






North Wagga Flood Risk Mitigation: **Community Engagement**

October 2023



An overview of the Community Engagement Program

	1. Workshop with Council and Influencers	August
	2. Community Engagement Forum and one on one depth interviews	August
	3. Fine tuning of proposed solutions for flood mitigation based on community feedback	September
	4. Wider community surveys	October ← We are here
	5. Presentation of outcomes from CBA results and community engagement	November

This presentation details the feedback from the Community Engagement Forum and the one-on-one in-depth interviews.

Details of the Forum

- Conducted 6-9pm at Wagga Wagga RSL Club - 15th August
- Attended as observers: Executives from Wagga Wagga City Council, NSW State Emergency Service (SES)
- The General Manager of Council, Peter Thompson, presented the information on the options at the forum
- The targeted distribution of participants was based on the number of 'properties' impacted by a 1:100 year flood
- Recruitment involved residents of the North Wagga and Oura/Gumly Gumly areas being sent a letter and completing an expression of interest
- Attendees were selected using a random stratified sampling approach to ensure that the forum was representative in terms of age and gender, and that all participants were homeowners

Resident Participants

- Other participants were recruited via Woolcott Research's phone room and a professional recruiter
- 50 out of 64 residents recruited attended on the day

Location	Sample (n=50)
North Wagga (inside the proposed levee)	30
North Wagga (outside the proposed levee)	4
Oura	2
Gumly Gumly	4
East Wagga	2
Rest of Wagga Wagga	8
TOTAL	50



Interviews with Opinion Leaders and Influencers



- In the same week as the Forum, n=6 in-depth interviews were conducted amongst key stakeholders:
 - Donna Argus – Gumly Gumly Village Representative
 - Nick Stephenson – Floodplain Protection Association
 - Aunty Mary Atkinson – First Nations Community
 - Michael Friend – Co-Opted Member for North Wagga
 - Joe McGirr – Independent Member for Wagga Wagga
 - Scott Sanbrook and Sophie Mackay – Committee 4 Wagga
- Each was taken through the same presentation that was given at the forum and asked to provide feedback and their preferences for the Flood Mitigation options.

Voluntary House Purchase



Voluntary House Raising

Reactions to VHP & VHR

- North Wagga residents were generally opposed to VP but supported VHR
- Those from outside North Wagga were more positive towards both as it provided options for those who wanted to remain in the area and for those who wanted to move without adversely impacting residents outside the floodplain.

Voluntary House Raising

REASONS FOR:

- More appeal to those in North Wagga, with some having raised their houses already at their own expense
- Can stay in North Wagga and remain part of the community
- Does not impact others outside North Wagga

REASONS AGAINST:

- Not all houses are able to be raised
- Access issues amongst the elderly and those with young children or disabled household members
- Part of a statewide program that does not guarantee a house will be selected
- A long-term project so could take years to happen
- Not mitigating the risk of flooding

Reactions to VHP & VHR

Voluntary House Purchase

REASONS FOR:

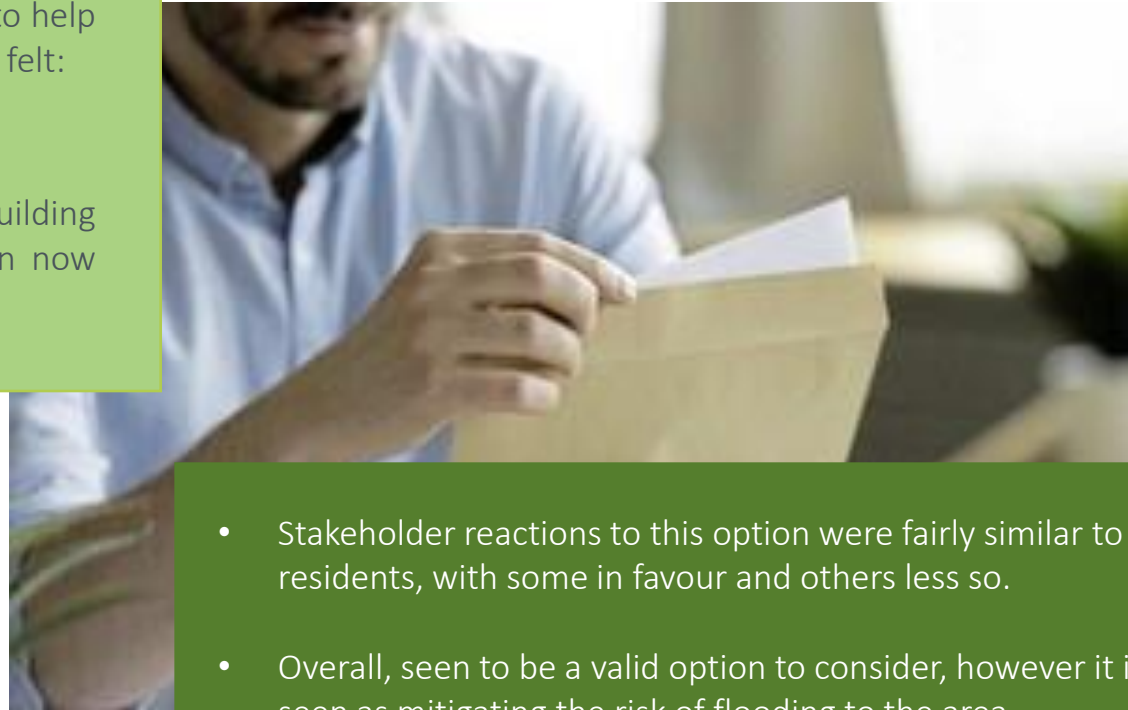
- Possibility of North Wagga residents receiving more for their house than they would otherwise
- Better option than raising the levee for those who would be affected outside the floodplain by the levee raising
- Provides an option for the elderly or others where VHR is not an option

