

An aerial photograph of a coastal town, likely in Queensland, Australia. The town is built on a green, hilly landscape with numerous houses and trees. In the background, a large body of water (the ocean) stretches to the horizon, with a range of dark, rugged mountains visible under a clear blue sky with some light clouds.

Could Cardwell connect?

Community Engagement Summary

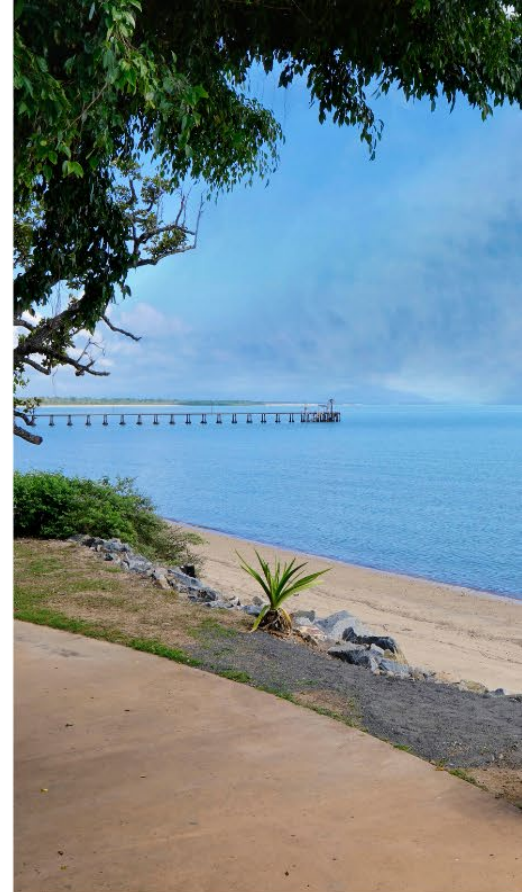
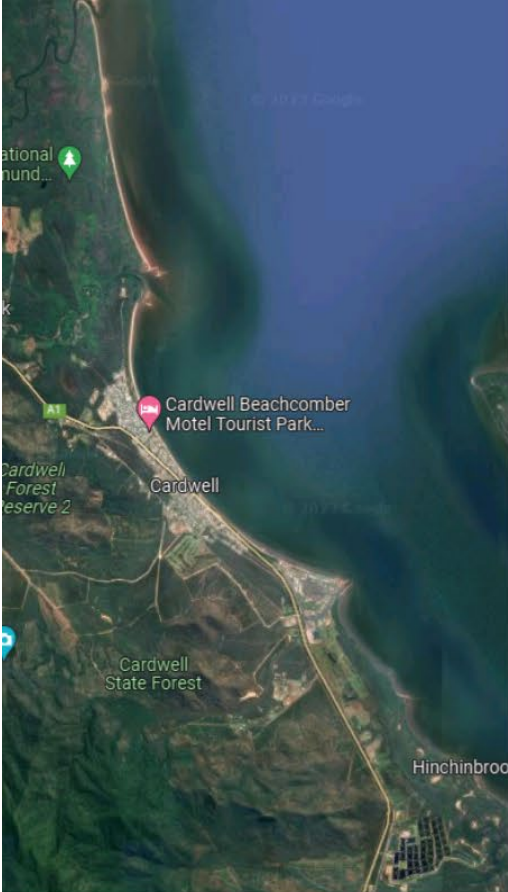
Prepared August 2026



Cassowary Coast
REGIONAL COUNCIL

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Engagement snapshot



715

YOURSAY
VIEWS



30

SOCIAL MEDIA
REACTIONS



222

YOURSAY
CONTRIBUTIONS



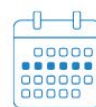
19

PAPER SURVEY
RESPONSES



1,159

LETTERS POSTED TO
CARDWELL RATEPAYERS



4

WEEKS ENGAGEMENT
WAS OPENED

Project background

Following completion of the Port Hinchinbrook Sewerage Treatment Plant, the Cassowary Coast Regional Council identified an opportunity to explore whether a future sewerage network could be expanded to service the Cardwell township.

A future sewerage network could support Cardwell's long-term growth, housing, tourism and infrastructure needs. However, a project of this scale would involve significant investment and require further planning, technical investigations, and external funding.

Engagement purpose

Council undertook pre-project community consultation to understand whether there was support for further planning and investigation into a potential future sewerage network for Cardwell.

