



Summer Estuary Workshop Series

5. Moore River Estuary

Workshop held on Friday 6th April 2013 at the Community Hall, Guilderton.

Attendees: Dr Mic Payne, (NACC), Dr Malcolm Robb, Zoe Goss (Dept of Water), Rachel Walmsley (Moore Catchment Council), Bev Port-Louis, Diane Yappo, Maxine Gossland, June Headland (Aboriginal representatives), Phillip Cook, David and Gay Messer, Geoff and Zoe Gilby, Stan Sykes, Linda Johnson, Dr Roger Severn, Sandra Mayer, Wendy Nottle, Colleen Legge, Ernst and Margot Helbig, David Taggart, Sandra Leigh, John Braid, Diana Papenfus, Neil Lamont, Gillian Lamont, Elaine McCartin, David Rickson, John Price, Steve Broadway, Paul and Sandra Jennings (community representatives).

Workshop goals

- Raise community awareness of the issues associated with the Moore River Estuary (MRE);
- Record estuary values important to the community;
- Identify threats to the estuary and possible solutions to mitigate these issues.

Summary of presentations

The Hill River Estuary - Dr Mic Payne (NACC) and Dr Malcolm Robb (DoW)

- Estuaries represent transition zones between rivers and the sea; they are very dynamic and biologically productive with complex food webs, but are generally not very diverse;
- Australian government database, OzCoasts (<http://www.ozcoasts.gov.au>), have adopted a general definition of estuaries as “semi-enclosed bodies of water where salt and freshwater meet”;
- The MRE is classified as a wave-dominated estuary, which means that ocean-derived sediments tend to deposit at the mouth to form a sand bar;
- The MRE has 82% of its catchment cleared for agriculture (1999 data) resulting in high nutrient levels;
- Despite this level of clearing, the MRE has good riparian vegetation communities, due in part by continued management and revegetation efforts by community and landcare groups;
- At present there is little urban development in the catchment but the Guilderton community is very concerned about urban development pressure on the southern bank of the estuary;
- The township of Guilderton uses septic tanks which likely contributes to nutrient levels in the estuary;
- Flow in the MRE is maintained by significant groundwater inflow, although decreasing rainfall in the region is reducing flushing;
- This estuary has been subject to considerable research and a number of publications are available;
- It is a popular holiday destination, placing substantial recreational pressure on the system during holiday periods;
- The sand bar at the mouth was often opened manually in the past, however this activity has been discouraged and is now an infrequent occurrence;
- Artificial opening of the bar does not provide adequate flushing of the estuary and can deprive sensitive riparian habitats of water coverage at critical time of the year.





Aboriginal perspective – Bev Port-Louis (Yuat representative)

- Estuaries were places where Yuat people camped, traded and hunted;
- The Moore River is the main place in this region of significance to the Yuat people;
- The river and estuary are created by, and are home to, the Waugal serpent;
- Aboriginal people throw a handful of sand into the water when they arrive at a waterway to let the spirits know they have arrived;
- Bev expressed a strong desire to form partnerships with land managers to ensure protection of her country.

Community values

Workshop attendees attributed the following values to the MRE;

- Recreational – fishing, canoeing, boating, swimming;
- Natural amenity;
- Bird watching;
- Tourism;
- Aboriginal culture/heritage.

Community concerns

At the conclusion of the workshop attendees were invited to complete a feedback survey. A Feedback Report is included as Appendix A.

Conclusions

Nutrient levels in the MRE are comparable to those estuaries in the Northern Agricultural Region with substantial agricultural clearing in their catchments. Lower rainfall in the region means that the estuary is not receiving as much flushing as in previous times. The overwhelming concern of the Guilderton community is the proposed urban development on the southern bank of the estuary near the coast. Substantial recreational pressures, primarily during holiday season, including boating and off-road vehicle use require continued management. An active local community group undertake effective management activities including riparian re-vegetation and education regarding manual bar openings.

