

Historical and Heritage Importance of Newcastle

Individuals Attitudes towards Newcastle's History

Introduction:

Australia has a vast rich and interesting history for its people to learn about, however, it isn't until they travel overseas that they might have or seem to be interested in the history of the location that they travel to. Newcastle also has a rich history of its location, environment and people, some of which people are unfamiliar with whether that be through not having interest or simply not being taught about their local history in an educational environment, however, there are also individuals within the community that have an interest or have some prior known knowledge of the local history of the area. A simple 14 question survey was formulated and conducted for the GLAMx Living Histories Digitisation Lab, archiving and digitising historical information as a part of a 80-hour Social Science degree placement, asking the general public about their thoughts, opinions, attitudes about Newcastle's history to get a better understanding on what the general public know about its local history and whether individuals think Newcastle has important significant to Australia's greater history.

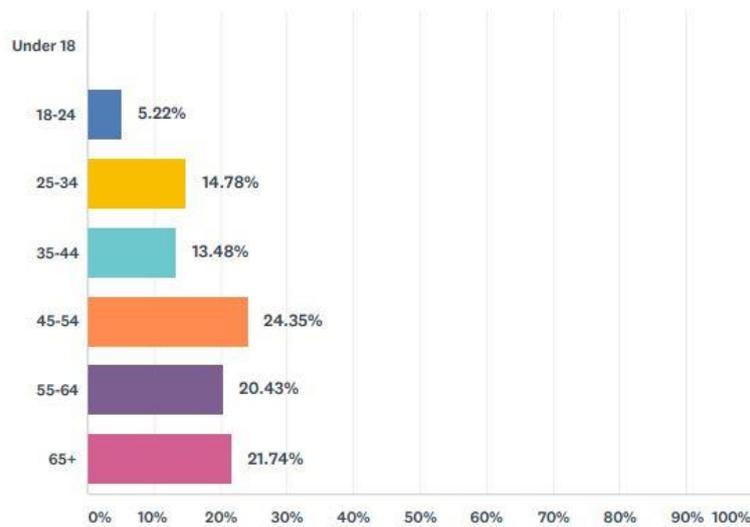
Methodology:

The survey results will be analysed and made into graphs to show a visual representation of what participants said and how many answered the questions in addition to interpreting the data to make a better understanding of the information given. The survey was sent out via personal social media and was shared by friends and family, it was also sent out to local Facebook groups that encompassed the Newcastle and hunter region. The survey was open for 3 weeks for participants to take part in the survey and over 230 individuals responded and participated in the survey. While participating in the survey participants were told that all information will be protected securely and that no private information will be asked and that every response will be anonymous so that any or sensitive information given did not reflect poorly on the individual's viewpoints and opinions.

Findings and Data Analysis:

From these 230 responses there was a variation in the age brackets individuals ranging from the 18-24 age bracket to 65+ (See Table 1 below).

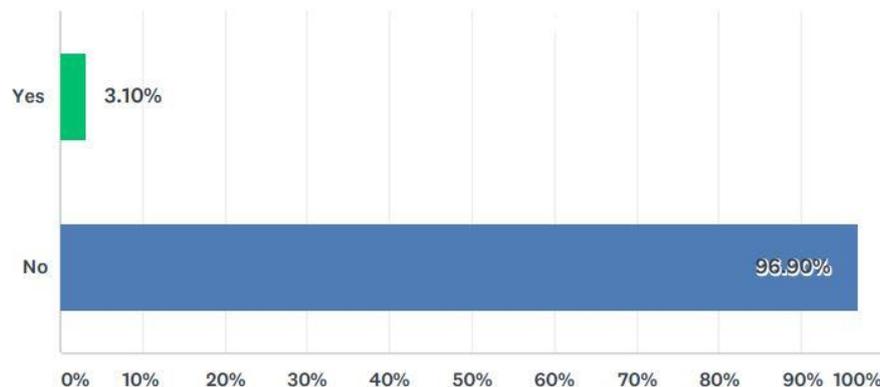
Q1 Age?