Specifically, Council sought feedback on:

- the level of support for further planning and feasibility investigations
- potential benefits and challenges of a future sewerage network
- affordability and potential cost impacts
- experiences with existing wastewater systems
- other considerations that should inform Council's decision on whether further investigation should occur.

The consultation was designed to inform Council's consideration of whether further investigation should occur. It was not consultation on a final design or a decision to construct a sewerage network.

How we engaged

Community consultation was undertaken for four weeks between Monday, 22 June and Sunday, 19 July 2026 using a range of online and traditional communication channels to maximise awareness and encourage participation.

Engagement activities included:

- [Your Say](#) project webpage featuring project information, questions and answers, and an online survey (22 June 2026).
- Media release published on Council's website (24 June 2026).
- Letter posted to Cardwell property owners.
- [Social media campaign \(two organic posts\)](#).
- Radio 4KZ and Kool FM 10-day campaign.
- Corflute signage x five.
- Paper surveys available from Cardwell Library.

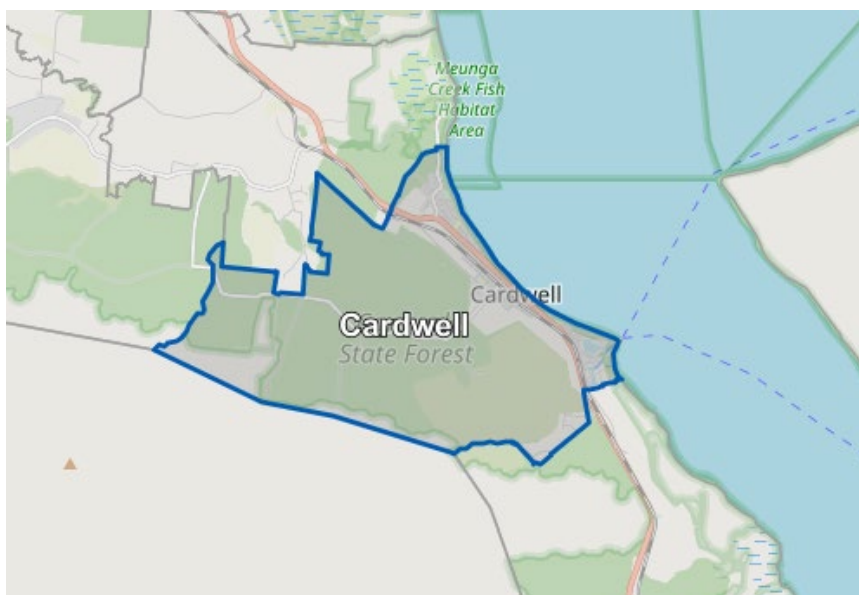
These activities provided the Cardwell community with multiple opportunities to learn about the project and provide feedback throughout the consultation period.

Community participation

The consultation received **241 survey responses**, which included 222 online responses and 19 paper surveys. Of the online respondents, approximately 70 per cent were from Cardwell and 30 per cent from Port Hinchinbrook, with around half having lived, owned property, or operated a business in the area for more than 10 years.

The 2021 Census recorded a population of 1,320 people in Cardwell, with a median age of 60 years compared with 38 years across Queensland. Cardwell's median weekly household income was \$846, compared with \$1,675 across Queensland.

These demographics provide useful context for understanding the community represented through the consultation and the feedback received. [Source: ABS 2021 Census, Cardwell \(Suburbs and Localities\)](#).



What we heard

Key themes

- **Community views were closely divided.** There was no clear majority either supporting or opposing further investigation into a future sewerage network.
- **Cost and affordability were the strongest concerns.** Potential rates, service charges, connection costs, and impacts on pensioners and fixed-income households were raised consistently.
- **Many residents are confident in their existing wastewater systems.** Respondents who believe their current systems are working effectively questioned the need and value of connecting to a future network.
- **Potential long-term benefits were recognised.** Supportive respondents identified opportunities for future growth, housing, tourism, environmental protection, and improved wastewater infrastructure.
- **Cardwell and Port Hinchinbrook perspectives differed.** Port Hinchinbrook respondents were generally more supportive, while Cardwell respondents expressed greater concern about household costs and the need for change.
- **Greater certainty would be needed if further investigation occurred.** Respondents wanted clearer information about costs, funding, connection requirements, staging, and what a future network would mean for existing wastewater systems.