This workshop supported by;



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Appendix A : Moore Estuary Feedback Report



Photograph 1: View of the Moore river estuary, 6 April, 2013, Guilderton (photograph: NACC)

Geraldton, August 2013

Author: Rolan Deutekom, Social Science Research Officer at NACC





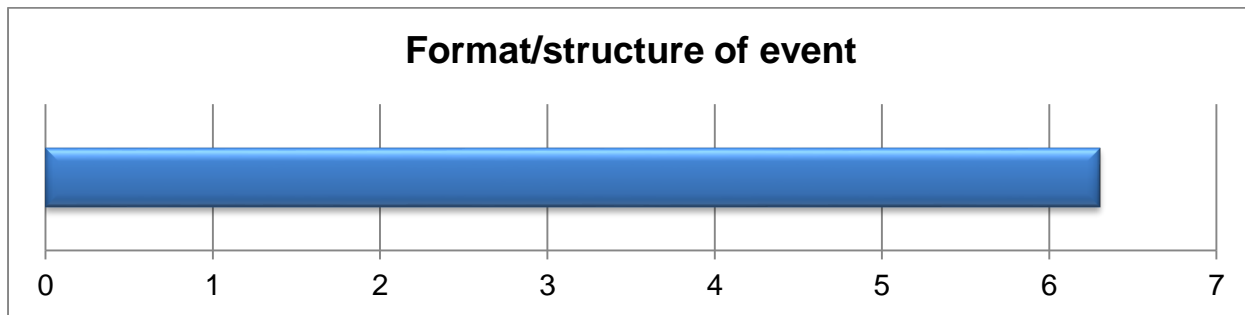
Introduction

A summer estuary workshop on the environmental value of the Moore River estuary was conducted in the Northern Agricultural Region (NAR) on 6 April 2013. A total of 32 participants attended the workshop.

Funding for these workshops was provided by Caring for Our Country and the Northern Agricultural Catchments Council (NACC). The workshop aimed to engage the coastal community in raising awareness of the role of estuaries in our coastal environment and issues associated with estuary management. Community feedback was recorded via feedback forms distributed at the end of the workshop.

24 respondents filled in a survey, but not all respondents filled in all questions.

Question 1: How do you rate the format/structure of this event?



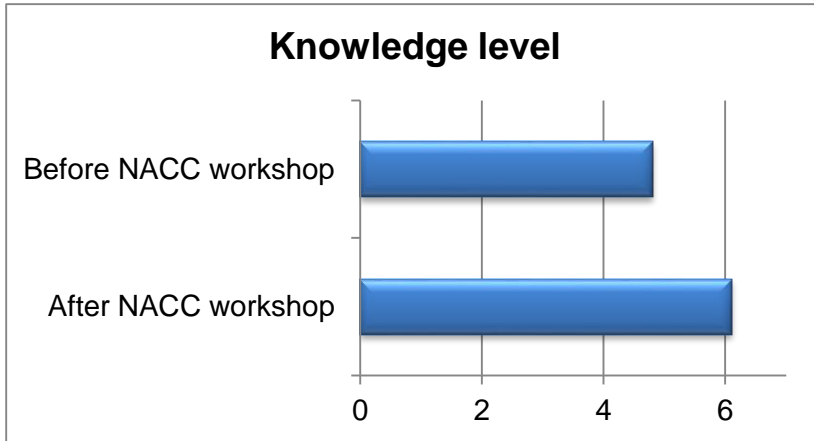
24 respondents answered this question. Most respondents rated the format/structure of the workshop as very good. Six respondents provided the following comments:

- Very useful presentations and information (mentioned twice)
- Well-presented display of estuarine systems
- Unfortunately I missed most of this event
- The river tour was a great way to preface the workshop





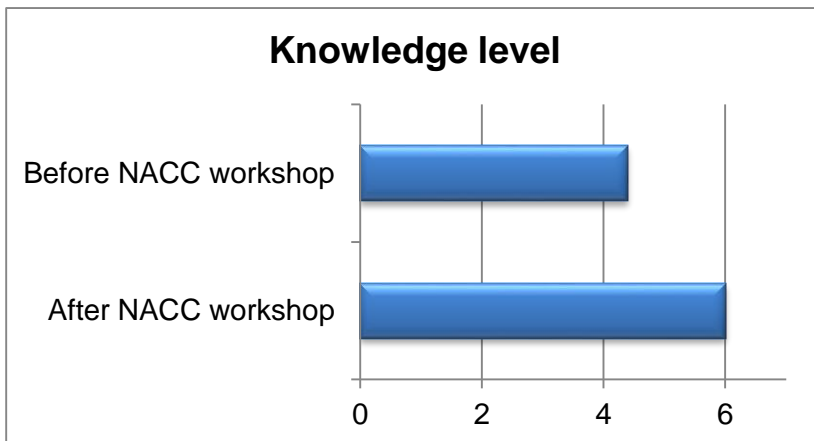
Question 2: Please indicate your knowledge level on the environmental value of estuaries:



