

# RESIDENT'S PERCEPTION SURVEY

Maribyrnong Truck Action Group's (MTAG)  
survey of Yarraville and Footscray residents



**REPORT.**

**mtag**

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## Yarraville and Footscray Residents Truck Impact Perception Survey Report

### Summary of key findings:

- ▶ 36% of respondents reported that they, or a member of their family living at their address, suffered from asthma. This is triple the Australian average according to the Asthma Foundation Victoria (2007). Eye, nose and throat irritations were also an area of concern for residents.
- ▶ 55% of respondents reported ongoing sleep disturbance from truck noise at night and in the early hours of the morning.
- ▶ 76% of respondents felt a consistent level of concern/fear having to use local roads because of the number of freight vehicles.
- ▶ 62% of respondents felt the effects of truck traffic (fumes and noise) prevented them from spending time in their house (ie their own backyard).
- ▶ 90% of respondents felt that the state government was not effective in controlling the levels of truck traffic on their local streets.

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“Its always at the back of my mind that diesel fumes are falling where the children play. Almost all the local schools are on major trucks routes.”

“It has become so bad that we are looking at moving. The children are always sick and the truck traffic is dangerous. We love living in Yarraville but we have to put our children first.”

“I live off Francis St and when I put my indicator on to turn they start to tailgate. If I need to make a complete stop to give way to another motorist they stop inches behind me – it’s like a deathtrap.”

“I’ve had numerous scary encounters with aggressive and angry truck drivers.”

## **The way forward...**

Since the completion of the Western Ring Road in 1996, and CityLink in 1999, the levels of truck traffic in the inner west have increased dramatically. Currently 20,000 heavy trucks a day presently use residential streets in Maribyrnong. (Figures supplied by Vic Roads March 2005).

According to the most recent research, quoted in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (12 August 2005), it appears that children living close to pollution hotspots are 12 times more likely to die of cancer than those who don't. The *Herald Sun* (11 September 2005) also published an article headed 'Cancer Link to Fumes', which quoted the Cancer Council of Victoria's Professor Mark Elwood: "Chemicals in diesel emissions are cancer causing agents, we know that." Another study done recently at Birmingham University concludes that many childhood cancers are caused by exposure to diesel emissions while in the womb (27 January 2005, *Dieselwatch*).

The planned expansion of the Port of Melbourne will result in even more trucks on the streets of Maribyrnong. The Port of Melbourne's own studies predict a doubling of truck traffic in the next ten years if channel deepening and port expansion go ahead as planned. The government's proposal to increase the amount of freight carried by rail will only take a fraction of the extra traffic.

Recommendations include a series of short, medium and long-term solutions. Short-term solutions would remove 40% of truck traffic from Francis Street, Somerville Road and Williamstown Rd immediately, whilst medium and long-term solutions would slowly address the remainder in this rapidly changing area.

### **Short-term**

- ▶ Extension of curfews on Francis and Somerville Rds
- ▶ Freeing up Westgate bridge capacity
- ▶ Night curfews on Buckley St, Footscray