REASONS AGAINST:

- Does not reduce the likelihood of flooding occurring in North Wagga
- Will potentially ruin the village feel
- Leaves abandoned blocks in between those houses that are still there
- Concerns over how the land would be repurposed
- Impacts people's current lifestyle
- Upheaval of moving
- Question over housing availability in other areas
- Mistrust of Council in the valuation of properties

Acceptance of a Special Rate Variation

- North Wagga residents and those in favour of this option were generally comfortable with an SRV to help cover the costs, others were not. Those in favour felt:
 - It benefited them
 - They had contributed in the past to the building of the Wagga Wagga levee so others can now contribute to their flood mitigation



- Stakeholder reactions to this option were fairly similar to residents, with some in favour and others less so.
- Overall, seen to be a valid option to consider, however it is not seen as mitigating the risk of flooding to the area.
- Seen as more of a complementary option than a standalone solution.

Levee Upgrade

- Raising the levee to a 5% AEP and raising Hampden Avenue between Wiradjuri Bridge and Gardiner St
- Construction could occur in two stages – the levee upgrade first and then other works including the road height increase.



Reactions to Upgrading the Levee

- Those from inside the levee in North Wagga were strongly in favour of this option
- Others, including those from outside of the current North Wagga levee were less favourable to quite negative about the idea.

Upgrading the Levee

FOR:

- Answers a long-term request for something to be done to protect the people of North Wagga
- Provides peace of mind and psychological benefits to those inside the levee area
- A 'quick' fix if the levee is built as a first stage
- Potentially provides financial benefit through increased house prices and reduced insurance costs
- Reduces risk to property, lives and livestock

AGAINST:

- Concerns that the levee will not be high enough (not 1% AEP)
- Will negatively impact those up and downstream outside of North Wagga (amount of impact uncertain)
- Second stage is expensive
- Detrimental to the environment

Acceptance of a Special Rate Variation



Stage 1 - raising of the levee manageable in a cost sense, as the need for a SRV would be limited.

Stage 2 - seen as extremely costly and those against the levee were strongly against a SRV to help fund it.

Most felt that this would not be supported by the rest of Wagga Wagga.

- Stakeholders agreed with a staged approach as it provided more immediate resolution to the issue.
- Doing Stage 1 first was seen as likely to be more palatable to the rest of Wagga (except to those in areas like Gumly Gumly and Oura who would be affected).

Combined Option

Option A

- Upgrading the Levee
- Increasing height of escape road, bridges and excavation
- VHP & VHR in Oura, Gumly, Gumly & East Wagga

Option B

- Extending the VHR & VHP to NW residents



Reactions to Combined Options

Option A

- Upgrading the levee around North Wagga (Stage 1)
- Increasing the height of escape road including bridges an excavation (Stage 2), and voluntary house purchase and house raising in areas of Oura, Gumly Gumly and East Wagga.
- The costs associated with this option would be the same as those presented earlier.

- Reactions to Combined Option A were generally positive amongst those from North Wagga.
- It retained the building of the levee, with the promise of the construction of escape roads in the future
- Addressed the impact to those outside the levee.
- However, seen as an expensive option, perhaps not achievable.
- There were also concerns that including VHP and VHR could “slow down the implementation of the levee”.