25 respondents answered this question. They indicated a $(6.1 - 4.8) / 4.8 * 100\% \approx 27\%$ increase in knowledge. Three respondents provided additional comments:

- There is so much to know.
- Understanding the issues of other catchments compared to Moore River was fascinating
- Have been at Moore River for over 50 years, but learnt so much today!!

Question 3: Please indicate your knowledge level on issues relating to estuary management:



25 respondents answered this question. They indicated a $(6.0 - 4.4) / 4.4 * 100\% \approx 36\%$ increase in knowledge.

One respondent provided an additional comment:

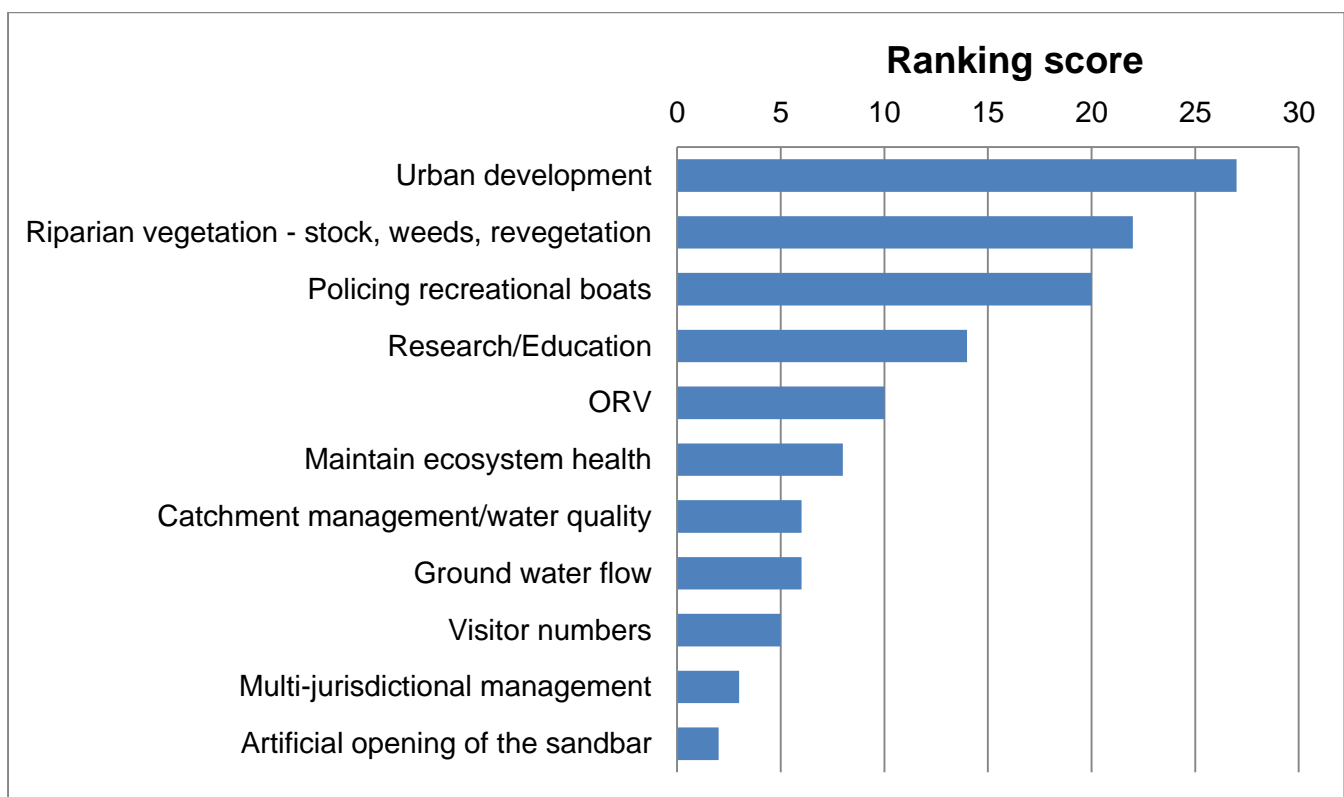
- Very interesting and informative.





