Our Story:

The NSW Burns Community in Transition
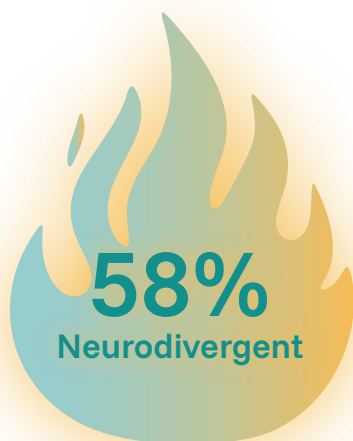
A comprehensive analysis of the 2025 NSW Burns Community Survey

Contents

Introduction

518
Respondents

58%
Neurodivergent

425+
Willing to
Volunteer

83%
Attended
>1 Burn

Executive Summary

This document presents the findings from the most comprehensive consultation in NSW Burner history; capturing the voices of 518 community members across New South Wales and beyond. The survey reveals a mature, experienced community ready to build sustainable events that serves both seasoned participants and newcomers seeking authentic connection.

Our community is predominantly middle-aged (73% aged 35-54) with deep cultural knowledge (83% have attended multiple events) and a remarkably high proportion of neurodivergent members (58% identify as or are exploring neurodivergence). We are geographically concentrated in Sydney and Newcastle but draw participants from across Australia, creating a strong foundation for regional events.

The data reveals abundant capacity for growth: over 425 people ready to volunteer, 180 prepared for leadership roles, and widespread agreement on core values including radical inclusion, accessibility, and sustainable practices. This is not a community struggling to find direction—it is one with clear vision, proven capability, and the experience to turn aspirations into reality.

Collective Vision Statement

We are 500 passionate souls, primarily from Sydney and Newcastle, with 73% aged 35-54 and over half neurodivergent. We come for community and connection (76%), self-expression and creativity (62%), and transformative art and music (48%). While 54% feel deeply connected, nearly a third feel on the edges—reminding us that true inclusion requires intentional effort.

We envision a thriving NSW Burner ecosystem with year-round connection: one flagship regional burn scaling toward 1,500 participants, smaller seasonal gatherings of 400-800 people, quarterly micro-burns, and monthly social meetups. We commit to spaces where families, neurodivergent individuals, seasoned burners, and curious newcomers all belong.

Collective Capabilities

When 518 community members shared their skills, a picture of abundance emerged. We have over 425 people ready to volunteer, 180 prepared for leadership roles, and 95 offering specialist resources like workshop spaces and equipment. Nearly 300 have attended five or more burns, carrying deep cultural knowledge that ensures continuity and authenticity.

Our volunteers cover every essential area—from Rangers and Greeters to artists and Leave No Trace specialists. Leaders are willing to commit reasonable hours: 1-4 weekly for Team Leads, 4-8 for Department Captains, 3-5 for strategic roles. We prefer clear roles, proper training, and cooler-month events that work for both fire safety and volunteer energy.

The numbers tell a story of abundance, not scarcity. We have the capacity, skills, and most importantly, the willingness to build something extraordinary together.

How to Read This Report

This report is structured to mirror the survey questions that community members answered, allowing readers to navigate directly to topics of particular interest. Each section builds upon the previous one, creating a comprehensive picture of who we are and where we're heading.

For Community Members:
You'll find validation of your experiences and insights into how your individual voice contributes to our collective direction.

For Organisers:
You'll discover not just what the community wants, but proof that we have the skills, experience, and commitment to achieve it.

For Partners and Stakeholders:
You'll see a mature, self-aware community ready for strategic collaboration.

The detailed findings support three key conclusions: we have a clear collective vision, abundant capabilities, and a predictable trajectory toward sustainable growth. Whether you read cover to cover or focus on specific sections, you'll encounter the same story—a community that knows itself and is ready to build the future it envisions together.

Acknowledgements

The Independent Burners Analytics Group

Peter Simpson-Young

Background in neuroscience and philosophy; currently works in research translation strategy. Co-leads the Bourges Douf theme camp.

Teresa Trevoire

Background as a Sexologist, Psychotherapist, and Communications Strategist. Leads the Garden of Squirting Nymphs theme camp.

COI: SBA membership sub committee, Garden of Squirting Nymphs lead, professional counselling practice

Ariane "Shiny" Blanch

Background in physics, medical research, and IT with expertise in data integration and visualisation.

COI: Burning Man Regional Contact, Former Sunburnt Events Director, Former BOSS Co-Chair

Dr Leanna Pugliese

Doctor of Pharmacy and Investigational Medicines specialist. Founder and Director of Sparkhaus Studio Makerspace.

COI: Sunburnt Arts Director (acting), BM Regional Contact, BoNZA co-producer, former BOSS director/cofounder, former Burning Seed Town Councillor, Restructure team member 2019-2024

Gabe "Doof Daddy" Rey

Risk and Public Safety Investigations Officer for the NSW Government with degrees in Human Geography, Public Safety, and Psychology.

COI: Sunburnt Arts Director (acting)

Dr Roland Warner

ICU specialist and climate organiser with an interest in using data for event planning.

COI: Embers 2025 organiser

Ale Mac

Background as a Psychologist with experience in IT support.

COI: BM Regional Contact Sydney, Embers 2025 organiser

Dr Felipe Aires

Background in Fire Science, Knowledge Management, and Bushfire Management.

COI: Embers 2025 organiser, Ex-SBE director

Alicia Dudek

Specialist in Design Ethnography and founder of MycoReality.

The Story We're Telling: Community Identity & Values

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The Story We're Telling: Community Identity & Values

Why This Story Matters

In the wake of Burning Seed 2025's cancellation, the NSW Burner community found itself at a crossroads. What began as disappointment revealed itself to be an opportunity to pause, reflect, and intentionally design a future that honours both our past and our potential. This report is not merely a survey analysis; it is a community portrait painted with data, a story told through the statistics and authentic voices of 518 community members.

The Independent Burners Analytics Group (I-BAG) emerged from this moment, formed by passionate volunteers who believe in the power of collective wisdom. Our independence is philosophical: we operate to serve the community's interests, believing that communities thrive when they understand themselves clearly and ground decisions in evidence.

This report frames findings as insights and observations, not problems to be solved, recognising that the community itself must chart its path forward.

The NSW Burns community is a highly connected but stressed ecosystem. With a strong majority of members feeling connected to one another, there is a powerful social foundation that exists despite organisational challenges. The data paints a picture of a mature burner culture wrestling with questions of growth and sustainability. The presence of families, a high degree of neurodiversity, and a veteran participant base indicate an evolution beyond just event-focused connections into a more comprehensive and complex social fabric.

Who We Are: Portraits of Our Community

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Who We Are: Portraits of Our Community

What is your age?

