

Community Wellbeing in the Western Downs: 2014 and 2016

Even though some aspects of wellbeing decreased and others improved, overall community wellbeing remains similar and robust over two years of CSG development.

The 2016 CSIRO Community Wellbeing and Responding to Change survey shows the biggest change in wellbeing from 2014 was the decrease in satisfaction in relation to jobs and employment opportunities, and the biggest improvements were in roads and the quality of the environment (e.g. dust and noise).

KEY POINTS

- The biggest change in wellbeing in 2016 was the decrease in satisfaction in relation to jobs and employment opportunities.
- The biggest improvements were in roads and the quality of the environment (e.g. dust and noise).
- Overall community wellbeing in the Western Downs region was favourable and remained relatively unchanged when measured in 2014 and 2016.
- On average, people who live in-town reported higher levels of wellbeing than those who live out-of-town.

What's most important for a sense of wellbeing within the community in 2016?

The 2016 CSIRO Community Wellbeing and Responding to Change survey shows that the key contributors to a sense of wellbeing in the Western Downs are:

- the level of services and facilities
- the social aspects of community life, such as community spirit and social interaction
- feelings of personal safety
- the opportunities for employment and businesses.

When people feel these aspects of their community are strong then they view their community as a great place to live, a place that offers a good quality of life to all ages.

Fifteen dimensions of community wellbeing assessed by residents

The survey measures 15 dimensions of community wellbeing across a wide range of topics, such as perceptions of community spirit, environmental quality, level of services and facilities, and employment and job opportunities.

In 2016, ten dimensions of community wellbeing were, on average, rated favourably. Five dimensions rated unfavourably including roads, community trust, environmental management for the future, decision making and having a say, and employment and business opportunities.

While some dimensions improved and others declined, overall community wellbeing remained virtually the same between 2014 when CSG development was in its busy construction phase and 2016 when the industry had slowed and was not yet in full operations phase.

Dimensions that improved from 2014

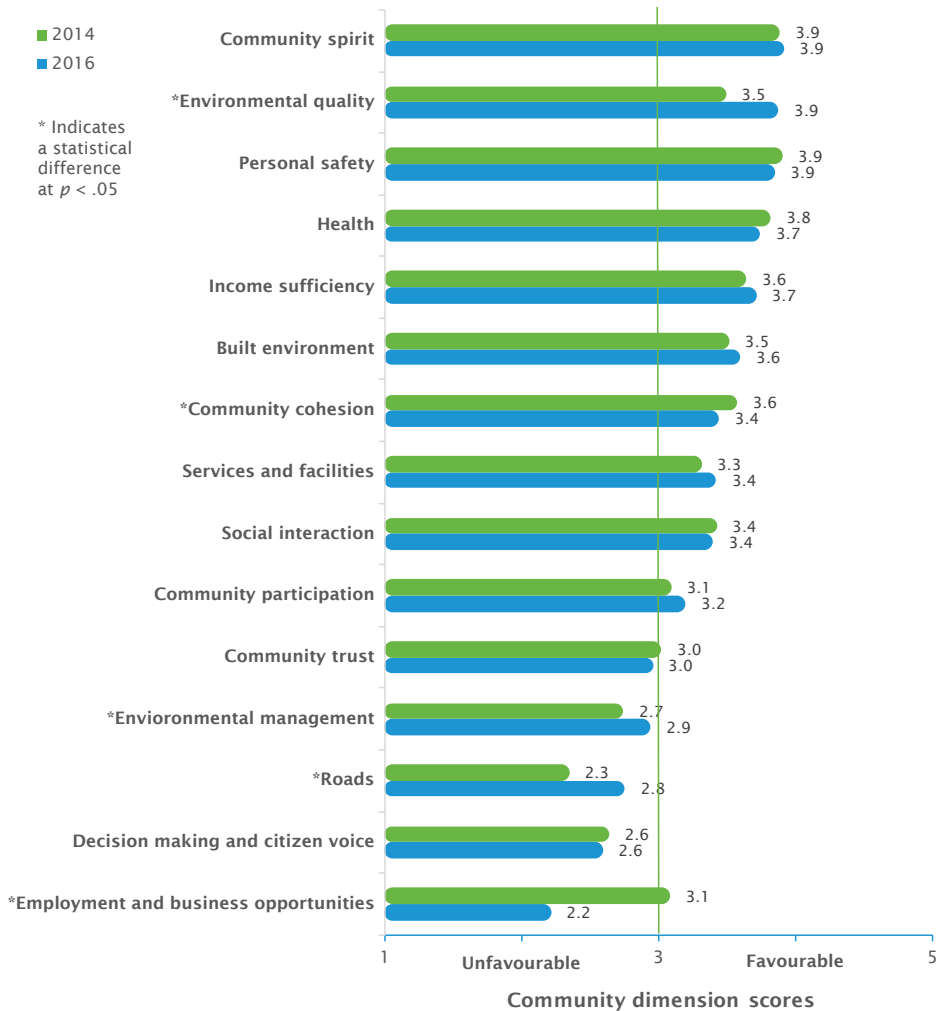
Perceptions of environmental quality relating to dust and noise improved significantly since 2014 to become the second most highly rated dimension in 2016.