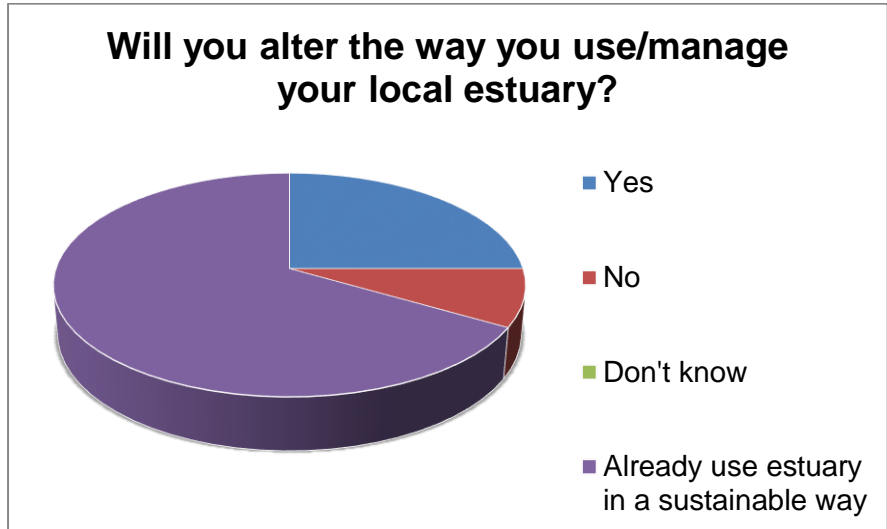
Question 4: Please rank (in order of priority) three management issues you regard as most important for your local estuary:

This question was answered by 22 respondents. A value matrix was done to aggregate priority management issues. The most important management issue was Urban development, followed by Riparian vegetation and Policing recreational boats.



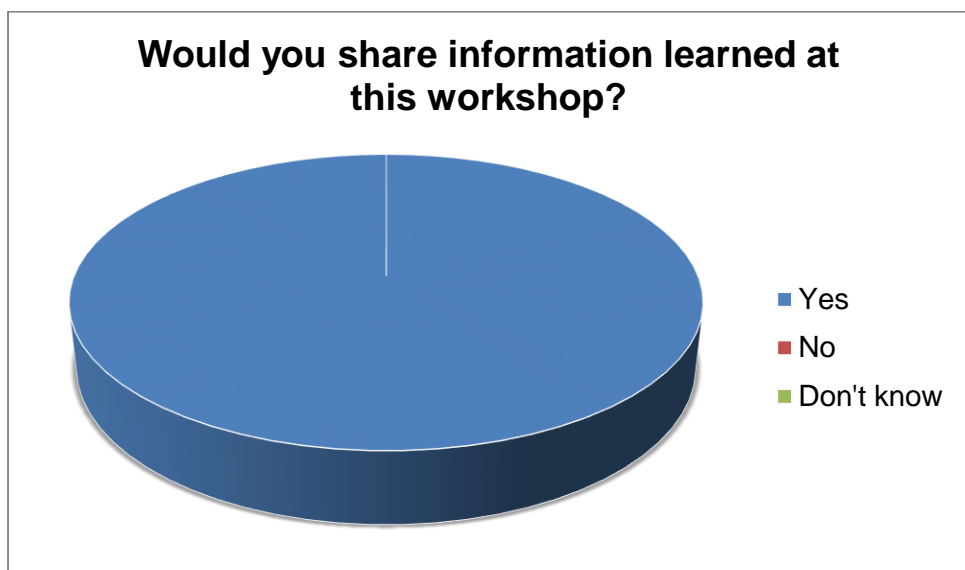


Question 5: Would you alter the way you use/manage your local estuary as a result of this workshop?



24 respondents answered this question. 16 respondents indicated they already use the estuary in a sustainable way, six respondents indicated 'yes' and two respondents 'no'.

Question 6: Would you share information learned at this workshop with others?