Our community reflects a mature demographic profile that speaks to both stability and life experience. The data reveals a concentration in the 35-54 age range, representing 73% of respondents, with the largest single group being 35-44 year olds at 48.2% of the community. There is a notable younger cohort in the 25-34 age group (18%), suggesting potential for future growth and leadership succession. Participation from individuals under 25 and over 65 is minimal, highlighting opportunities for engagement with younger adults and older community members.

This age distribution tells a significant story about our community's character. We are predominantly established Burners who have moved beyond experimental participation into committed community building. The concentration in middle age suggests people with the resources, life stability, and long-term thinking necessary for sustainable event creation.

Age Distribution Data

Age Range	Percentage	Count
Under 18	0%	2
18 - 24	0%	1
25 - 34	18%	89
35 - 44	48%	233
45 - 54	25%	119
55 - 64	5%	25
65 - 74	2%	11
75 - 84	0%	1
Prefer not to say	0%	2
Total	**100%**	**483**

Our geographic distribution demonstrates a strong NSW foundation with significant interstate appeal. New South Wales represents 75.4% of respondents, establishing a solid local base for regional events, while interstate participants comprise 18% of the community, indicating broader cultural influence..

Where do you live?

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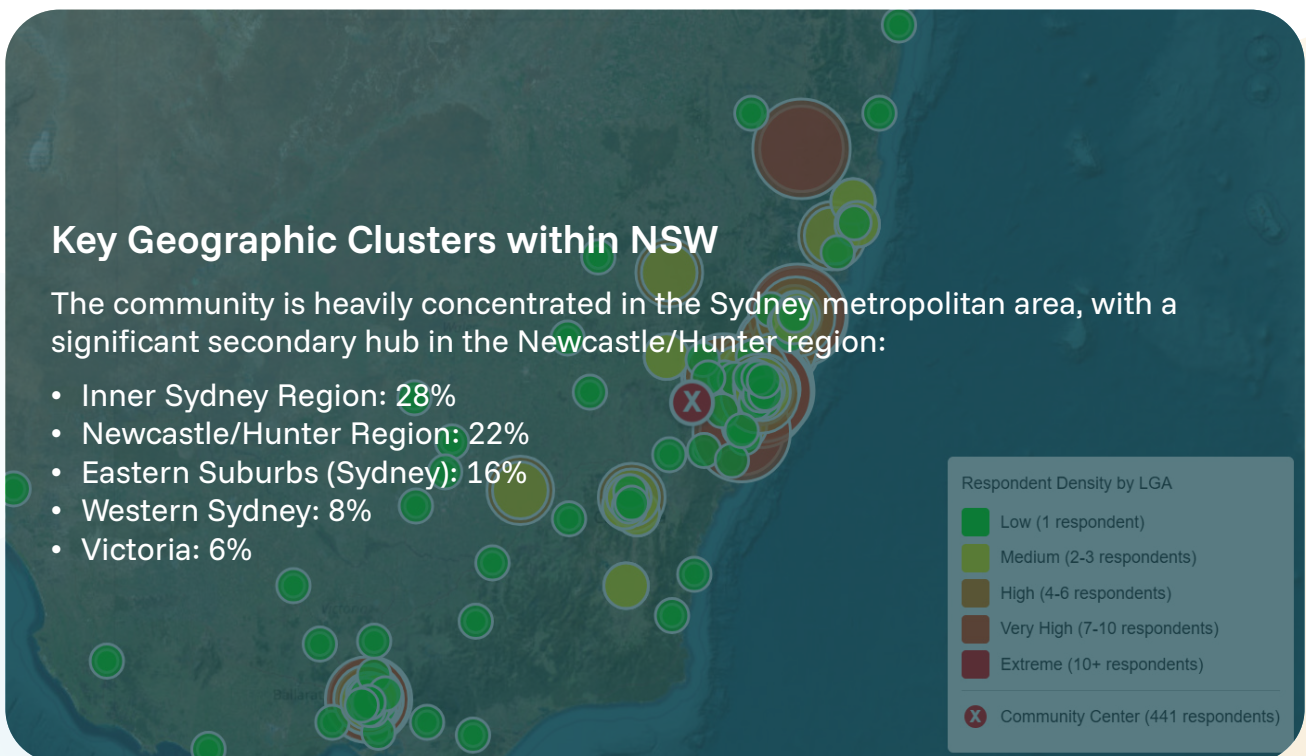
Geographic Distribution Data

Location	Percentage	Count
New South Wales	75%	364
Victoria	12%	58
Australian Capital Territory	6%	28
Queensland	4%	17
South Australia	1%	7
Outside Australia	1%	4
Tasmania	0%	2
Western Australia	0%	1
Other/Invalid	0%	2
Total	**100%**	**483**

Key Geographic Clusters within NSW

The community is heavily concentrated in the Sydney metropolitan area, with a significant secondary hub in the Newcastle/Hunter region:

- Inner Sydney Region: 28%
- Newcastle/Hunter Region: 22%
- Eastern Suburbs (Sydney): 16%
- Western Sydney: 8%
- Victoria: 6%

Respondent Density by LGA

- Low (1 respondent)
- Medium (2-3 respondents)
- High (4-6 respondents)
- Very High (7-10 respondents)
- Extreme (10+ respondents)
- Community Center (441 respondents)

What is your experience level with multi-day Burner events?

Our community demonstrates remarkable depth of experience, with 83% having attended multiple events and 61.5% having attended five or more burns. This represents a veteran-heavy community with deep cultural knowledge and proven commitment to Burner principles.

While experienced Burners form the core, there is continuous influx of new participants, with 17% having attended one event or none at all, This experience distribution suggests a community ready for leadership rather than one requiring extensive cultural education.

The high proportion of experienced participants provides several advantages for community building. These individuals understand Burner culture, have witnessed successful event organisation, and can mentor newcomers while maintaining cultural continuity.

Experience Level Data

Experience Level	Percentage	Count
Attended 5+ events	62%	295
Attended 2-4 events	22%	105
Attended 1 event	11%	51
I have not attended a multi-day Burner event	6%	29
Total	**100%**	**480**

Accessibility
and Inclusion

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Accessibility and Inclusion

What physical difficulties do you experience?

Stamina and fatigue are the most commonly cited issues, affecting 6% of respondents, suggesting that the physical demands of multi-day events could be significant barriers. A similar number (6%) identify with having a chronic condition or disability not listed, indicating the need for flexible and understanding support systems. Mobility challenges (5%) are also a key consideration, highlighting the importance of site accessibility, including pathways and terrain. While a large majority report no difficulties, the 15-20% of the community that does experience some form of physical challenge represents a significant group whose needs should be considered in event planning to ensure inclusivity.

