
Council Functioning	make a decision and stick to it. get on with it
Council Functioning	make relevant decisions and stick to them, not be waylaid by an extreme few. Stop throwing ridiculous amounts of money into assessments of trees. There are homeless people in Newcastle, mental health issues and lack of affordable housing, do something for the greater good in Newcastle, not the minority.
Council Functioning	More community input from all sectors is needed. Unfortunately a select group of people seem to get all the attention and make use of valuable Council resources that could be better utilised to enhance our city
Council Functioning	More indication who made decisions. Management should indicate clearer recommendations. Staff should consider the public more in issues, what and if there is a minority or a majority in pushing one way or the other. Elected Councillors should be accountable. Voting scale For/Against available to ratepayers all times for all issues.
Council Functioning	More information about when people in the community get together to talk about city issues. Cutting down the figs was heartbreaking, a waste of money when our post office needs restoring. more opportunity for gettogethers of the community
Council Functioning	more information on what is going on and stop wasting rate payers money because in the long we as rate payers will pay more in rates to recover the lost revenue, also for god sake stop the council in fighting very embarasing for newcastle
Council Functioning	My own research and looking at the tree branches cut down, they didn't look unhealthy. It appears the whole thing may have been more about Insurance than anything else. Seems a great pity. I will NOT be voting for ANY of the persons now on Council in the next election.
Council Functioning	My responses are influenced Council's handling of the issue as well as communication. The indecision dragged on too long, and the issue became a debacle, a forum for political grandstanding; our elected Councillors seem to have found themselves lost/outof their depth between a rock and a fig tree!

Council Functioning	NCC dropped the ball. They should have refuted SOF lies from day one. Decent information only started flowing in the last weeks to rebut their lies. You left a void and SOF filled it. Next time, get the facts out early and often.
Council Functioning	Newcastle City Councillors are a disgrace.
Council Functioning	Newcastle Council members forget they are merely public servants, conducting themselves as self-serving historical landmark vandals, wasting taxpayer dollars while demonstrating complete disregard for the desires of the people. Then slapping the rate payer in the face because they dared complain by removing bulk waste collections and public holidays.
Council Functioning	Newcastle is performing appallingly, ask Lake Macquarie who has less rate payer money at their disposal, how they engage their community. My city is being destroyed by power, money, greed. Natural resources and history are being disrespected and destroyed - Councillors take some pride, act now!
Council Functioning	No matter what the council does in the interests of safety and the community it will always have to manage the lack of understanding by sections of the community. . The process was drawn out and the constant recession motions have served to undermine the process as well.
Council Functioning	No point in the council trying to inform people of anything when all can see how disorganised and embarrassing the council actually is via other means.
Council Functioning	Not have the mayor set the counsellors to vote one way on issues without his vote. Then when their opposition to that vote in council from the general public he can then go to the media and cry crocodile tears, and blame the other counsellors.
Council Functioning	not waste rate payer money on noisy very small groups.
Council Functioning	Once decision is made stick to it
Council Functioning	Pay constant attention to the Councils role of providing a service to the public rather than engaging in factional, polirical and beurocratic power games.
Council Functioning	Please define 'significant' as everybody has a different interpretation. I'm very dissatisfied how much ratepayers money was spent and wasted with this debarkle.
Council Functioning	Please do much better next time. This has been both costly and embarassing for the council and hence us Newcastle citizens.
Council Functioning	please fence dog parks.. especially MARYLANDS
Council Functioning	Provide honest feedback on situations. Do not waste tax payers money on issues that could be resolved. Provide open discussion forums not fruitless sessions that resolve nothing.
Council Functioning	Regarding the Fig issue, the council was not interested in engaging in community consultation. This has been extremely badly handled by council and the councilors behaviour appalling. The community has been left divided and a row of beautiful trees has been butchered. The process was not open and transparent.
Council Functioning	Release of actual and factual information without hidden agendas and highly emotive bickering of councilors ie Cooke. The embarrassing effort of council (Management within Bee Hive)covering ones rear with Bob assistance.

	<p>Audits focused on facts not fiction build credibility in the community -</p> <p>Unablbe to answered in 50 words.</p>
Council Functioning	<p>Removing LamanSt's figs is a shameful example of miscommunication between NCC & the community it supposedly represents. NCC has demonstrated complete disrespect & contempt for it's citizens-has only itself to blame for the costly, appalling mess+the groundswell of mistrust created through mismanaging this issue. Councillors responsible should also be removed.</p>
Council Functioning	<p>research should be carried out before put to council votes and if agreed just do it!</p>
Council Functioning	<p>Sack all your communications staff including this ridiculous Newcastle Voice. NCC clearly does not listen and it's staff have no clue what is going on externally and internally.</p>
Council Functioning	<p>Sack the the council and bring in an administrator</p>
Council Functioning	<p>Seek community consoltation and take decisive action, don't let the loud minority ruin things for the majority.</p>
Council Functioning	<p>Senior administration could start telling the truth. It is an insult to conduct such a survey AFTER the figs have been chopped.</p> <p>Basically I do not trust Frank C</p> <p>and some of the councilors</p>
Council Functioning	<p>Set out the arguments consistently and across as many platforms as possible. THEN ACT PROMPTLY. The problem with the fig issue was that it was left to fester for months if not years. If you decide something stick to it.</p>
Council Functioning	<p>SOF controlled the issue. Where was the future vision, positives after felling the trees, what the area can become? All the public heard was conspiracies & no independence of advice. Get SOF, & wider community, to channel energy into a future for Laman St rather then more legal nonsense.</p>
Council Functioning	<p>Sometimes they shouldn't bother. Most people are idiots, and in the case of the figs, the less council listened to the protests, the better off we'd be. The figs might have already been replanted and a lot of money could have been saved.</p>
Council Functioning	<p>Stop pandering to loud minority activists. The council made the decision (that is what they were elected for) and then flipped and flopped for too long. The Lord Mayor was next to useless.</p>
Council Functioning	<p>stop wasting money on trees, there's more things in our area that need attention! don't forget western newcastle!</p>
Council Functioning	<p>Stop wasting Tax payers money on consultation and cut the fig trees down, as should have happened in the first place</p>
Council Functioning	<p>Surely a media policy applies to the Lord Mayor? Why can he say whatever he likes against the Council and council staff doing their jobs?</p>
Council Functioning	<p>survey way too late</p> <p>no community consultation done</p> <p>no willingness to find a better solution</p>

	<p>no compassion or consideration for community</p> <p>investigation should be launched immediately</p> <p>council staff should be sacked</p> <p>community should be consulted about what is planned for Laman St</p> <p>lets hope it doesn't look like Wheeler Place</p>
Council Functioning	Taking community concerns into account when making decisions. This process has been completely bypassed in Laman St issue. It has been obvious that some Councillors have their own agenda and Council management have not acted in the best interests of Newcastle.
Council Functioning	Tate should have been sacked for gross miss management.
Council Functioning	that councillors and council staff observe confidentiality. when a decision is reached it is adhered to and observed.
Council Functioning	The absolute waste of ratepayers money in this situation shows how the fringe minority has again hindered the positive moving forward of this gerat city. To keep the community informed is one thing but to have these minorities hijack every decsion that council make is just ridiculous.
Council Functioning	The communication was fine but I was a bit confused by the message; it was inconsistent. I still don't feel like I really know the "real story". Some things just need a decision made and actions carried out, without debate. Thanks for getting on with it!
Council Functioning	The council did a brilliant job with the Laman St Figs - well done (this excludes John Tate and his alliance with the Save our Figs criminals, of course).
Council Functioning	The council has been elected to represent the majority and therefore by the silence of the majority it should be noted that they were supported.The Lord Mayor waived. Maybe we need an new way of managing local issues?? No council!!! Selected Managers with a back bone.
Council Functioning	The council is elected to act on our behalf. Counsellors should have the means to ascertain community views on specific subjects and vote/act accordingly.
Council Functioning	The Council should have avoided AT ALL COSTS the images portrayed on our screens and newspapers of fences, conflict etc as the trees were destroyed. A compromise was required - the impression we are left with is that the Council chose not to pursue a compromise. Very divisive outcome.
Council Functioning	The council spent too much time and money on community consiltation - what a fantatic sight to the the built environment - the library building - in all its glory from King Street - what trees?
Council Functioning	The council, both staff and councillors need to counteract the biased information issued by protesters such as the SOF rabble. So often in the current debate many outlandish accusations were made of council staff and hidden agendas and to my opinion they were able to go unchallenged for most part.
Council Functioning	The councillors as a group are dysfunctional and hinder clear thinking on many issues i.e. emotional noisemaking clouds too many issues

Council Functioning	The councilors are a dysfunctional unit, this is the issue in this instant. The behaviour of a number of councilors has been totally unprofessional. It would appear a number of untruths were brought into the equation. The process & the participants are what need to be investigated.
Council Functioning	The current Councillors should not be able to represent the Newcastle community because of the total waste of money and energy that has used up on the fig issue. An election for new representatives is needed.
Council Functioning	The delays and waste of money was grotesque. A proper and thorough argument should have been established at the beginning, and then dissent to that argument been discussed. I think the strategic planning to the whole affair was appalling. Why weren't the tree thinned out and replaced over time.
Council Functioning	The Fig saga was disasterous with political in fighting and a hidden adgenda. Why should tax/rate payers have to foot the bill which could have been avoided with honesty and a clear adgenda. Nobody likes to see the trees gone but if it is a valid resason so be it.
Council Functioning	The fig tree issue was a disaster for the Council. The Mayor and councillors should be sacked and replaced with competent representatives.
Council Functioning	The Fig's fiasco has destroyed trust in Council. Council's credibility and reputation has been severly damaged. It reflects the Directors' lack of understanding of the rationale and need for open and transparent decison making and makes a mockery of the role of Local Government. Their intransigent behaviour isincomprehensible.
Council Functioning	The handling of the Laman street figs is a complete and utter disgrace. Council manipulated information and did not listen to the community. Senior council directors should resign if they have any integrity
Council Functioning	The landscape of local government must change. We need a completely new Council who is capable of managing the administration and delivering what the rate payer wants. Pearce and Cordingly should be sacked for their involvement. The community will have the last laugh at the elections.
Council Functioning	The mayor is off with the faries so dont use him. I am not one for attending meetings so anything electronic is good.
Council Functioning	The people in the Electorate can be informed..but decision making can be "smothered out" by elected representatives in Local Council ...with their own agendas. The Laman Fig saga ...I believe, "fits" in the above description... Obvious some people had a "lot of money" riding on the decision...!!
Council Functioning	The problem was not that Council did not communicate but it did not listen to the people and then actually be prepared to change what they had already decided. You then wasted considerable money in the courts because of arguing with the people who pay the rates.
Council Functioning	The process for Laman St cost an extreme amount of money. Once you have a vote for yes or no that should be the end of it. We are dealing with trees here not life or death. I love trees, but I also believe in common sense.
Council Functioning	The quality of the communication used regarding this issue is only relevant when related to the level of interest in the issue. If someone does not care at all about the issue, they are not going to be satisfied or dissatisfied with the level of consultation.