By looking at the ages of the participants we can get a sense of understanding of the types of individuals that are interested in partaking in a history survey and history in general about Newcastle's importance and their opinions and attitudes on this subject. We see that the younger three age brackets are somewhat smaller in percentages compared to the older age brackets with the 18-24 bracket being the lowest at 5.22% which equates to only 12 participants in that bracket. This small number can be an indication on a bigger scale that individuals in this age bracket do not have the same sense of interest in history because of the smaller number of responses in comparison to the older age brackets that have a significantly more responses. These higher responses in the older age bracket showcase that individuals of those ages have more of a sense of interest and importance in partaking in a history survey and general interest

in history because of their own lived experiences as well as having a greater sense of learning or preserving history throughout their lives.

Q4 Do you identify with being Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander?



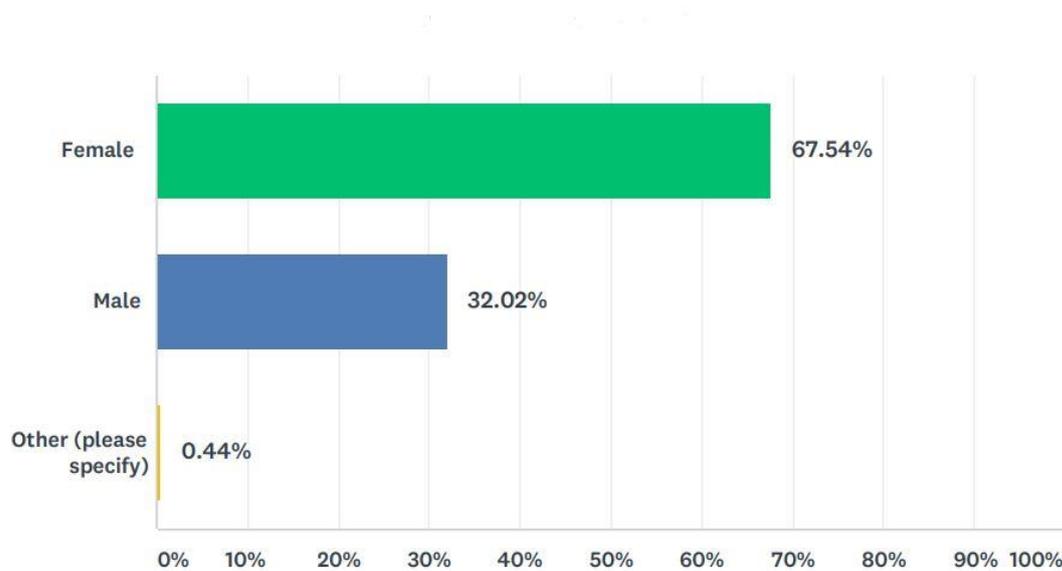
This graph shows the of the 230 responses 226 answer this and only 4 skipped the question leaving the percentages stating that 96.90% did not identify with being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and only 3.10% did identify with being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. This reflects the greater scale from information provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2016) which states that within the Newcastle and Charlestown regions combined that there are only 7,673 individuals that are or did identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and that they are of a smaller population and minorities compared to others in the same context and living. This small number could also indicate on a larger scale that individuals from indigenous backgrounds could have less

of an interest and opinions on history in their surrounding environment and location they live in.

The question of “*Do you identify with any other cultural background other than Australian?*” was asked in which 225 participants answer the question, 24% saying they did identify with another cultural background other than Australian and 76% did not identify with other than Australian. Many different cultural ethnicities were identified with another cultural background such include: Chinese, German, Tongan, Polish, Macedonian, Latino, Scottish, Canadian, Greek, Russian, Italian, Dutch, Croatian, New Zealand, Eastern European, Vietnamese, and Irish. Many can be seen that most have identified with ethnicities and cultural backgrounds from Europe as well as other ethnicities from across the globe which has had an influence on Australia’s identity and the way individuals connect with local history and history from cultural backgrounds. However looking at the term of ‘Australian’ and the many different aspects of ‘being Australian’ is difficult to interpret and analyse because of the many different nationalities and cultural groups that make up Australia’s population. Individuals, depending on age and general backgrounds, may perceive Australian to the stereotypical white Anglo-Saxon/Celtic in comparison to someone else who might recognize being Australian as a multicultural and have multifaceted dimensions depending on many different

aspects of ones living environments and attitudes. These differentiations in identifying can also have impact on where an individual might and might not focus on in terms of historical moments, sites, and stories relating to them and Australia's greater story.