The data reinforces the importance of accessibility planning from the earliest stages of event development rather than as an afterthought. With one in five community members requiring some form of accommodation, accessibility becomes a core design principle rather than an optional consideration.

Physical Accessibility Data

Difficulty	Percentage	Count
I do not experience these difficulties	80%	342
Stamina, breathing, or fatigue	6%	26
I have a physical disability or chronic condition not described above	6%	24
Walking, climbing steps, or moving over uneven ground	5%	21
Other	4%	18
Prefer not to say	3%	12
Seeing, even when wearing glasses	3%	11
Hearing, even when using a hearing aid	2%	7
Gripping, holding, or using objects with your hands	1%	4

Are you neurodivergent?

Our community shows a remarkably high proportion of neurodivergent individuals, with 37.1% identifying as neurodivergent and an additional 20.8% questioning or exploring their neurodivergence. Combined, 58% of our community either identifies as or is exploring neurodivergence—significantly higher than general population estimates. The high proportion of people exploring their neurodivergence suggests our community provides a safe space for self-discovery and acceptance.
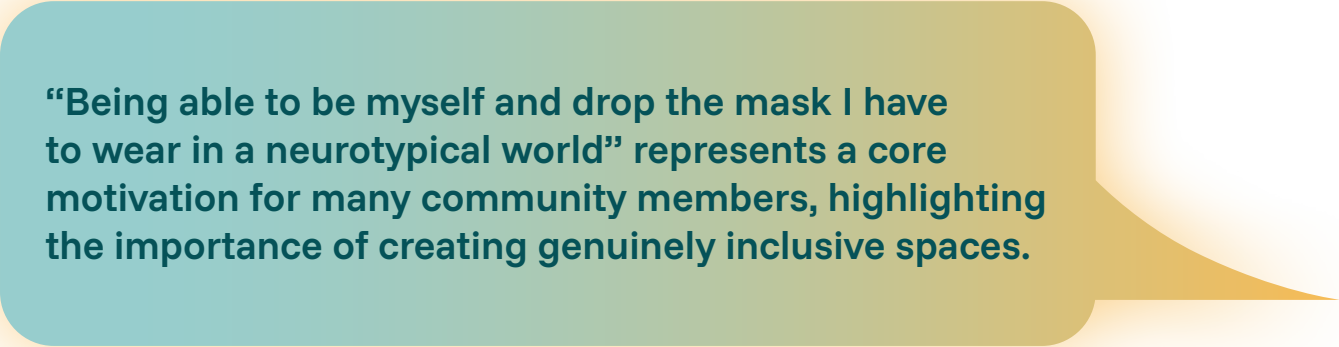
Neurodivergent Status Data

Status	Percentage	Count
No	42%	203
Yes	37%	179
I'm questioning/exploring	21%	100
Total	**100%**	**482**

Neurodivergent Status Data

ADHD and autism are the most common neurodivergent identities, requiring specific considerations for event design and communication. Event design must prioritise neurodivergent accessibility from the beginning rather than retrofitting accommodations.

Identity	Percentage of Neurodivergent	Count
ADHD	80%	143
Autism	36%	65
Dyslexia/Dyspraxia/Dyscalculia	15%	27
Other neurodivergent identity	12%	21

"Being able to be myself and drop the mask I have to wear in a neurotypical world" represents a core motivation for many community members, highlighting the importance of creating genuinely inclusive spaces.

Implications for Event Design: This data has profound implications for event design, communication strategies, and community support systems. The high proportion of neurodivergent community members suggests that neurotypical event design assumptions may not serve our community well. Instead, we need approaches that work for neurodivergent brains from the outset, including:

- Clear, consistent communication with advance notice
- Sensory-friendly spaces and quiet zones
- Structured information delivery and signage
- Flexible participation options
- Understanding of different processing and social needs

Community Connection and Belonging

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Community Connection and Belonging

How connected do you feel to the NSW Burns community?

Community connection reveals both strengths and opportunities within our network. While 54% feel connected (18% very connected, 36% somewhat connected), 31% experience some level of disconnection (21% somewhat disconnected, 10% very disconnected), with 15% feeling neutral.

This distribution highlights a critical insight: while the majority feel connected, nearly one-third feel on the edges of the community. This pattern is common in growing communities but requires intentional attention to ensure that expansion doesn't leave people behind

Community Connection Data

| Connection Level	Percentage	Count
Very connected	18%	87
Somewhat connected	36%	174
Neutral	15%	72
Somewhat disconnected	21%	101
Very disconnected	10%	48
Total	**100%**	**482**

What motivates your participation in Burner events?

Community and connection are the primary motivators (76%), indicating that successful NSW events should prioritise community building over entertainment consumption. Self-expression and creativity rank highly (62%), supporting models that emphasise participant-created content over imported entertainment. Transformative art and music provide essential cultural elements (48%), requiring dedicated support and resources. The emphasis on escape from default world (38%) and personal growth (35%) indicates events serve as important spaces for authentic self-expression.

These motivations align closely with core Burner principles while highlighting what our community values most. The emphasis on connection over spectacle suggests that successful NSW events should prioritise community building and participation over entertainment consumption.

Community Motivations Data

Motivation	Percentage	Count
Community and connection	76%	367
Self-expression and creativity	62%	299
Transformative art and music	48%	232
Escape from default world	38%	183
Personal growth and healing	35%	169
Radical self-reliance	28%	135
Spiritual or transcendent experiences	25%	121
Adventure and novelty	23%	111
Party and celebration	18%	87
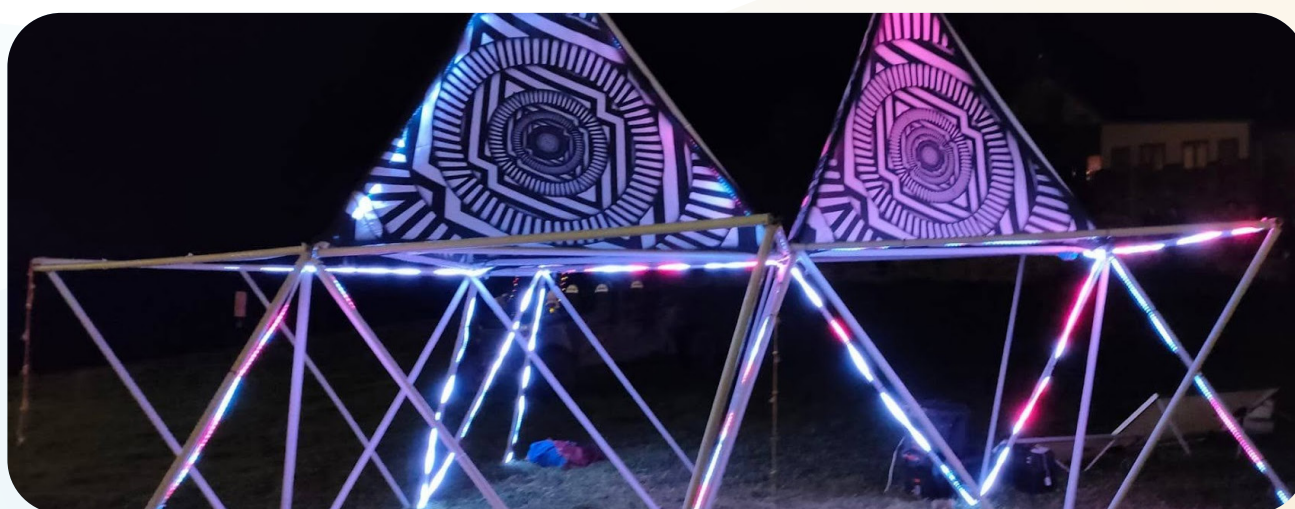
Volunteer Capacity and Experience

