

Local Biodiversity Community Survey

Prepared August 2024

A community survey was conducted in 2024 to collect community feedback on local biodiversity and urban forest in the City of Albany. The information collected will be used to guide the development of the new Local Biodiversity Strategy and a revised Urban Forest Strategy.

Key Findings

Survey Effort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The high number of responses received (693), and effort taken to complete the survey signify that Biodiversity and Urban Forest are important community issues. Responses received from 42 localities within the City of Albany, with 84% stating that they lived in urban Albany.
Biodiversity Conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 93% of respondents feel that biodiversity conservation in the City of Albany is Important to Very Important There was a strong desire amongst respondents for better protections on native bushland with the municipality.
Biodiversity Loss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 96% of respondents are concerned about biodiversity loss within the City of Albany 56.7% of respondents believe that biodiversity is Declining or Declining Significantly in the City of Albany The highest perceived threats by respondents were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearing for land subdivision Non-native animals (feral cats, foxes, rabbits) Weeds Dieback Tree canopy loss Climate change impacts Uncontrolled pet cats was also a concern for multiple respondents in the open-ended response.
Biodiversity Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The highest ranked values for biodiversity were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To preserve the biodiversity of life and ecosystem processes Living close to nature The role biodiversity plays in mitigating climate change Respondents recognise the value of native vegetation for preserving and enhancing corridors or wildlife and protecting plants, animals and other organisms. Respondents value the location of native vegetation for enhancing biodiversity values.
Actions by the City of Albany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong support for more action by the City of Albany to protect biodiversity. In general, there was slightly higher support for direct actions such as managing weeds and pests and slightly less support for changes to policy and community education. The exception was for the Council to consider nature and biodiversity in all decision making. 85% of respondents believed this was Very Important which was the highest ranked action. Concerns included:

- The council would take away rights of property owners to manage vegetation on their private property.
- Biodiversity values would take precedence over bushfire management and safety.

Background

The survey for Local Biodiversity and Urban Forest included contextual information on the purpose of the two strategies, and maps to define areas of interest. A variety of question types were used to gather a comprehensive range of insights and maximize respondent engagement. These included: multiple-choice, open-ended questions, Likert scale to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement, rating scale and matrix questions.

The survey was promoted and accessed via:

- City of Albany website – Public Comment page
- Media Release 6/3/24
- Social media posts- City of Albany Facebook and Instagram pages,
- Facebook Boosting (19 March to 12 April 2024)
- Quarter Page Advertisement -The Extra (22 March and 5 March 2024).
- City of Albany E-newsletter
- Albany Advertiser Community Pages
- Radio Advertisement -Great Southern FM (25 March to 12 April 2024)
- Hard copies were available at the North Road Administration, with one response received via this method.

The survey was open from 6 March through to 14 April 2024:

- 693 responses were received.
- 88% completion rate.
- Average time taken to complete survey – 14 minutes.

Compared to other recent City of Albany surveys, the number of responses received is to be considered as high. Only one paper copy was received, indicating that the online survey was an accessible and convenient option for respondents to have their say. The average time taken to complete the survey and the completion rate demonstrate a high level of effort and signify that Biodiversity and Urban Forest are important community issues.

Results

Demographics

84% of survey respondents stated that they lived in urban Albany and 16% did not.

Survey respondents came from 42 localities within the City of Albany, with representation from urban and rural zoned areas.