Council Functioning	The subject was emotional. Community was shocked at the vitriol between councillors, and the fact that council kowtowed so readily to an insurance company. Also, there was grief at the loss of a unique local landscape. It was more than a routine planning issue, yet council could not predict this.
Council Functioning	The time factor is very important as time means money; there was a massive blowout of council funds, obtained from the rate payer, in the matter of the Laman St figs issue/debacle.
Council Functioning	the whole Laman Street Figs fiasco was a mess controlled by a small radical group of disruptive people.council should have carried out it's decision promptly to remove the trees.all the meetings, consultations and the costs were disgusting
Council Functioning	The whole lamen street fig fiasco was extremely frustrating!! In the end I didn't give two hoots what you did about it or how you went about informing the community. I WAS OVER IT. All I wanted was a decision and the council kept letting me down.
Council Functioning	The wider community lacked a lot of facts regarding the figs and the reasons behind the removal. This resulted in poorly informed opinions based on a vocal minority group's emotional rantings. The community needed more fact based info in the media to balance the hype and sensationalism.
Council Functioning	There is nothing worse than debating a decision several times such as the Laman Street trees. Make a decision that is best for the community then stick to it no matter what minority group protests, its councils decision.
Council Functioning	There was an air of "win at all costs" coming from Council staff and they didn't realise the significance of the issue and the meaning that these trees had to so many.When a Council acts in this way,it has forgotten that it is the servant of the people.
Council Functioning	This elected council are the most unorganised bunch of rabble ever elected to council in this city. There is to many personal agends between them instead of making decisions that will benefit this city.
Council Functioning	This fig issue was blown completely out of proportion. There are more important issues to deal with! More surveys such as Newcastle Voice are needed to provide evidence for community support or lack thereof for decisions such as these. The rail line is another issue in need of a solution.
Council Functioning	This issue was basically dominated by a loud group of people who captured attention on media. In the end council was too concerned about engagement and should have taken action years ago. People will not come to you. Use media which is easy and convenient to them.
Council Functioning	This surevy is about council, but which part of council, the voted representatives or the LG public service. Like the fig tree debarkle, the poliical debarkle overshadowed the issue, and the LG public service was quiet. Appaulling on both counts.
Council Functioning	This survey is flawed,the real issue has not been addressed,it is not HOW information is released, but WHAT.Real facts where not released.If council admin had been honest and transparent, instead of covering up mistakes, to avoid "losing face".We would have a beautiful street,and \$1.6M for more pressing needs.

Council Functioning	This was an issue that flagged very early in the process that it was going to be very divisive in the community. It was up to council, both councillors and staff, to find ways early in the piece of defusing the situation. Council has not handled this problem well
Council Functioning	This whole matter was appallingly managed. It should be used as a case study of how NOT to conduct a community consultation process. It was allowed to drag on for too long. My suggestion: design a reasonable consultation process, consider all opinions, make the best decision and act on it.
Council Functioning	Transparency needed: Don't understand how the decision to remove figs went to vote. If deemed dangerous by expert opinion, then they need removing. No vote necessary. I'm also appalled by processes length. We need clear, definite processes for 1) council decisions and 2) for people to appeal/protest against those decisions.
Council Functioning	Transparency of actions (better communication of reasons why things are done) upfront rather than playing "catch-up". More positive reporting of actions through radio, newspapers. Council to act on decisions and not be so susceptible to minority groups. Lord Mayor to support Council decisions. SHOW LEADERSHIP
Council Functioning	Try to ignore local news media since I find it is too biased towards certain elements of a vocal community which does not represent views held by the silent (unfortunately) majority.
Council Functioning	Typical of NV - too few words permitted to explain. However, councillors who act as these should be ashamed. Also, nobody can believe anything stated by council (members or GM). How can \$2M+ be justified on a few trees with so much poverty & need in the City? Shame, shame, shame!
Council Functioning	Until Council is honest there is no point communicating with the public at all. Stop pretending to be open and transparent when you aren't. Don't produce papers such as the Urban Forest Background paper without supporting them. Sack Frank and Judy that would be a great start.
Council Functioning	Various Radio interviews with elected Councillors that wish to positively inform and educate the public of the reasons for the decisions, not people who wish to point score. eg, the Lord Mayor appears indecisive in most interviews I have heard.
Council Functioning	We are discussed with the procrastination by council, once the decision was made to remove the Lamen St Fig Trees and blow out in cost to the rate payers. Council members are elected to make / action decisions expeditiously and cost effectively for the rate payers they represent
Council Functioning	We want our city to be functional and beautiful. Claiming trees are going to kill people, with no evidence? If you had an alternative plan that needed the trees to go, great, tell me about that, but don't tell me insurance companies rule my city.
Council Functioning	Well, its all very well to supply information just to see the plan changed back and forth as we have seen with the disaster reg. the fig trees. For goodness sake pull together and work for a better Newcastle on all levels. Not another Rats in the ranks council.
Council Functioning	What a ridiculous situation this council is in, the Lord mayor watches his own workers cut down the figs while crying "don't cut the figs down"

Council Functioning	<p>What was the original reason for cutting the trees down? It was lost in the flip flopping of the councillors (politically motivated).</p> <p>Explain clearly to rate payers reasons for actions and benefits of such actions.</p> <p>Concentrate on the positives, and get on with it without stuffing around.</p>
Council Functioning	<p>Whatever the "right" outcome, the Figs debacle seemed appallingly handled. Much distress was generated within a large, caring and active part of our community whose VOICE was dismissed. Council's seeming unwillingness in going the extra miles has not endeared it to many who appreciate the difficulties decisions Council faces.</p>
Council Functioning	<p>When council makes a decision stick to it, dont bow to vocal minority groups just so you look good in the paper.</p>
Council Functioning	<p>When elected councillors make a decision that should be the end of it. It should be then passed over to the General Manager to take action. No more correspondence should be entered into.</p> <p>That is what the ratepayers elect councillors to do - make sensible and responsible decisions.</p>
Council Functioning	<p>When I voted in the local Govt elections I authorised the candidate to make decisions on my behalf. If he stuffs up I will vote against his re-election. A majority rules. Get rid of the Lord Mayor, run the council properly, or bring in an Administrator to run Newcastle.</p>
Council Functioning	<p>When the council makes a decision stick to it and implement it straight away to save all is waste of money!</p>
Council Functioning	<p>Why do our councillors let issues such as the removal of figs linger on unresolved for months. This leads to community misinformation, innuendo, unrest, near riots and is a big fat waste of our coucil rates. 2+million \$ wasted which could have been spent on keeping ???pre-schools open. A disgrace.</p>
Council Functioning	<p>With a dysfunctional council, information comes from biased sources, who is telling the truth?</p> <p>There is no place in local govt for politics, the politics of everything takes over from sane, sensible and good governance.</p>
Council Functioning	<p>You are doing OK. The Laman Figs were NOT a big issue, you let them become so. They had to go, why waste time and money, just do it. Engage me on issues like why council approves developments without adequate parking provisions (Leapfrog Ability for example).</p>
Council Functioning	<p>You are elected to represent & make decisions.All the people don't agree with those decisions but you have embarrassed yourselves and the city by this fiasco. Get on with the job you were elected to do & stop carrying on like prima donnas....after all you are merely public servants</p>
Council Functioning	<p>You couldn't have [EXPLETIVE] this issue up any better than you already have. Next time you have \$2M to waste give me a call and I'll help you waste it.</p> <p>The NCC and everyone involved with this issue are extremely incompetent.</p>
Council Functioning	<p>You should be ashamed for wasting rate payers money bending over for a bunch of smelly tree hugging lefties shame shame shame.Next time that happens i would like to see a heavier police presence and charges laid against demonstrators(smelly tree hugging oxygen thieves</p>

Subject Category	Q6 open ended responses
Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Listening to what the community wants would be a good start. - Transparency of process. - NCC needs to understand the import of cultural heritage vs a risk adverse insurance culture.
Consultation	100+ upset community members wanted to speak to Phil Pearce today. 20+ police barrier between community and it's elected council disgraceful. Two people asked to speak to him were refused!! What happened to NCC? Not rocket science, LISTEN TO THE PEOPLE!!! Stop charade, sack 7 councillors, and sack puppeteers.
Consultation	50 word limit. Today is the most shameful event I have witnessed in this city. You would have to be kidding asking me to comment on consultation. hadn't council staff decided what they were doing before the consultation?
Consultation	A rate payer referendum on major issue's such as the Laman St Figs. Send a reply paid envelope or it doesn't even need to be reply paid people would buy a stamp to be heard,and a form to mark for or against the issue.
Consultation	<p>Actually listen to the community.</p> <p>Let the community be involved.</p> <p>None of what is said in the Urban Forest Policy was carried through in the Laman St Fig Tree situation.</p> <p>The comments from the Newcastle Voice for Laman St were misconstrued to mean Replace, when very well they meant Retain.</p>
Consultation	Actually listen to what people have to say, make a decision and then stick to it
Consultation	All Communication needs to be honest and transparent. Listen to community groups and respect their opinion as representative of a community. Council does not have the right to make decisions on their own. Disengage from authoritarianism.
Consultation	All of the questions that have been asked are gauged to give the council what they want to hear, it is not focused on what the community are wanting the council to know. What has happened over the fig tress proves that the council is not interested in its people
Consultation	Allowing more access to the public addressing council meetings. Making the administration more accountable to the public. There is a feeling in the community that the admin staff work independently of anybody, I think the entire NCC should be put into administration as the accountability has been so poor,
Consultation	An online avenue for all ratepayers to vote on significant issues unresolved after 3 meetings. Registration would be mandatory and if a determined percentage has voted then the result would be final. Councillors would not be allowed to overturn the result.
Consultation	Basically the community wanted something and council have not given it to them - who does council stand for then if not the community??? With Tyrrel street figs the council was dishonest to the residents so i don't blame the community not believing them in the Laman street case.