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Volunteer Capacity and Experience

What volunteer roles have you previously done?

Our community demonstrates abundant volunteer experience across all essential event functions. The most common previous roles include Leave No Trace (46%), Gate (39%), and Greeter (36%), indicating strong experience in environmental stewardship and community welcome. The high experience in Rangers (28%) and Medical/First Aid (12%) shows community commitment to safety and wellbeing.

The broad distribution across roles—from Rangers (28%) and Crew Kitchen (22%) to specialised functions like Art Department (17%) and Medical/First Aid (12%)— suggests a community with diverse skills and experience. This distribution supports complex event organisation without over-reliance on any single volunteer pool.

Volunteer Roles Experience Data

Volunteer Role	Percentage	Count
Leave No Trace	46%	164
Gate	39%	139
Greeter	36%	129
Ranger	28%	98
Crew Kitchen	22%	77
Art Department	17%	61
Medical/First Aid	12%	43
Sound/Music	11%	39
Infrastructure	10%	36
Communications	8%	29

What level of leadership responsibility interests you?

Leadership interest reveals a healthy distribution of engagement levels, with 49% preferring team member roles while 51% express interest in various coordination responsibilities. This balance suggests sustainable leadership development potential. Team Lead positions (35%) show strong appeal, indicating willingness to take on specific responsibilities without necessarily committing to organisation-wide leadership. The 23% interested in "Big Picture Visionary" roles provides strategic thinking capacity for long-term planning.

Among those interested in coordination, Project Wrangler roles (42%) and Team Lead positions (35%) show strong appeal, indicating willingness to take on specific responsibilities without necessarily committing to organisation-wide leadership. This suggests a preference for distributed leadership models over hierarchical structures.

Leadership Interest Data

Level of Interest	Percentage	Count
Team Member (onsite contribution)	49%	82
Project Wrangler (various contribution)	42%	70
Team Lead (3-15 hours/month during event season)	35%	57
Big Picture Visionary (10-20 hours/month year around)	23%	38
Department Captain (15-30 hours/month)	17%	19

Leadership Commitment Levels: Our community leaders are willing to commit reasonable hours that support sustainable engagement. When commitments are framed in a weekly contributions:

- **Team Leads:** 1-4 hours weekly during event season
- **Department Captains:** 4-8 hours weekly during event season
- **Strategic Roles:** 3-5 hours weekly year round

This demonstrates understanding that volunteer leadership must be sustainable and balanced with other life commitments.

What improvements would enhance the volunteer experience?

Volunteers are seeking significant improvements in structure, communication, and recognition that reflect a mature understanding of sustainable participation. The feedback indicates a strong desire for shorter, more manageable shifts and better support systems that would prevent burnout while enhancing both volunteer satisfaction and event quality.

The volunteer improvement requests are notably practical and achievable, focusing on systematic changes rather than fundamental restructuring. The emphasis on shorter shifts and better communication suggests that volunteers want to contribute effectively while maintaining the energy to participate in the broader event experience.

Primary Volunteer Experience Improvements:

Improvement Area	Representative Quotes
Shift Duration & Workload (32%) Strong preference for shorter, more sustainable volunteer commitments.	*"Not having too long shifts during the event, max 4 hours at a time"* *"About 2 hours shifts max for 2 days. Who wants to give more hours can by heart"*
Training & Development (28%) Clear need for structured preparation and ongoing support systems.	*"Training for bigger roles"* *"Training off site and support on site"*
Role Clarity & Communication (26%) Frustration with unclear expectations and coordination failures.	*"More clarity on other people's roles, clarity somewhat on my own role"* *"Role clarity, understanding what roles need what skills"*
Recognition & Rewards (16%) Appreciation for volunteer contributions through tangible acknowledgment.	*"Great Schwag and recognition"* *"Lower price ticket/free tickets"*
Team Structure & Support (14%) Desire for collaborative systems and better resource access.	*"Better system to allow volunteers to collaborate earlier"* *"Support of other trained volunteers- good equipment"*

The volunteer feedback reveals that people want to contribute meaningfully but need better frameworks to do so sustainably. The solutions suggested are practical and would likely increase both volunteer satisfaction and retention while improving event operations.

What challenges do theme camps face in the NSW Burns community?

Theme camps are under significant strain from multiple angles, with predominantly negative sentiment regarding their current sustainability. The core issues revolve around workload distribution, financial pressures, logistics coordination, and interpersonal dynamics, indicating that the current support model is leading to burnout and putting camp operations at risk. The theme camp challenges reflect systemic issues that affect the entire community's capacity for creative collaboration. The concentration of work among small core groups and inadequate resource support threatens the long-term viability of the creative infrastructure that makes Burns events distinctive.

Primary Theme Camp Challenges:

Improvement Area	Representative Quotes
Workload & Resource Distribution (42%) Unsustainable concentration of responsibility among core organisers.	*"Core crew doing 80% of the work"* *"Workload and costs!"* *"Workload generally falls on a few key people, on site camp members can be flaky"*
Financial Challenges (36%) Inadequate funding forcing personal financial strain on organizers.	*"Costs covered out of own pocket to supplement what is raised from fundraisers"* *"Unsustainably low grant amounts"* *"Financial cost and workload, dealing with materials after burn"*
Logistics & Transportation (30%) Persistent issues with storage, transport, and site coordination.	*"Logistics- storage and transport are always the 2 ongoing issues"* *"Getting out at the end with little crew under difficult conditions"* *"Transport for all the gear is a constant battle"*
Communication & Organization (28%) Unclear coordination with event organizers affecting planning and execution.	*"Unclear communications eg when to buy tix, dates, funding etc"* *"Clarity from org on level of effort ask"* *"Communication and getting people to buy in"*
Interpersonal Dynamics (24%) Personality conflicts and ego issues severely impacting camp cohesion.	*"POLITICS. OMG again and again I have seen dreadful behaviour"* *"Interpersonal conflicts and burnout"* *"Egos. Ableism. Cost."*

The theme camp challenges indicate that while creative passion remains strong, the practical support systems are inadequate for sustainable community building. Addressing these systemic issues is essential for maintaining the creative infrastructure that defines Burns culture.

