



hmc

Hunter Multicultural
Communities

Hunter Multicultural Communities
Fiesta Festival Survey Report 2026



INTRODUCTION

Hunter Multicultural Communities (HMC) was established in 1977 and is the recognised regional multicultural peak body for Northern NSW. We support Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities across the region through:



The Hunter's multicultural landscape is changing. Established communities are ageing and increasingly require support to maintain connection and independence. At the same time, newly arrived and emerging communities are navigating systems that are more complex, more targeted, and increasingly focused on service outcomes.

Across this changing environment, people are often expected to engage with services as customers rather than as **citizens in a multicultural region**. HMC strongly believes it is not enough for services to exist; people need to be able to access them, understand them, and feel included when using them.

The Multicultural Fiesta Festival, an annual event hosted by HMC, provides a unique opportunity to hear directly from diverse communities in an informal and trusted setting, offering insights that complement formal service data. This report looks at:

- how people feel about belonging, safety, and inclusion at the festival
- how they access and understand services
- what services they feel are working well and where they would like improvements



WHAT DID WE DO

WHAT WAS OUR APPROACH

We conducted a survey to understand how people experience belonging, inclusion, and access to services.

HOW MANY PEOPLE ATTENDED

We estimate that **6,000 people** attended, with about 2,500 on site at peak times.

We made this estimate by placing five volunteers across the site and counting people every 30 minutes over five hours.

The five volunteers also collected **253 survey responses** from attendees.

WHO DID WE SPEAK TO

- Slightly more people born in Australia than overseas
- A large proportion (52%) were aged between 35-64
- A majority (69%) were women
- People who spoke one of **27 languages**

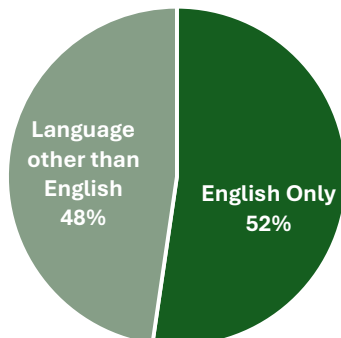
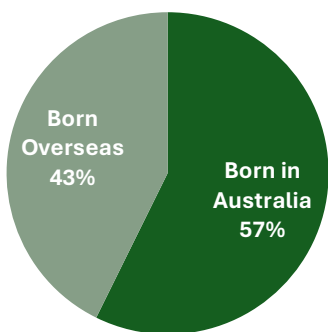
HOW DID WE UNDERSTAND RESPONSES

We analysed the data by looking at:

- percentages (agree, neutral, disagree)
- average scores
- differences between groups

While the sample is not statistically representative of all communities in the Hunter, it provides meaningful insights into the experiences and priorities of people engaging with Fiesta.

You can find all the questions at the end of the report in Appendix 1.





COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE

WHAT PEOPLE TOLD US

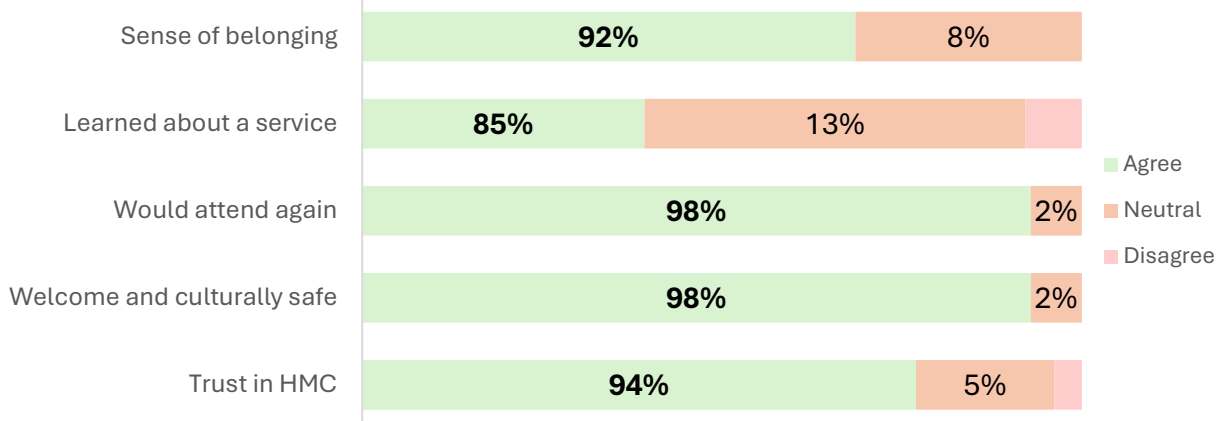
- People felt welcome, safe, and connected, and most said they would come back
- The majority (85%) also shared that they learned about a new service
- People who speak languages other than English and those born overseas reported more positive experiences