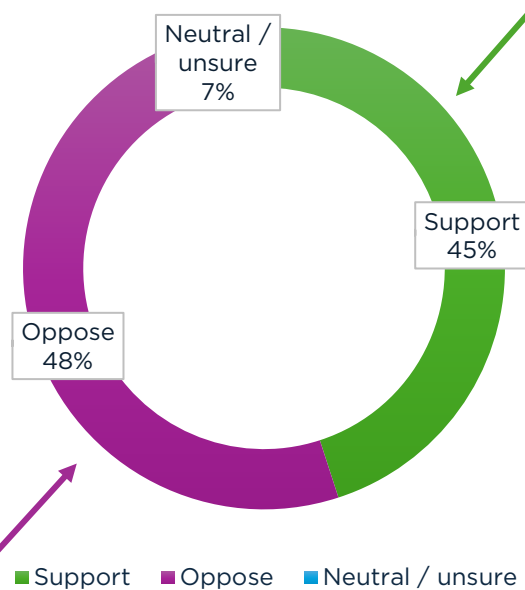


Community sentiment

Responses showed there was no clear majority position on whether Council should undertake further investigation into a potential future sewerage network for Cardwell. Instead, two strongly held perspectives emerged.

Those who supported further investigation commonly saw potential benefits for Cardwell's future growth, tourism, housing, environmental outcomes, and infrastructure.

Preference of Council conducting further investigations



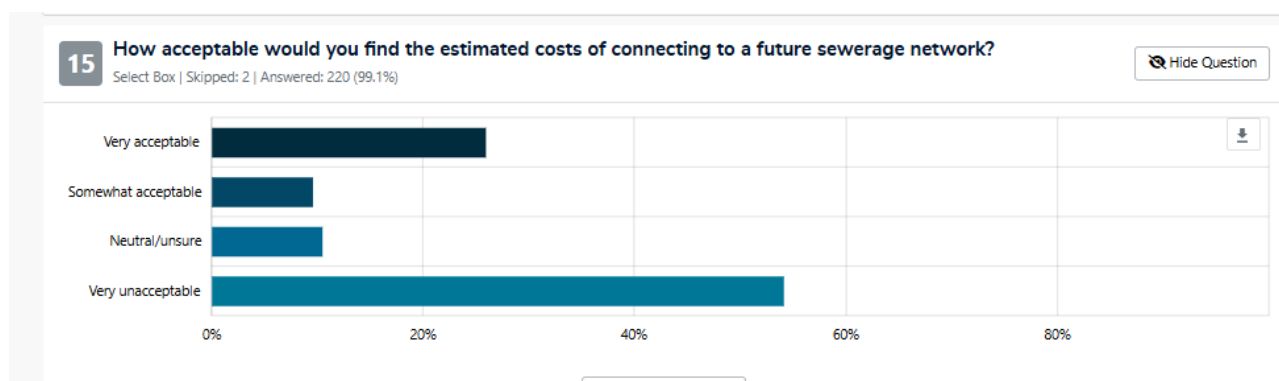
Those who opposed further investigation commonly questioned the need for change, particularly where existing wastewater systems were working effectively, and raised concerns about affordability and additional household costs.

Sentiment changed during consultation

Support was higher during the first week of consultation, at 66 per cent, before settling at 45 per cent in the final online results. As participation increased throughout the consultation period, the balance of responses shifted, with the final results showing the community was closely divided on further investigation.

Cost and affordability

More than 50 per cent of respondents who answered the cost question considered the estimated costs of a future sewerage service to be **very unacceptable**.



Concerns about affordability were raised by both respondents who supported and opposed further investigation. Common concerns included:

- increased rates and ongoing sewerage charges
- household connection costs
- costs associated with decommissioning existing septic systems
- impacts on pensioners and fixed-income households
- paying for new infrastructure where existing wastewater systems were considered to be working effectively
- the need for significant Queensland and Australian Government funding.

Feedback showed that cost and how a future network would be funded would be important considerations for the community if further investigation were to occur.

Information provided during consultation

Preliminary estimates indicated an annual sewerage charge of approximately \$1,165 per **connected property**, with additional service charges potentially applying to properties with multiple toilet connections. All figures provided during consultation were indicative and subject to further investigation and future Council decisions.