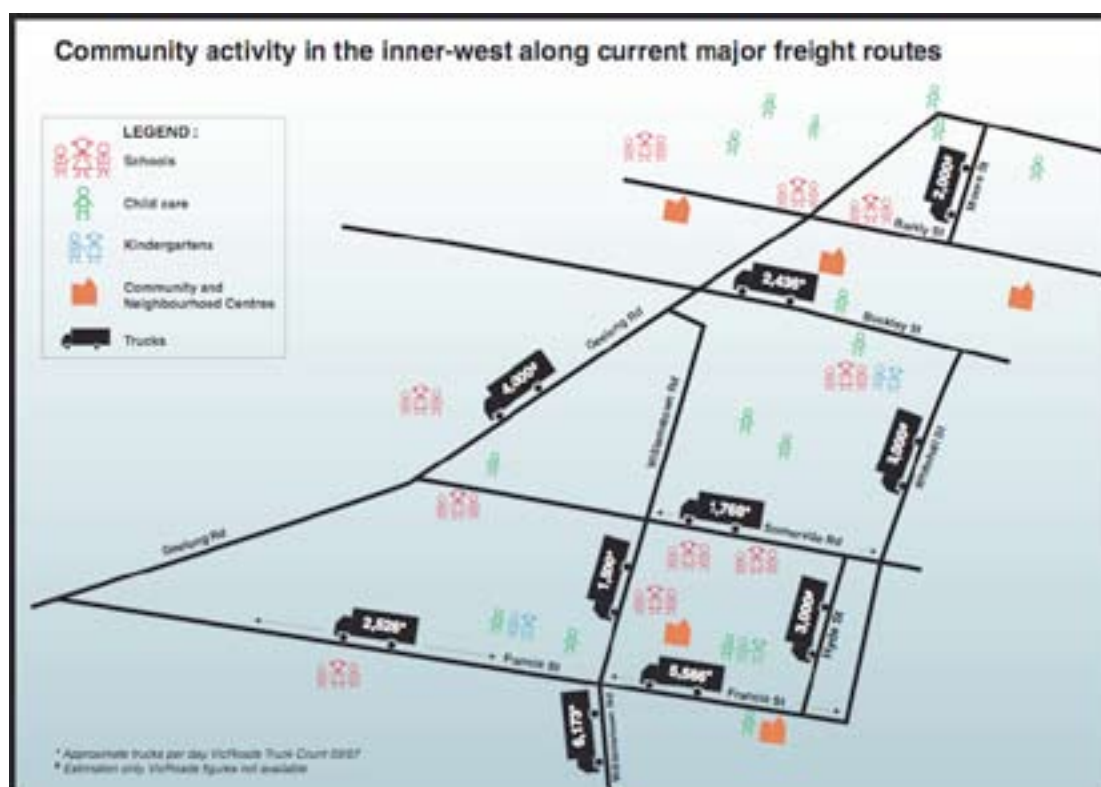
### **Medium-term and long-term**

- ▶ Creating an exit from the Westgate freeway allowing trucks to access the Mobil terminal and the Whitehall St container yards
- ▶ Bridge built across the Maribyrnong near the ex-Pivot site to be used exclusively for trucks
- ▶ Create a truck route from Sunshine Rd west of Paramount Rd in Tottenham, to the West Gate Freeway
- ▶ Create infrastructure to move more freight by rail and provide financial incentive for companies to use rail instead of road

## Background

Maribyrnong Truck Action Group (MTAG) was formed in late 2005 out of concern about the negative effects of the growing number of trucks using the streets of the City of Maribyrnong, Victoria. By raising community awareness, and providing a focus for the mounting anger/frustration that exists amongst residents in the inner west concerning truck traffic/issues, MTAG aims to lobby and pressure local and state Government to start finding real, workable solutions to this issue.

The following map shows the proximity of truck traffic to the many schools, childcare centres and kindergartens that cater for the large number of children who live in Yarraville and Footscray. This is a fast growing area and most of the people moving in are young families or couples wishing to start a family.



To date, neither the State Government nor the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) have conducted an extensive investigation into the effects of such large volumes of road freight traffic on the health and wellbeing of residents living along – or near – these routes.

In April 2007, MTAG commissioned an independent survey to provide insights into the perceived impacts of truck traffic on residents living in Yarraville and Footscray. One thousand surveys were distributed throughout the suburbs of Yarraville, Kingsville, Seddon and Footscray. It is important to note that the survey questions were designed to include whole households and not just individuals.

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## Methodology

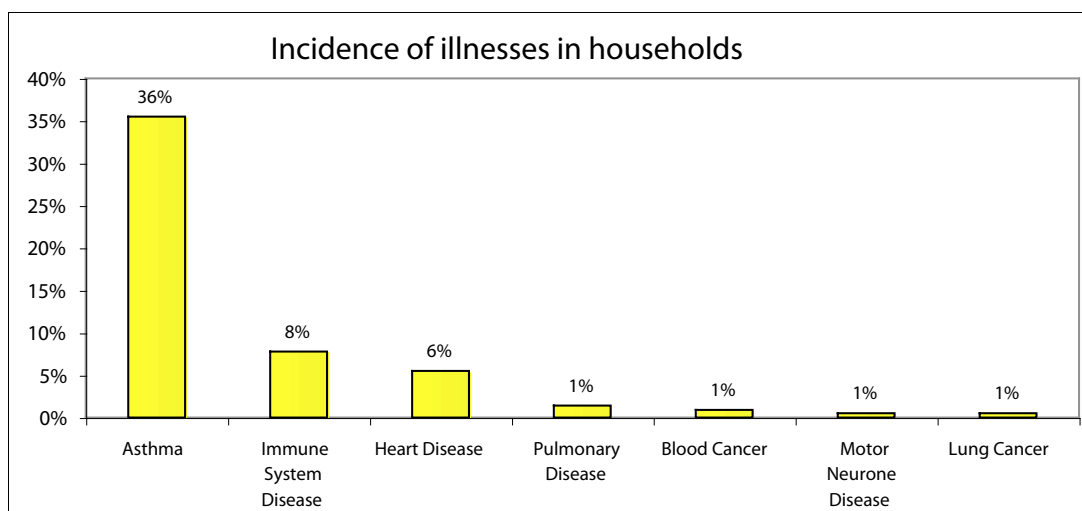
The survey addressed four main themes: *Physical Health, Emotional Health, Liveability and Amenity, and Role of Governing Bodies*. The 23 survey questions were a combination of open and closed questions, and those using a Likert Scale (1 to 7).

Five hundred of these surveys were placed in the letterboxes of houses situated on the major freight routes of Francis St, Somerville Rd, Williamstown Rd and Buckley St. The remaining were distributed through childcare centres, schools and the MTAG website. The return rate of the surveys distributed was 29.5%.

The survey results and questionnaire feedback was collated and analysed by an independent research company specialising in the interpretation of qualitative research.