How do theme camps collaborate within the NSW Burns community?

Theme camp collaboration is generally viewed positively and occurs in various successful forms, from resource sharing to co-hosted events. The success of these collaborations consistently depends on clear communication and pre-planning, with more structured arrangements yielding better results and stronger long-term partnerships.

The collaboration patterns reveal a community with strong cooperative instincts and practical experience in shared projects. The positive sentiment around collaboration contrasts sharply with individual camp challenges, suggesting that working together may be part of the solution to sustainability issues.

Successful Collaboration Models:

Collaboration Type	Representative Quotes
Resource Sharing (35% - Mostly Positive) The most common and generally successful form of inter-camp cooperation.	*"Sharing power is very common"* *"We've shared a large solar array with other camps and that went brilliantly"*
Event Collaborations (30% - Positive) Co-hosted activities and shared programming create enhanced experiences.	*"Our camp has done bar take-overs and music take-overs with other camps. It has always been a great success"* *"Multiple co hosted events parties with art cars. Was fun, will do it again"*
Space Sharing (15% - Mixed Results) Physical space sharing requires more careful planning and agreements.	*"We have a space that we allow other camps to use"* *"Those have not generally gone as promised"*
Fundraising Collaborations (10% - Positive) Joint fundraising efforts create shared benefits and stronger relationships.	*"Multiple theme camps to do fundraisers for Seed"* *"Collabs w Trash Mansion (fundraising warehouse parties)"*
Village Formation (10% - Positive) Structured camping arrangements enhance community connection.	*"Did a village, it was great. Communication was key to success"* *"Part of Mad Square, loved it"*

The collaboration successes demonstrate that theme camps have both the willingness and capability to work together effectively. The key factors for success—clear communication, pre-planning, and formal agreements—provide a template for expanding collaborative approaches to address individual camp sustainability challenges.

What challenges do artists face when creating installations for NSW Burns?

Artists face significant and overlapping challenges that primarily relate to funding limitations and logistical complexities. There is a strong sense that current support systems are inadequate for the scale and ambition of community art being created, leading to personal financial strain and coordination difficulties that may limit artistic participation and innovation.

The artist challenges reflect broader community resource and coordination issues, but with particular intensity given the complexity and expense of creating large-scale temporary installations. The passion for artistic contribution remains strong despite systemic barriers.

Primary Artist Challenges:

Challenge Area	Representative Quotes
Funding & Costs (35%) Most significant barrier preventing artistic participation and limiting project scope.	*"Time and effort to make and transport the art are worth it, but the costs easily go over grant budget"* *"Who couldn't use more money to make their art? As you start to make bigger pieces you need more space and the grants do not cover rent"*
Transportation & Logistics (32%) Universal challenge affecting all large-scale artistic participation.	*"Logistics to move heavy items"* *"The challenge is shared: transport, logistics and funding are not just art installation related"*
Site Placement & Installation (24%) Coordination failures creating inefficiency and frustration during setup.	*"Site placement has been a mess every time"* *"The herding cats nature of it wastes alot of time. If art had a staging area with a desk and a map would be good"*
Technical Support & Resources (19%) Limited access to tools and unclear safety requirements affecting project execution.	*"Relying on others for tools i dont own"* *"Need more clarity on safety requirements on application or lead up instead of onsite when its too late"*
Safety & Durability (16%) Participant interaction issues and structural challenges affecting installation integrity.	*"Catbus broke a wheel at Seed 2023 due to people misusing him"* *"Not understanding how rough people will be with it"*

The artist challenges indicate that while creative passion and community support for art remain strong, systematic improvements in funding, logistics coordination, and technical support are essential for maintaining and expanding the artistic culture that defines Burns community identity.

What would make leadership roles more sustainable and effective?

Leadership feedback from 108 people with event organiser experienced reveals significant challenges related to organisation, communication, and culture that are creating burnout and reducing effectiveness. There is a strong desire for more formalised processes, clearer documentation, and a less hierarchical, more collaborative leadership approach that would enable sustainable long-term community building.

The leadership sustainability concerns reflect deeper organisational challenges that affect the entire community. Leaders are not asking for reduced responsibility but rather for better systems that would allow them to be more effective while maintaining personal wellbeing and work-life balance.

Leadership Sustainability Requirements:

Sustainability Need	Representative Quotes
Communication & Documentation (24%) Critical need for centralised, accessible information systems.	*"Clarity of communication especially deadlines and requirements- need to be listed clearly in one document"* *"More documentation from previous burns. Mystopia do a great job at this"*
Organizational Structure & Process (20%) Call for standardised, predictable systems and accountability.	*"Standardized processes. Simple doco for expected tasks and deadlines"* *"Having a plan for onboarding and off boarding. A clear accountability chart"*
Volunteer Management (18%) Need for better tools and systems to coordinate community participation.	*"An easy way for volunteers to sign up for shifts without me having to contact them all"* *"Engagement from volunteers prior to the event to build trust"*
Leadership Culture (16%) Concerns about ego-driven dynamics and accountability failures.	*"Get rid of the 'Important people'"* *"Reduced egos and consequences for those who placed others at risk"*
Resource Management (14%) Better coordination of budgets and shared resources between teams.	*"Budgets based on actual need, and far better information sharing between teams"* *"Group resources, how about if we have a technologist, artist and or engineering genius at hand"*
Work-Life Balance (8%) Recognition that sustainable leadership requires reasonable boundaries.	*"Not wearing too many hats"* *"More joy! Less distress! Play and make together!"*

The leadership sustainability feedback indicates that organisational maturity is essential for community growth. Leaders want to contribute effectively but need systematic support to avoid the burnout patterns that have affected previous generations of community organizers.

Community Personas: Understanding Our Leadership Archetypes

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Community Personas: Understanding Our Leadership Archetypes

Based on comprehensive data analysis, five distinct community personas emerge that help us understand the diverse motivations and capabilities within our community. These personas represent different approaches to engagement and contribution, each with specific needs and valuable offerings.

