

# 2nd Sustaining Rural Communities CONFERENCE 2011



## Sustaining Rural Communities Conference, Narrabri, April 2011

### Survey Report

Compiled by  
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**Overview:**

79 responses received out of attendance of 260 people (30%). The survey was sent out within 10 days of the conference being held.

96% of respondents felt that the conference either met or exceeded their expectations.

70% of respondents took the opportunity to write down their top ideas they had taken away from the conference that they are most likely to use.

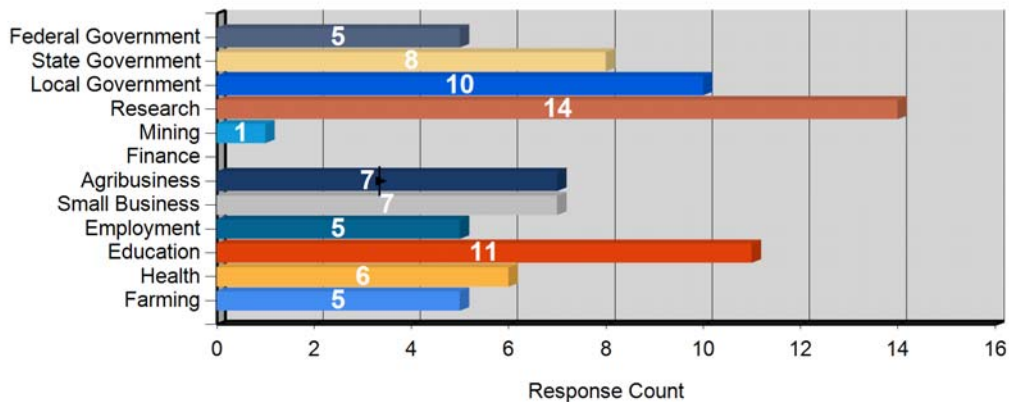
This survey has provided the organizers with some excellent feedback to consider when organizing the 2012 Conference.

The committee would like to thank everyone who attended the 2011 conference and helped make it a success in terms of driving rural sustainability, and to those who made the time to respond to this survey. Your efforts are much appreciated, and we hope to hear of some wonderful events and happening in rural areas in the next 12 months.

Best Wishes,  
SRC Committee.

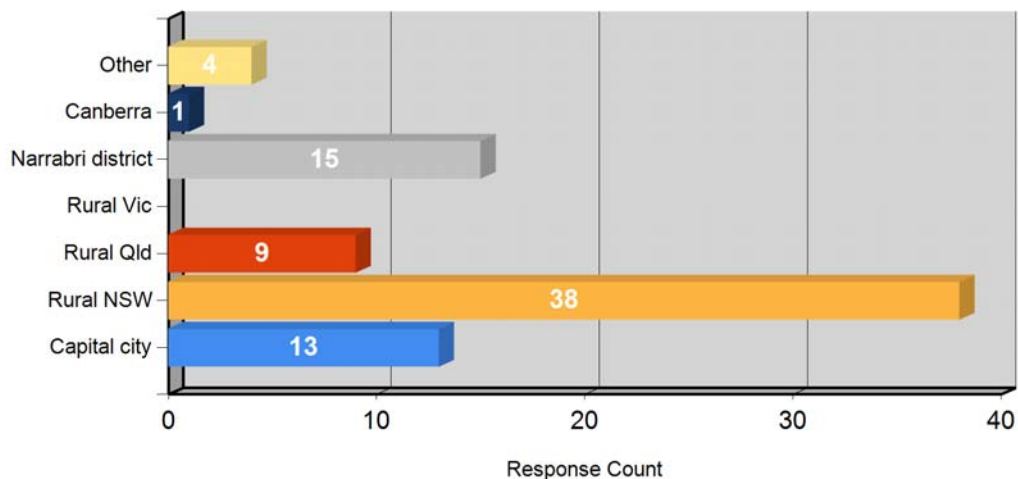
**Q 1. What is your area of work? (79 responses)**