WHAT THIS MEANS

Results were consistent across language and birthplace groups, suggesting a high level of inclusion among participants. This suggests that respondents experienced Fiesta as:

- a safe and welcoming environment
- where different communities came together in a meaningful way
- a place to build trust, which is critical for engagement and advocacy

Festivals can provide inclusive spaces that benefit participants and support service awareness





SERVICES

RESPECTING CULTURES

People can access services, but they do not always feel respected or understood when using them.

We asked participants how well different services respect people from different cultural backgrounds.

- The biggest gap was with Police, where Australian-born respondents were much more likely to feel services do not respect different cultures

- Legal and family services also showed clear gaps, with overseas-born respondents feeling more understood and respected
- Schools were rated highly by both groups, though slightly stronger for those born in Australia
- Health services stood out as consistent, with both groups reporting strong and similar experiences

Services are not always experienced as respectful or culturally safe

Police	Born Overseas	73%	18%	
	Born in Australia	59%	22%	19%
Health services	Born Overseas	86%	14%	
	Born in Australia	86%	14%	
Family services	Born Overseas	79%	21%	
	Born in Australia	66%	24%	
Lawyers	Born Overseas	80%	20%	
	Born in Australia	69%	26%	
Schools	Born Overseas	88%	8%	
	Born in Australia	96%	0%	

■ Agree
 ■ Neutral
 ■ Disagree



ACCESS TO SERVICES

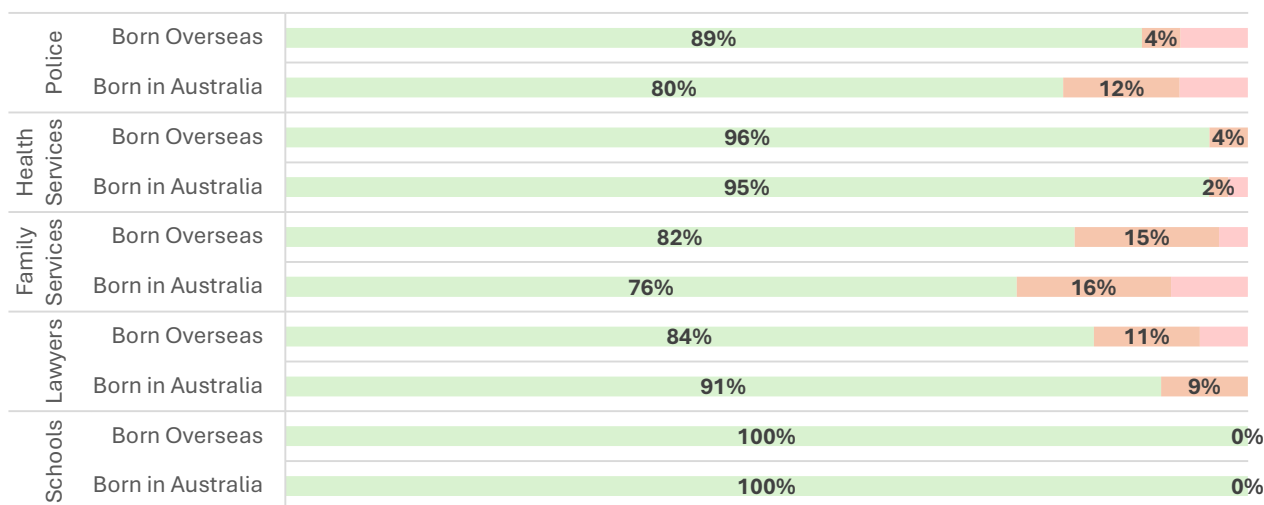
Access to services is strong, with most people able to get support across key areas.