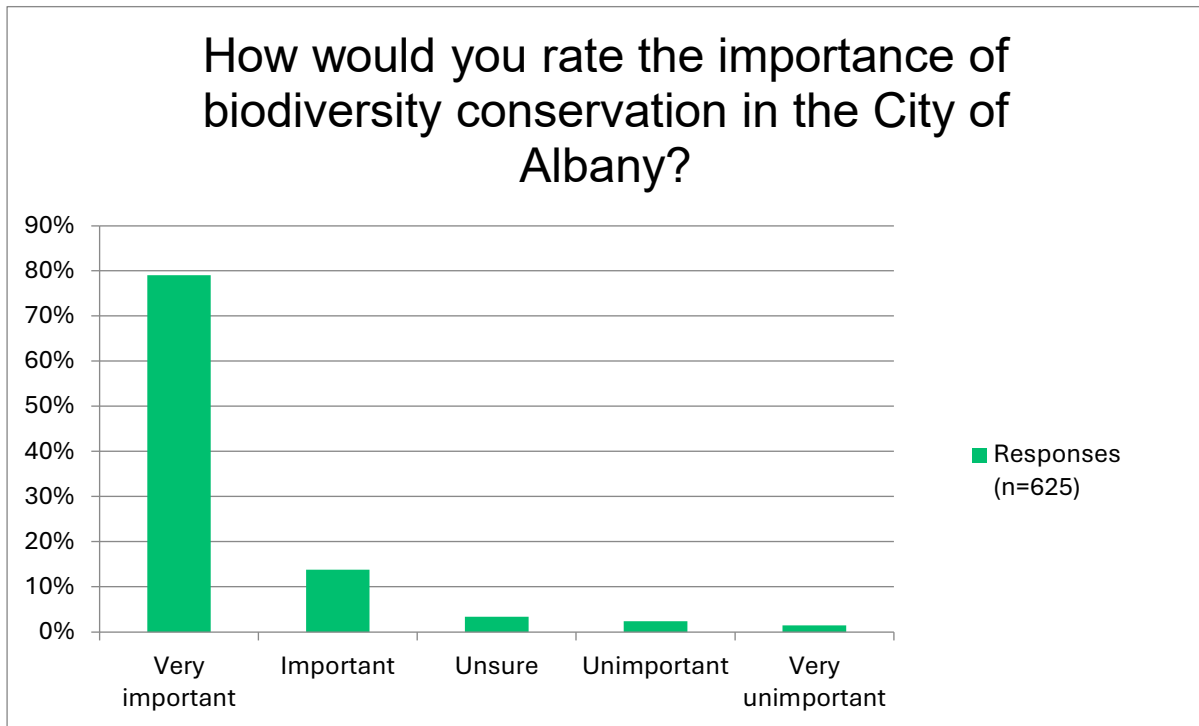
Less than 2% of survey respondents did not reside in the City of Albany.

The top 12 suburbs with the highest number of respondents are listed in the table below:

Suburb	# Respondents	% Respondents
Bayonet Head	58	8.6
Mira Mar	48	7.1
Spencer Park	43	6.3
Mt Melville	41	6
Yakamia	39	5.7
Lower King	36	5.3
Little Grove	33	4.8
Mt Clarence	32	4.7
Central/Port Albany	30	4.4
Milpara	29	4.2
McKail	27	3.9
Kalgan/Kalgan Heights	23	3.4

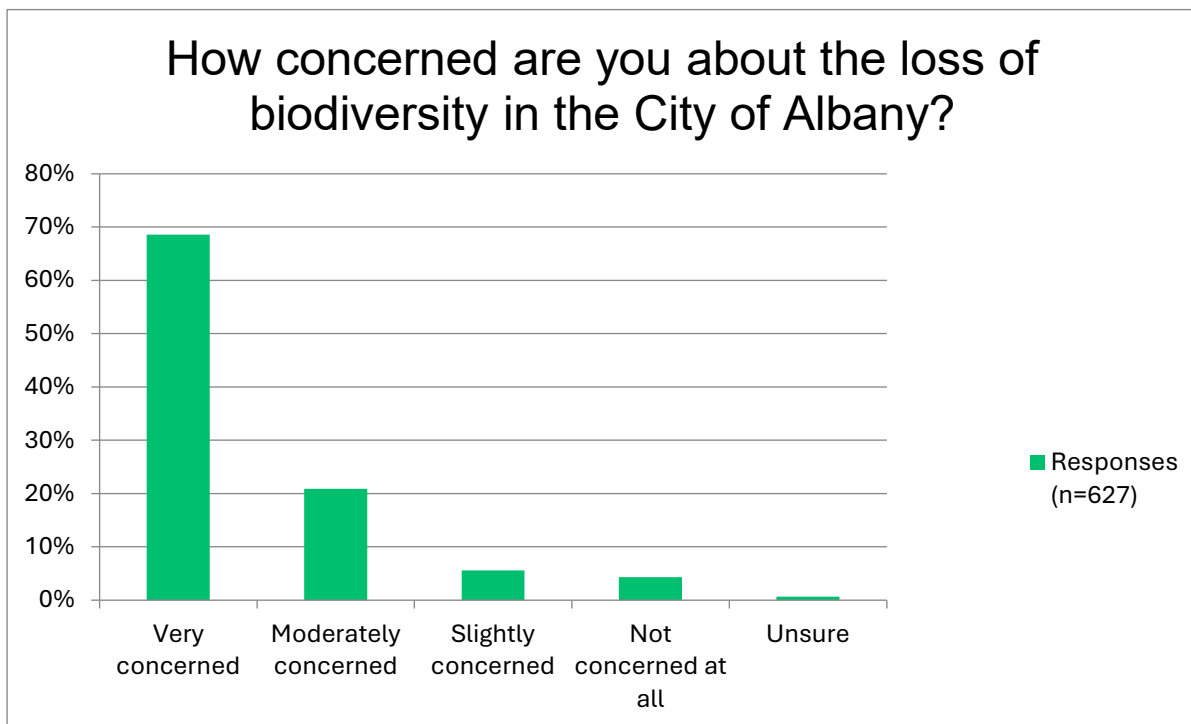
The following analysis relates to the Local Biodiversity Survey Questions (20 – 26).