## Summary of survey results – key findings

### Physical Health

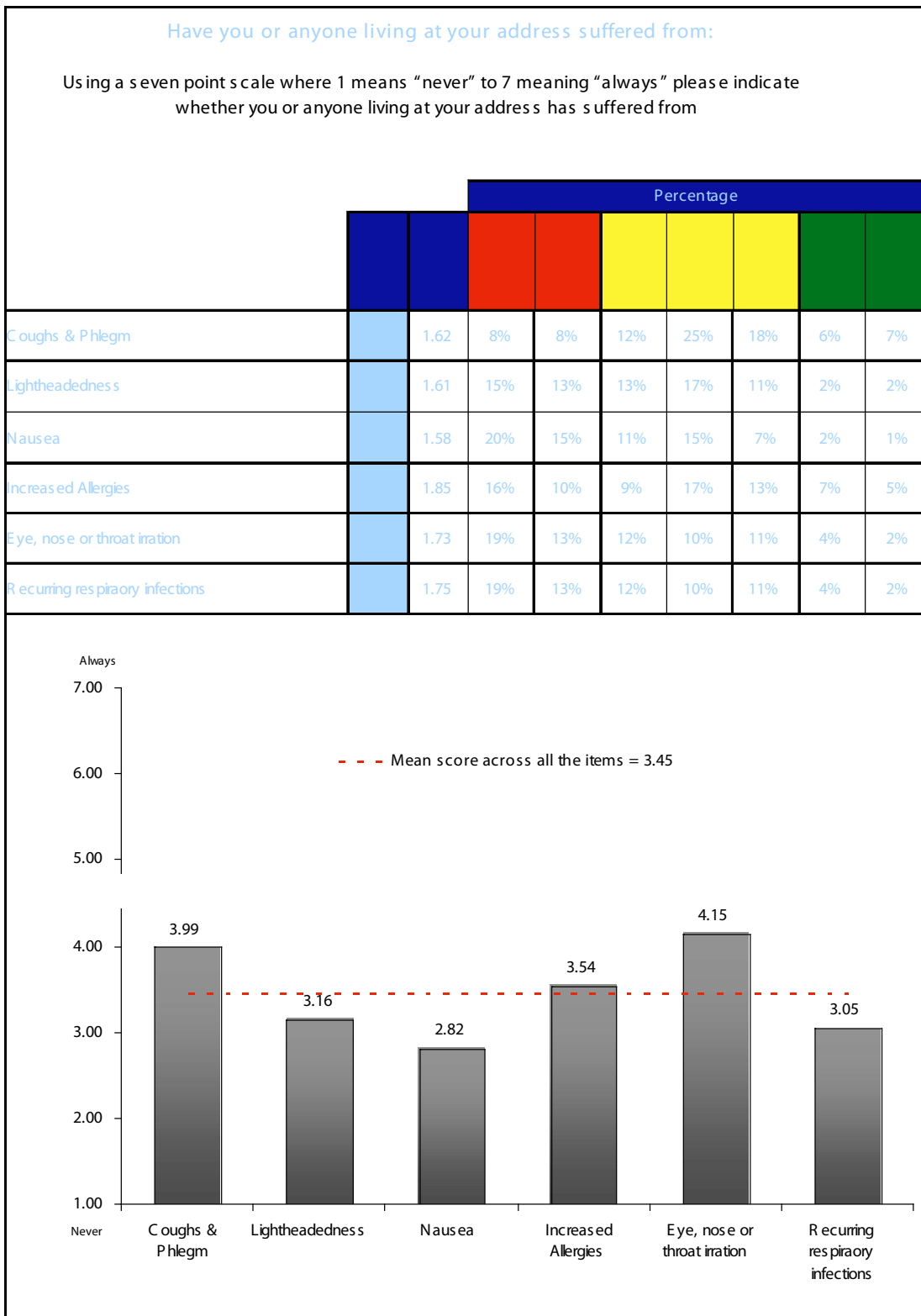


Survey Fig. 3

Survey Fig. 3 (above) shows the occurrence, amongst respondents, of a number of diseases that have been associated with airborne pollution. The incidence of asthma is of particular concern as it is nearly triple the Australian average which, according to the Asthma Foundation Victoria (2007) is 14 to 16% for children and 10 to 12% for adults. The qualitative observations of residents also stressed their concern over their health:

”My elderly parents suffer badly at least six to ten times a year with coughs, flu and recurring respiratory infections. This has led to depression.”

”I notice that my allergies decrease when I am away from this area (ie. coughs, eye/nose/throat infections, respiratory infections).”