Persona	Key Characteristics	Core Motivations	Primary Needs	Contribution Style
Veteran Community Architect 35-54 years 23% of community	• 5+ events experience • Multi-skilled contributors • Strong institutional knowledge • Neurodivergent representation	*"Community, stepping out of the matrix, the ethos"* *"Living as an example of how you want to be in life"*	• Sustainable volunteer structures (max 4-hour shifts) • Clear documentation & processes • Recognition for ongoing contributions • Succession planning systems	• Year-round community involvement • Department heads & coordinators • Mentorship & training • Institutional memory
Creative Contributor 25-44 years 32% of community	• 2-4 events experience • Art & music focused • Project-based involvement • Values gift economy principles	*"The artistic and marvellous effort that people gift for the community"* *"Being able to be myself and drop the mask"*	• Funding & resource support • Workspace access & tool sharing • Collaborative project coordination • Recognition of artistic contributions	• Art installations & creative projects • Skill-sharing workshops • Theme camp artistic coordination • Cultural programming

Persona	Key Characteristics	Core Motivations	Primary Needs	Contribution Style
Community Connector 25-44 years 28% of community	• Often newer participants • Seeking belonging & growth • Strong interpersonal skills • Sensitive to exclusion	*"Authentic connection and belonging"* *"Personal transformation and growth"*	• Safe, welcoming spaces • Protection from exclusionary dynamics • Clear community integration pathways • Neurodivergent support	• Greeter & Ranger roles • Social event organisation • Newcomer support activities • Inclusion advocacy
Parent Leaders 5-54 years 15% of community	• Balancing Burner identity with family • Safety & accessibility focused • Inter-generational perspective • Values-based parenting	*Inter-generational community experiences"* *"Values-based environment for children"*	• Family-friendly programming & facilities • Childcare options & family areas • Enhanced safety considerations • Community that welcomes children	• Family programming coordination • Child-friendly activity development • Safety & welfare roles • Community education about inclusion

Each persona contributes essential elements—Veterans provide systems and continuity, Creatives bring cultural vitality, Connectors ensure inclusion, Families add intergenerational perspective, and Balanced Participants maintain professional standards.

This persona diversity represents a strength rather than a challenge, providing multiple pathways for meaningful participation while ensuring comprehensive community capabilities across organisational, creative, social, and practical domains.

Event Preferences and Accessibility Needs

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Event Preferences and Accessibility Needs

What accessibility features would benefit you at events?

Accessibility needs extend far beyond physical accommodations to include sensory and social considerations. Sound stage separation (50%) and quiet/sensory-friendly zones (45%) top the list, reflecting our community's high neurodivergent representation and need for inclusive design. Clear communication (40%) supports diverse cognitive needs and processing styles

77% benefit from various accessibility features, making this a majority concern rather than a minority accommodation. Social interaction support (29%) indicates need for structured ways to help people connect and participate.

Accessibility Features Data

Accessibility Feature	Percentage	Count
Sound stage separation	50%	241
Quiet/sensory-friendly zones	45%	217
Clear written information and signage	40%	193
Social interaction support	29%	140
Reduced sensory input options	21%	101
I don't require specific accessibility features at this time	23%	111
Physical accessibility (ramps, accessible toilets)	18%	87
Visual accessibility (large print, high contrast)	12%	58
Hearing accessibility (interpreters, hearing loops)	8%	39

Key Insights: *"Notably, 23% indicate they don't require specific accessibility features at this time, but the remaining 77% benefit from various accommodations. This reinforces that accessibility planning must be comprehensive and integrated rather than targeted at a small minority."*

Community Voices on Accessibility: *"Being able to be myself and drop the mask I have to wear in a neurotypical world"*

This powerful community voice highlights how accessibility features aren't just accommodations—they're essential for creating spaces where neurodivergent community members can participate authentically.

Implications for Event Design: The data shows that accessibility needs reflect our community's composition, with sensory and cognitive accessibility being as important as physical accessibility. This requires:

- **Sound Design:** Separate stages and quiet zones to manage sensory overload
- **Clear Communication:** Written information, consistent signage, and advance notice
- **Social Support:** Structured ways to help people connect without overwhelming social demands
- **Flexible Participation:** Options for different energy levels and processing needs

What long weekend would work best for events?

Event timing preferences show flexibility while indicating optimal periods. Labour Day in October (50%) emerges as the preferred option, with 43% indicating that all options work for them, demonstrating significant scheduling flexibility within our community. Easter (41%) and Australia Day (34%) show strong secondary support, indicating potential for seasonal event portfolio

King's Birthday in June (29%) ranks lower, possibly due to cooler weather and energy considerations.

> *Key Insight: "The preference for October aligns well with fire safety considerations and volunteer energy levels, while the overall flexibility supports the vision of multiple events serving different community segments throughout the year."*

Long Weekend Preferences Data

Long Weekend	Percentage	Count
Labour Day (October)	50%	241
All of these work for me	43%	207
Easter (March/April)	41%	198
Australia Day (January)	34%	164
King's Birthday (June)	29%	140

Event Size and Format Preferences

Our community shows sophisticated understanding of different event formats and their purposes, with preferences that support a diverse ecosystem of gatherings:

Event Size Preferences

- **Large Regional Burn (1000+ people):** 46% prefer as primary annual event
- **Mixed Model (Multiple sizes):** 38% prefer variety of event sizes
- **Smaller Intimate Events (400-800):** 28% prefer as primary format
- **Micro-burns (Under 200):** Strong support for quarterly gatherings

Format Preferences

- **Traditional Burn Format:** Strong support for effigy burns and established principles
- **Innovation and Evolution:** 16% call for "innovating beyond traditional formats"
- **Family-Friendly Options:** Significant demand for inclusive family events
- **Skill-Sharing Gatherings:** High interest in educational and workshop-focused events

Interstate vs Local Events

The community places the highest value on building a strong, local NSW-based community, with accessibility for Sydney participants being a key consideration. Interstate connections are valued, but are a lower priority than fostering the local scene.

What matters most to you?	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Neutral	Somewhat Unimportant	Not Important
Building a strong NSW-based Burner community	41% (125)	42% (125)	14% (43)	1% (2)	2% (6)
Event accessibility for Sydney-based participants	29% (88)	41% (123)	20% (61)	4% (11)	6% (18)
Maintaining connections with interstate Burner communities	25% (74)	41% (124)	25% (75)	6% (19)	3% (8)
Drawing participants from multiple states/ territories	13% (38)	30% (90)	41% (124)	7% (21)	9% (27)

Importance of Official Regional Burns

Over half of the community (54%) feels that official Burning Man Regional status is "Not Very Important" or "Not at all Important." This suggests that the community's identity and the success of its events are not perceived as being dependent on official affiliation. Conversely, a substantial portion of the community (40%) considers official status to be "Somewhat," "Very," or "Absolutely" important. This indicates a clear division in the community on this issue. Very few respondents (6%) were undecided, suggesting that most community members have a firm opinion on the matter of official regional status.