20. How would you rate the importance of biodiversity conservation in the City of Albany?



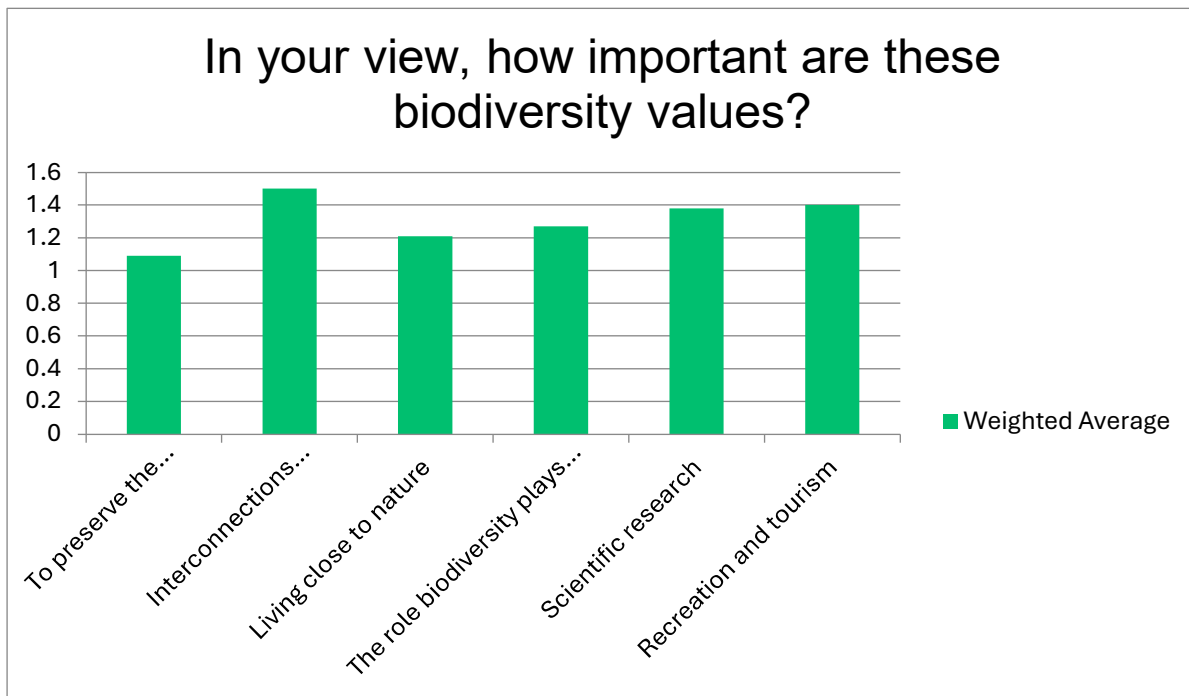
- Biodiversity conservation is a significant value for the City of Albany community
- 625 respondents described the importance of biodiversity conservation in the City of Albany as Very Important (79%), Important (14%), Unimportant (2%) or Very Unimportant (1%).