Survey Fig. 4

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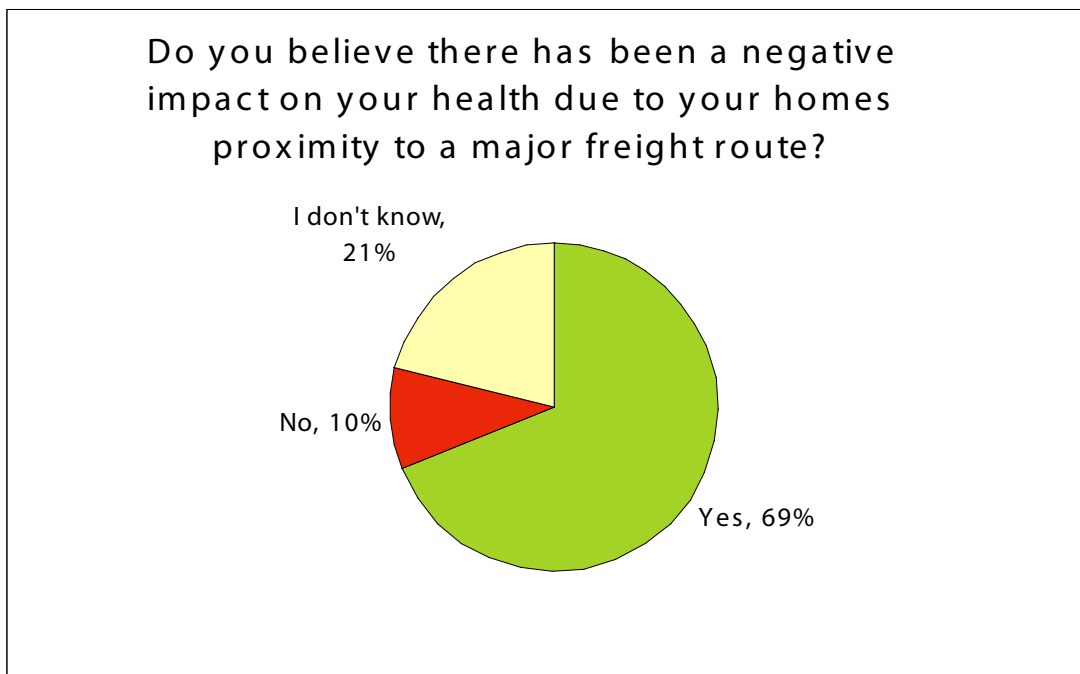
Nearly 50% of survey respondents experienced some form of physical symptom associated with exposure to diesel fumes.



"I believe my multiple chemical sensitivities would improve with less exposure to diesel fumes and exhaust."

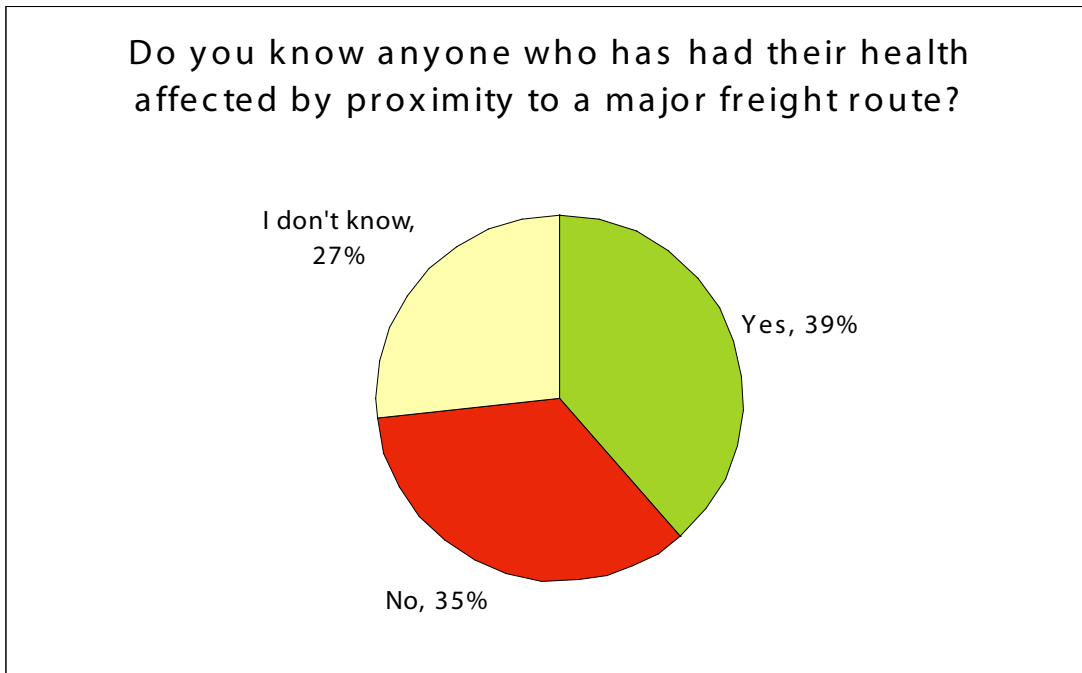
"I try to spend time away from home to relieve my symptoms."

"My youngest daughter has had a series of chest infections from about two months old. My eldest daughter has been rushed to hospital by ambulance in the last year with respiratory problems. My husband has a constant cough and chest infections."