**Summary note:** More than 50% of participants were professionals in 4 different fields.



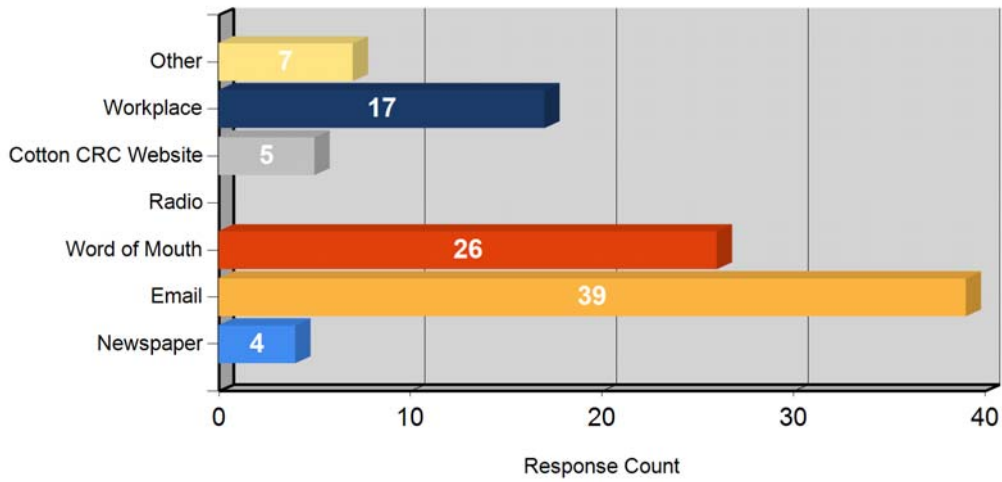
**Q2. Where do you live? (79 responses)**

**Summary:** About 67% of participants were from rural NSW (including Narrabri district)



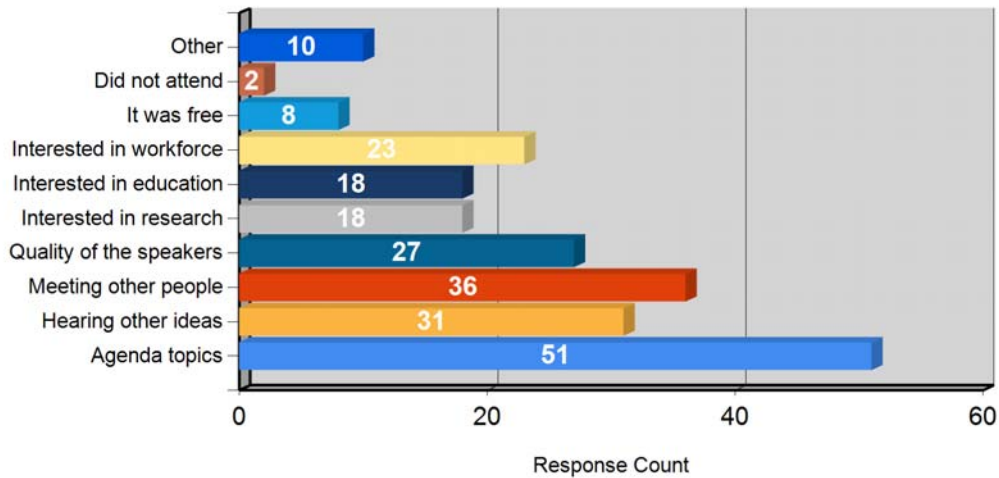
**Q3. How did you hear about the Communities Conference 2011? (79 responses)**