Consultation	Be truthful & open in consultation & actually listen to the community!! 'Consultation' wasn't the problem with the figs, it was actually respecting the community by listening and doing as they asked.
Consultation	Certainly workshop and forums are very useful as well as information on website and literature sent by Council. The local forums that were stopped would have been an excellent way to communicate information. There should be better transparency in the future by Council on such projects.
Consultation	communicate via social media. i think in this case - council had no intention to do community consultation - just wanted to get the trees down so they could redevelop the area (plans which we were asked to comment on through newcastle voice). the whole thing is an absolute disgrace.
Consultation	Communications dependant on quality of information provided. In figs case could not trust Officer distributed propaganda Even letters from GM "challenge the truth" This voice survey is unlikely to give a real result. Survey is not transparent as it does not allow you to keep a copy of your response.
Consultation	Community consultation is about LISTENING to the community - not just a forum to tell us what is happening. LISTENING on your part is JUST as important.
Consultation	Community consultation prior to decision making by council. It seems as though large amounts of ratepayer funds have been utilised in resolving this matter diverting funds from other important projects.
Consultation	community should be consulted, the results of that consultation should be factored into any decision. The results need to be in the papers, on tv/radio, to ensure people are informed of how the community feels. Then the obscene amount of money spent on the Laman street fiasco would not recur.
Consultation	Consult before making a decision and let Councillors know results of consultation before presenting to Council for a decision.
Consultation	Consultation is only as good as the information provided and the response to any questions raised by the community.
Consultation	Consultation methods used now attract strong views either way with both sides claiming to speak for the majority. For more reliable responses use the HVRF who are highly skilled at sampling population on many issues. Our community would be more likely to respond positively to the results obtained from HVRF,
Consultation	Consultation needs to happen before decisions are made.
Consultation	Consultation requires listening, review, re-engagement, a long cycle. Council staff don't know best, technical staff have limited skills and limited capacity. I am expert on the Laman St trees and attended briefings and the attempt at mediation. Council staff were wrong, the outcome was unnecessary and costly.
Consultation	Councillors were elected by the ratepayers to represent them for their term. They speak for me and if I am not satisfied I would vote them out at next elections. To me I consider the present "Voice" system is not necessary and must be a huge unwanted cost to ratepayers.

Consultation	Council ACTUALLY needs to engage with the community - they clearly didn't in relation to the Fig Trees. What was very obvious is that Council had made up their mind early on and no matter what clear logic/ rational were put forward Council just weren't prepared to listen.
Consultation	Council must always be transparent to ratepayers with clear, concise & honest communication providing all of the facts, in the first instance. Provide many opportunities for community consultation & communication allowing ratepayer input & alternative solutions must be investigated. DON'T withhold any information about community issue. Be proactive not reactive.
Consultation	Council needs to find methods of polling yhe silent majorities position on issues so that vocal small majority interest groups don't control the agenda as witnessed in the case of the figs.
Consultation	Council senior management are arrogance towards ratepayers. Management are full of their own importance and are unwilling to listen to ratepayers. I am not a member of the save figs group. The council totally ignored a ratepayer petition of 11,000 signatures. Until culture changes, council management will not be trusted.
Consultation	Council should be inclusive with the whole community in these types of debates, not form "working parties" with vocal minorities. An online poll, available to the whole community, would highlight the actual community views and give a level of comfort to decision making.
Consultation	Council should not only 'consult' with community, but then act on the outcomes of the consultations, instead of treating Novocastrians like idiots without a voice.
Consultation	Council should tell us the whole story if they want anything changed eg the fig saga....I feel this was more to do with improving the buildings near them ...if so say so they would have had a better response to the truth!Listen to the general public not just minority groups
Consultation	Councils website seems intent on avoiding difficult or contentious issues fail to recognize contentious issues. Lack of feedback from surveys gives perception of a "black hole". Face to face meetings at least engage community. Should accept that some issues will create debate and therefore be prepared to accept criticism
Consultation	Demonstration that Council will be prepared to act on the feedback it receives, not just go through the motions of having people say their piece then ignore it.
Consultation	Disemination of known relevant information including SWAT analysis and oportunity for feedback before decissions are made and put into action. Councilors canvassing the views of their constituents and making their stance clear and public knowledge.
Consultation	Do not engage riot police when dealing with the community. Listen to the community. Learn how to properly assess issues of complexity. Do not negotiate in bad faith. Do not adopt a tone of arrogance and contempt for the community.

Consultation	Don't just pay lip service through your communication efforts. Please listen to the community when it objects to changes. That would be a big improvement.
Consultation	Don't make large plans without asking the people you are meant to be representing! Remain open minded on issues - don't continue with decisions made to "save face".
Consultation	Door to door interviews Phone interviews
Consultation	Engage community, get community opinion, and follow it PRIOR to these decisions. Stop putting council commerce before community's well being, life style, mental, physical health and community needs. Laman St figs, Dyke Point redevelopment, Lynch's prawn shop site, Kings Cross crime bosses businesses and hotels, clubs; public drinking, violence.
Consultation	engage with the local community affected by the issues before making decisions. Also provide expected outcomes of the actions so that people know what is being planned.
Consultation	Engaged is when my input means something. I feel that council engagement is just 'a tick a box exercise' and opinions other than those held by council officers are ignored. The increase of rates survey of 500 people was significant but a petition of 11000 names was ignored - go figure!!!!
Consultation	Ensure the proper planning for any project is discussed with many different sources. So called experts who alone make decisions regarding even minor works which can impact future developments is backward. Having public voting on projects should be given consideration for a more balanced perspective.
Consultation	Find a way to prevent people who are not NCC ratepayers from hijacking council meetings. This time should be quarantined for ratepayer issues. Set up a NCC facebook page. Have ward forums and council meetings on Saturdays or later in the evenings.
Consultation	genuine community consultation needs to happen BEFORE significant decisions (such as cutting down fig trees) are made by the executive/un-elected arm of Council, not AFTERWARDS. two-way discussions, such as ward & public forums, are more effective for consultation than one-way information dissemination from Council.
Consultation	Genuine independent opinion about contentious topics, and honest and transparent consultation. The Council Officers' and Councillors' resistance to an independent review of the WHOLE Laman street issue, and the misuse of the public liability issue as a way to bypass appropriate decision-making, was reprehensible. (And I am NOT a greenie!)
Consultation	Greater emphasis on communication at the earliest stage in the project allowing for discussion and ideas to feed into the project prior to commencing it.
Consultation	Had the feeling that the Laman Street Figs demise was already decided and any further talks would not have mattered.
Consultation	Have some day forums so the elderly can attend.
Consultation	Having an informal opinion poll through Newcastle Voice would have been very useful

<p>Consultation</p>	<p>HONEST & REAL community consultation.</p> <p>Q4: None of the methods listed are useful unless they are truthful & unbiased.</p> <p>Ward Forums: Never been informed.</p> <p>MONTHLY Council news.</p> <p>Replying to emails and letters from community.</p> <p>Adhering to proper council processes and policies for proposals and informing community.</p>
<p>Consultation</p>	<p>Honesty and Transparency,not after the event,</p> <p>Listen to residents,Council officers honest with councillors.Web site must be searchable.</p> <p>HONESTY main thing for residents rate payers.</p>
<p>Consultation</p>	<p>I am pleased trees have gone and finished waste of money caused by radicals who cannot accept change. New trees will grow in their place. SOF greenies refused to accept that trees have fallen over in the near past. Is Newcastle Voice a representative sample of the rate paying community.</p>
<p>Consultation</p>	<p>I beleive that rate payers should be able to discuss significant issues in council run chatsites or better advertised public forums...but these would have to be made known to the public and not just overrun by the people who were against the issue.</p>
<p>Consultation</p>	<p>I believe enough was done in the way of consultation & flyers and info with rate notices may help NCC get its message out net of any pro/con media bias but little else needs to be done as long as public input is sought before the final decision.</p>
<p>Consultation</p>	<p>I can't remember getting an e-newsletter from council, or receiving anything from Newcastle Voice about the figs.</p> <p>Anyway whats the use of any of these things when the council ignored the enormous number of people in the community who said they wanted to keep the figs.</p>
<p>Consultation</p>	<p>I dismay at what is happening to this "liveable city", let alone our "future city".</p> <p>If council wants to "engage" it could show good faith and roll Laman st into Civic Park and have an open honest discussion with the community about the precincts' development, including the art gallery additions.</p>
<p>Consultation</p>	<p>I dont believe it has been possible to get any information outside of the media reporting. Newcastle Voice never gives feedback that opinions have been considered or presented to council...probably a waste of time.</p>
<p>Consultation</p>	<p>I feel Council made very possible attempt to engage with the community regarding the issue, with on-line polls showing overwhelming support for the decision made by Council. Unfortunately, the squeaky wheel minority wasted rate payers money.</p>
<p>Consultation</p>	<p>I feel totally violated by council and certain highly aggressive councilors who completely ignored the community on this occasion, by not allowing sufficient consultation. Additionally the offer from the state government was not taken up, and therefore there was not an open and transparent process. Disgraceful behavior!</p>
<p>Consultation</p>	<p>I find that N'cstle Voice does engage with me well regarding the issues chosen. My problem is that there is not enough signage in area e.g. shopping centres, railway stations, as well as Libraries, and Ccl Chambers, in regard to the future develop of Newcastle.</p>

Consultation	I have attended council forums on various issues and find they do not result in any policy changes. The way the fig issue was handled is disgraceful.
Consultation	I have participated in several of council "Community Consultancy" Workshops and feel strongly that the process is a box ticking exercise. Council time and time again continues to ignore what the majority of the comments and input from the participants (who represent their respective communities).
Consultation	I heard very little from council about their intentions to cut down the Laman St figs even though I was very interested in the issue. The community input from the previous workshops was ignored. Council needs to consult before taking such drastic action even if there are safety issues.
Consultation	I live in Kahibah and answers to earlier questions should be viewed in that light. I consider Newcastle Voice a very good way to keep people informed and provide feed back with the Council website being used to provide upto date information and data.
Consultation	I think consultation is important to the democratic process TO A POINT. Pandering to the vocal minority, however, is a waste of time and money.
Consultation	I THINK COUNCIL SHOULD RING RATE PAYERS AND GET THERE FINAL DISCUSSION OF ISSUES,IT WOULD SAVE A LOT OF PROBLEMS, YOU CAPTURE EVERYONES OPINION AND WOULD BE MUCH CHEAPER IN THE LONG RUN
Consultation	I think for me information through the Newspaper and Newcastle Voice is best.
Consultation	I think in future big issues for example like the figs,when the decision can't be made by council,let the people vote and they make the decision, hence saving us money to spend on things that need doing in our city.
Consultation	I would find radio/television news/Newcastle Voice/letterbox flyers/notices would better engage someone like myself and my husband. Once alerted we would then probably seek further information via some of the other communication strategies.
Consultation	I would have liked to see more consultation on the Fig issue. It seemed to be handled badly by Council and with little regard for the opinion voiced by the local community. I feel let down by Council and devastated by the result. I don't understand Council's destructive response.
Consultation	If a decision is made don't waste the community's money
Consultation	If an issue calls for independent assessment make sure it is genuinely INDEPENDENT [use our uni] and then STICK with the decision regardless.
Consultation	If council has made its mind up then not much use in asking for the general public's comments/suggestions
Consultation	I'm surprised that there weren't discussions through Newcastle Voice considering the whole idea of it is to voice our opinion on what's happening in Newcastle. This major event was not discussed through Newcastle Voice (I didn't receive any notifications or emails). I am disillusioned about the use of this survey.
Consultation	Impossible in 50 words! Listen to the community and address their concerns rather than calling in the riot squad and wasting huge sums of money. NCC has acted like a mindless thug.