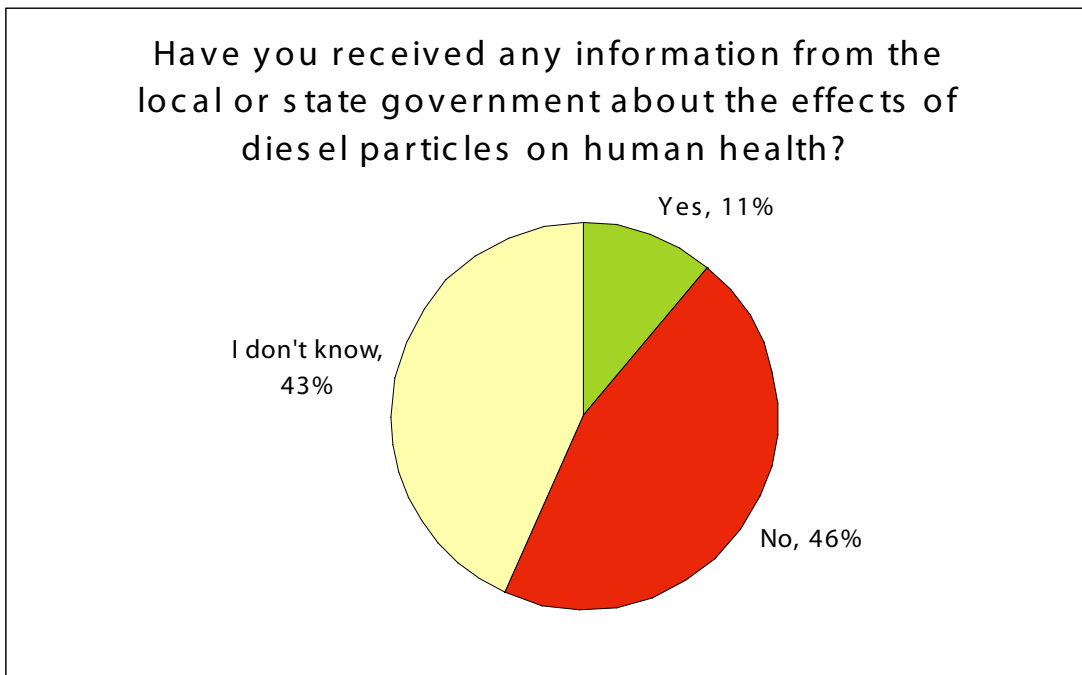
Survey Fig. 5

Nearly 70% of respondents believed that where they live has had a negative impact on their health (Survey fig. 5), and nearly 40% know someone who has become ill from living near a major freight route (Survey fig. 6).



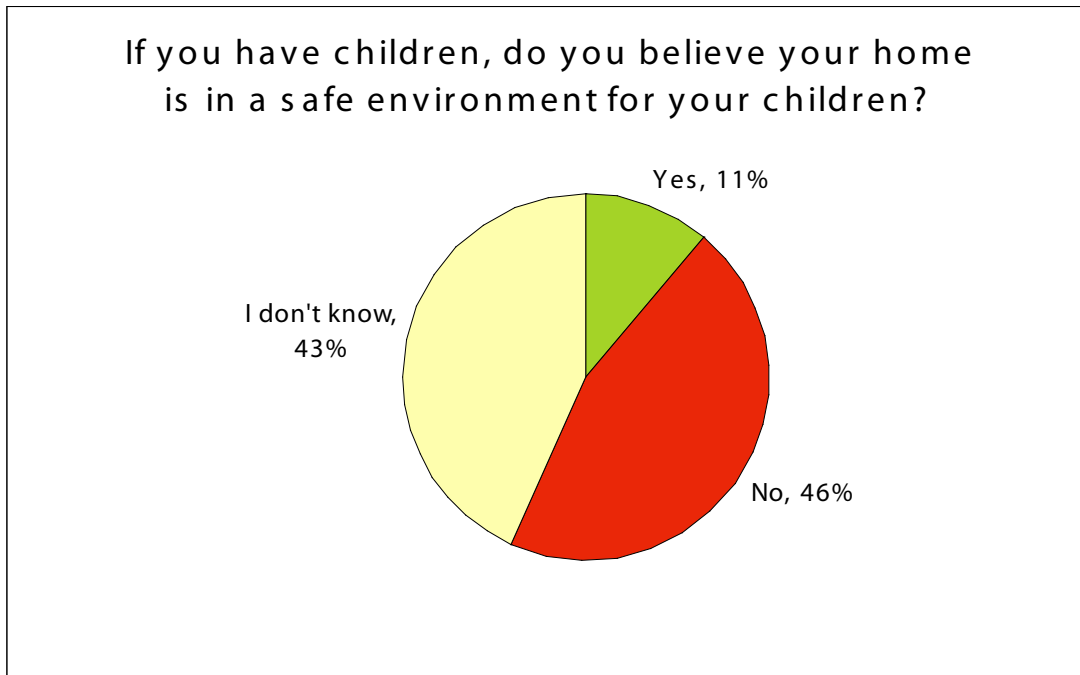
Survey Fig. 6

Figure 7 demonstrates that only 11% of respondents had received any information about the effects of diesel pollution on their health from a local or state authority. Interestingly, a small percentage of respondents had written in their response to this question that the only information they had received was from MTAG, which they had presumed was a government organisation and/or department.