Reactions to Combined Options

Option B

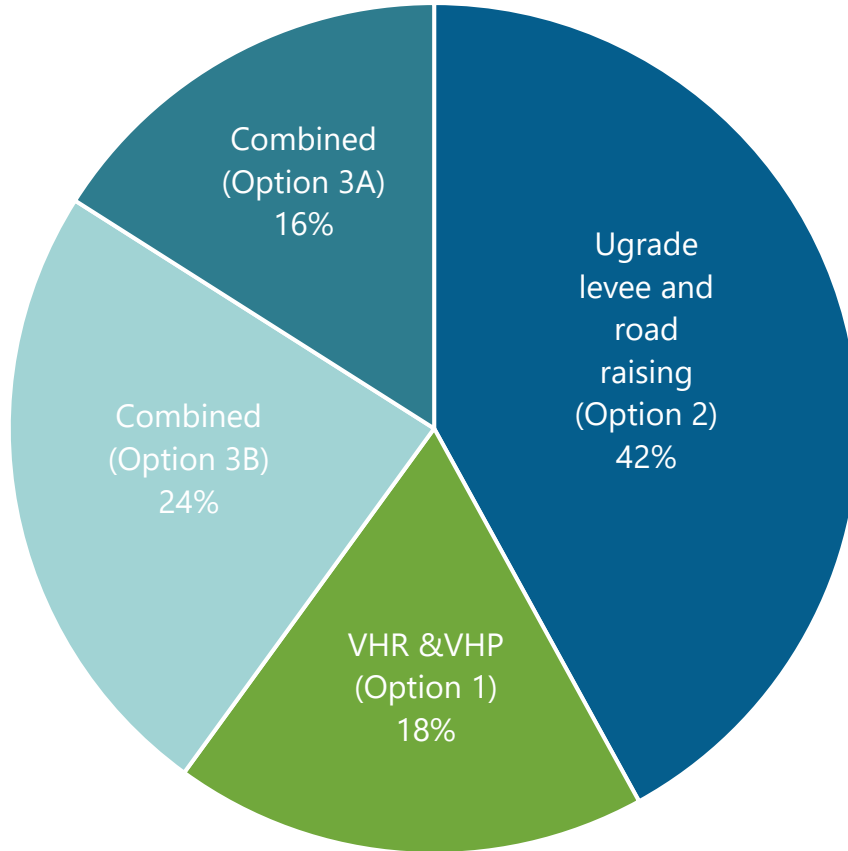
- This option is an extension to Combined Option A
- Extending the voluntary house raising and voluntary purchase to North Wagga residents.

- Inclusion of VHR & VHP to produce Option B was met with strong criticism by some participants.
- Not seen as a feasible option due to rules when there is already a levee in place - seen to be offering everything to North Wagga, at the expense of the rest of Wagga Wagga.
- Even some of the residents in North Wagga did not totally understand the need for VHR or VP if the levee was built.