**Summary:** Email is the most effective way.



**Q4. What made you attend? (79 responses)**

**Summary:** Agenda Topics were the main drawcard, followed by meeting other people and hearing other ideas.



**Q5. Thinking about the activities during Day 1, rank them in terms of their value to you.**

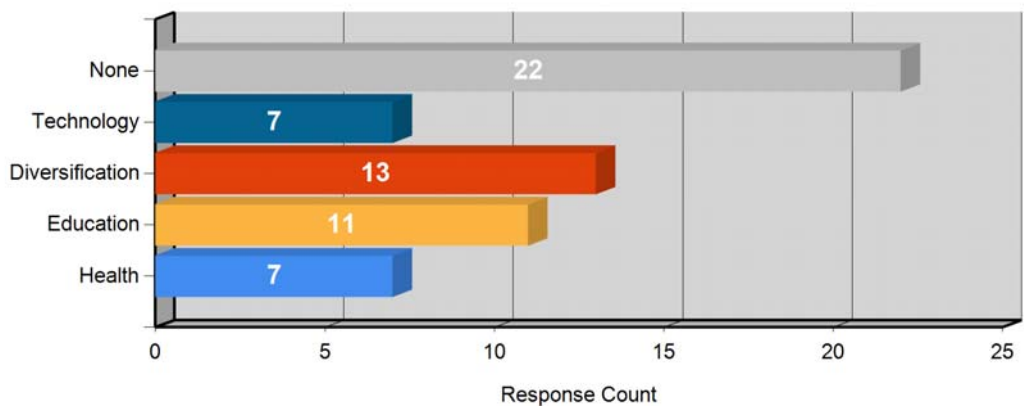
(In the table, 1 = no value; 5 = highest value, or NA= not applicable) (60 respondents)

**Summary:** Out of the people who attended the above activities, the most worthwhile activity nominated (ie. had high to highest value) was the **networking**, followed by the **speakers and dinner**. With **Ian Plowman's session** also being very rated very highly. The workshops and questions from the audience were rated less than the other activities

	1	2	3	4	5	NA	Total	% rated 4 or 5 out of no. attended
Day 1 speakers	0.0% (0)	5.2% (3)	12.1% (7)	50.0% (29)	15.5% (9)	17.2% (10)	58	79%
Day 1 workshop	1.7% (1)	10.2% (6)	20.3% (12)	33.9% (20)	8.5% (5)	25.4% (15)	59	57%
Day 1 Ian Plowman session	0.0% (0)	8.6% (5)	5.2% (3)	19.0% (11)	24.1% (14)	43.1% (25)	58	75%
Questions from the audience	1.8% (1)	10.7% (6)	30.4% (17)	30.4% (17)	8.9% (5)	17.9% (10)	56	52%
Networking	1.8% (1)	0.0% (0)	10.7% (6)	35.7% (20)	37.5% (21)	14.3% (8)	56	85%
Conference dinner	1.8% (1)	3.5% (2)	10.5% (6)	28.1% (16)	33.3% (19)	22.8% (13)	57	79%

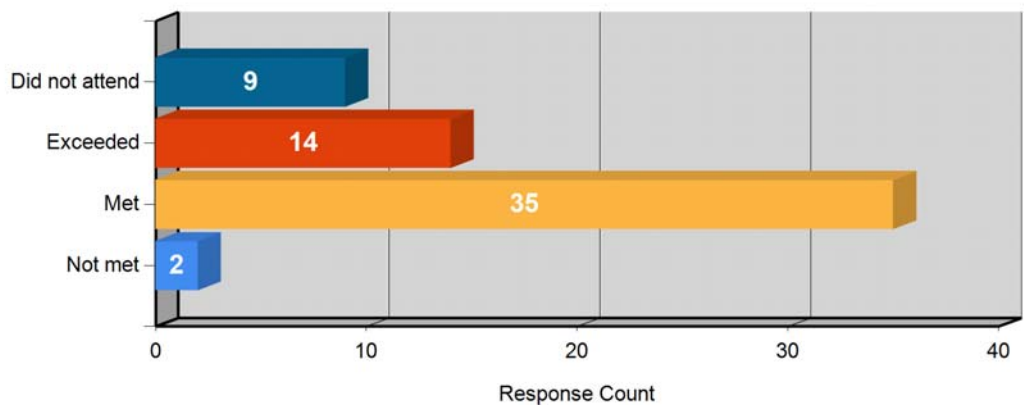
**Q6. Which workshop did you attend? (60 responses)**

**Summary note:** All workshops had good attendances



**Q7. Overall, how well did Day 1 meet your expectations? (60 responses)**

**Summary:** 96% of respondents who attended Day 1, said the conference met or exceeded their expectations



**Q8. Comments about Day 1 (21 responses), below are some examples of the pros and cons comments:**

A very well rounded and diverse group of speakers and workshop topics to build a spirit of working on ideas and learning together

Enjoyed the day thoroughly - it is great to see a forum which is focused on rural issues.

For me the speakers are too research focused and not community focused enough. I would rather hear more about what was actually happening on the ground that what is planned, or researched or being talked about. Real examples have power.