Survey Fig. 7

# 08.



Survey Fig. 8

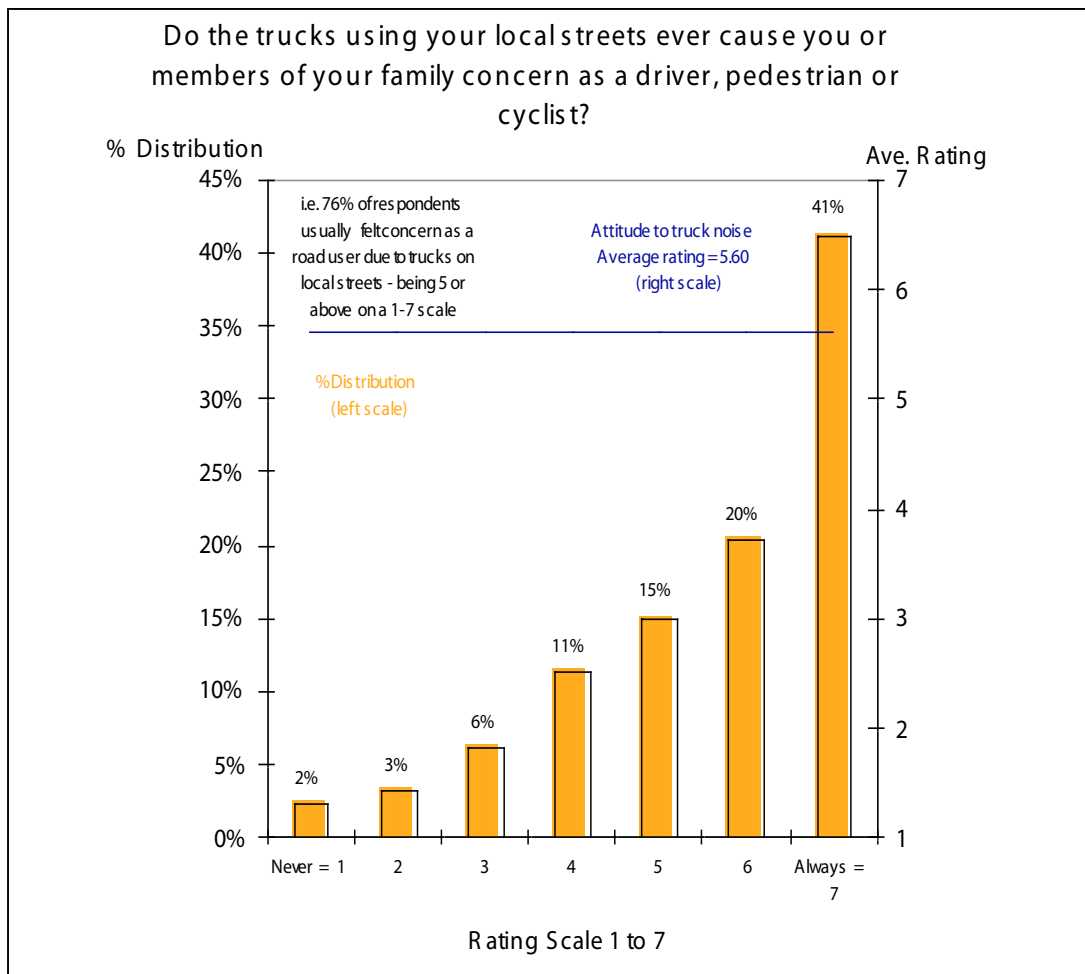
Figure 8 clearly shows that 46% of respondents are concerned that the close location of their homes to major freight routes did not provide a safe environment for their children.

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“My son and I both have an increased occurrence of bronchial/chest infections; since living here my son has developed asthma. He is the first person in both my husband’s and my family to be diagnosed with it.”

“I know the particles contain known carcinogens and even though we are not displaying obvious symptoms right now it might affect us later.”

**Mental Health**



Survey Fig.9

Figure 9 shows that 76% of respondents usually felt some apprehension when they or a member of their family – particularly children – used the local roads that carried heavy truck traffic.