21. How concerned are you about the loss of biodiversity in the City of Albany?



- Concern over biodiversity loss in the City of Albany was high amongst respondents
- 627 respondents described their attitude toward the loss of biodiversity in the City of Albany as Very Concerned (69%), Moderately Concerned (21%), Slightly Concerned (6%) and Not Concerned at All (4%).
- Open ended responses generally reflected a strong sentiment for the importance of native fauna in the local area and the retention of native vegetation.
- There were 106 open-ended responses to this question. These have been categorised into the following subcategories:
 - Importance of native bushland:
 - Vital for carbon storage
 - Albany is a biodiversity hotspot
 - Albany is home to threatened fauna such as the Western Ringtail Possum and Black Cockatoos
 - Concerns to local biodiversity include:
 - Not enough vegetated areas to encourage fauna
 - Existing vegetation is not adequately protected by the City, and what remains is zoned for development
 - Prescribed burning is causing damage to bushland areas and should be changed to suit the Albany area
 - Roaming pet cats
 - Weeds such as Sydney Golden Wattle, Taylorina, Blackberry Pampas Grass
 - Foxes
 - Noticeable decline in variety of native fauna
 - Climate change
 - Reserves are becoming increasingly isolated which prevents fauna movement
 - Leaves from non-native deciduous trees are messy and clog drainage systems
 - Streetlights are too bright for nocturnal fauna
 - Suggestions include:
 - Maximise use of already cleared land
 - Native vegetation should not be cleared except in extreme circumstances
 - Focus on restoration and recovery strategies not just retention of bushland
 - Positive feedback on the wetland development behind ALAC. Suggest more of these.
 - Specific areas of concern:
 - Weeds at Lake Seppings
 - Protecting Yakamia Forest from clearing
 - Loss of biodiversity in King George Sound
 - Comments against biodiversity:
 - Cities are not the places to retain biodiversity
 - There are already enough trees to retain biodiversity