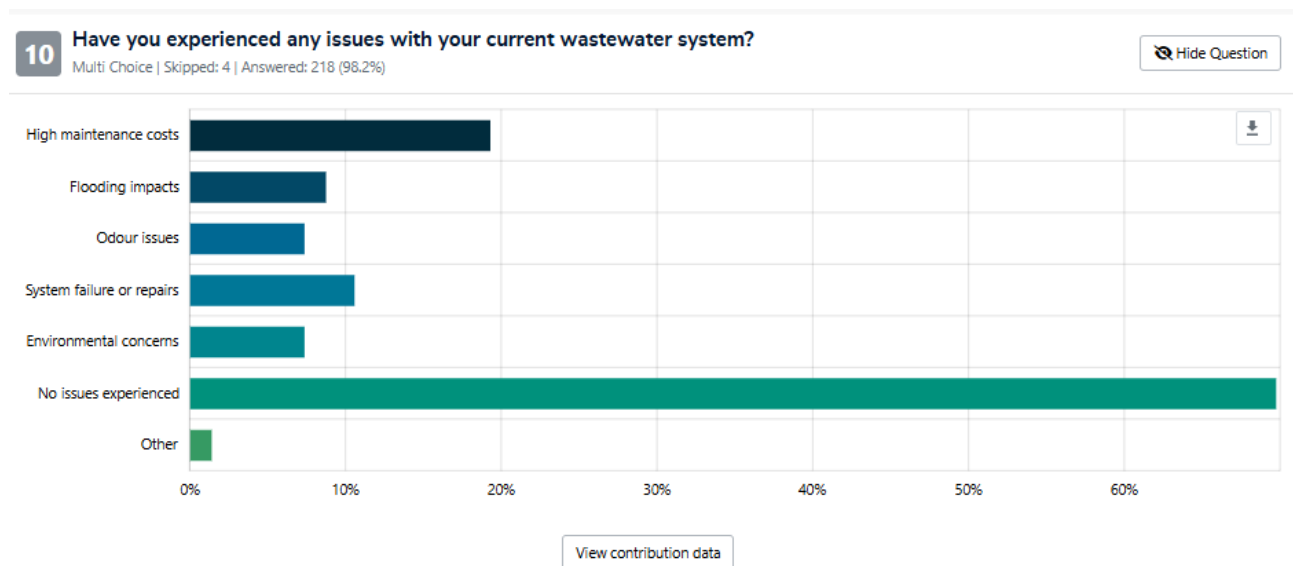
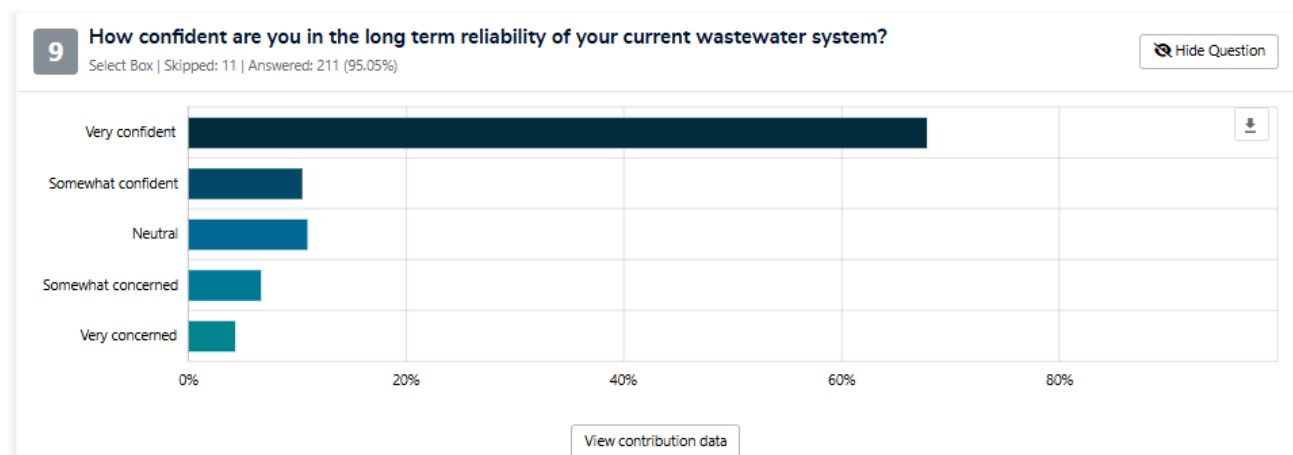
Existing wastewater systems

Confidence in existing systems influenced views

Around two-thirds of respondents described themselves as very confident in the long-term reliability of their existing wastewater system, with the majority reporting that they had experienced no issues.