“I can no longer enjoy time outside in my yard, even on the weekend it is oppressively noisy with large volumes of fumes. It’s distressing to drive as the truck drivers are so arrogant. I have been driven off the road by a truck. ”

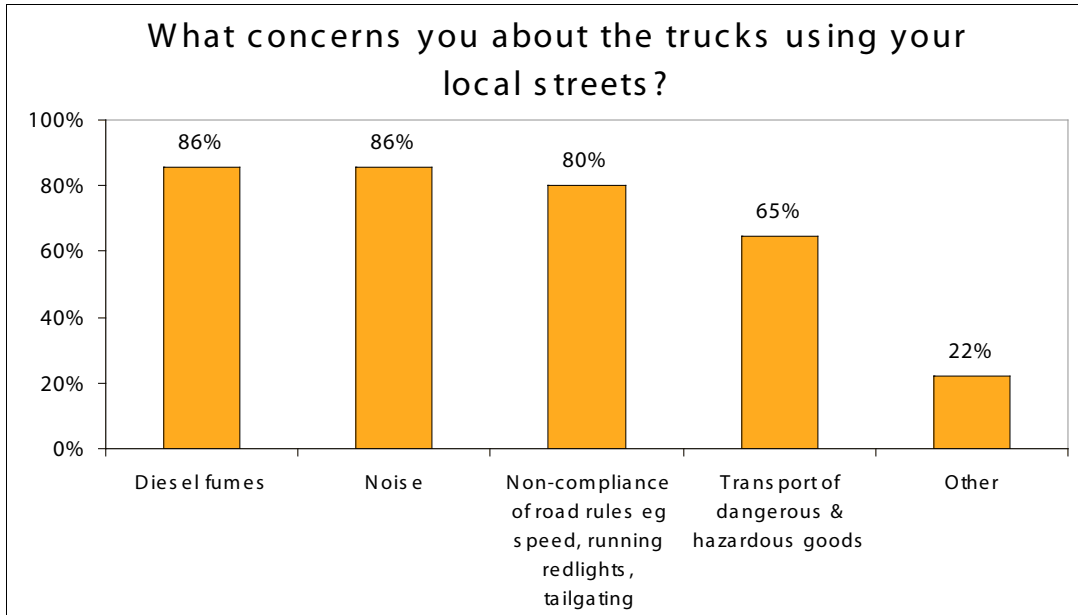
“Congestion of traffic begins at 4pm; you cannot even cross over Buckley St. Nor do I feel safe for my girls walking down the street due to the high volumes of traffic.”

“Living on Somerville Rd, we are constantly faced with all the dangers associated with having trucks drive past every second. We are certain that our health and living conditions would improve vastly with a significant reduction in truck volume.”

“It is not safe to be exposed to the level of diesel emitted by such heavy truck traffic – not to mention the increased risk of being a pedestrian or driver on roads with so many trucks.”

# 010.

Figure 10 shows that along with concerns about the health impacts of diesel fumes, noise is a major cause of disturbance and worry.