22. In your view, how important are these biodiversity values?

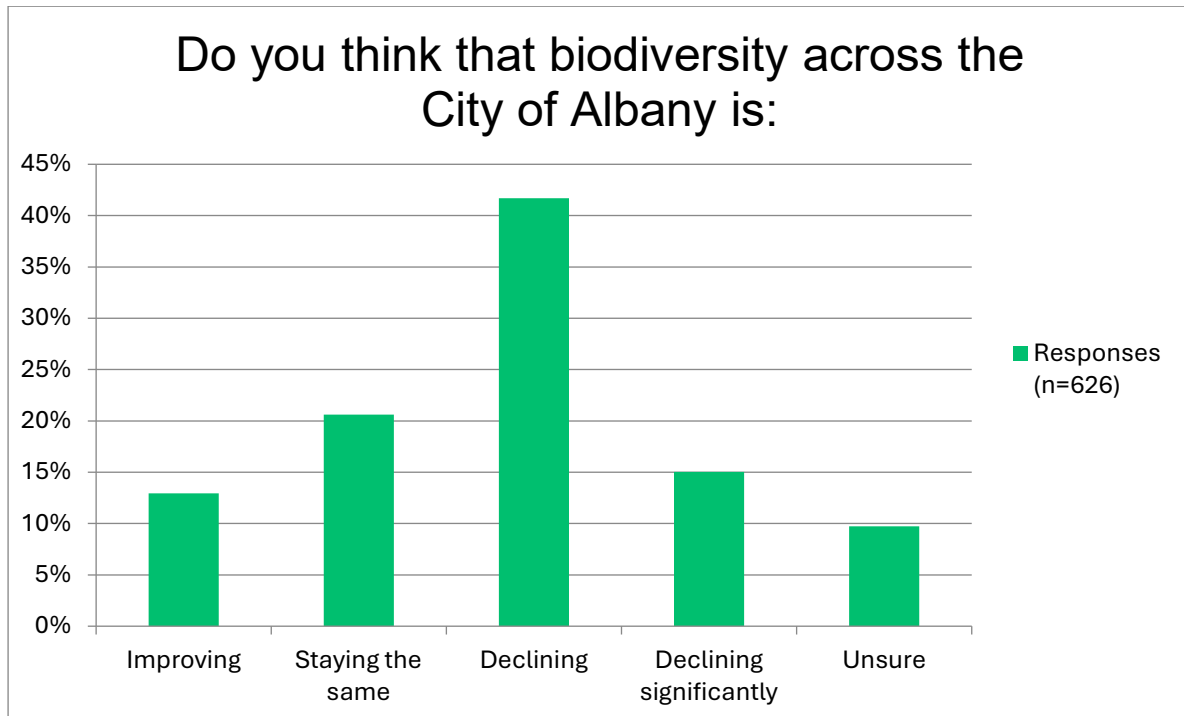


	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
To preserve the biodiversity of life and ecosystem processes	92%	7%	1%
Living close to nature	81%	17%	2%
The role biodiversity plays in mitigating climate change	79%	15%	6%
Scientific research	67%	28%	5%
Recreation and tourism	64%	31%	5%
Interconnections between biodiversity, indigenous knowledge, and cultural practices	61%	28%	11%

- Preserving life and ecosystem processes was the highest ranked value of biodiversity by survey respondents (99% said it is very or somewhat important).
- Living close to nature was also highly ranked (99% said it is very or somewhat important) indicating a strong connection between respondents and the natural environment around them. It may also show a preference for natural bushland areas rather than artificial green spaces/parks.
- 95% of respondents believe that biodiversity plays a role in mitigating climate change.
- Scientific research and recreation/tourism were also considered important values of biodiversity, although fewer respondents ranked these as Very Important.
- There were 43 open-ended responses to this question. Other values included:
 - Benefit of natural areas/biodiversity on physical and mental health
 - Spiritual/religious connections to land (not just Indigenous)
 - Several respondents wanted to clarify that tourism and recreational uses of natural areas needs to be carefully managed to protect biodiversity
 - Biodiversity is a strong tourist attraction and can help fund biodiversity projects
 - Education
 - Preserving natural areas will promote fauna biodiversity

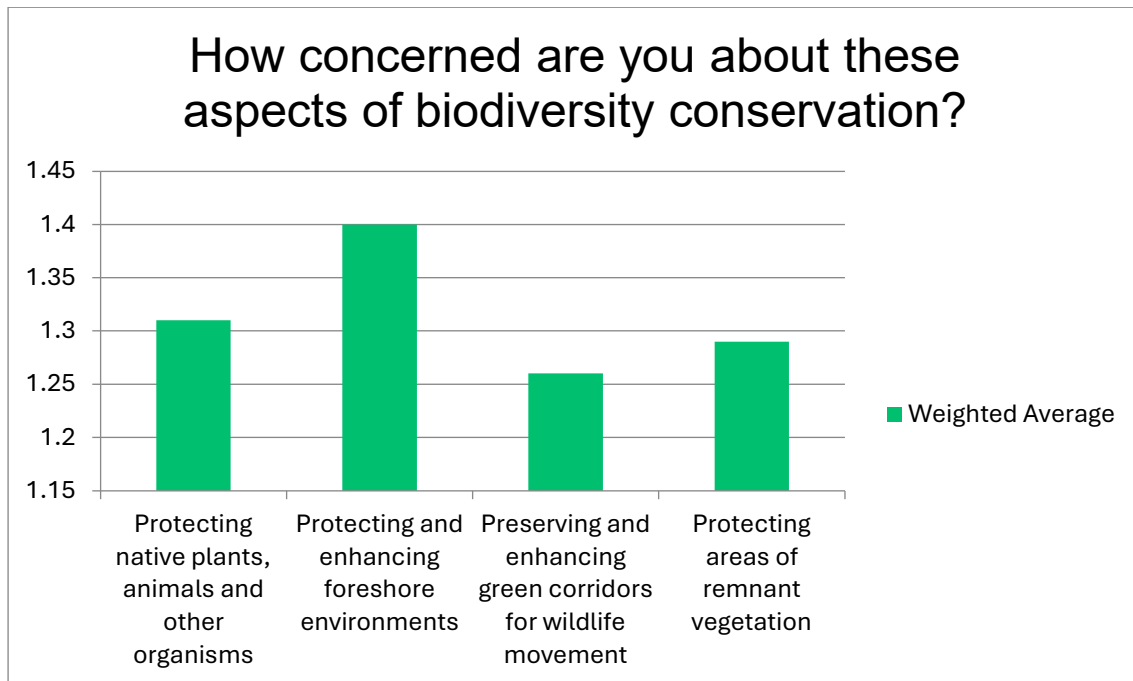
- Pollution control
- Increases oxygen
- Protection of water resources
- Albany is unique and beautiful, and we don't want it to become like suburban Perth
- While biodiversity is important, the City/planning also needs to protect properties and residents from fire, mould, shading neighbours' gardens.
- There are already enough trees