For many respondents, this influenced whether they saw a need for a future sewerage network. Those satisfied with their existing systems commonly questioned whether the potential benefits of connecting to a network would justify the additional costs.

“If it isn’t broken, why change it?”



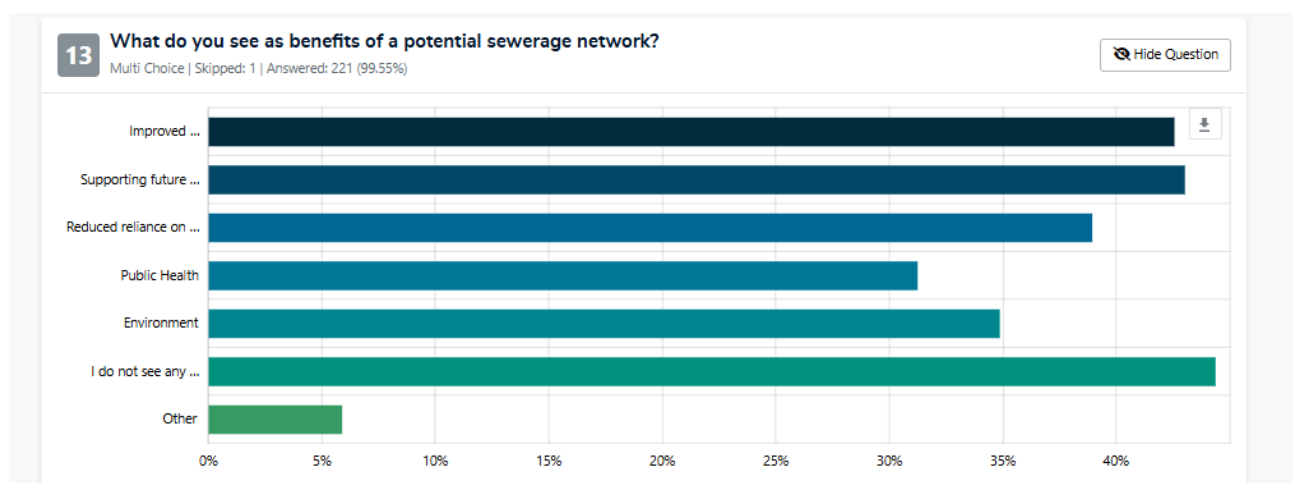
This sentiment was consistently reflected in feedback from respondents opposed to further investigation.

Potential future benefits

38 per cent of respondents believed wastewater infrastructure would have a mostly positive impact on Cardwell's future, while a further **18 per cent** believed there could be both positive and negative impacts.

Common themes included:

- supporting future growth and housing
- creating opportunities for tourism and economic development
- improved wastewater management
- protecting waterways and the surrounding environment
- making greater use of existing sewerage infrastructure at Port Hinchinbrook.



Cardwell and Port Hinchinbrook perspectives

A difference in perspectives between respondents from Cardwell and Port Hinchinbrook emerged through the consultation.

Port Hinchinbrook respondents were generally more supportive of further investigation and commonly identified better use of the existing treatment plant, environmental benefits, future growth, and the potential to spread operating costs across a larger customer base.

Cardwell respondents expressed greater concern about affordability and additional household costs, and greater confidence in their existing wastewater systems. Some also questioned whether Cardwell property owners should incur additional costs for infrastructure they perceived as providing a benefit to Port Hinchinbrook.

“As a resident of Port Hinchinbrook currently supporting a sewerage plant designed for many more residents, I would be pleased to see the town connected both for financial reasons and for long-term growth and protection of the environment of our town.”

“Why should I have to pay for something I cannot afford, let alone the additional cost I'll have to pay to have my home connected to the system.” – Cardwell resident.