Importance	Percentage	Count
Not Very Important	30%	114
Not at all Important	24%	90
Somewhat Important	23%	87
Very Important	11%	43
Absolutely Essential	6%	22
Don't Know	6%	23

Price Sensitivity and Affordability Thresholds

Understanding our community's economic reality reveals crucial insights for inclusive event planning. The Van Westendorp Price Sensitivity analysis demonstrates narrow margins between accessibility and exclusion, making pricing decisions critical for community participation.

Price Sensitivity Analysis Results:

Price Point	Amount	Community Response
Point of Marginal Cheapness	$275	"Great Value" threshold
Optimal Price Point	$350	Recommended base price
Point of Marginal Expensiveness	$400	"Expensive but Manageable"
Point of Excessive Expensiveness	$450	"Too Expensive" threshold

The community's price sensitivity reveals a mature understanding of event costs while emphasising accessibility concerns. 64% of responses cluster in the $100-200 range, with significant sensitivity to pricing above $400.

Our Future Vision and Community Development

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Our Future Vision and Community Development

What aspects of the NSW Burns community are currently working well?

Despite organisational challenges, there is cautiously positive sentiment, with community cohesion being actively maintained through smaller-scale events and strong interpersonal connections. The community demonstrates remarkable resilience and adaptability, maintaining cultural continuity while adapting to changing circumstances without a central flagship event.

The strength analysis reveals that the community's foundation remains solid, with smaller events proving particularly successful and interpersonal bonds staying strong. While organisational improvements are needed, the core community culture and values continue to thrive.

Current Community Strengths:

Strength Area	Representative Quotes
Small Burns & Local Events (32%) These gatherings are highly valued for accessibility and manageability.	*"Small regional events are amazing"* *"Smaller burns with smaller time commitments and smaller financial outlay to participate"*
Community Connection (24%) Strong interpersonal bonds and collaborative relationships persist across the community.	*"United community- theme camps coming back to do awesome stuff together"* *"We have been making stronger connections with our local communities"*
Events & Activities (20%) Regular social gatherings maintain engagement and cultural continuity.	*"Burning pub, great people"* *"Frequency of events - the in between things like burning pub and fundraisers"*
Organisation & Communication (12%) Some positive organisational evolution is occurring.	*"Finally restructuring has happened and that's better"* *"Communication and cooperation"*

The community's ability to maintain connection and cultural values despite significant disruption demonstrates deep resilience. The challenge moving forward is building on these strengths while addressing identified gaps, creating systems that serve both community connection priorities and event development aspirations without burning out core contributors.

What gaps exist in the NSW Burns community ecosystem?

The community ecosystem has several significant gaps, primarily in communication, event structure, and culture. There is a strong desire for more robust and reliable systems that move beyond social media dependence, a clearer event strategy that balances different scales, and a more inclusive and transparent culture that addresses current exclusionary dynamics.

The gap analysis reveals that communication failures are the most critical issue, affecting everything from newcomer integration to event coordination. Combined with unclear event structure and cultural problems, these gaps are creating friction that hinders the community's considerable potential.

Primary Community Gaps:

Gap Area	Representative Quotes
Communication & Connection (24%) Facebook dependence creates information silos and excludes community members.	*"Using Facebook Pages as a primary online hub is a poor substitute for a moderated forum"* *"I feel a bit disconnected living in the country, I'm hard to know when other events are on"*
Event Size & Structure (22%) Lack of clear strategy for balancing different event formats and scales.	*"Need a regular annual multi-day camping Burn like Burning Seed to happen"* *"More easy, small events that are co-run by camps"*
Community Culture & Inclusivity (20% - High Priority) Exclusionary dynamics and interpersonal conflicts affecting community cohesion.	*"Less arrogance, less interpersonal conflict, less tribalism"* *"More inclusion and less 'cool camp' vibes"*
Skill Sharing & Workshops (14%) Missed opportunities for structured learning and knowledge transfer.	*"More skill sharing; gosh i want to learn to weld"* *"Stronger emphasis on sharing of skills, knowledge, time, energy"*
Governance & Transparency (12%) Need for clearer decision-making processes and accountability.	*"We could always improve on transparency, accountability and accessibility of governance"* *"More honesty and transparency"*
Environmental Consciousness (8%) Opportunities for enhanced sustainability practices.	*"More conscious gifting. Avoid gifting that ends in landfills"*

These gaps represent addressable challenges rather than fundamental flaws. The community has both the awareness to identify problems and the sophistication to suggest practical solutions, indicating strong potential for systematic improvement.

What is the NSW Burns community's vision for its future?

The community's vision for the future is overwhelmingly positive, centered on fostering a more connected, creative, and inclusive environment. While there are differing opinions on the scale of events, the underlying desire is for a "unified community that grows, trusts, and supports each other." This vision reveals a mature community that understands both its aspirations and the practical requirements for achieving them.

The analysis reveals five distinct pillars of community vision, with community building and connection emerging as the clear priority, followed by thoughtful consideration of event structure that has led to support for a hybrid model balancing different scales and purposes.

Key Community Vision Elements:

Vision Pillar	Representative Quotes
Community Building & Connection (36%) The foremost desire is for strengthened interpersonal bonds and accountability structures.	*"Unified community that grows, trusts, and supports each other"* *"A space for learning, unlearning, releasing, connecting & reconnecting in community that is encouraging, giving and accountable to one another"*
Event Size & Location (28%) A sophisticated split revealing preference for hybrid approach rather than single solution.	*"I would love to see a regional NSW event (preferably in Matong) grown back to 5,000 or 10,000 participants"* *"Have small regular burns every year. Don't try to make them so big that they fail like seed did this year"*
Art & Creative Expression (16%) Art remains central to community identity and transformative experience.	*"The art is so inspiring that I hold my breath. When I go home, I am filled with possibility"* *"More visual art, less sound camps"*
Accessibility & Inclusivity (12%) Vision includes broad participation across economic and social barriers.	*"An inclusive community event with space for everyone, that is priced reasonably so low income people can come"* *"A welcoming environment where everyone is safe and able to express themselves freely"*
Governance & Organisation (8%) Desire for streamlined, effective leadership that prevents burnout.	*"Less micromanaging less spreadsheets less meetings less everything"* *"Maturing past the arrogance that leads to burn out"*

The vision data reveals that rather than fighting over event scale, the community has evolved toward understanding that different events serve different purposes, supporting a hybrid model that provides both spectacular flagship experiences and accessible regular gatherings throughout the year.

Conclusion

The data from 518 community members paints a clear picture: we are a mature, experienced community with abundant capacity for sustainable growth. Our high proportion of neurodivergent members (58%), veteran participants (83% with multiple events), and committed volunteers (425 ready to serve) creates a unique foundation for events that truly embody radical inclusion.