Consultation	In my opinion Newcastle Voice will give a distorted view of this issue and feedback to council and a broader, more representative community response would be very different. Do a proper community survey
Consultation	independent assessment, engaging with the community, restarting forums for each suburb, listening to community concerns, not just worrying about council officer careers lets worry about what is best for the community, building trust in the community. classic example you haven't even given me enough room to raise my concerns
Consultation	Information through Voice with a link to NCC website- specific page would be useful as that is the network I'm already involved in but the website on it's own is not easy to navigate to find specific information.
Consultation	Isn't this issue about how you define consultation? Council administration is perceived as being tricky and underhand in the way they dealt with the community and spent (our) money. They didn't want to know the answers so they didn't ask the questions until it was too late.
Consultation	Just be more upfront with the general public who are passionate about a cause. I found with the fig saga that if the council had not taken the approach 'that what we say goes'then maybe events would have progressed differently. They have just destroyed one of Newcastle grandest streets.
Consultation	Listen and act on what the community that elected u want and i think the library should be moved into the old post office get more people into the mall and expand the art gallery into the library
Consultation	Listen and meet with 11,000 people who signed the petition to save the figs. A very arrogant council who doesn't listen to the community. A sad week for newcastle with the loss of the green cathedral in the city. It's barren and the anzacs who planted them would be upset.
Consultation	listen to petitions
Consultation	listen to the community (which I dont think you did at all)
Consultation	listen to the community and act with integrity
Consultation	Listen to the community not out of date material from people that do not have any idea of what is athetically pleasing
Consultation	Listen to the community when they tell you they don't want the figs destroyed. COUNCIL OFFICERS HAVE A SET AGENDA AND ARE NOT INTERESTED IN WHAT THE PUBLIC THINK. People I have spoken to in the community, not the people at rallies think THAT WE NO LONGER HAVE A VOICE.
Consultation	Listen to the people. NCC could have spent a fortune communicating with the community and it would not have made any difference. Communication is a 2 way street and council need to listen to everyday people, not developers or councillors with personal agendas. The process was neither transparent or competent.
Consultation	LISTEN TO THE PUBLIC AND DISCUSS THE ALTERNATIVES THEY HAVE IN MIND
Consultation	Listen to the ratepayers in the Newcastle area, not people who are not rate payers in the area.

Consultation	Listen to your constituents, be honest and up front.
Consultation	listening to the community is one part of the problem. The council needs to act upon what the people want rather than just wearing everyone down by dragging issues on until they finally get their own way because the community is sick of fighting and paying heavily for the fight.
Consultation	<p>LS Working party must not have staff voting</p> <p>Under 'tools to communicate and consult' community, where is reference to the LM working party? I'd like to have conveyed its 'lack' of usefulness.</p> <p>Genuinely consult!!</p> <p>Limiting this open feedback to 50w is an insult to the engagement that you are attempting</p>
Consultation	<p>Many residents no confidence in the council decisions remove trees and refuse independent assessment.</p> <p>Useful for public information meeting. Councilors present, independent facilitator. Council's relevant experts + experts with different views (present or by videolink) answer questions chosen by facilitator (submitted by public and councillors).</p>
Consultation	May I suggest that those who don't yell and scream are asked in other words a better representation of the community/cross section of the community.
Consultation	More community input from all sectors is needed. Unfortunately a select group of people seem to get all the attention and make use of valuable Council resources that could be better utilised to enhance our city
Consultation	More encouragement to be a part of Newcastle Voice and greater presence in online social networking
Consultation	More indication who made decisions. Management should indicate clearer recommendations. Staff should consider the public more in issues, what and if there is a minority or a majority in pushing one way or the other. Elected Councillors should be accountable. Voting scale For/Against available to ratepayers all times for all issues.
Consultation	More information in the local paper from the very beginning with evidence provided for the decision, a time frame for consultation, reasons for the decision and post decision visions and plans.
Consultation	More public consultation and actually listening to the results. It should be accessible and notice should be paid to the results. It is no good consulting/communicating if the communication is only going one way. Poor form NCC
Consultation	More public meetings.
Consultation	Most information from council was about spin, after the event. There was no consultation prior to the decision that the figs had to go. My main issue was the lack of process, and hidden agenda from council
Consultation	<p>Much of the community was engaged in this issue, but the council refused to listen to what the community wanted.</p> <p>If council refuses to listen to the community on an issue that engages them, what hope does council have of engaging the community on issues they are less passionate about?</p>

Consultation	My concern is not about the number of opportunities to be consulted, but regarding whether or not Council took that consultation seriously or just treated it a means of pacifying dissent. Council's refusal to let another expert arborist look at the trees suggested the latter was the reality.
Consultation	Newcastle Voice is probably the best site for these matters in their newsletters
Consultation	Newcastle Voice only seems to seek opinion on issues of low significance. The council has communicated extremely poorly about the fig fiasco. The council administration has lost a lot of credibility at a time when you were asking for increases in rates.
Consultation	Newcastle voices
Consultation	Next time, use the Newcastle Voice to ask us for input, and then publish the results.
Consultation	Objective news reports on TV and local newspapers. Specific on line information and comment section when an issue arises. Councillors to LISTEN to rate payers and engage in meaningful dialogue.
Consultation	Open discussion; forums with independently chosen speakers for and against; less council division; willingness of councillors to undergo arbitration if necessary; working for the common good; LISTENING to the community; council requesting expert advice when needed.
Consultation	opponents of removal of the trees would not have been satisfied no matter what the communication were. Newcastle Voice etc are great forums to consult. For controversial issues council could blitz the issue in all forms of council communiqués. Costly but not as costly perhaps as the fig tree circus.
Consultation	Organise public consultation meetings and on-line response facilities. Advertise same in local press, by email or council flyers.
Consultation	Perhaps actually listen to the community rather than just informing us what is going on. Oh, and perhaps have a consistent, rational and defensible position.
Consultation	Please be honest and transparent with all information and in all consultation.
Consultation	Please listen to the 11,000 voices that signed the petition not to remove the trees... A very very sad day...With an obviously very contentious issue, a referendum should have been offered.
Consultation	Please listen to the local population with local issues. Don't bring in outsiders Make sure in zoning issues each side has EQUAl say in procedures
Consultation	Proper consultation, transparency in process and informed decision making - pure and simple not the atrocious and damaging farce that has just occurred - I am disgusted in how this council has dealt with this - SHAME NCC
Consultation	Provide additional context on reasons for Council decisions, some arguments made against council are unfounded, but appear to have merit when considered without context. Hold a community question and answer event, utilising if required a third party to vet and consolidate questions. Transparently publish the results of this.

Consultation	Provide full truth, eg. reason for figs removal was to make way for precinct redevelopment as planned prior to declaring the trees "unsafe". Use Voice or other means to conduct independent plebiscite before proceeding with someone's grand idea which may not be generally seen as worthwhile expenditure. Ward section consultation.
Consultation	Provide future plans and allow time for community involvement before stupid decisions are made like branding the figs dangerous and forcing them to be removed.
Consultation	Provide honest feedback on situations. Do not waste tax payers money on issues that could be resolved. Provide open discussion forums not fruitless sessions that resolve nothing.
Consultation	Provide information sessions, and let rate payer's vote on the big issues, such as revitalise Hunter St, Rail and mall.
Consultation	public forums in a less formal setting - meet in cafes / restaurants / public spaces where it is open to communication but not so formal so people are less intimidated to add their opinions / views to these important debates.
Consultation	Public meetings at the beginning best and would be for future major issues. Basically you have wrecked the best street in Newcastle for ridiculous "safety" concerns. A balanced report was needed - not just Council officers. Councillors didn't read just how strong the community actually felt about this.
Consultation	Regarding the Fig issue, the council was not interested in engaging in community consultation. This has been extremely badly handled by council and the councilors behaviour appalling. The community has been left divided and a row of beautiful trees has been butchered. The process was not open and transparent.
Consultation	Reintroduce the original concept and meeting cycle and procedures for Ward Forums. I find the current format to be totally useless and nothing more than a stage managed circus.
Consultation	Retired persons and working persons need to be marketed differently, as most working people do not have the time to attend meetings, use Newcastle Voice etc, though it doesn't mean they are not interested.
Consultation	Sack all your communications staff including this ridiculous Newcastle Voice. NCC clearly does not listen and it's staff have no clue what is going on externally and internally.
Consultation	Seek community consultation and take decisive action, don't let the loud minority ruin things for the majority.
Consultation	Seems info is available but the issue is not a priority with me but environment is high on my agenda. I feel disempowered with most current methods and would like non-political low key meetings FREE of power figures as an adjunct to formal council business if I became interested enough.
Consultation	Senior Management already know how to communicate; what they do not know is what the community wants or how they feel.
Consultation	Simple, be completely honest, open and transparent and be prepared to admit to mistakes. Genuinely engage with community before critical decisions made in secret and demonstrate an intelligent approach when addressing controversial issues, instead of keep treating the community as uninformed idiots.