Preferred Option



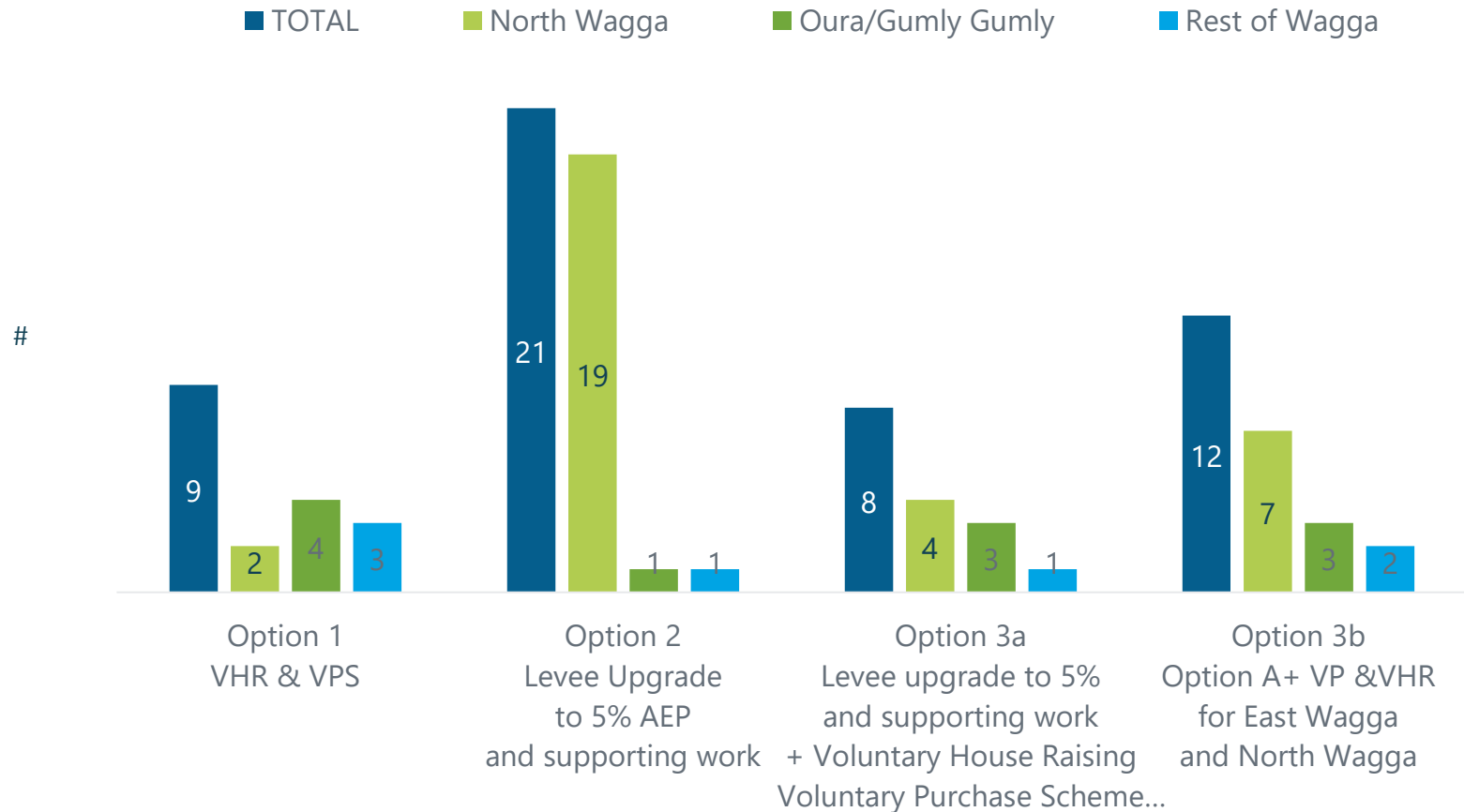
Preferred Option



- Option 2, Upgrading the Levee and Road Raising was the most popular (21/50 participants), however this was mostly amongst North Wagga residents (19/50 participants).
- A similar number preferred a Combined Option (either 3A or 3B) – 20/50 participants.
- Therefore, an option that included the levee was selected by 41 of the 50 participants (82%).
- House Raising and Voluntary Purchase as a standalone solution, appeared to be the least preferred (9/50 participants).



Preferred Option – split by location



- The vast majority of North Wagga residents chose an option with the levee included, either Option 2, 3A or 3B (94%).
- Although a smaller proportion, a majority of those from outside North Wagga also chose a levee option (61%), but preference was for the combined options (50%) rather than the levee only (11%).

Which is your preferred option?

Base n=50 forum participants. Please note that votes were anonymous. Participants were asked to identify where they lived on the preference form and a minority did not classify where they lived in the same way as during recruitment.

Conclusions

There are competing motivations amongst those from North Wagga to those from outside the floodplain area.

- North Wagga residents are clearly in favour of upgrading the levee and to a lesser degree the subsequent road raising, however those in other areas are concerned about the impacts to their own property and those properties up and downstream.
- Given the skew of participants to North Wagga residents, it resulted in Option 2 (upgrading the levee followed by surrounding works) being the preferred option overall.
- Having a staged approach (raising the levee first) is well received as it has the advantages of offering a fast solution to the issue, providing added protection to houses within North Wagga, and being the least costly option (Council could fund it).
- Many residents at the forum who are outside of North Wagga were favourable to the idea of a levee but prefer options that also include voluntary house raising and voluntary house purchase. They are seen to provide those outside the floodplain with a solution to the possible impacts of the higher levee.

Conclusions

- The expense of the road raising and excavation could be a major drawback to gaining support for the total upgrade to the levee package. Needing to evacuate at the same timeframe is acceptable and a positive trade off for the peace of mind an upgrade to the levee would provide to those in North Wagga.
- There is a concern about whether voluntary house raising and purchase would be available to all (given it is a statewide program) and that it would be a drawn-out solution.
- The combined option (Combined Option 3b) to extend voluntary house raising and purchase to North Wagga residents is welcomed by some of those in North Wagga, however it is likely to be seen by others as 'double dipping' and therefore, unpopular. There are also concerns by some of those in North Wagga that it could hold up the levee raising if it is included in the final solution.
- The need for a SRV is not a significant barrier as residents have been requested to contribute to levee upgrades previously, however there is likely to be pushback if it is significant and if it is seen as favouring just one community to the detriment of others.
- It is likely that the VHP and VHR cost estimates are too high, as many people in flood impacted areas will not take up the offer, therefore the SRV would be lower than presented. If implemented it would also occur over a long period of time.

Conclusions

- It will be important that the final solution meets the needs of North Wagga residents, but also goes some way to alleviating the concerns of those who will be impacted by the levee upgrade.
- The engagement so far on the options presented suggests that the eventual solution should include an upgrade of the levee, along with VHP and VHR in Oura, Gumly Gumly and the floodplains at the least - this sentiment will be tested in the community survey.
- The final recommendation will be dependent on the outcome of the CBA.



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