We asked participants how well people from different cultural backgrounds are able to access services.

- Health services showed the strongest access, with both groups reporting very high and consistent access

- Police access was slightly lower for Australian-born respondents, who were more likely to report mixed experiences
- Family services showed a small gap, with overseas-born respondents reporting slightly easier access
- Legal services were strong overall, though Australian-born respondents reported slightly higher access
- Schools were universally accessible, with both groups reporting full access

Services are accessible, but experiences are not always consistent across cultural groups



■ Agree ■ Neutral ■ Disagree



KNOWLEDGE OF SERVICES

Understanding of available services varied across respondents, particularly between those who speak English only and those who speak a language other than English.

We asked people how well they understand the available services for them.

- People who speak a language other than English were more likely to know about some services, particularly police and family services

Access starts with awareness, and awareness is not equal

- The biggest gap was with police, where English-only speakers were much less likely to know about available supports, such as MCLOs
- Health services showed mixed results, with English-only speakers reporting slightly higher awareness of interpreter services
- Legal services were well known overall, though awareness was higher among English-only speakers
- Schools were well understood by all groups, with very high awareness regardless of language

Service	Language	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Police (MCLO)	Speak other language	70%	9%	21%
	Only Speak English	48%	21%	31%
Health int. services	Speak other language	83%	11%	
	Only Speak English	88%	12%	
Family services	Speak other language	81%	13%	
	Only Speak English	75%	22%	
Lawyers	Speak other language	81%	14%	
	Only Speak English	92%	8%	
Schools	Speak other language	96%	4%	
	Only Speak English	100%	0%	

■ Agree ■ Neutral ■ Disagree



JOBS & TRAINING

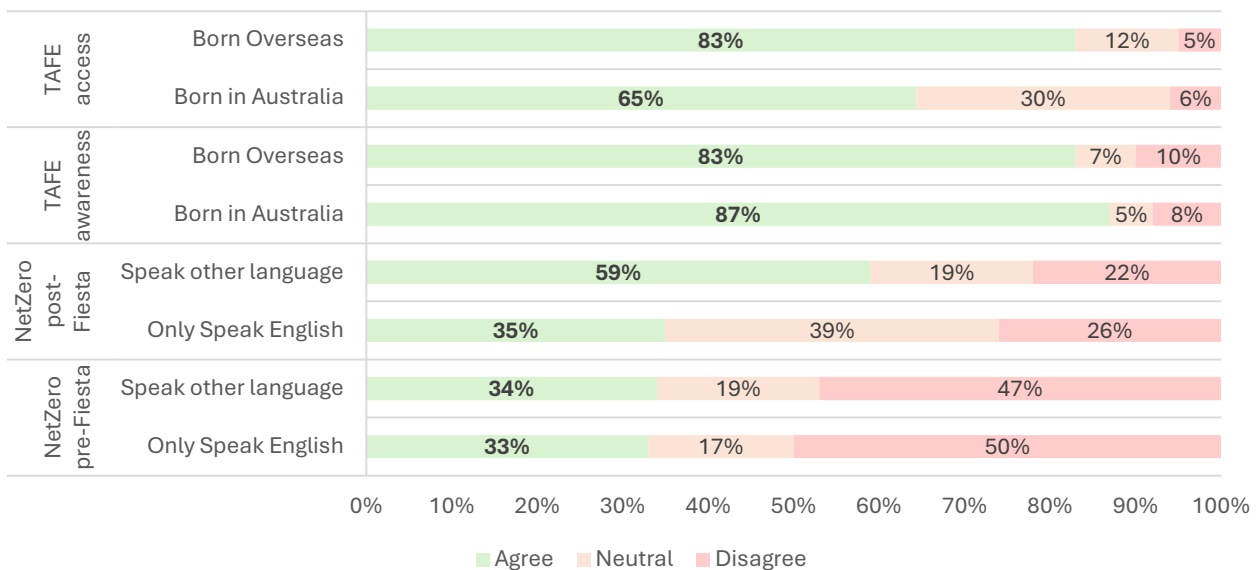
WHAT WE HEARD

Attendees reported improved awareness of jobs and training opportunities, but ongoing barriers to access and understanding remain.