Consultation	Since it seems council were intent on their action anyway I don't see how much purpose was served by community consultation. All that has happened is that a level of violence previously unseen anywhere in Newcastle other than industrial lockouts has now reared its head.
Consultation	Small group "question and answer sessions" could be offered. Then residents don't feel intimidated by group size or vocal interests. There might be more demand on staff but at least they can have a conversation with residents in a safe and comfortable environment.
Consultation	Stop running consultations so they can tick a box to say they have done it, and then doing exactly what Frank C wanted to do all along!
Consultation	Stop wasting Tax payers money on consultation and cut the fig trees down, as should have happened in the first place
Consultation	<p>survey way too late</p> <p>no community consultation done</p> <p>no willingness to find a better solution</p> <p>no compassion or consideration for community</p> <p>investigation should be launched immediately</p> <p>council staff should be sacked</p> <p>community should be consulted about what is planned for Laman St</p> <p>lets hope it doesn't look like Wheeler Place</p>
Consultation	Surveys across wide range of community perhaps by letterbox drop, telephone in addition to Newcastle Voice. Options, perhaps at libraries to complete brief on line surveys. Councillors more accessible, more often for face to face forums.
Consultation	The community has never been so engaged with a local issue. As a result we were lied to and betrayed by this council in its blatant refusal to step down on the issue. What is the point of "engagement" when informed public opinion ultimately does not count?
Consultation	The consultation on the figs issue was beyond poor & Council needs to accept a lot of responsibility for the damage done to our community. This is not the first time. Likewise, the community information on Empire Park was v ordinary. Pls improve - we can't take much more.
Consultation	The council didn't try very hard to solve. It simple decided to divide the community to get its way. The council could have staged the removal of the most dangerous trees over a few years, or something a little more tactful and we would not be so out of pocket.
Consultation	The council has a responsibility to communicate and provide opportunities for feedback from the general community, in a variety of formats, and especially to canvass the views of those who do not hold polarised opinions that tend to get all the publicity.
Consultation	The council has suitable methods to engage the community. Via the various engagements, good proposals were put forward to resolve the issue but not acted on. Improvement action should focus on what do with the outcomes not new methods to get input that won't be acted on.

Consultation	The council should listen to community concerns and solve problems laterally with consultation. The fig failure estimates were blatantly absurd to any actuary, and needed rejection by council. A credible report from a consultant with sufficient liability insurance as reinsurance would let a broker find another insurer.
Consultation	The council spent too much time and money on community consultation - what a fantastic sight to the the built environment - the library building - in all its glory from King Street - what trees?
Consultation	The general manager should be at the forefront of any communication on significant issues. Also if there is only one option - ie removing the trees then council shouldn't undertake any consultation.
Consultation	The information and key messages from NCC seemed to change weekly. I also feel that NCC seems to think to'telling' is consultation or community engagement. It's not.
Consultation	The mayor is off with the fairies so dont use him. I am not one for attending meetings so anything electronic is good.
Consultation	The problem that I have with Newcastle Voice, the Councils Newsletter, and the website is that the focus and the agenda we are commenting on is set up so the statistics can't reflect some of the connecting issues outside of the focus which effect the questionnaires results.
Consultation	The problem was not that Council did not communicate but it did not listen to the people and then actually be prepared to change what they had already decided. You then wasted considerable money in the courts because of arguing with the people who pay the rates.
Consultation	The public were continually bombarded with sensationalist, inaccurate rubbish by local media. We need a means of holding a plebiscite where the rational citizens can vote on such issues.
Consultation	The question is "HOW CAN I TALK TO COUNCIL" not "how should council talk to me". Emails to councilors have gone unanswered, ward meetings are too pompous for the average person to express their views, and Newcastle voice poses fixed questions, and does not answer questions that participants ask.
Consultation	The Trees should stay. I don't believe that Council has listened to the community. Everyone I know believes the trees should stay (or atleast some).
Consultation	The Voice would be the best medium for me as an owner living out of the area. I am probably not a good candidate for this survey due to the fact that I don't live in an area relevant to local newspaper, tv, billboard advertising etc for NCC.
Consultation	There were alternatives to cutting down none were canvassed. facilities for discussions at a suburb level would be useful. Stockton had meetings but they were so badly run and organised that they were of little interest, were abandoned by the Council without any local input about this abandonment.
Consultation	This fig issue was blown completely out of proportion. There are more important issues to deal with! More surveys such as Newcastle Voice are needed to provide evidence for community support or lack thereof for decisions such as these. The rail line is another issue in need of a solution.
Consultation	To listen to the people on what they want in their local area. Such as not cutting down the trees then getting them to pay for it in their land rates. Very displeased

Consultation	<p>Today I tried to complete the NV survey on the Laman St figs, it was a very frustrating experience. The tick the box rating style survey seemed structured to not enable real feedback as there were only very limited choices. Then when I wanted to write extra comments, I was only given 50 words. Given the public profile and outrage of this issue, I would think Newcastle Voice and NCC would be open to hearing widespread public feedback on their communication style and means – and real suggestions for improvement. With only 50 words and the type of questions asked - the structure of the survey didn't enable this to occur. I am so disappointed in NV and NCC for this whole issue. The community engagement has been about 'telling the public', not listening, or two-way dialogue. It makes a farce out of the 'community engagement' title. And the survey made me feel angry that the Council was continuing along the same path, asking a few questions, ticking a few boxes and labelling it as 'consultation'. Very, very disappointed, and angry</p>
Consultation	<p>TRANSPARENT, DETAILED & WELL-PUBLICISED information should be provided that allows appropriate time for GENUINE, RECIPROCAL COMMUNITY CONSULTATION. Then community could be PARTICIPANTS in the ENTIRE planning process, not just survey respondents. Transparency & GENUINE DIALOGUE would engender engaged trust rather than community mistrust & resistance that we have now.</p>
Consultation	<p>Try actually really CONSULTING the community not just going through the motions to tick a box.</p> <p>From the Macquarie Dictionary</p> <p>consult verb (t)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. to seek counsel from; ask advice of. 2. to refer to for information. 3. to have regard for (a person's interest, convenience, etc.) in making plans.
Consultation	<p>Use of direct email letters and via The Voice will attract most attention.</p>
Consultation	<p>Use the website and the voice, and those who want to know what's going on will. Flyers are useless, when I occasionally read the paper, I don't read any adds or editorials. Radio, TV and Internet are my sources of news & education</p>
Consultation	<p>What is the point of consulting with the community if council does want it wants anyway.</p> <p>Surf house at least the well to do can have a meal there , but where to park the car, seems if you have money and influence things like a car park arent necessary.</p>
Consultation	<p>Whatever the "right" outcome, the Figs debacle seemed appallingly handled. Much distress was generated within a large, caring and active part of our community whose VOICE was dismissed. Council's seeming unwillingness in going the extra miles has not endeared it to many who appreciate the difficulties decisions Council faces.</p>
Consultation	<p>When community consultations and suggestions are made by the community how these are addressed, whether positively or in the negatively, should be clearly articulated. The consultation and response to residents concerns on the Traffic study and parking chaos in and around National Park has to date been less than professional.</p>
Consultation	<p>When the public is so involved, there should be some sort of referendum to decide the issue.</p> <p>If for what ever reason, private developers profit in any way by the removal of the fig's, the sitting members may as well look at their next vocation</p>

Consultation	why ask the public when the council/authoriy goes ahead anyway.
Consultation	Why ask us? you do what you want whether we like it or not. Look out!! the Elections aren't far off, then we'll have our say. GOODBYE!!!!!!
Consultation	Why should I take the trouble to try to assist when Newcastle Voice ignores any criticism and has demonstrated repeatedly that its methods do not work.
Consultation	With highly divisive issues it would be more than useful for council to engage independent researchers, consultation without a perception of having a predetermined outcome, and stop Councillors from politicising issues and demeaning others in public and private forums. Democracy is a process not just an outcome.
Consultation	You need to involve ALL ratepayers in these type of events
Consultation	You say you communicated through Newcastle Voice and other media, but I heard absolutely nothing from Council. I said NV would be very useful, but only if you use it. If you used it and I didn't get it, then there is a problem in how you are using it.

Subject Category	Q6 open-ended response
Communication	"Misinformation" was coming from both sides of the argument and the council was divided. If council is divided no amount of information will be accepted without cynicism. To gain support the council need to be seen to respect rate payers and their needs and not to be stubborn.
Communication	* Social media
Communication	<p>1 As TV seems to be the media everyone is connected with, that is the first choice for giving information</p> <p>2 Letterbox drop or letter, simply and clearly outlined</p> <p>3 Free newspaper, again clearly outlined. Remember, most readers read at the age of 12 yrs</p>
Communication	a weekly newsletter in the Herald would inform everyone what is happening
Communication	ABC local radio and NBN news are at this point in my life my main sources of local news that I can trust. I don't always have time to read things on the computer or in the mail.
Communication	Actual factual information needs to be made public e.g the results of the independent surveys, and the future plans for the area. oO much speculation and misinformation in the media and the constant fighting of council has been a huge problem
Communication	Advertise Saturday NewcastleHerald, be interviewed NBN 6:00pm nightly news and local radio stations. Council staff dealing with Community should be properly qualified to do their job. For example; the Council staff involved with traffic issues do not seem to have appropriate qualifications to deal with problems eg, Hamilton SouthTraffic Plan
Communication	all methods suggested would be very useful - however the public needs to be aware and informed of where and when to find information
Communication	All the information I had was obtained from media (newspapers, radio, TV). Do not rely on Council information as, particularly in this case, Council's approach did not seem to be an open and objective
Communication	Anything that comes from the council itself, in my opinion, must be viewed as having the potential for bias. As such, I would be seeking info from a variety of sources. However, I like to be informed in a variety of contexts and appreciate paper saving, so e-news is good.
Communication	As a full-time worker it is difficult attend council meetings and know what decisions are being made. Making available a summary of the minutes of council meetings + decisions made would be good.
Communication	As a rate payer I consider being informed on any council decision regarding Newcastle City Council boundary
Communication	As a resident more facts and figures at an earlier stage of the significant event (and repeated if necessary) rather than towards the final stages ie the full page advert in the herald of the formal responses to SOF claims and facts about the issues was very helpful.

Communication	be truthful! I don't trust council publications/propaganda. Council had an agenda known only to itself. Figs were slaughtered because a bunch of men had to demonstrate that their word was law - how dare anyone question them. Newcastle is so patriarchal and just another characterless cookie cutter sydney suburb. despicable
Communication	Better use of social media
Communication	By direct e-mail or Newcastle voice. I get these every day and have the time to read and digest the information
Communication	communicate via social media. i think in this case - council had no intention to do community consultation - just wanted to get the trees down so they could redevelop the area (plans which we were asked to comment on through newcastle voice). the whole thing is an absolute disgrace.
Communication	Communications dependant on quality of information provided. In figs case could not trust Officer distributed propaganda Even letters from GM "challenge the truth" This voice survey is unlikely to give a real result. Survey is not transparent as it does not allow you to keep a copy of your response.
Communication	content with the approaches already in use
Communication	Council always appeared to be lagging behind those opposing tree replacement in getting its message out to ratepayers. If I had not had a discussion with a Councillor I dont think that I would have known the issue with the utility service conduits in that block of Laman Street!
Communication	Council and our elected Councillors need to better communicate the positives and long term community gains of such projects rather than dropping the ball and therefore being relegated to providing reactive responses to a mostly misinformed argument. "Promote what is to be gained rather than what is to be lost".
Communication	Council communicate very well
Communication	Council didn't invest enough time or money into communicating an accurate message to the community. The unreliable media sources in Newcastle don't present the whole story so an investment needs to be made into paid messaging.
Communication	Council generated information is only useful when it is factual and unbiased - not merely designed to promote the council- and when it addresses the questions raised and is not merely political speak.
Communication	Council need to employ professional marketing companies to sell such decision to the general public. All incorrect statements made to the media require immediate replies to prevent the "snowball" effect. Also it is most unproductive when the Mayor actively campaigns against the decisions made by Council.
Communication	Council should do more to proactively promote positive contributions they are making to the community. The Councillors should not listen to minority groups and waste public moneys on petty causes.