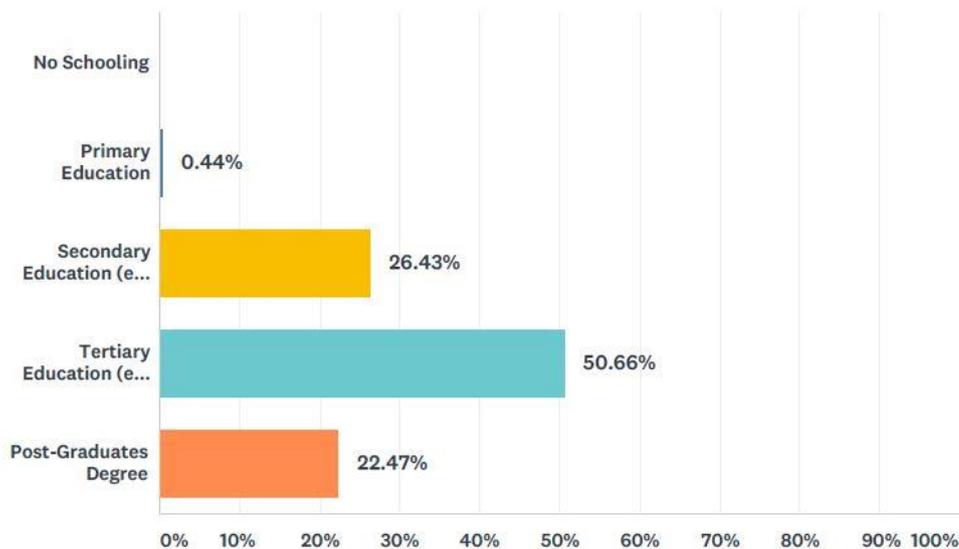
Q2 Gender?



An interesting factor to account in both and all the graphs included in this report, is that most and majority of 228 respondents that answered this question are or identified as female with over 67.54% (154 participants), while those who are or identified as male are only at 32.02% (73 participants) of the survey population and only 0.44% (1 participant) identified as other. This is interesting because this dives deeper than just the face value of if an individual is female, male or specified otherwise, it goes into such sociological aspects of why more female respondents answered this survey opposed to male respondents, are there

factors and explanations into why this occurs, why didn't more males answer. Due to time constraints on this project this was not answered, however it is an interesting point to think about.

Q3 What is the highest level of education you have completed?