Business respondents

Business owners and operators represented **36 of the 222 online survey respondents** (16 per cent). Within this group:

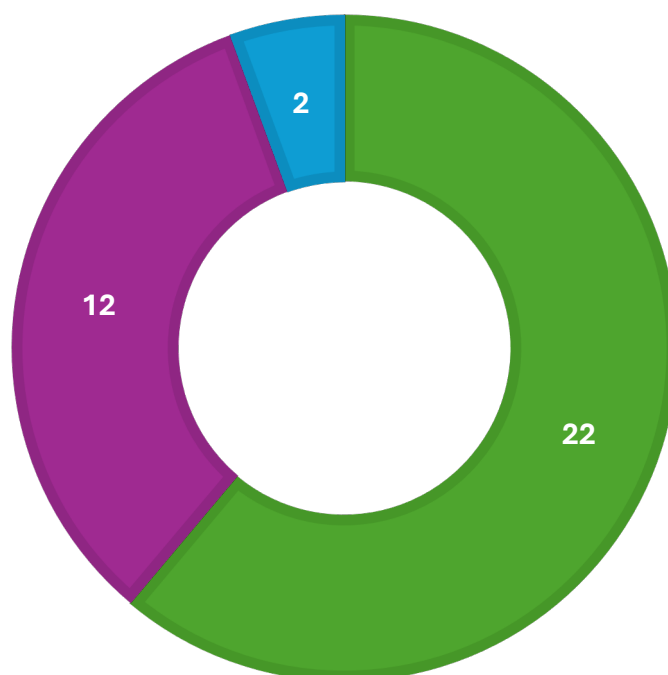
- **61 per cent strongly supported** further investigation (22 respondents).
- **33 per cent strongly opposed** (12 respondents).
- **Six per cent were neutral or unsure** (two respondents).

Of the 36 business respondents, **23 were from Cardwell and 13 from Port Hinchinbrook.**

Business respondents who supported further investigation commonly identified opportunities associated with growth, housing, tourism and economic development.

Those opposed or concerned raised similar issues to the broader community, particularly costs and existing investment in on-site wastewater systems.

BUSINESS RESPONDENTS – N=36



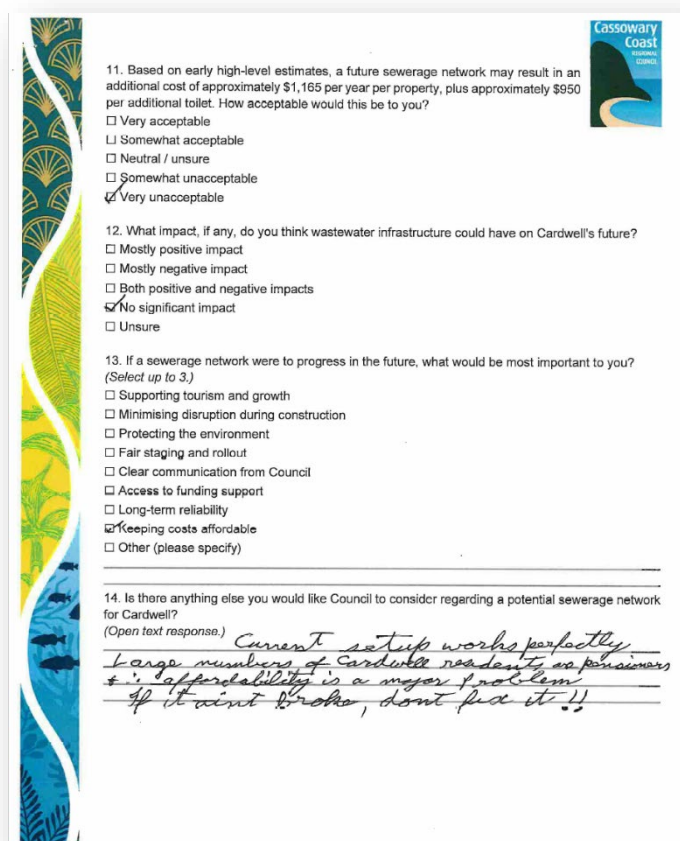
■ Strongly support ■ Strongly oppose ■ Neutral/unsure

Paper survey responses

Council received **19 paper survey responses**, providing an additional opportunity for community members to participate outside the online survey. Of these:

- **17 opposed or strongly opposed** further investigation.
- **One was neutral**, recognising potential future benefits while remaining concerned about cost.
- **One was supportive**, but also identified cost as a concern.

The issues raised through paper surveys were consistent with themes identified through the online consultation, particularly affordability, rates and service charges, connection costs, impacts on fixed-income households, and whether there was a need to replace existing wastewater systems that were considered to be working effectively.



Cassowary Coast Council

11. Based on early high-level estimates, a future sewerage network may result in an additional cost of approximately \$1,165 per year per property, plus approximately \$950 per additional toilet. How acceptable would this be to you?