- Awareness of TAFE courses is high overall (85%), but slightly lower among those born overseas
- Less Australian-born respondents (65%) felt those people from different cultural backgrounds can access courses

- Understanding of Net Zero job and training opportunities increased after Fiesta, particularly among multilingual participants
- English-only speakers report lower understanding and confidence of Net Zero pathways

25-point increase in understanding of Net Zero opportunities among multilingual participants after Fiesta





WHAT FIESTA PARTICIPANTS WANT

WHAT PEOPLE TOLD US

We asked participants to identify the one area they felt needs improvement.

Three clear ranked priorities came through:

- 1) Voice in decisions
- 2) Police and safety
- 3) Transport

We also saw strong responses for better access to:

- Jobs and training
- Health services
- Housing

DIFFERENCES ACROSS GROUPS

- CALD respondents raised jobs, health, transport, and housing affordability more often
- Australian-born respondents more often raised having a voice in decision-making, police, and education

WHAT PEOPLE WOULD CHANGE IN NSW SERVICES

When asked what they would change, all groups focused on:

- Multicultural service engagement
- Housing
- Transport
- Health services

Participants consistently expressed wanting more than access to services. They wanted to be heard, included, and able to navigate systems with confidence.



NEXT STEPS

WHAT WE THINK IT ALL MEANS

Survey responses show a strong, connected and engaged multicultural community at Fiesta.

Participants reported feeling welcome and safe in community spaces and are generally able to access services.

A consistent message emerged:

- people can access services, but do not always feel respected, understood, or included
- awareness of services is also uneven, meaning some people do not know what support is available or how to access it.

Together, these findings show that while services exist, they are not always experienced as inclusive, trusted, or easy to navigate.

Australian-born and English-only respondents were often more critical of cultural safety and fairness, particularly in policing and legal services.

WHAT WILL WE DO

We will use this evidence to strengthen our advocacy to government and service providers for:

- improving cultural engagement in services, not just access
- increasing awareness of existing supports, particularly where gaps exist
- strengthening trust and confidence in key services such as policing and legal support
- funding community-based engagement that connects people to services
- including community voice earlier and more meaningfully in decision-making

We will continue to collect and share community evidence to support better decisions across the region.

Strong multicultural services are a community-wide desire. They reflect a shared expectation for a fair, vibrant, and inclusive multicultural Hunter.

Appendix 1: Survey Questions

ABOUT YOU

- What is your suburb of residence?
- What is your age group?
- What is your gender?
- Which language(s) do you speak at home?
- How long have you lived in Australia?

YOUR EXPERIENCE OF SERVICES IN THE HUNTER

Participants responded using a 5-point scale: strongly agree to strongly disagree

EDUCATION

- My child's school respects different cultures and backgrounds
- I can understand information from my child's school
- I know who to contact at school if I need support

LEGAL SERVICES

- Lawyers in the Hunter respect my culture
- I can get legal help in the Hunter
- I know where to go for legal help in my language

FAMILY SERVICES (DCJ)

- Family services understand the needs of people from different cultural backgrounds
- I can access family services when needed
- I know what support family services provide

HEALTH SERVICES

- Health workers respect my culture
- I can explain my health concerns to health workers
- I know interpreter services are available in hospitals

POLICE

- Police respect people from different cultures
- I feel safe asking police for help
- I know about Multicultural Community Liaison Officers (MCLOs)

EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING (NET ZERO)

- I understood NetZero job and training opportunities before Fiesta
- I understand NetZero job and training opportunities better after attending Fiesta

TAFE

- I know TAFE provides courses for people from different cultural backgrounds
- It is easy for people from different communities to access TAFE

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

- Which ONE area needs the most improvement?
- What is one thing you would improve with NSW services in the Hunter?

YOUR EXPERIENCE AT FIESTA

- I felt welcome and culturally safe
- The event increased my sense of belonging
- I learned about a service I did not know before
- I would attend Fiesta again
- I trust HMC to advocate for multicultural communities
- What would you like to see at future Fiesta events?