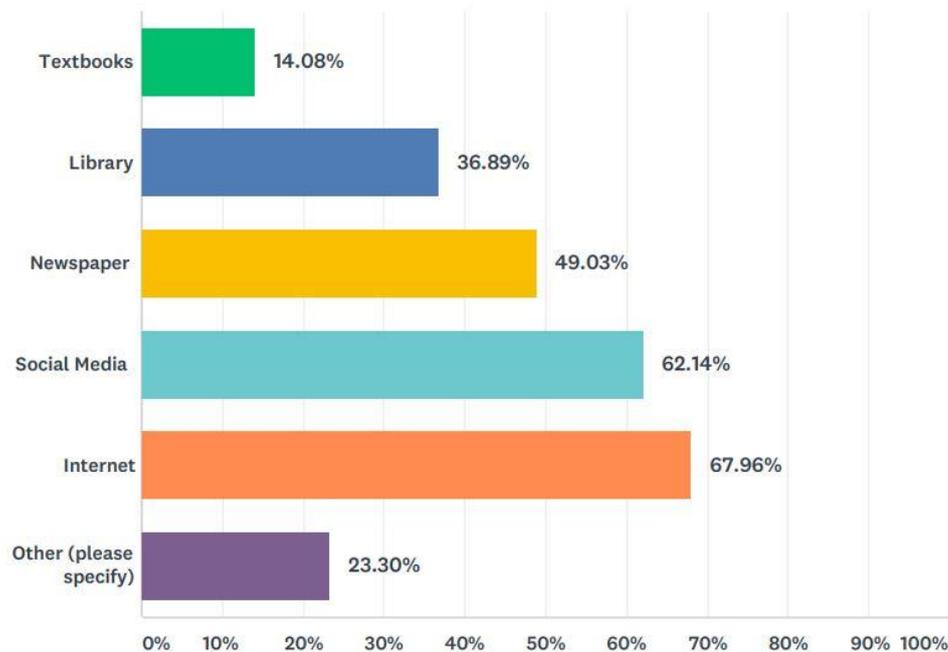


When asking this question the thought was would a level of education have an influence on whether an individual would be interested or have any knowledge of local Newcastle history. Again due to time constraints this was not further elaborated on but is an interesting aspects to think about. Looking at the graph above there are various options in which respondents could give insight into their highest level of education they have achieved. We see that the highest response is tertiary education, which was categorised with a Bachelors Degree or TAFE qualification, at 50.66% (115 respondents), secondary education, grouped by school certificate or HSC certificate, at 26.43% (60 respondents)

followed by post-graduates degree at 22.47% (51 respondents) and only 0.44% (1 respondent) that only achieved primary education.

It can be theorised that those who have the higher education such as tertiary education would have more of an insight and better understanding and an interest of local histories than those who have a lower education such as secondary or primary, however this can be difficult to evaluate because of the responders age and the time period in which they attended school and the information they received during those periods in their life. After looking at the data and analysing, further questions formulated does gender play a role in education? e.g. are females more likely to attend university or further their education compared to males that might only focus on entering the workforce than completing both work and study, after a certain degree of education such as TAFE where individuals learn in workplace and practical skills and once finished will cut ties with learning. Again to time constraints this was not fully answered.

Q11 Where do you mostly find or come across information about Newcastle's History? (Click multiple if applicable)



Respondents were asked “Where do you mostly find or come across information about Newcastle's History?” in which 206 responded answered and 24 skipped the question, the responders were asked to click the answer in which correlated to how or where they found information on Newcastle’s history. The most in which information was found was the internet at 67.96% (140 responses), although the internet is a general blanket term and has various and broad areas in which information is found it is a useful search tool to start or begin searching for information. Next was social media at 62.14% (128 responses), social media could be include in the internet option however this was specifically asking if responders were getting information such such websites as Facebook, Twitter Instagram etc. Newspapers followed at 49.03% (101

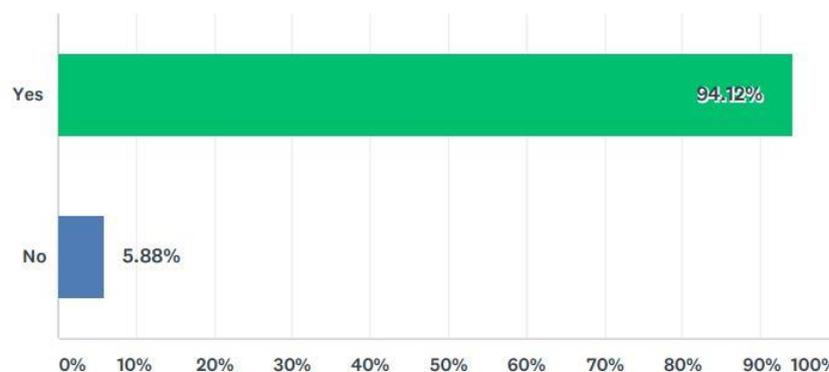
responses) then library at 36.89% (76 responses) lastly textbooks at 14.08% (29 responses) again like internet and social media, library and textbooks could also be linked together however library has slightly more in which individuals could find information.

This is further reinforced when responders were asked if any other ways or outlets in which information could be found about Newcastle's history. 23.03% (48 responses) clicked other and specified places or outlets in which they acquired information, some comments include: state archives, library archives, visiting historic sites, museums and photo albums. More than 14 responses indicated that they learned about Newcastle's history through oral presentation, whether that be through older family members telling stories, family knowledge, friends, talking other people and local ABC radio. One respondent's comment states *"rather than textbooks per se, local history publications are more useful, plus oral histories and photographs are of prime importance"* which perfectly encapsulates there are an array of outlets and places in which information and interest can found about Newcastle's history.

These demographic questions help serve the purpose of giving a background into general information about the public and the individuals that responded, but can also lead into complex and abstract aspects as discussed earlier of whether

education and gender play a role in learning, understanding or finding interest in local history as well as if cultural backgrounds influence an individual and the answers they provided. The second half of the survey also has demographic elements but was more free and open for individuals to leave comments after they had clicked on the answer correlating to the question.