☐ Very acceptable
☐ Somewhat acceptable
☐ Neutral / unsure
☐ Somewhat unacceptable
☒ Very unacceptable

12. What impact, if any, do you think wastewater infrastructure could have on Cardwell's future?

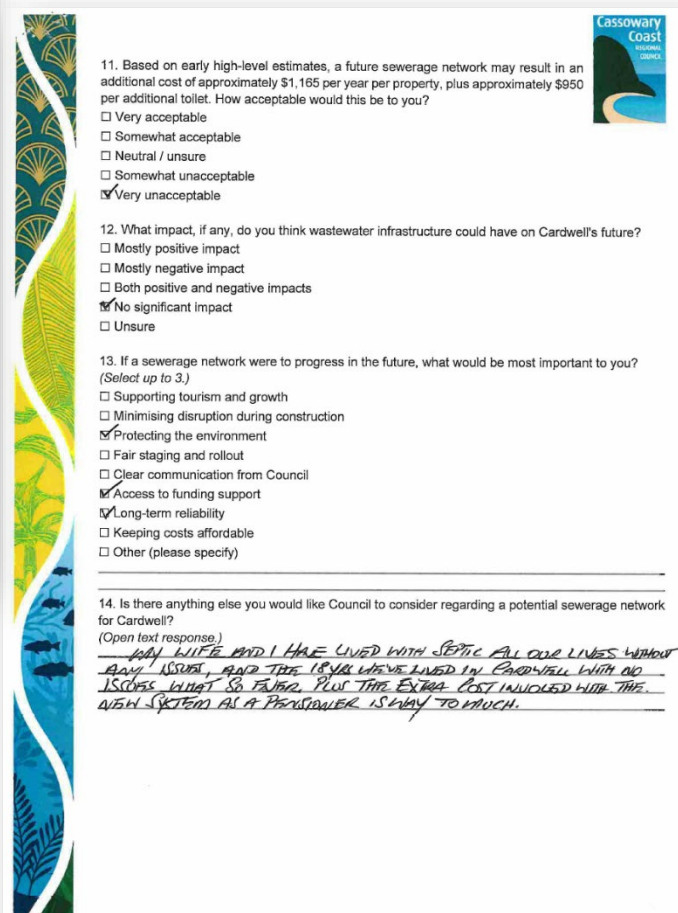
☐ Mostly positive impact
☐ Mostly negative impact
☐ Both positive and negative impacts
☒ No significant impact
☐ Unsure

13. If a sewerage network were to progress in the future, what would be most important to you? (Select up to 3.)

☐ Supporting tourism and growth
☐ Minimising disruption during construction
☐ Protecting the environment
☐ Fair staging and rollout
☐ Clear communication from Council
☐ Access to funding support
☐ Long-term reliability
☒ Keeping costs affordable
☐ Other (please specify)

14. Is there anything else you would like Council to consider regarding a potential sewerage network for Cardwell?
 (Open text response.)

Current setup works perfectly. Large numbers of Cardwell residents as pensioners & affordability is a major problem. If it aint broke, dont fix it!!



Cassowary Coast Council

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 (Open text response.)

MY WIFE AND I HAV LIVED WITH SEPTIC ALL OUR LIVES WITHOUT ANY ISSUES, AND THE 18 YRS WE'VE LIVED IN CARDWELL WITH NO ISSUES WHAT SO EVER. PLUS THE EXTRA COST INVOLVED WITH THE NEW SYSTEM AS A PENSIONER IS WAY TO MUCH.

What we heard overall

The consultation showed there is **no single community position** on further investigation into a potential future sewerage network for Cardwell.

Two strongly held perspectives emerged. Some respondents saw potential long-term benefits for Cardwell through growth, tourism, housing, environmental protection, and improved infrastructure.

Others questioned the need for change where existing wastewater systems were working effectively and were concerned about the additional costs to households.

Across the feedback, several common considerations emerged should further investigation occur:

- affordability and potential household costs
- access to Queensland and Australian Government funding
- clear and transparent information
- fair staging and rollout
- long-term reliability
- minimising impacts on individual properties.

These findings provide Council with a clearer understanding of the community's priorities, concerns and expectations regarding any further investigation.

Next steps

Feedback received will be reviewed by Councillors and relevant Council officers to determine a recommendation on whether Council pursue further investigation into a potential sewerage network for Cardwell.

The recommendation will be presented for endorsement at the September 2026 Local Government meeting and the community will be updated with Council's decision.



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