Q23: Do you think that biodiversity across the City of Albany is:



- Over half (56.7%) of respondents believe that biodiversity in the City of Albany is declining.
- 20.6% believe that biodiversity is staying the same and 12.9% believe biodiversity is improving
- There were 112 open-ended responses to this question. The primary concern was that there is too much land clearing for housing developments or subdivisions and that there need to be better protections on native bushland with the municipality.
- Other responses included:
 - Biodiversity loss due to clearing, bushfires, dieback, weeds, feral animals, climate change, mountain biking (and other recreational uses).
 - Some respondents had seen improvements – more street trees; planting at Centennial Park (replacing old trees), Lake Seppings and Middleton Road.
 - Concern that City would impose unnecessary rules on private property owners
 - More effort should be made to preserve granite outcrop habitats (e.g. Mount Wilyung (quarry) and Mount Melville (rubbish tip)
 - Concern over increasing habitat fragmentation
 - Suggestion to prioritise urban infill

24. How concerned are you about these aspects of biodiversity conservation?

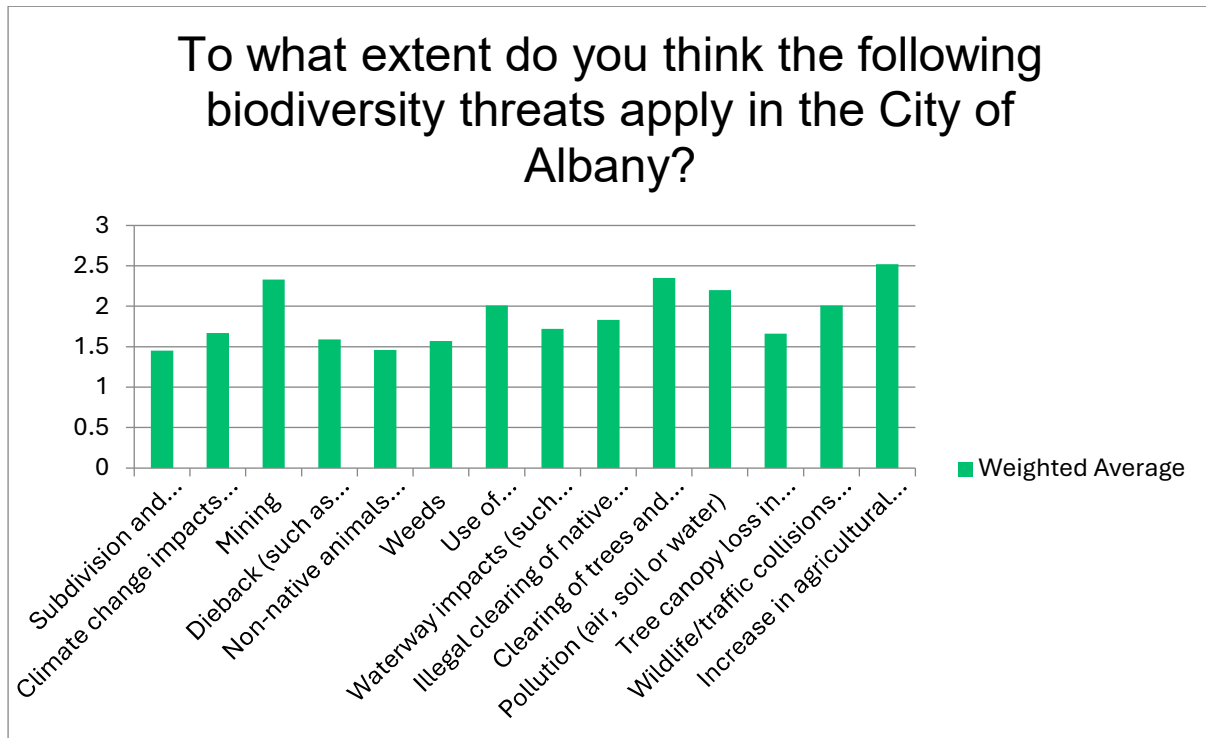


	Very Concerned	Moderately Concerned	Somewhat Concerned	Not Concerned
Protecting native plants, animals and other organisms	79%	14%	4%	3%
Protecting and enhancing foreshore environments	70%	22%	4%	3%