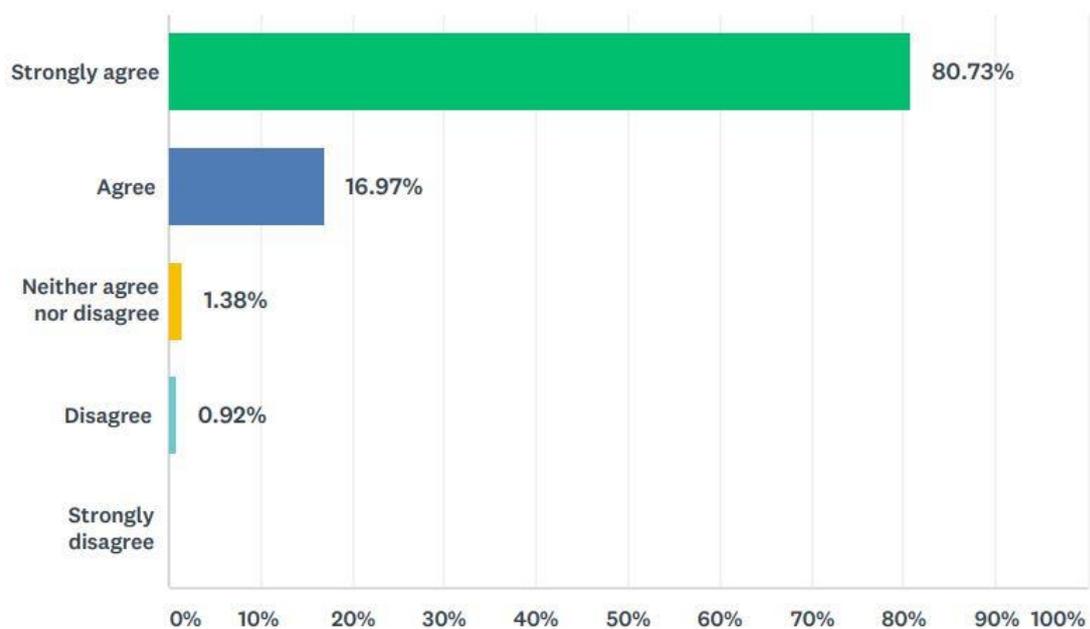
Q12 When travelling overseas do you visit historical places in other countries?



Individuals were asked “*When travelling overseas do you visit historical places in other countries?*” of the 204 individuals that answered this question an outstanding 94.12% (192 responses) said they would visit and have an interest in learning about the country’s historical relevance while visiting historic sites of interest which would broaden their historical capital of the worlds history. Interestingly enough 5.88% (12 responses) stated they would not visit historical sites while travelling overseas, this could be because some factors such as age, no interest in history, they could be visiting family and have no time for exploration, possible already know history of the country. This the poses the

question if individuals have an interest for overseas history do they have the same interest and knowledge for local and national history of Australia. Which leads into further parts of the survey where questions were asked to get participants to answer about Newcastle's history and get them thinking about if there were points about Newcastle that are significant.

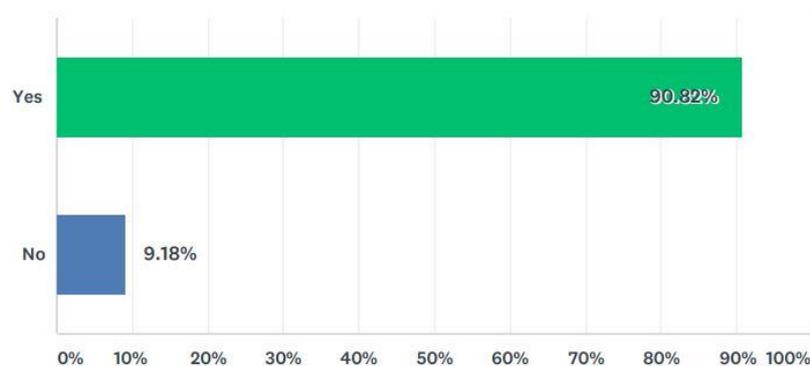
Q9 Do you think that Newcastle's history is important?