**Summary:** 13 respondents provided positive comments  
10 respondents provided constructive criticism

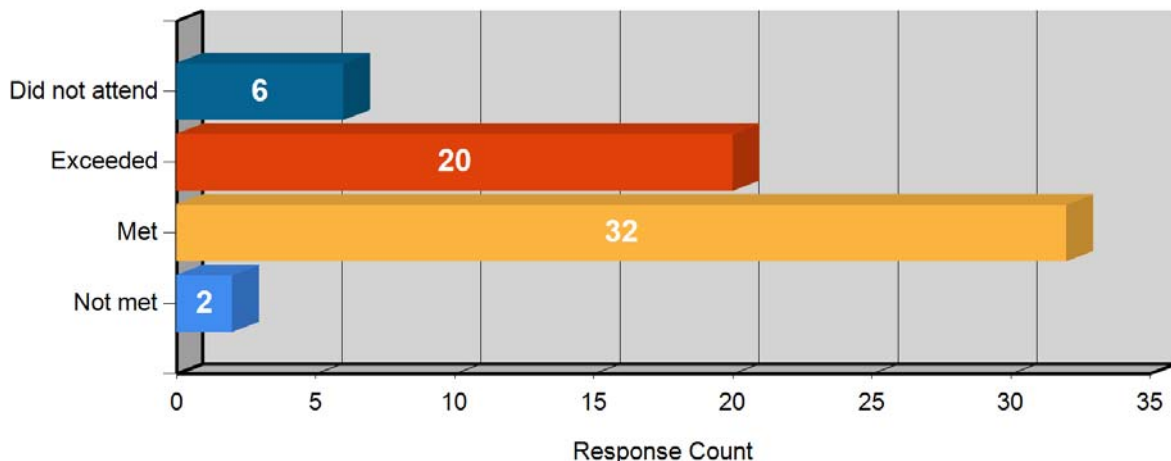
**Q9. Thinking about the activities during Day 2, rank them in terms of their value to you. (59 responses)**  
In the table, 1 = no value; 5 = highest value, NA = Not Applicable

	1	2	3	4	5	NA	Total	% of total attended who rated 4 or 5
Day 2 speakers	1.7% (1)	3.4% (2)	11.9% (7)	50.8% (30)	23.7% (14)	8.5% (5)	59	81%
Day 2 Panel session	0.0% (0)	6.9% (4)	17.2% (10)	44.8% (26)	19.0% (11)	12.1% (7)	58	73%
"Paws UP" display	3.4% (2)	1.7% (1)	6.9% (4)	24.1% (14)	31.0% (18)	32.8% (19)	58	82%
Questions from the audience	0.0% (0)	12.1% (7)	17.2% (10)	43.1% (25)	12.1% (7)	15.5% (9)	58	65%
Networking	1.7% (1)	0.0% (0)	8.6% (5)	44.8% (26)	32.8% (19)	12.1% (7)	58	88%
Clive Leach Session	1.8% (1)	3.6% (2)	12.7% (7)	18.2% (10)	16.4% (9)	47.3% (26)	55	65%
Lets Go Regional	0.0% (0)	5.4% (3)	7.1% (4)	17.9% (10)	23.2% (13)	46.4% (26)	56	77%
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>99</b>		

**Summary:** Many people had left the conference prior to the Clive Leach and the Let's Go Regional sessions. Also, many people did not see the Paws Up session and so could not comment on it. The quality of the speakers, networking and Paws Up were the 3 activities which were rated the highest on Day 2. The Panel session and Clive Leach session were scored next highest rating.

**Q10. Overall, how well did Day 2 meet your expectations? (60 responses)**

**Summary:** 96% of participants who attended Day 2, said that Day 2 met or exceeded their expectations.



<b>Q 11. Any comments about Day 2? (19 responses)</b> <b>Below are some examples of the positive and negative comments:</b>
great audience participation-good session at the end
The panel session was a standout event - high levels of diversity of people - all very capable of articulating their viewpoints Very well chaired by Helen Dalley - taking a journalist approach at questioning rather than facilitating
Interesting what big crowd the Hon Craig Knowles drew - is there a message there to always include a pollie on topic?
Inadequate introduction to the Paws Up session, people did not appear to know the context of the group nor their background.
I found the sessions given by Dr Jo-Anne Everingham and Craig Knowles of most interest to me, but I also was impressed by the way the facilitator managed discussion and mobilised input as the day progressed. For me, Day 2 was better than Day1.