Communication	<p>Councils website seems intent on avoiding difficult or contentious issues fail to recognize contentious issues. Lack of feedback from surveys gives perception of a "black hole". Face to face meetings at least engage community.</p> <p>Should accept that some issues will create debate and therefore be prepared to accept criticism</p>
Communication	<p>Debate re figs clouded+++ by media reporting giving misinformation and red herrings equal or even top billing over the facts. Am v. concerned re increasingly personal attacks and subsequent denials which occurred as part of this issue. Becoming a challenge to maintain a balanced debate about any issue these days.</p>
Communication	<p>democracy be realised through many-to-many communication. The internet is evolving efficient ways to separate signal from noise.</p> <p>Why did you close newcastlevoice2. bangthetable is the right future vision of governance.</p> <p>long version: http://pastebin.com/raw.php?i=yyqV5UGM</p>
Communication	<p>direct contact: mail or via internet, email being the best</p>
Communication	<p>Don't allow a void to develop, be pro active from the start & get the information out as quickly as possible via social media sites.</p>
Communication	<p>don't let issues go too far before they are brought to the attention of the community</p>
Communication	<p>Don't restrict yourself to local news outlets as some of us rarely watch/read them, especially tv news.</p>
Communication	<p>Easier pathway through the council website, and e-notes/mails</p>
Communication	<p>Electronic communication means best for us as our main residence is not in Newcastle. We do not receive mail and or local papers, comment papers, flyers etc</p>
Communication	<p>Email is my preferred method of receiving and sending information.</p>
Communication	<p>email news to rate payers</p>
Communication	<p>Email newsletters are good. I'm just very disappointed that a large chunk of Newcastle clearly reads the Newcastle Herald and forms their opinion from entirely biased reporting. I didn't realise I belonged to a city with such a high proportion of stupid people!</p>
Communication	<p>Emails</p>
Communication	<p>Ensure articles in newspapers, etc have prominent headings and not buried in the back pages.</p>
Communication	<p>Ensure communication through letters/emails are addressed to residents before each project planning process commences in their suburb.</p>
Communication	<p>Every time an item is added to the council web site an email is sent to all subscribers making them aware of the new issues listed. Like most people I do not go onto the council web site just in case there is some new information.</p>
Communication	<p>Find a way to prevent people who are not NCC ratepayers from hijacking council meetings. This time should be quarantined for ratepayer issues.</p> <p>Set up a NCC facebook page.</p> <p>Have ward forums and council meetings on Saturdays or later in the evenings.</p>

Communication	Firstly, general information available in Newcastle Voice, newspapers, radio, rates notices etc keeping people up to date on potential or current issues. Secondly, for people who feel passionately about an issue more detailed information on websites, brochures requested from council and a forum for discussion of issues.
Communication	For major issues, letters explaining Council's reasons to each rate payer
Communication	For me, electronic media works best, along with info in council rates notices. Of all council's comms devices, I find Newcastle Voice to be the most informative and useful.
Communication	frustrated re figs, lack of communication, council was not clear about the fig assessment, did not see a quick and balanced summary and council should provide different points of view and sources. the figs should not have been chopped they were no more of a risk than many other trees
Communication	general manager should be in charge of news items--not all the different so called managers of different departments domiciled in the roundhouse!!!
Communication	genuine community consultation needs to happen BEFORE significant decisions (such as cutting down fig trees) are made by the executive/un-elected arm of Council, not AFTERWARDS. two-way discussions, such as ward & public forums, are more effective for consultation than one-way information dissemination from Council.
Communication	Getting to each house hold without extra cost such as rate notices would ensure that everyone is informed. The truth and both sides of arguments need to be presented fairly.
Communication	Have not noticed much information from Council though certainly have heard lots of unofficial news re the figs on 1233. If i had known of a meeting re this matter I would have attended. we did not receive any details via post/newletter.
Communication	Have senior management heed the advice of your qualified communications professionals, EG 1: Lord Mayor being the 'face' for the Council's media re figs since October: it needed to be the GM. EG 2: this survey at this time beggars belief!!
Communication	Highlight issues early via local radio & newspaper. Provide detailed information on council website in a way that is easily searchable. Facebook /twitter etc could link to this part of council website. Emails and newsletters just get drowned in the flood of these coming in every day.
Communication	Honest communication TV Newspapers to ratepayers, tell us what is really happening and make the Council respect ratepayers comments and be honest with plans for our city.
Communication	Honesty and Transparency, not after the event, Listen to residents, Council officers honest with councillors. Web site must be searchable. HONESTY main thing for residents rate payers.
Communication	Honesty by council staff and honest not biased reporting by council staff who have previously shown they have their own agendas and consisantly leak information to their own ends
Communication	How can I trust any methods of Council's communication when I believe the council has been dishonest? This issue has been an absolute fiasco and has shown Council's absolute disrespect for the community. I am ashamed of Newcastle and NCC.

Communication	<p>I am afraid most of what council put forth was misinformation.</p> <p>I am ashamed of the way council conducted themselves in this affair using a campaign of fear and misinformation.</p> <p>Shame on all involved.</p> <p>It has set a sad precedent for Newcastle.</p>
Communication	<p>i am not sure this correct or proper but i would like to hear more from the general manager of the council on what he/her are trying to achieve for our city</p>
Communication	<p>I believe enough was done in the way of consultation & flyers and info with rate notices may help NCC get its message out net of any pro/con media bias but little else needs to be done as long as public input is sought before the final decision.</p>
Communication	<p>I can't remember how, but managed to see some plans for the Civic Precinct (twitter?) which looked great and should have been more widely available on facebook for people to see. Might have helped people to understand "why".</p>
Communication	<p>I didn't feel that the media was providing a balanced view on the issue. In future I would prefer to have the facts presented in the paper just as it has been recently by Council taking out a full page ad informing the community what is happening and why.</p>
Communication	<p>I do not follow news, and usually rely on family/friends/colleagues and work for information. Direct contact (flyers) would be most useful to me, or public notices at the library. Some communication is better than none.</p>
Communication	<p>I do not wish to be negative, but I do not recall that any information about the figs saga was communicated to me. My only recollection is news reports and reports in Star. A stronger council spokesperson media presence and faster handling of expertise reports would have been desirable.</p>
Communication	<p>I don't access a lot of the media listed in the questions so I cannot answer thoroughly. I am a keen Facebook user and find this a very effective way to get messages across.</p>
Communication	<p>I don't receive e-newsletters or Council news it might help if I did.</p>
Communication	<p>I don't watch local news and rarely watch commercial TV so miss news because of it.</p> <p>council news raises more questions then it answers.</p> <p>website is not user friendly & often only has basic information.</p> <p>forum meetings are too spaced out, a long time before the next one comes around.</p>
Communication	<p>I find local radio bias & bogan. Don't use them</p>
Communication	<p>I find that N'cstle Voice does engage with me well regarding the issues chosen. My problem is that there is not enough signage in area e.g. shopping centres, railway stations, as well as Libraries, and Ccl Chambers, in regard to the future develop of Newcastle.</p>
Communication	<p>I found information from council conflicting, confusing, and belated. I think clear billboards at the sites of future developments would be most useful.</p>
Communication	<p>I get a lot of infomation from signs at the library so more compleate infomation on those would be good, or flyers/brochers available there with infomation and directing you to a webpage would be good.</p>

Communication	<p>I know it's impossible, but having a single representative from Council as spokesperson on significant issues is the only way to ensure consistency of message.</p> <p>This would normally be the Chair/CEO. Unfortunately you had the administration and political arm at loggerheads during this debate. Hence the shemozzle we all witnessed!</p>
Communication	<p>I live in Kahibah and answers to earlier questions should be viewed in that light.</p> <p>I consider Newcastle Voice a very good way to keep people informed and provide feedback with the Council website being used to provide up-to-date information and data.</p>
Communication	<p>I'm happy with Council's communication on most issues and on the fig trees in particular.</p>
Communication	<p>I own a house in Newcastle and pay rates, however, I don't live in Newcastle so have received almost no information regarding this issue. The only information is that received via the Newcastle Herald website.</p>
Communication	<p>I personally get most of my info from ABC 1233 - I find them the most knowledgeable and informative about all things local.</p>
Communication	<p>I prefer the communication that arrives in the mail. If I am too busy to read it at the time I will hold onto it and read it when I can, whereas I tend to delete the emails if I don't have time to read it at the time.</p>
Communication	<p>I really don't know if what was delivered in media was accurate. If the agenda to remove the trees was purely OH&S or for other works in relation to the Art Gallery. If it was for future works in relation to the Art Gallery then all media used was pointless.</p>
Communication	<p>I saw no information around in my day-to-day life that was from the council in regards to the figs.</p> <p>The only information I came upon was in the Newcastle Herald, usually in opinion form not factual, and from word of mouth.</p>
Communication	<p>I still take notice of letters, but they need to be addressed to me, eg rates notices, not just junk mail. This then prompts me to find out more from other sources, eg website.</p>
Communication	<p>I think council has provided adequate information and it is up to people to avail themselves of that information, not use word of mouth as being a 'reliable' source. Many people get it wrong!</p>
Communication	<p>I think more media input from the General Manager would be very useful. Comments from the Mayor or councillors are linked to their political leanings. The community would benefit from the General Manager talking directly to our community. The Fig tree situation was disturbing and wasteful.</p>
Communication	<p>I think the council did not handle the Laman Street Fig issue well at all and feel that word of mouth and media gave more information than the council itself.</p>
Communication	<p>I think the methods already used are varied and widely available.</p>
Communication	<p>I think via the website is the most useful way for me personally. I am not on Facebook, but the computer is the easiest form of communication. An iPhone app would be one better. I now get most of my information on the go through my smart phone.</p>