Participants were asked if they thought that if Newcastle's history was important of the 218 that answer this question, majority strongly agreed or agreed respectively with over 97.7% (213 responses) combined, 1.38% (3 responses) either didn't know too much information of the city or just did have a concrete and decisive answer. In comparison the question which we asked

“Do you think that Newcastle's history has national significance?” where 207 participants answered in which 90.82% (188 responses) agreed that Newcastle’s history has national significance and 9.18% (19 responses) disagreed and said that it did not have national significance. These 2 question are similar in wording this is done so to get and honest and authentic response, and just at by comparing the responses it is clear that individuals do think that Newcastle is important and has national significance. Along with the national significance question we gave participants the option to further elaborate “if yes why?” which have over 132 responses.

Q10 Do you think that Newcastle's history has national significance?



Of these 132 response as well as other responses in the survey could be divided into 2 themes, Tangible and Non-Tangible. For example tangible would encompass historical sites that are still around to this day, physically and are able to touch and see the building, structures etc., and intangible would be

histories that are things we can't see or touch and would be related to oral histories that would be passed down through family or other outlets such as individuals that are no longer around to this day and the impact they had on the time and their legacy. Participants left an array of response and gave an understanding that Newcastle's history has national significance and is important overall. The general consensus amongst those who just answered and those who left comments was that Newcastle has national significance, many stating it being one of the earliest European settlement and the convicts that arrived in early 1800s outside of Sydney and the prime location of it being near the coast and the Hunter (Coal) River for easier transportation and exporting items, produce and materials as well as some of the most recent years of the industrial presence of BHP and OneSteel, some also note some military history and role Newcastle played. Some responses:

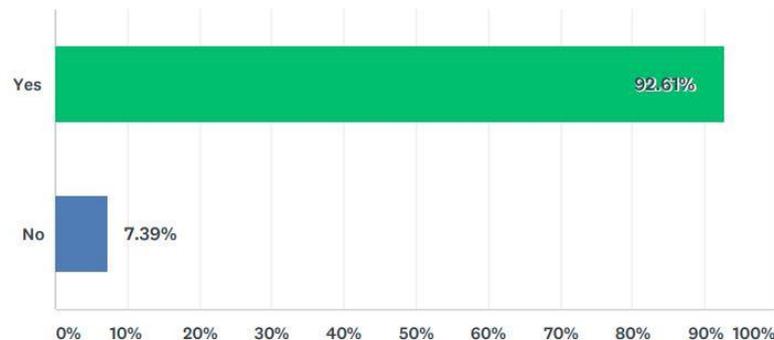
"Newcastle has always been 'needed' by Sydney, first as a place to hold convicts twice convicted, and as a source of coal. Produce from the Hunter Valley were shipped through Newcastle to Sydney. To the elites and merchants of Sydney, Newcastle was then seen as utilitarian material resource where convicts worked under the compulsion of camp commandants, or were assigned to landholders to clear properties and provide very cheap labour. Convicts exiled here were not just vital but essential to meeting the primary needs of Sydney -coal, timber and produce -and a distant prison. Because of the results of their blood soaked toil the history of Newcastle has national significance."

“It was one of the earliest settlements outside of Sydney. It provided the fledgling colony with coal, cedar, farm land, timber and somewhere to place recalcitrant convicts. It had a large navigable river and the surrounding land was suitable for farming, so this helped the colony to be able to become more self-sufficient with regard to food. The availability of farm land allowed free settlers to populate the northern part of the state. There were good transport links to Sydney by sea, initially.”

“As the second mainland settlement of the colonial era Newcastle has a premier place in the history of colonisation and of the nation. Prior to that, this area was home to two powerful groups of Indigenous peoples (Worimi and Awabakal) and their histories and cultures have national significance. Further the early development of industrialisation in the colony was dependent on coal and other raw materials harvested from this area. The city's military history is nationally significant. The city that grew would be a national mainstay in times of peace and war for the production of coal and steel. Further important battles in labour relations in terms of class and gender were waged here that had impacts far beyond the region's borders to the national level. The ways in which the city has transformed over the centuries to embrace its post-industrial future is also significant to the future of the nation.”