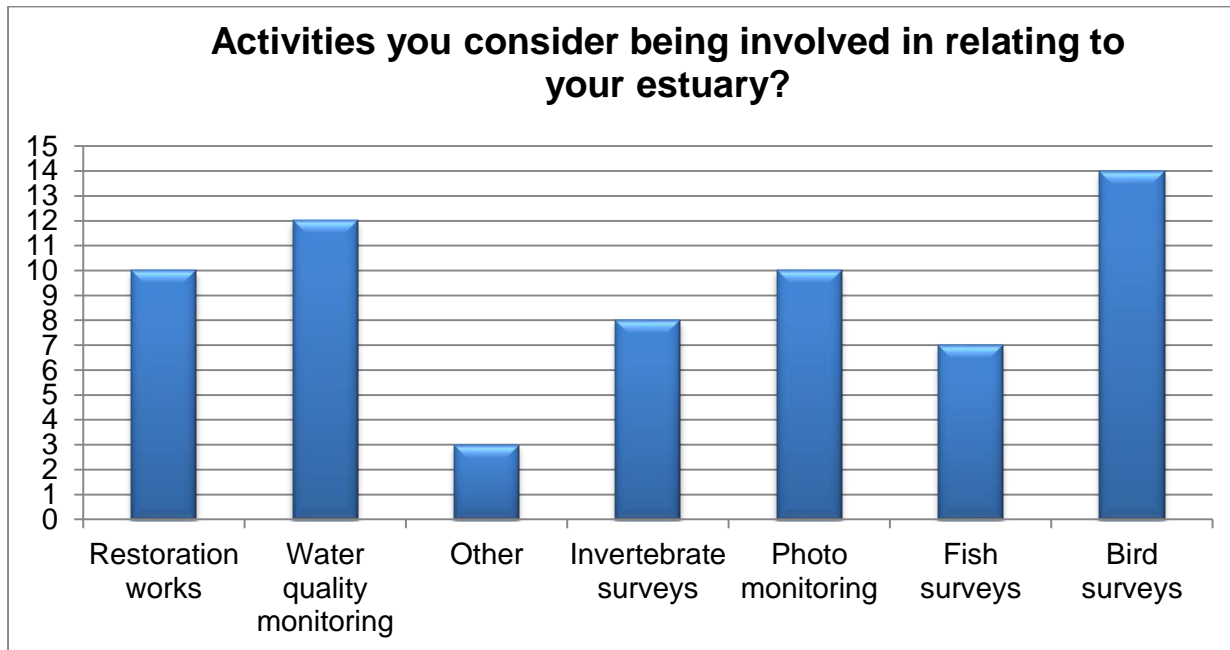


24 respondents answered this question and all indicated that they would share information with others.





Question 7: Would you consider becoming involved in any of the following activities relating to your local estuary?



19 respondents answered this question. Their answers can be found in the above graph.

Three respondent indicated “Other” of which one mentioned:

- Keen to be involved, home travel distance an issue

Question 8: What was the one thing you enjoyed most about this event?

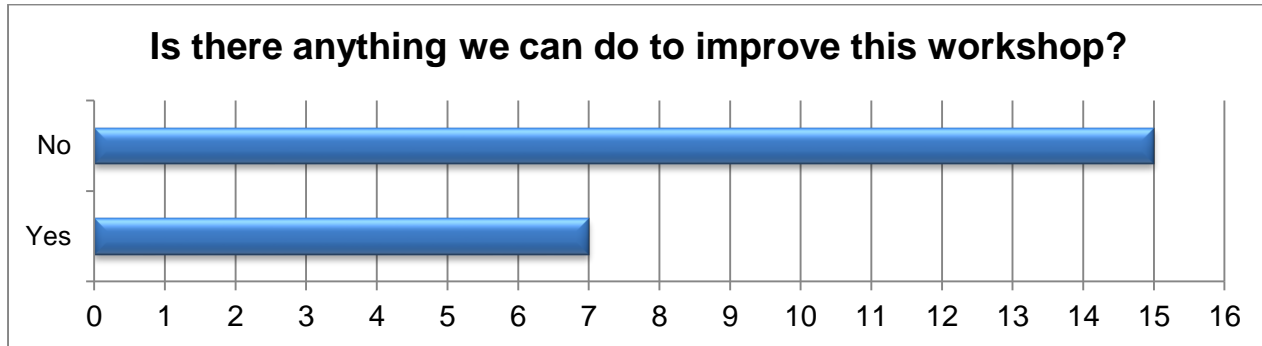
23 respondents answered this question. Their summarized responses can be found below.