**Summary:** 11 people provided positive comments  
9 people provided constructive criticism.  
There were many divergent views about the same sessions!

<b>Q12. Which sessions or issues are you interested in following up? Please list: (25 responses)</b>
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**Summary:** Out of the 25 responses:  
8 people indicated they wanted to follow up with Ian Plowman  
5 will follow up community type action  
4 will follow up Mining and Agriculture activities  
3 will follow up MDBA activities  
3 will follow up Let's Go Regional activities  
3 will follow up Regional Development (RDA)

<b>Q13. Thinking about the whole program that you attended, what were YOUR TOP THREE take home messages? (55 responses)</b>
1. Conference was a hotbed of political lobbying and positioning 2. Principles of economic development not fully embraced 3. Value of economic development practitioners not understood or embraced
1. Ways to engage people, community conversations 2. Paws up presentation - engaging young people 3. Resilience thinking - Namoi CMA
1. Water issues uniform in country areas 2. Social impacts from large businesses to not be ignored 3. Opportunities arise from anywhere
1. There is a lot of good work and good people in rural Australia. 2. The social ramifications of mining are HUGE and currently under resourced/ under considered. 3. Innovation, imagination and persistence are keys to sustaining rural communities.
1. Just do it, 2. Youth CRC
1. Localism is how communities will move forward in the changing environment 2. Change requires management not avoidance within a community for the outcome to be positive. 3. Many innovative activities out there need more forums to capture and share experiences
1. further opportunities for industries to work together
1. That we are not on our own with the mining and we still have a long way to go. 2. That Tony Windsor is for Regional Australia and not in it for himself. 3. That Craig Knowles is a good choice for his position.
1. Think relatively about solutions
1. We are fortunate to live in the country - great communities Needing to work together collaboratively to put actions into place

2. We are not second rate to Cities. 3. Technology can assist us upload this message	GREAT WORK by those involved
1. The importance of process design to maximise participant learning. 2. The wisdom of the collective and how it can be tapped. 3. Serendipity and how it can be maximised.	
1. Capacity needs resolution now 2. Still many tiers of institutions that don't talk to one another 3. Mining and Ag need to work together for thriving rural communities	
1. New strategies are needed to complement entertainment options for getting city people to visit regional/rural Australia	
1. stress and anxiety = narrow thinking 2. positivity produces disproportionate outcomes 3: 1 3. great ideas for community events and fundraising from the last session on day 2	
1. Rural communities have enormous social capital 2. The cotton community is vastly constituted -- more than location-based (ie not just Narrabri, or any other town.. it is well networked in other ways) 3. Cotton communities are diverse. 4. Cotton communities (at least at the Narrabri conference), are very concerned about social and environmental issues)	
1. There are no silver bullets: rural Australia has a long, hard haul ahead of it 2. Communities must work hard to take control of their own futures 3. Localism is the answer: top down doesn't work, bottom up can	
1. Positive attitude to the use of technology to build resilience in rural communities	
1. The way we construct organisations, looking at innovative ways to put a bit of life back in them and take away the burden. 2. Analysing our events and looking at ways to get over the 'hump'. 3. Promoting ways to get the message out about the opportunity in the bush	
1. This was a fantastic opportunity for like minded people to network and gain relevant information.	
1. There may be hope for a sensible MDBP 2. Progress is being made between agriculture and mining (though I don't believe the miners!) 3. PAWS UP is awesome	
1. More 'fine scale' research needed (e.g. impact of mining/energy development) to inform regional planning. 2. Role and value of communication technology in regional development. 3. Need to invest more time and effort in building the capacity of community to effectively participate and contribute to the improvement of their own region.	
1. Big ego speakers lose the audience Surprised how many people talked about themselves when asking a question! 2. Regional areas have some great creative people. 3. It was a well organised 2 days	
1. The conference attracts a different participation than normal industry and research forums. 2. The opportunity to use the strengths of this diversity of ideas and experience is exciting.	
1. Embrace technology and work out how it can be utilized in your community 2. MDBP has a long way to run 3. Need to identify 'local solutions' the extractive industries vs prime ag land is a major concern and governments favour mining, huge social costs to regional NSW	
1 Diversity is the core of regional thinking 2 The cotton industry is mature and can achieve most by engagement and leadership - there is no need for a hairy-chested approach for an industry that has many ideas and achieves through collaboration 3 Regionalism and localism is on the national agenda - the cotton industry can be a significant player through its leadership/vision	
1. Opportunities for collaboration 2. Update on fast changing policy context 3. Networking	
1. Community connectivity important. Clichés within a community not good - need to engage whole community 2. New industry should engage community - agriculture and non-agriculture	
1. move beyond disciplines; 2. go LOCALISM; 3. regional Australia definitely has a future;	
1. RDA seems to be the current gov't channel for investment in regional Australia - not sure what it's about 2. Aged care may be important and great something is happening – 3. We lose a lot of valuable people from regional areas well before that is the issue (schooling, opportunities, etc) - so many leave at peak of careers - a big drain from leadership in regional Australia	
1. Leadership in rural communities is critical 2. We waste a lot of time in meetings 3. Politics trumps science and economics (nearly) every time	
1. Mining is going to be a much bigger issue for water quality and quantity than anything the MDB Plan will ever impose. 2. Craig Knowles has many good values and aspirations for the process but it will be interesting to see how this actually	