Just like the statement above, some participants also left comments about the local Indigenous history and heritage and how certain parts of their culture have remained and combined with the settlement, as well as how there could have been conflicts between the Indigenous communities and the settlers and the integration of this community and how they worked within the society.

Q13 Do you think public funding (e.g. Tax, Donations, and Government Funding etc.) should assist in preserving Newcastle's heritage, and more generally Australian history and heritage?



Participant were also asked *'Do you think public funding (e.g. Tax, Donations, and Government Funding etc.) should assist in preserving Newcastle's heritage, and more generally Australian history and heritage?'*, of the 230 that did the participated in the survey, 203 answered and 27 skipped the question and didn't input their opinion and attitude of this question, 92.61% (188 responses).

However agreed that some sort of public or government funding should be involved with preserving Newcastle's heritage as well as Australia's overall history and heritage. 7.39% (15 responses) said that it shouldn't be publicly funded of some sorts. This question also asked if they did responded to yes why they thought this, over 125 addition comments were made to further back the idea that public funding should assist preserving Newcastle history.

"Newcastle has such a precious heritage...such sites, buildings, people, which we need to conserve (not the people of course but they need to be listened to and written about) Some of these people who

have given so much to this community, indigenous and others as well need to be heard and recorded before it's too late."

"Governments represent, in a sense, Australian history. If history is to be preserved, and promoted, in Australia funding will not come from private sources. The people (generally speaking) are interested in history, and Governments are, or at least are supposed to be, Representatives of the people."

"Newcastle has too few early structures that evidence Newcastle's origins. Those that survive must be preserved as markers in time. I believe if the roots of our history are not understood, and shown in relief, then we have no history. The story of Newcastle is not well told. What buildings and lands that exist should be preserved as our heritage, and winning support through government funding and public donations should be a priority."

"It is absolutely imperative that public funding be used to preserve the history, cultural and material heritage of Newcastle and elsewhere because it is a very deep but easily destroyed treasure in terms of Aboriginal heritage with a thin and seemingly ephemeral veneer of European heritage. Without public funding we will find it increasingly easy to clear away, particularly material culture, because it can seem an impediment to progress. Although it has been suggested in the past, it may be time to investigate heritage lotteries as they have in the UK."

"Definitely - I love the French notion of "patrimony", the idea of culture, place and history being significant to a nation's people, and I strongly think our government should fund preserving and promoting heritage."

“I'm currently travelling overseas and what I've learnt about other cultures by visiting their historical sites is amazing. Tourists and locals should have the same opportunity to do the same in Newcastle”.

These additional comments given, give a sense of a small populations understanding and attitude towards the idea of public funding toward Newcastle's history and heritage. Generally participant's answers would gravitate towards physical tangible places that still stand such as building and areas in the city but some would also note the intangible histories such as individual's and family stories and indigenous histories that are not well known or documented.

As mentioned above the French have the word 'patrimony' which is the idea of culture, place and history being significant to a nation's people, this is seemingly a good concept for a nation to have to preserve and acknowledge their past and look back on it and to see how far it has come. The changed attitudes within its society and physical changes whether it be good or bad perception of history of a country should still be documented and preserved as it plays an important part in country's history and identity. Again because of the larger older age brackets answering the survey they might have the mindset of preserving and maintain history and heritage compared to a younger 18-35 demographic who had a smaller percentage in answering, might be all for change and completely

disregarding historical buildings and lose touch with their local identity and the importance of the past.

At the end of the survey the question *“Is there anything else that you think is important history or heritage about Newcastle?”* was posed as an optional question if they felt that if they missed the opportunity to talk about something then they could mention it as something else that was/is important to Newcastle’s history. Of the 230 that participated around half (114) answered adding anything they thought was something important or interesting to add. Two comments that stuck out as interesting to me where:

“I’m particularly interested in the history of significant women in Newcastle and the region because they have been hidden behind an industrial smoke screen.”

“Social history. Feminist history. Physical history. Just about all ‘genres’ of history not related to industrial and political history! Newcastle’s history - other than industrial/political - is a largely untapped source of information that few Novocastrians understand or care for.”