We know who we are—predominantly middle-aged Burners from Sydney and Newcastle with deep Burner experience and strong environmental values. We know what we want—community connection, creative expression, and accessible events that welcome everyone. Most importantly, we know we can achieve it—with 425 volunteers, 180 potential leaders, and widespread agreement on core principles.

Appendices

Appendix A: Methodology and Limitations

This research employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative data with qualitative thematic analysis. The survey was distributed through over 20 channels including official newsletters, Facebook pages, grassroots Discord networks, and direct outreach to over 50 theme camps.

Limitations:

- Online survey format may underrepresent community members less engaged with digital platforms
- Self-selection bias inherent in voluntary survey participation
- Temporal limitations of snapshot data from July 2025

Independence Statement: The Independent Burners Analytics Group (I-BAG) maintains independence through transparent methodology and commitment to serving community interests rather than any particular organisational agenda.

Appendix B: The Path Forward: Evidence-Based Recommendations

Based on our comprehensive analysis, the following strategic recommendations emerge directly from community data and voices:

For Leadership & Governance

Recommendation	Rationale
Establish formal governance structures with defined roles, transparent decision-making processes, and published accountability measures.	This addresses widespread calls for improved governance, with 20% of leaders wanting better structure, 12% of the community identifying a lack of transparency as a key gap, and others raising concerns about the leadership culture (16%).
Implement a central communication platform (e.g., a moderated forum, dedicated website section, or newsletter) to serve as the single source of truth for all official information, reducing reliance on social media.	The community's reliance on Facebook was cited as a major failure, with 24% of respondents identifying communication as a key gap. Leaders also noted a critical need for centralised documentation (24%).
Develop and adopt a formal leadership Code of Conduct and provide training opportunities focused on collaborative leadership, communication, and conflict resolution.	This directly responds to concerns about "egos" and a negative leadership culture (16%), as well as broader community concerns about inclusivity (20%). It provides a framework for accountability and skill development.

For Event & Site Planning

Recommendation	Rationale
Adopt a hybrid event portfolio that includes one large, annual "destination" burn, supplemented by multiple smaller, more frequent regional events.	This model directly addresses the community's split vision, satisfying the 46% who desire a single large burn and the significant cohorts who prefer a mixed model (38%) or smaller events (28%). It balances the need for scale with the desire for intimacy and accessibility.
Prioritise site locations based on travel time appropriate to the event size: place smaller burns within a 4-hour drive of major population centres (Sydney/Newcastle) and reserve more distant locations for larger "destination" events.	This aligns directly with community data on travel willingness. Most attendees will only travel up to 4 hours for a mini-burn, while tolerance increases significantly for larger events. This strategy maximises accessibility and attendance.
Actively explore and prototype innovative event formats to re-energise the community and balance tradition with radical new ideas.	This responds to the 16% of the community who feel events have become stagnant and the direct call to "innovate beyond traditional formats," ensuring the community's creative and radical spirit continues to evolve.
Design all events with neurodivergent accessibility as a core principle, including sound separation, quiet zones, clear signage, and social interaction support.	With 58% of the community identifying as or exploring neurodivergence, and 77% benefiting from accessibility features, this is not accommodation for a minority but essential design for our community's majority needs.
Implement comprehensive accessibility planning from the earliest stages, including physical, sensory, cognitive, and social accessibility considerations.	20% of the community experiences physical challenges, while accessibility needs span far beyond physical accommodations to include the sensory and social needs of our highly neurodivergent community.

For Community Resources & Partnerships

Recommendation	Rationale
Develop a community-wide, opt in directory of skills, resources, and recommended suppliers to better leverage the community's internal assets.	The survey revealed a vast pool of skills and resources within the community. A formal directory would address the need for structured skill-sharing (identified as a gap by 14%) and connect creators with the talent they need to bring their projects to life.
Establish a dedicated community relations role or team to manage relationships with external bodies such as local councils, First Nations representatives, and emergency services	As the community's events grow in scale and formality, professional management of these key external relationships becomes essential for securing sites, ensuring compliance, and building long-term goodwill.

Appendix C: Collective Resources

The survey responses provide a rich, community-sourced database of potential paths forward. This collective wisdom offers actionable leads for event organisers on everything from finding a new home to building a more supportive creative ecosystem.

Finding a New Home

There is a clear consensus on what the community desires in a new location: access to water for swimming, natural shade, and closer proximity to major hubs like Sydney.

Highly Mentioned Locations:

- The most popular suggestions included:
- Glenworth Valley/ Hawkesbury Region (8 mentions)
- Dragon Dreaming site at Wee Jasper (5 mentions)
- Confest site (Woorooma Station) (5 mentions)

Frequently Mentioned Locations:

Other notable suggestions with multiple mentions were the previous:

- Matong State Forest site (4)
- Castle Mountain (3)
- Parkes (2).

Other Notable Suggestions:

A wealth of single-mention ideas were also provided, including the:

- Wingham/Taree area
- Riverwood Downs
- The Steps Campground (Barrington Tops)
- Coolendel Camp (near Nowra)
- Rydal Showgrounds
- Carcoar Dam Sailing Club
- Buangla (Shoalhaven River).
- Actionable Leads: Specific contacts were provided for a farm in:
- Bellingen (via James Tomlinson)
- a rural property in Mandalong (via Jimmy Veliss)
- a space on the Central Coast known as "The Lair" (via Grant from Bhima the Dragon).

Community Suppliers and Equipment

The community possesses a wealth of technical resources and expertise.

- Sound, Lighting, and AV: Key leads include:
- Cody Lawton (Litness Lights / Dynamic Audio Visual)
- Justin "Cosmos" James (Dynamic Audio Visual)
- Julian Lacey/Nicholas Randell (Sunset Town).
- Maker Spaces & Materials: Crucial hubs identified were:
- Newcastle's Sparkhaus
- Sydney's RoboDino.
- Established resources like:
  - Reverse Garbage:
  - The Bower
  - and local libraries with tool libraries were also recommended.
- Event Production & Logistics: Recommended suppliers include:
- Sapphire Events
- Spaceman Design
- ATS Logistics
- Crew on Call for skilled labour
- Common Arts Victoria was suggested as a resource for best practices.

Potential Community Partners

To strengthen the ecosystem, community members suggested forging partnerships with several types of organisations.

Festivals: The most common suggestions were collaborations with other Burn-adjacent festivals like:

- ConFest
- Dragon Dreaming
- Modifyre (QLD)
- Blazing Swan (WA).

Arts & Maker Communities: Key potential partners include:

- Sparkhaus
- local Men's Sheds
- Newtown Festival.

Government & Local Bodies: Building strategic relationships with:

- Local Aboriginal Land Councils
- Regional Arts NSW
- Create NSW, and specific local councils (e.g., Bega Valley Shire) was seen as a key step.