- Great information and knowledge. (mentioned six times)
- Presentations (mentioned six times)
- River cruise (field trip) (mentioned five times)
- Aboriginal heritage. (mentioned three times)
- Meeting other people who care for the river and estuaries and who want to keep it clean and healthy like me. (mentioned three times)
- Understanding of estuary/river management and information of eco systems (mentioned two times)
- Clarity re range of estuaries
- Understanding the way NACC is working on strategies to help the environment
- All of it.
- Great food.





Question 9: Is there anything we can do to improve this workshop?



22 respondents answered this question and their answers are depicted in the above graph.

Seven respondents who mentioned 'yes' stated:

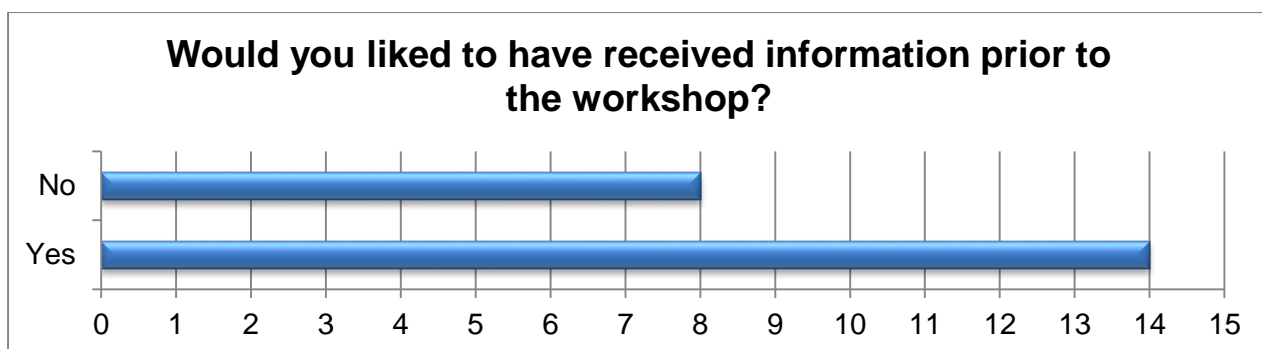
- Facilitate more group interaction and feedback (mentioned three times)
- Wider distribution and workshop opportunities
- Perhaps more time for Malcolm Robb
- Hard to follow Aboriginal cultural values from delivery of report. Read poorly.
- Update Powerpoint presentation

Two respondents who mentioned 'no' stated:

- All parties good. Non-government and community groups need to work better.
- It was well done at an appropriate level

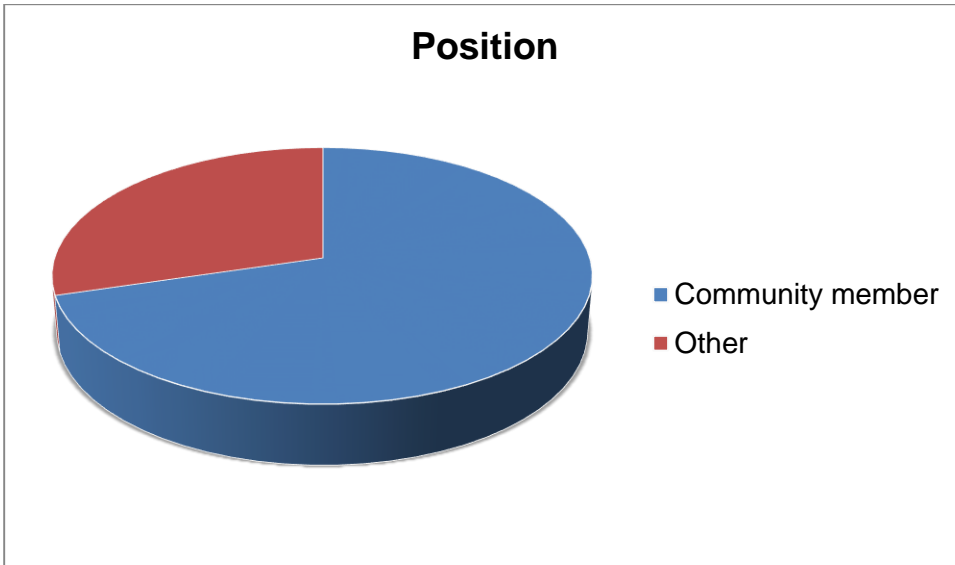
Question 10: Would you like to have received relevant information to read prior to the workshop?