<p>plays out.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Research continues to seek answers to complex questions but has trouble articulating the results.</li> </ol>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Concept of Politicians follow, they don't lead. The need to have people who can communicate our message succinctly to those in policy positions.</li> <li>2. Meeting procedures</li> </ol>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Localism Resilience RDA - need to get the Qld RDAs operating more effectively</li> </ol>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Need for a way to achieve collective action evident to achieve goals that there are currently a lot of ideas but some confusion on how to act</li> <li>2. Mining is a reality and legislation around it is inadequate and antiquated - miners appear to understand that this is the situation and is favourable for them.</li> </ol>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The focus on regions at the national level seems to be waning so we must do more to keep it front and centre</li> <li>2. as above</li> <li>3. as above</li> </ol>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Mining affects on communities</li> <li>2. Different ways to diversify rural communities</li> <li>3. Effective meetings/discussions</li> </ol>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Rural communities are sustainable</li> </ol>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Community Conversations and their importance</li> <li>2. Issues surrounding irrigation communities</li> </ol>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The importance of dialogue in land-use conflicts</li> <li>2. The importance of sharing research outcomes in every day language</li> <li>3. The importance of sustaining rural communities for Australia's future</li> </ol>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Retaining workers, attracting skills and employers to the regions.</li> </ol>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The importance of learning from the past</li> <li>2. The importance of listening to what rural people have to say</li> <li>3. The importance of planning</li> </ol>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Rural/regional people have the answers to the issues facing them, they just need to be more greatly engaged in the solution finding/defining process</li> </ol>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Networking is key</li> <li>2. Researchers don't live in the real world sometimes</li> <li>3. Politicians like the sound of their own voice</li> </ol>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Growing regional expertise in their own workshop planning is a definite positive</li> <li>2. Hearing messages that include local industry voices is valuable</li> <li>3. Networking with local leaders gets things happening</li> </ol>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. We are able to make great improvements to the community by implementing innovative ideas.</li> </ol>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Impact on mining in communities both positive and negative.</li> <li>2. Opportunities for students in ag/mining industries.</li> <li>3. How dedicated many of the groups were to improving their region.</li> </ol>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Find an alternative to CSG (Coal Seam Gas)</li> <li>2. Use precautionary approach with coal and gas mining.</li> </ol>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. MDB project being handled with more community confidence than previous</li> <li>2. I need to attend conferences like this to gain continued info &amp; make good contacts to enable good business decisions to be made for future. Boosts confidence</li> </ol>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Keep youth in rural areas</li> <li>2. Mining is a big issue</li> <li>3. Sustain rural communities</li> </ol>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Importance of knowledge sharing</li> <li>2. Rural communities need to be engaged more in opportunities through NBN roll-out</li> </ol>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Communities should lead policy, not wait for politicians to formulate policy</li> <li>2. Meetings need to have a clear purpose and time frame, be limited to selected participants, and have clear working rules to maximise productivity.</li> <li>3. Technology offers new opportunities for rural communities.</li> </ol>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Reminded - Sometimes good ideas just aren't adopted.</li> <li>2) Provoked - Like too many people, even noisy (quasi) politicians aren't interested in real answers - must remember that and leverage from it strategically as per:</li> <li>3) Enlightened - Ian Plowman's workshop, which was very enlightening.</li> </ol>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Rural communities are alive and thriving.</li> <li>2. Mining cannot be ignored as it is the elephant in the room and is not going away.</li> </ol>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Major socio-economic changes in our region due to policy and industry changes;</li> <li>2. Community consultation is critical need;</li> <li>3. Local solutions needed for local and regional problems</li> </ol>