Preserving and enhancing green corridors for wildlife movement	82%	11%	5%	2%
Protecting areas of remnant vegetation	80%	13%	4%	3%

- The highest concern respondents had for biodiversity was preserving and enhancing corridors for wildlife.
- The second highest concern was for protecting plants, animals and other organisms.
- This indicates that respondents also value the location of native vegetation and recognise the importance of reducing habitat fragmentation. Although they highly value protecting remnant vegetation, there is some recognition (at least intellectually) of the strategic value of some locations over others.
- Only 3% of respondents were not concerned about protecting areas of native vegetation.
- Other concerns from the open-ended responses included:
 - Beaches and coastal environments (damage to seagrass, damage caused from surf reef and driving on beaches)
 - Existing reserves
 - Habitat in front and back yards
 - Damage from pet cats, dumping of greenwaste in native bushland, weeds and dieback
 - Fire risk should be a priority

- Proactive in restoring bushland areas not just preserving

25: To what extent do you think the following biodiversity threats apply in the City of Albany?

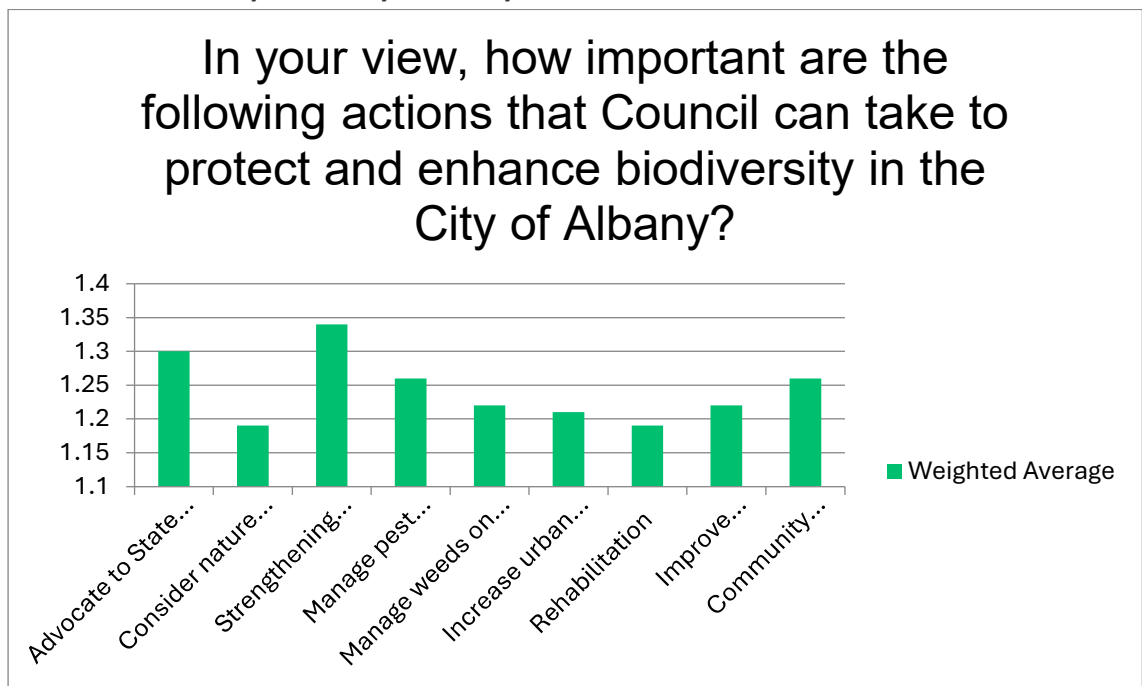


The following questions are listed in their order of importance from respondents from highest threat at the top to lowest.