22 respondents answered this question and their answers are depicted in the graph below.



Question 11: Please indicate your position:





23 respondents answered this question. 19 people identified themselves as community members and seven as 'other'. The detailed responses to the category 'other' can be found below:

- Guilderton Community Association (GCA) (mentioned twice)
- Commercial operator on river (tourism)
- Former counsellor
- Bush regenerator
- Yuat elder
- NACC & MCC member
- Ex youth employee, now retired



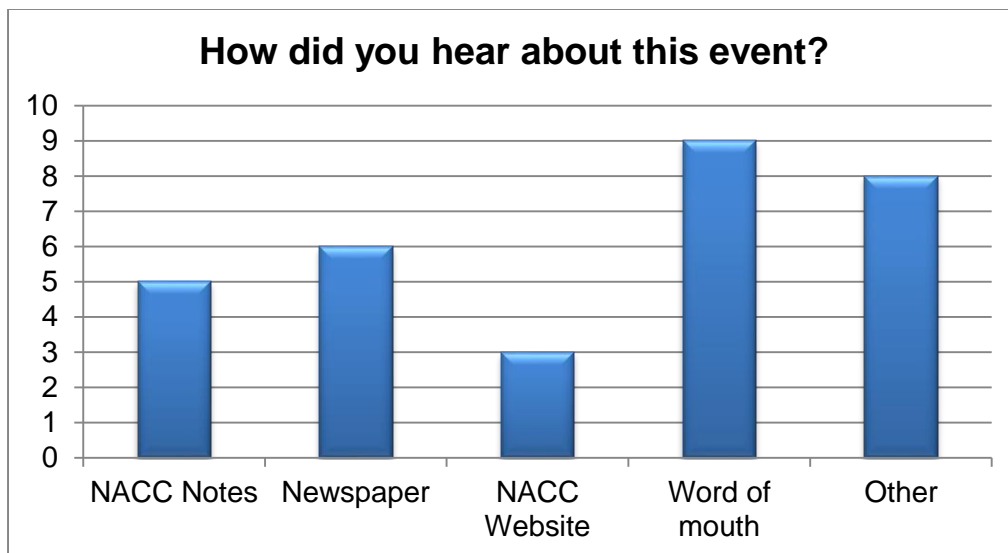


Question 12: How did you hear about this event?

22 respondents answered this question and their answers can be found in the graph below.

Seven respondent who mentioned 'other' provided additional comments:

- Guilderton Community Association (mentioned twice)
- Garden club
- Friends of Moore River Estuary
- Moore Catchment Council
- Gingin Water Group
- Community email



Question 13: Other comments?

Seven respondents answered this question and their answers are depicted below.

- Well organised. Great boat tour. Thanks Phil. Great food, thanks Cathy. All good. Thanks Rachel, Mic, Malcolm and Bev
- Well done. Very informative.
- Missed a great deal of workshop, but parts I did get to see were very informative.
- Thanks Mike and Rachel
- Wonderful experience. Professional presentation.
- Heritage talk a little befuddled.
- Would have liked more time at the end for management issues





Conclusion

Members of the Guilderton community requested that this workshop be held on a weekend to allow them to attend, resulting in an audience predominantly comprising of community representatives. Workshop participants considered the workshop format good and increased slightly their knowledge on the environmental values of and management issues for the Moore River Estuary. Management concerns focused mainly on the issue of expanding urban development on the southern banks of the Moore River. Maintaining and enhancing riparian vegetation, policing the use of recreational boats, increasing research and education, and managing off-road vehicle impacts were also highlighted as management concerns. Most participants indicated that they already considered their use/management of the estuary as sustainable. A willingness to share workshop information with others and to get involved in community-based activities were also strongly indicated.



Photograph 2: Dr Michael Payne presenting on the Moore River Estuary, 6 April 2013, Guilderton (photograph: NACC)