Communication	I think what I'd find useful would be independent articles outlining the main issues, pro and con, regardless of who supports what. Publish them in The Herald, get them picked up by NBN, and make background details available on-line (also perhaps in printed form for those without computers).
Communication	I would find radio/television news/Newcastle Voice/letterbox flyers/notices would better engage someone like myself and my husband. Once alerted we would then probably seek further information via some of the other communication strategies.
Communication	I would prefer information via email, council website or social websites. With young children it can be difficult to hear/read local media and often it isn't useful information anyway (as it can be biased and not based on the facts)
Communication	If Council passes a recommendation it should then speak with ONE voice. Using local radio or free newspapers to spread the official word, rather than opinion pieces, would do us all good!
Communication	If Council used each of these methods/mediums to advise which one is the source for all updates there would be more awareness
Communication	If it is significant issue, letterbox drop all households so renters can get info too.
Communication	If it is to be informed on the radio? It would be better if it was communicated through all local and popular radio stations as the whole community (even younger adults) can be informed of improvements that involves the city and be part of a changing society.
Communication	If only the press would stop sensationalising every small issue... wishful thinking. This however wasn't helped at all by having the Lord Mayor inciting the angry mob to continue their vitriol over a non-issue. Why give these vocal self interest groups any coverage? There are bigger issues to discuss.
Communication	If the decision is justified - just get on with the job. Don't waste money pandering to minority groups. A full explanation of the reasons for the project by the General Manager in the local media would be sufficient in most cases.
Communication	If you have an e-newsletter, how do people know to get on the mailing list? For it to work, it needs to be publicised.
Communication	Imo hearsay, lies, newspaper stories and official messages by sof and ncc all blurred into a big mess However it was council re-voting on the issue that made council appear weak and created the biggest problems
Communication	include with rates notice
Communication	Information should come directly from the GM to keep a consistent and easily understandable message.
Communication	Information through Voice with a link to NCC website- specific page would be useful as that is the network I'm already involved in but the website on its own is not easy to navigate to find specific information.
Communication	It doesn't matter how much information is sent out if the process used by Council is wrong. There is no doubt that council has sanitised and manipulated information that it has brought forward. If in the future Council wants to regain its credibility it has to be truthful and open.

Communication	It doesn't matter what form of communications council uses. I don't trust anything the council has said on this issue. I have the strong impression that the administration has an agenda for the art gallery and Laman Street which it has not disclosed to the public or even the councillors.
Communication	It was extremely disappointing that the accurate and correct information was not readily available. Residents felt they were losing a beautiful and significant asset, with nothing to gain. The concept plan to replant and beautify was not properly disclosed until the last minute, and lost in all the bickering.
Communication	It's very difficult to counteract emotional/ simplistic appeals like "Save Our Trees" where real issues are complex and technical. It's essential that simple slogans such as "Make Laman St. Beautiful and Safe for Our Children" are promulgated very early in debates, particularly through local radio, TV and newspapers.
Communication	I've only just signed up to Newcastle Voice so previously wasn't getting any email communication at all. This is probably the best way to engage me, I rarely watch TV or go to council venues. I hear alot on 1233 but that is media reporting not the council.
Communication	Letters or emails sent directly to rate payers
Communication	Listen to the people. NCC could have spent a fortune communicating with the community and it would not have made any difference. Communication is a 2 way street and council need to listen to everyday people, not developers or councillors with personal agendas. The process was neither transparent or competent.
Communication	Local coverage in newspaper/radio/tv news and libraries (as i visit libraries once a week on average)
Communication	Local newsletter to residents of area likely to be most affected by changes / proposals with opportunity for response.
Communication	Local TV news is a great source of information to me. I dont aalways read the local papers
Communication	Maintain a distinct & clear message, react to specific issues or challenges
Communication	More council views in the paper(both star and Herald)
Communication	More encouragement to be a part of Newcastle Voice and greater presence in online social networking
Communication	More information from Council in the newspaper and radio rather than from community groups. More adds and signs in places people will read them. Need to respond to claims from the pubilc/media
Communication	More information in the local paper from the very beginning with evidence provided for the decision, a time frame for consultation, reasons for the decision and post decision visions and plans.
Communication	More public consultation and actually listening to the results. It should be accessible and notice should be paid to the results. It is no good consulting/communicating if the communication is only going one way. Poor form NCC
Communication	Most information from council was about spin, after the event. There was no consultation prior to the decision that the figs had to go. My main issue was the lack of process, and hidden agenda from council
Communication	most of the council news was not accessed by me and I relied mainly on information from the media and informed sources from the council

Communication	Most of what was conveyed to me, (the general public), about the figs episode was through the TV and news papers. That only conveyed the sensationalism of the episode. There was very little ACTUAL information from the NCC.
Communication	Most people in my age group rely on the internet or tv for news
Communication	My husband (local architect) was involved in forum with Council staff who explained the reasons for removal- rational, convincing & compelling. Disappointed these arguments were not effectively conveyed to the wider community, and SOF group. Impressed with recent Council staff interviews on ABC radio- hope this continues.
Communication	My initial information comes from *radio, heard while driving or engaged in other activities around home, and *listening to TV news. then followed up on other mediums when time permits as these all require my undivided attention
Communication	My main sources of information are, in rough order from most significant: Email, Sydney Morning Herald, ABC Local Radio, ABC News/features/panel discussions, NBN News/features
Communication	Need to connect with the younger generation more. More Social Media communication that sort of thing. Younger generation don't go to ward meetings etc. but are concerned about issues affecting our city. thanks for surveying.
Communication	Newcastle Voice is probably the best site for these matters in their newsletters
Communication	Newspapers are by far the most efficient means of communication but Council needs to ensure the media are reporting current info and factual info. Very rarely would anyone check the websites/facebook etc on a regular basis to get updates. PS . You should have left the figs alone.
Communication	Newspaper ads, flyers, brochures, email. Anything that comes direct to the people without all the bullshit emotional spin of "journalism". As long as the process is transparent, thorough, and balanced, rational people will accept it. The figs (and the rail) sagas are just embarrassing to Newcastle
Communication	Newspaper is the best
Communication	Newspapers and radio add their opinions on articles written. May need to consider paid ads. Many people do not receive the 'free' newspapers. Specific info brochures are expensive to deliver when it may not interest all. email/web page updates allow timely info. Meetings will only attract the very keen.
Communication	Notices in with our rates are a great idea. I find radio especially JJJ to inform the younger generation would be a great tool for the council.
Communication	Objective news reports on TV and local newspapers. Specific on line information and comment section when an issue arises. Councillors to LISTEN to rate payers and engage in meaningful dialogue.
Communication	Online is far more useful than on-site displays. Newcastle Herald is useful too purely because of its vast readership.

Communication	Only saw one-way commentation in the papers. Very pro-figs. Where was Council's voice? Issues with the media hyping the situation up and then got lost in what was actually being decided upon - the trees, the cost, or a political process??
Communication	Organise public consultation meetings and on-line response facilities. Advertise same in local press, by email or council flyers.
Communication	People likely to be interested in council affairs are more likely to be listening to 2NUR rather than 2HD. Similarly with local TV. I've said most of my information re. Laman St, came from NBN. Pure luck as I rarely watch commercial TV.
Communication	<p>People need to be aware of communications such as e-letters. I was unsure where to get information so had to rely on TV and radio reports.</p> <p>Most People didn't care if the figs were kept or cut down but were angry with the money wasted while council dithered.</p>
Communication	People with young family in most cases are not able to attend meetings or have the time/ or think to troll through websites looking for latest news. Issues raised in newspapers/tv could be done so briefly and if interested, people can go to websites/ forums etc.
Communication	Perhaps the Council should have published the facts for the decision for cutting down the trees in very simple terms so that every one could examine the issue with objectivity.
Communication	Please consider SMS
Communication	Please state the correct matter of affairs at all times. Be transparent and provide factual reports on the situation if the media is not going to report the full story due to wanting to increase their sales. Use alternatives to just one newspaper.
Communication	<p>Please keep in mind that many people do not receive free newspapers or flyers due to "no junk mail" and 'no free papers' signage on letterboxes.</p> <p>local radio, local TV, email and social media would be preferred methods of communication.</p> <p>decisions must be more timely than seen in past.</p>
Communication	Radio and television are the most useful ways for me to get the information as we don't often get the free paper and are NOT regular purchasers of the Newcastle Herald.
Communication	Regarding figs, I didn't at any stage get a clear understanding of the arguments for and against their removal
Communication	Regardless of the medium to convey information, the council officers should be more transparent in their comments and speak truthfully.
Communication	Regular public meetings with GM, council administration and councillors ie. once a month. There was much mis-information about this issue and no opportunity for NCC to explain or residents questions. A matter as decisive as this can't be handled by newsletters it has to be in an open forum.
Communication	Relatively low cost, yet effective methods of community engagement should be the primary means of discussing/notifying rate payers of key issues.
Communication	Remember that not all rate payers and stakeholders live in the Newcastle LGA and they require broader coverage than the council's vision is obviously capable of delivering.

Communication	Set out the arguments consistently and across as many platforms as possible. THEN ACT PROMPTLY. The problem with the fig issue was that it was left to fester for months if not years. If you decide something stick to it.
Communication	Sometimes the quality of the content is more important than the delivery mechanism for communications.
Communication	Suggest letter box or email communication with community members who do not always read The Herald or rely on biased reporting. I would have like better information about road closures and access/closure to library/art gallery during the road closures.
Communication	Tell the truth in newspaper advertisements instead of deceitful misinformation. Employ managers that have reasonable background in and respect for local government. No confidential meetings or briefings except those allowed for under them LG Act. Meetings to be held in the chamber. No more unofficial private meetings.
Communication	The biggest issue was the quality of the information rather than the way the information was transmitted. There were very strong feeling involved and I did not feel I could trust the information provided by either side of the debate.
Communication	The communication was fine but I was a bit confused by the message; it was inconsistent. I still don't feel like I really know the "real story". Some things just need a decision made and actions carried out, without debate. Thanks for getting on with it!
Communication	The council has a responsibility to communicate and provide opportunities for feedback from the general community, in a variety of formats, and especially to canvass the views of those who do not hold polarised opinions that tend to get all the publicity.
Communication	The Council needs to be more pro-active with explaining to rate payers what is happening and what will occur instead of having a distorted one sided opinion being presented by in this case the SOF group.
Communication	The figs had outlived their usefulness & had to go. The issue became a significant community debate because safety was blamed for their demise and media blew it up into an emotive problem.
Communication	The general manager should be at the forefront of any communication on significant issues. Also if there is only one option - ie removing the trees then council shouldn't undertake any consultation.
Communication	the Herald, TV and radio are the best means of communication. there needs to be more upfront notifications and dialogue of what is proposed and what is going to happen. Not retrospective as it often is.
Communication	The issue is the quality of the communication not the mediums used by council. It was not transparent, we were feed dribble. The simple question most people want answered is why were those figs so dangerous compared to all the other figs overhanging roads, houses and schools in the area.
Communication	The mayor is off with the faries so dont use him. I am not one for attending meetings so anything electronic is good.