These are interesting to look at because majority or most of the participants that took part in the survey are female and mention mostly about industrial and masculine side of the city’s history such as the coal, steel, mining, labour etc., compared to the other history in which women took place in or had influential

impacts. The comment above uses the term of 'smokescreen' which used metaphorically and physically, because Newcastle throughout its many early decades in the industrial periods was described to be surrounded by a thick and heavy smokescreen. This smokescreen has somewhat acted as a metaphorically wall when used in feminist or women's history in Newcastle because it has not been well documented or acknowledged because in thought history in many cases women were seen to be less or under the influence of men so much attention was possibly not paid. So it might be an interesting area to further research or preserve knowledge and any influence women that play an important roles in the city's development as well as when most of the men and some women who went to war women were left behind to take over and take control.

Another interesting area in which participants commented on was Indigenous histories. Some participant felt that it is important to further preserving Indigenous cultural histories such as the oral histories and stories within their culture and different communities and heritage sites, as well as the traditional owners of the land within Newcastle area like the Awabakal and Worimi people which should be respected and remembered. While others on the other hand also commented on the different diversity of culture and ethnicities in the recent

history in addition to past and older history and the influence of migrants or foreigners had on the region over time.

Generally most participants further mentioned specific place of interest that they thought was interesting such as, old houses and buildings like the old court house, General changes in location, Fort Scatchley, Lumberyard, Bogey Hole (Commandant's pool), Royal Newcastle Hospital, post office just to name a few some also talk about intangible things like events such as the star hotel riot and the 1989 earthquake that struck the city. However, the notable revival of the Post Office which will be used as a commercial business and function area incoming years can be seen as a way of preserving and maintaining the location while showcasing it in a different view, this concept could be implemented in to other areas and old building as a new take on enlightening public of its past in addition to new utilisation of the space. In addition to general interest in building histories participants also mentioned and have a general consensus of preserving these areas histories and structure as well as preserving other means of history such as oral histories and stories. One comment which had an overall concern of individuals in the community not knowing or caring about Newcastle's history states:

"I am at times distressed with the number of people who care or know little about it. I am not against progress but too many people condemn those who seek to retain many of our historical edifices. Many

fine pieces of historical architecture are being condemned, only to be replaced by monotonous boxes with glass. How soon before the post office and all those old buildings in the city region are pushed from our memories. Ask young people of Newcastle's history and they either don't know or don't care. I might suggest that many who argue against history and push for progress, would not hesitate to travel the world to see places whose history has lasted for hundreds, if not thousands, of years."

Conclusion:

To summarise, findings of this survey help in understanding how the general public have a concept and knowledge of its local history and heritage. We have been able to interpret many different aspects of the responses given. Age could have been viewed as stereotypical that those in a younger age bracket would be less inclined to do the survey or be interested in Newcastle history.

Gender was another interesting factor to look at in terms of which gender would have done the survey and who was interested, it was found that in this survey that more females answered than males. This could also lead in to the next topic which was education and the many different levels in which participants achieved their highest level of education which could have a correlation to gender and why more female than male participated however this wasn't further developed because of time constraints. We also looked at how many individuals were Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders in addition to individuals that have cultural or ethnic background other than Australian but again Australian is hard to interpret and have one concrete definition.

From these base demographic question we were able to get the opinions and attitudes of the participants who were involved. From questions ranging on what they thought was important or had national significance in addition to where and how they found information on Newcastle's history through various outlets. Through these question we were able to find that majority would mentioned Newcastle's Industrial history from the beginning stages to most recent times as well as the first settlement and settlers. From this they also mention the need to preserve history whether they are tangible things like building, sites or structures and intangible things like earthquakes, the star hotel riots, indigenous histories because the lack of written or documentation as they would commonly use oral history to past on to future generations, in addition to general many stories from older individuals. In general most participants were able to give some form of a response on their thoughts and opinions of Newcastle's history and heritage having some form of general or detailed knowledge of places, things and stories. Again this survey serves a base foundation which could be used in to further studies and only so much was worked on because of time constraints of the placement not everything was able to be worked on.

Reference List:

Australian Bureau of Statistics Newcastle:

[http://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/
quickstat/CED131](http://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/CED131)

Australian Bureau of Statistics Charlestown:

[http://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/
quickstat/SED10018?opendocument](http://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/SED10018?opendocument)