Perceptions of roads and environmental management for the future also improved significantly since 2014, though residents were still not satisfied with these dimensions on average.

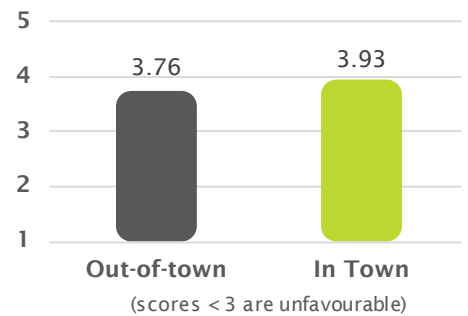
Dimensions that decreased from 2014

As may be expected, satisfaction with employment and business opportunities declined significantly between the construction phase in 2014 and the post-construction phase in 2016 to such an extent that residents were now dissatisfied on average.

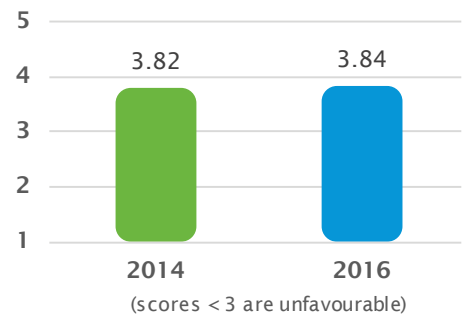
Perhaps not as expected was that community cohesion also declined significantly. Other dimensions of community wellbeing did not change significantly between 2014 and 2016, as did overall community wellbeing.



Graph 1: Community wellbeing dimensions: 2014 and 2016.



Graph 2: Overall community wellbeing 2016: resides out-of-town v in-town.



Graph 3: Overall community wellbeing: 2014 v 2016.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How did you conduct the survey?

We used a telephone survey that took 30 minutes to complete. We asked 400 people approximately 120 questions about their views towards quality of life in their community. We also asked them about their attitudes towards CSG development in their area.

When did you conduct the survey?

We conducted the survey in Feb 2014 and again in Feb 2016.

Who completed the survey?

We contacted people who lived in the Western Downs region of southern Queensland to participate. All participants were randomly selected using public lists of telephone and mobile phone numbers.

The people who completed the survey were a representative sample of the region based on the ABS statistics for age, gender, and working status.

We made sure that our sample included:

- 100 people each from the areas of Dalby, Chinchilla, Tara, and Miles
- Half the people lived 'In Town' and half the people lived 'Out of Town'.

Where do I find more information?

A complete report of the 2014 and 2016 CSIRO Community Wellbeing and Responding to Change survey can be found at the GISERA website gisera.org.au

Note: the 2016 report is due for release in July 2016.

ABOUT GISERA

The Gas Industry Social and Environmental Research Alliance (GISERA) is a collaboration between CSIRO, Commonwealth and state governments and industry established to undertake publicly-reported independent research. The purpose of GISERA is to provide quality assured scientific research and information to communities living in gas development regions focusing on social and environmental topics including: groundwater and surface water, biodiversity, land management, the marine environment, and socio-economic impacts. The governance structure for GISERA is designed to provide for and protect research independence and transparency of research. Visit gisera.org.au for more information about GISERA's governance structure, projects and research findings.

FURTHER INFORMATION: 1300 363 400 | gisera@gisera.org.au