Communication	The method of communication is not the issue. It's the fact that council never clearly or convincingly articulated the argument for removing the trees. The nature of the 'danger' was never really explained. Council treated the community like idiots. No communication strategy will fix that
Communication	The necessary information about the trees was available to the community. There were those that chose not to listen. Hard to counteract this. Perhaps NCC could have been more proactive, in hindsight. Engage with lobby groups in a way that appeals to their ideology - easier said than done.
Communication	The only information we received was from the press and radio. The information from the council and could not be trusted and was bias. The most efficient form of communications would be to do press conference with the local media.
Communication	The options for some answers in this survey were not appropriate. Your focus on communication seems to be one way, the Council telling us what they have decided, rather than 2 way communication.
Communication	The public were continually bombarded with sensationalist, inaccurate rubbish by local media. We need a means of holding a plebiscite where the rational citizens can vote on such issues.
Communication	The recent full page explanation in the paper was good and should have been out straight away instead of wasting our money. What a joke.
Communication	The survey focus should be about the content of the communication not the tools used. The communications were disjointed, lacked integrity, honesty and transparency and were inconsistent given the differing views between Council and councilors. Get the information right and the communication method will be less of an issue.
Communication	The Voice would be the best medium for me as an owner living out of the area. I am probably not a good candidate for this survey due to the fact that I don't live in an area relevant to local newspaper, tv, billboard advertising etc for NCC.
Communication	The wider community lacked a lot of facts regarding the figs and the reasons behind the removal. This resulted in poorly informed opinions based on a vocal minority group's emotional rantings. The community needed more fact based info in the media to balance the hype and sensationalism.
Communication	There needs to be people fronting people when emotive issues like the figs are involved. Whatever the truth is, the Council has walked away damaged by this event as people do not feel as if they were engaged.
Communication	This fig issue was blown completely out of proportion. There are more important issues to deal with! More surveys such as Newcastle Voice are needed to provide evidence for community support or lack thereof for decisions such as these. The rail line is another issue in need of a solution.
Communication	Transparency of actions (better communication of reasons why things are done) upfront rather than playing "catch-up". More positive reporting of actions through radio, newspapers. Council to act on decisions and not be so susceptible to minority groups. Lord Mayor to support Council decisions. SHOW LEADERSHIP

Communication	Try to ignore local news media since I find it is too biased towards certain elements of a vocal community which does not represent views held by the silent (unfortunately) majority.
Communication	tv and newspapers are the most informative for those of us who reside outside the council area but are still very concerned with whats going on in town.
Communication	TV campaign Radio talkback Billboards/signage at the site
Communication	Usage of Social Media isn't really apply to issues like this - more appropriate is mass media and direct to consumer (flyers with rate notices, letterbox drops etc). Information should be given (in multiple forums), not simply available if sought, if PR disasters like this are to be managed appropriately.
Communication	Use of direct email letters and via The Voice will attract most attention.
Communication	use social media and internet as much as possible to engage young to middle aged people. In addition to traditional means.
Communication	Use the website and the voice, and those who want to know what's going on will. Flyers are useless, when I occasionally read the paper, I don't read any adds or editorials. Radio, TV and Internet are my sources of news & education
Communication	Various Radio interviews with elected Councilors that wish to positively inform and educate the public of the reasons for the decisions, not people who wish to point score. eg, the Lord Mayor appears indecisive in most interviews i have heard.
Communication	Vicious and heartfelt campaign whipped up by the Herald everyday. Mixed messages re LM v GM. Best communication at the end when the GM stood up and fired back about the accusations (online)NCC should now release photos of rotten tree roots and internal tree damage. Good luck
Communication	What use has Newcastle Voice been? Better use of news papers.
Communication	When "controversial" issues come before council, would suggest full details be disclosed on council's website and people be advised accordingly through all forms of media so they can be informed "directly" of reasons or actions behind council's decisions.
Communication	When council is discussing significant re-zoning and 'renewal corridors' that are major changes to suburbs, the plans should be exhibited for longer periods and all rate payers in the suburb should be notified via their rates notices
Communication	Where there is a conflict between the council and the community on an issue, there needs to be a specific list of the public criticisms somewhere and council's response, so that the broader community can evaluate the criticisms objectively.
Communication	Whilst the majority of community members don't, can't or won't attend Council meetings, it would be extremely beneficial (and transparent) for Council meetings to be podcast ... allowing the community first hand access to decisions as they are made.
Communication	You should look at what's useful for the majority, not the "interested" minority doing these surveys. If decisions made and processes carried out by Newcastle Council didn't always defy logic, they wouldn't need to communicate so-much. In the case of Laman st the problem isn't lack of communication, it's the glaringly obvious ulterior motives and feeble excuses for not taking the correct action. If U wanted real opinions why limit it to 50 words?

Appendix V – Correspondence Received

- “I was unable to express myself in less than 50 words, so I have sent my comment to the NCC email address and copied in the Newcastle Herald.”

Sent: Saturday, 4 February 2012 8:47:35 PM
To: Official Mail
Subject: newcastle voice feedback - laman st fig survey

Dear Newcastle Voice (NV),

Today I tried to complete the NV survey on the Laman St figs, it was a very frustrating experience.

The tick the box rating style survey seemed structured to not enable real feedback as there were only very limited choices.

Then when I wanted to write extra comments, I was only given 50 words. Given the public profile and outrage of this issue, I would think Newcastle Voice and NCC would be open to hearing widespread public feedback on their communication style and means – and real suggestions for improvement. With only 50 words and the type of questions asked - the structure of the survey didn't enable this to occur.

I am so disappointed in NV and NCC for this whole issue. The community engagement has been about 'telling the public', not listening, or two-way dialogue. It makes a farce out of the 'community engagement' title. And the survey made me feel angry that the Council was continuing along the same path, asking a few questions, ticking a few boxes and labelling it as 'consultation'

Very, very disappointed, and angry



Sent: Wednesday, 15 February 2012 9:13:34 AM
To: Official Mail
Subject: Please forward my comment to Newcastle Voice

Hello,

I hope you can forward my comment to those members of staff responsible for the administration of Newcastle Voice. Apparently they don't want to know what I really think unless I can express myself in fifty words or less.

Below is the text of my full comment that I was unable to include in the survey about the Council's Communication Strategy about the Laman Street figs.

Let's me make this clear. I am not a member of Save our Figs and wasn't particularly interested in their public demonstrations. However, I think the fiasco over the figs became quite independent of whether the figs posed a public safety threat or not. The management of the whole process was terrible - and that lies very much with the Council. Regardless of how various people and groups who came forward from the community presented themselves, the council's communication, the behaviour of our elected officials, all showed lack of respect for community. The tone from the outset was adversarial and that made me lose any interest in this forum. Personally, although sad to see the figs go, if provided proof to my satisfaction that there was a need for them to be removed, I would have supported the removal of the figs. It was the stupid waste of money, the bullying, nasty comments from some elected members of council and the unwillingness to compromise about the independent assessment that disgusted me and made me lose faith that the original decision was for the community's best interest. I feel that the council's communication strategy was about justifying the decision and not engaging in an honest dialogue with the community. I no longer believe that this forum (Newcastle Voice) is an honest attempt to gain insight from and consult with the community. I feel that Newcastle Voice is nothing more than a PR exercise in appearances to make it look like the council gives a shit when it clearly doesn't. I have no interest in this forum anymore.

I really wish it was law that our elected representative could be charged for the money they waste on proving their petty points and on whose ego's are biggest. I am wondering if it would be cheaper for the public if we paid for penis enlargement surgery and viagra for some of the male members of council. Pun intended.

PS I am copying this to the Newcastle Herald.

Laman Street Engagement Processes



Appendix H - Full Page Ad Newcastle Herald 25/01/12

25 January 2012



PO Box 499, Newcastle
NSW 2300 Australia
Phone 02 4074 2000
Facsimile 02 4074 2222
Email mail@ncc.nsw.gov.au
www.newcastle.nsw.gov.au

To the Newcastle community

On 19 July 2011, Newcastle's elected Council resolved to remove and replace 14 Hill's figs in Laman Street "as soon as practical" because they "are likely to cause danger to traffic, property and persons in the use of Laman Street and are a traffic hazard in severe weather events."

In all Council activities, safety is the number one priority.

Council has already obtained four independent assessments by expert arborists on the Laman Street figs and they all come to the same conclusion – the trees pose a significant risk to public safety.

Council, as a public body, is proud of its openness and transparency in this matter. All relevant information (except where privileged) has been put before the Councillors and the community. The vast majority of this is available on our website.

Council has undertaken substantial investigation and analysis using both internal and external experts in arboriculture, engineering and other relevant professions. These experts have based their opinions on detailed knowledge of the site, evidence-based investigations and readily available relevant literature.

Council is very comfortable with the conclusions drawn from those reports and the decision by the majority of the democratically elected Council to remove and replace the trees.

Due to the huge body of evidence supporting the safety risk, Council's insurer Statewide Mutual will no longer cover the figs and no other insurer worldwide will provide cover.

It is worth noting that over the past seven years, nine fig trees in the Civic and Cultural Precinct have failed due to poorly developed root systems. One of these trees landed on the childcare facility in Darby Street. Further, over the past 10 years, 35 Hill's figs out of 135 in the inner city have failed or been removed as a foreseeable risk.

I want to make it clear there is no ulterior motive to remove the trees and suggestions to the contrary are completely unfounded. Council will replant figs in Laman Street and already has replacement trees ready to go. These trees are now four metres high and will be planted in specially constructed vaults to avoid the root problems that have plagued the existing figs.

Council's actions in Laman Street do not herald the wholesale removal of street trees across the city. Council undertakes a very detailed and rigorous assessment of its public trees and risk is assessed on a site-specific, case-by-case basis.

On Friday 7 October, work to remove the figs commenced but was soon brought to a stop due to significant unrest that impacted on the safety of contractors, staff, councillors and community members.

Work to remove and replace the trees will recommence soon. I acknowledge not everyone is happy with this outcome. However, I am seeking the community's understanding in this matter and ask people to recognise that the individuals involved in the removal of the trees are doing their jobs.

I would urge anyone planning to demonstrate against this decision to do so in a respectful and lawful manner to assist Council ensure the safety of all involved.

Phil Pearce
General Manager



Artist impression of figs in 15 years



The replacement figs now