1. Agriculture, technology and innovation to drive rural communities (more from the likes of NFF, VFF, AgForce)
2. Like to hear more about community initiative that work (eg Fleur Anderson, and discussion on how they can be further expanded)

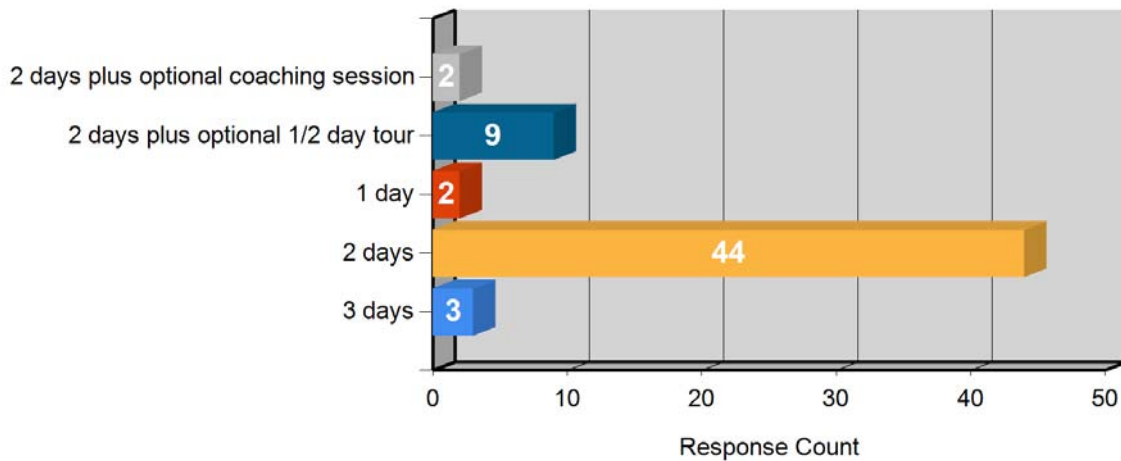
**Summary:** Very good response to this question, with most of the respondents taking the time to put down their thoughts.

Wide diversity of comments and good suggestions. Plenty of food for thought for organizers.

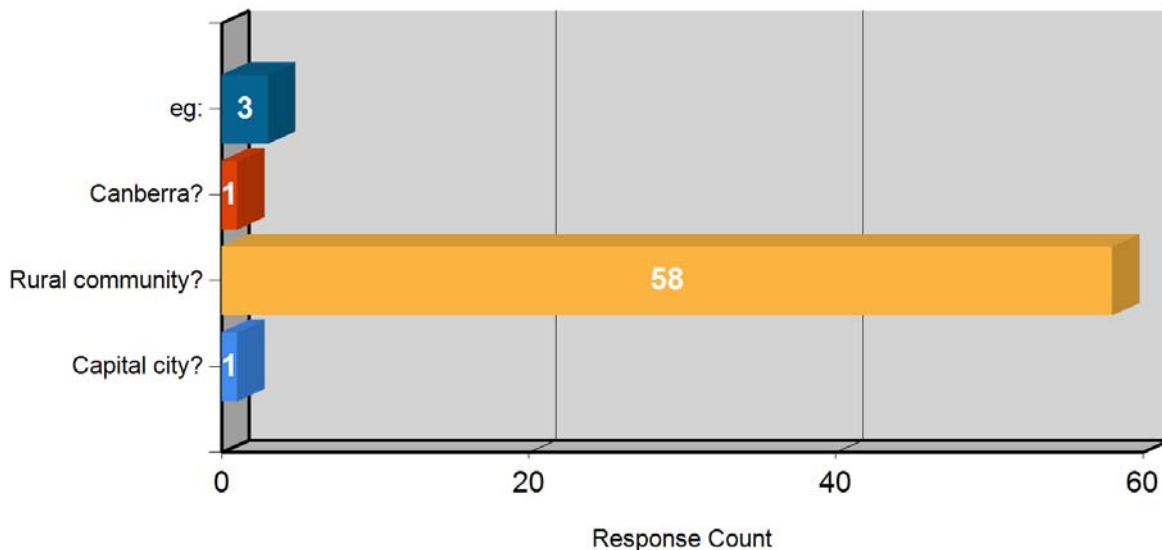
**Q. 14 For the 2012 conference, please list any suggestions or topics that you feel would be appealing (27 responses)**