	Large Threat	Medium Threat	Small Threat	No Threat	Unsure
Subdivision and development of land	69%	21%	7%	2%	1%
Non-native animals (such as foxes, feral cats and rabbits)	65%	27%	6%	1%	1%
Weeds	57%	34%	6%	1%	2%
Dieback (such as introduced diseases, fungus and insects that kill native plants)	57%	33%	7%	1%	2%
Tree canopy loss in urban areas	53%	33%	10%	3%	1%
Climate change impacts (such as drought, extreme rainfall events, warmer temperatures)	54%	31%	8%	6%	1%
Waterway impacts (such as litter, sediment, erosion, flow)	47%	40%	10%	1%	2%
Illegal clearing of native vegetation	49%	32%	12%	3%	5%
Use of herbicides/pesticides	38%	37%	16%	5%	4%
Wildlife/traffic collisions (road kill)	34%	39%	21%	5%	2%
Pollution (air, soil or water)	27%	39%	25%	4%	5%
Mining	32%	27%	25%	9%	7%
Clearing of trees and vegetation to help protect homes from bushfire	22%	39%	26%	9%	4%
Increase in agricultural land	21%	34%	24%	14%	7%

- The first six threats were considered the highest threats, with over 50% of respondents identifying them as a Large Threat to biodiversity.
- Subdivision and development of land and non-native animals are considered the highest threats with 69% and 65% of respondents identifying them as a Large Threat respectively.
- Increase in agricultural land was considered the lowest threat to biodiversity and 14% of respondents did not believe it to be a threat at all.
- Other threats mentioned in the open-ended section were:
 - Clearing for large roads/infrastructure
 - People lighting fires, dumping rubbish and ablutions in bush and coastal dunes
 - Pesticides
 - Prescribed burns
 - The way agricultural land is used
 - Pet cats
 - Clearing bush on rural blocks
 - Polyphagus shothole borer
 - Block sizes too small for tree planting
 - Legal clearing
 - Recreational vehicles and bike tracks
- There was some support for agricultural activities and that using agricultural land for housing developments was not sustainable.
- Some respondents stated that large-scale clearing for agriculture has not occurred in the region since the 1980's and therefore that question was unfair
- Comment that people should have the right to remove trees on their own property.

26. In your view, how important are the following actions that Council can take to protect and enhance biodiversity in the City of Albany?



	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Advocate to State and Federal Governments to take biodiversity-supportive actions	76%	18%	6%
Consider nature and biodiversity in all Council decision making	85%	12%	4%
Strengthening planning policies and other regulations to protect trees/native vegetation and other biodiversity on private land	74%	18%	8%
Manage pest animals on Council land	77%	21%	2%
Manage weeds on Council land	80%	19%	2%
Increase urban tree canopy	81%	16%	2%
Rehabilitation	82%	16%	2%
Improve management practices	80%	18%	2%
Community education and awareness raising about protecting and enhancing biodiversity	77%	19%	3%

- There was strong support for more action from the City of Albany to protect biodiversity. All options were considered Very Important by >74% of respondents.
- In general, there was slightly higher support for direct actions such as managing weeds and pests and slightly less support for changes to policy and community education. The exception was for the Council to consider nature and biodiversity in all decision making. 85% of respondents believed this was Very Important which was the highest ranked action.
- Strengthening policies and regulations for private land owners had the lowest support.
- Other actions from the open-ended responses included:
 - Put aside significant natural reserves as part of bicentenary celebrations. Suggestions included Yakamia Forest and Bayonet Head
 - Lawnmowers accidentally ringbarking verge trees
 - High quality school-based education programs
 - Consequences to ensure people comply
 - Fire threat needs to be considered
 - Listen to local experts
 - Integrated weed management (not just glyphosate)
 - Restricting vehicle access to beaches
 - Deal with rabbits
 - Ban plant nurseries from selling declared weeds
 - Weeds on private properties
 - Dogs should always be on leads. Pet cats should be banned
 - Council rates should go towards biodiversity projects
 - Wildlife rehabilitation centre with paid staff
 - No native vegetation clearing on council-managed land
 - Don't take away people's rights to remove trees on their own property