**Summary** – Very good individual suggestions. Too many suggestions to summarise conveniently, except:  
 a) maybe to have follow up sessions from past years speakers to see how they situation has changed (or not).  
 b) Have real-life examples from other rural areas that have been successful.

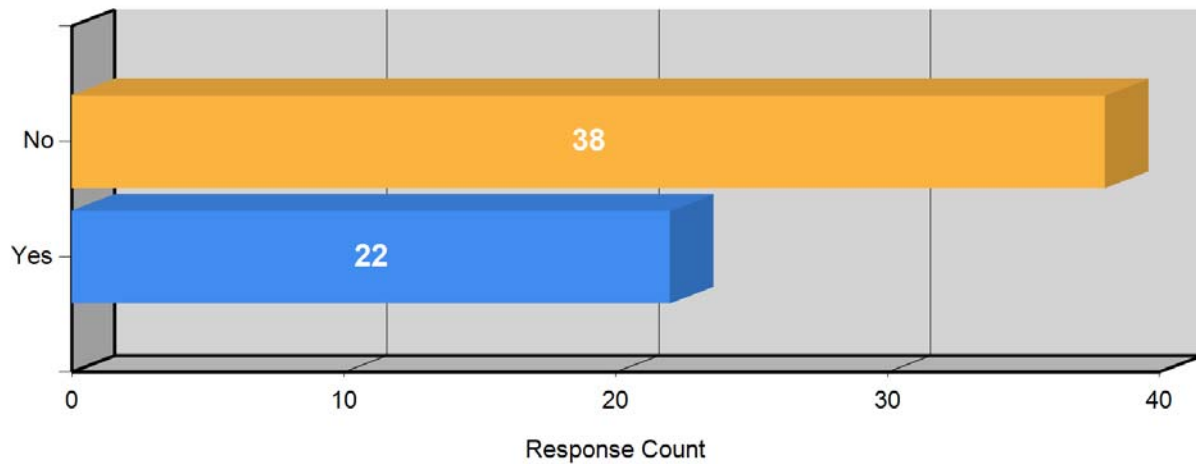
**Q15. How long do you think the conference should go for? (60 responses)**



**Q16. Where do you think it should be held? (60 responses)**



**Q17. Did you attend the 2010 SRC Conference? (60 responses)**



<b>Q. 18 If yes, did you implement anything in your life/community as a result of attending last year's conference? Feel free to briefly describe: (10/60 responses)</b>
Started own business – workshops for rural women
Utilised the networks that I was exposed to. This is a significant outcome because without the conference the relationships can not be established.
Greater linkages to other training programs
yes. Rural Health research from 2010 prompted me to become involved in a pilot program with the Cancer Council NSW
Continued on the path of developing my career in community development. Made changes to our strategic plan and the running of our organisation. Changes to our community consultation processes.
Closer ties with the mining industry - supporting Make It Work
Yes, hope to host a Plowman and a Leach w'shop in our community. Followed up with people I met at Conference.
I have worked through COTA to build up our involvement in the rural community around Canberra through a peer education program which provides talks/discussions with groups of elderly people on issues like depression, falls prevention, managing medications etc. The depression talks have been popular with men's sheds, church seniors' groups etc. They follow a course outline developed by Beyond Blue.
yes
Yes, paid more attention to Ray Brown issues and sent Councilors to Emerald and Roma to see for themselves what was happening.