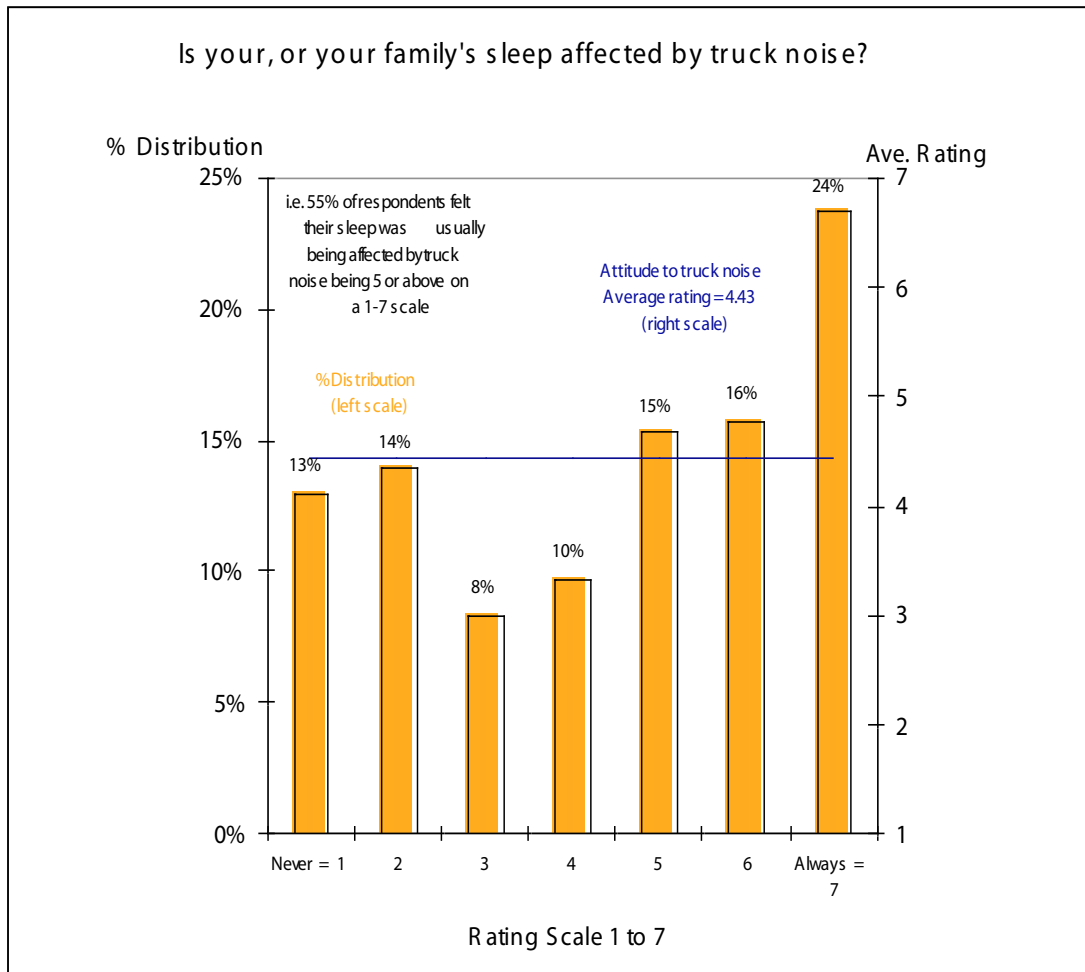


Survey Fig.10

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“To get a good night’s sleep, I need my window open for fresh air but then it is too noisy and polluted so I have to close it. I get used to the noise, but I go away for a few nights and then find I can’t sleep because of the truck noise and their brakes wake me up. I have to wear earplugs to sleep because of the truck noise and the brakes.”

“I am regularly woken at 5.30am by large trucks driving by. The truck curfew is just a joke.”



Survey Fig.11

Figure 11 clearly demonstrated that 55% of households USUALLY experience some sleep deprivation. This is disturbing as lack of sleep or disrupted sleep is associated with car and workplace accidents, and recent research has shown links to weakened immune system function and diabetes (*The Lancet*, vol 354, Oct 23 1999), as well as cognitive problems. This figure was supported by many verbal comments relating to the subject of sleep disturbance from truck noise.

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“Sleep deprivation means I cannot function adequately in all areas of my life in terms of physical, emotional psychological wellbeing, in my work, relationships etc.”

“I can't relax properly. I'm woken up frequently during the night, often feeling frightened. I can never sleep in.”

“When you are affected by fatigue your mind doesn't function properly which affects you at work and home.”

“It would be heaven to have less truck traffic. Sleep is a serious issue and relaxation is what we really need. Living here is extremely stressful.”

## Liveability and Amenity

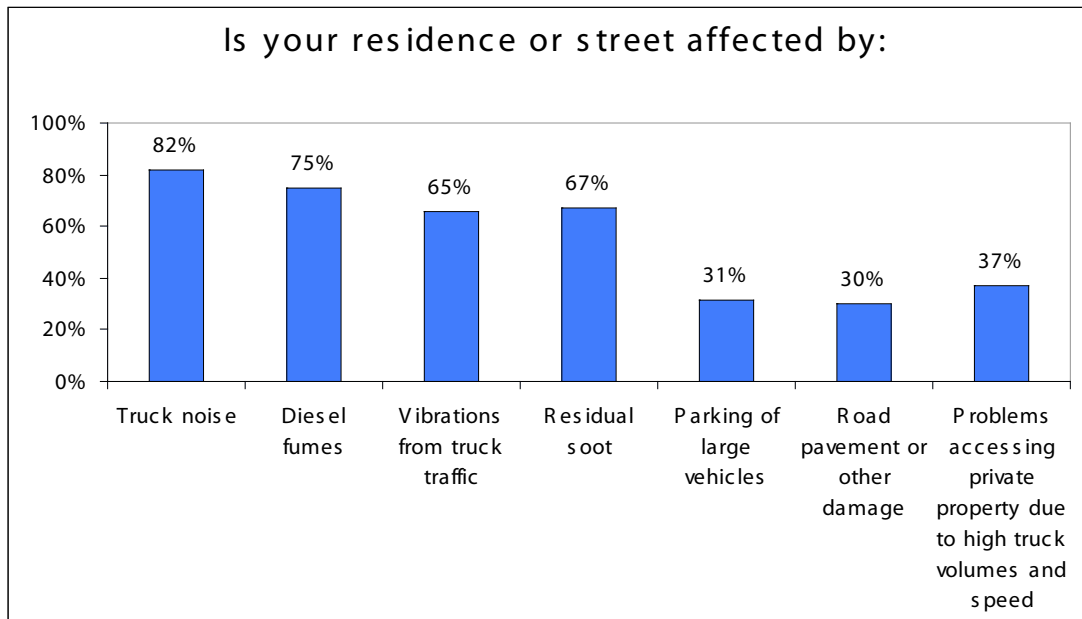
Survey respondents were asked what issues affected their actual homes. Again truck noise (82%) and diesel fumes (75%) were the major areas of concern (Figure 12).

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“Heavy noise from exhaust brakes and skidding when braking due to excessive speed.

I find the numbers and size of the trucks using the suburban streets surrounding Yarraville, particularly Francis street, Somerville Rd and Whitehall street, to be highly intimidating when I drive on these streets going to and from work. I am also concerned at the pollution from the diesel fumes as a result of so many trucks using these streets and their use of Francis street and Somerville Rd creates something of an ‘artificial boundary’ around Yarraville which makes me, as a pedestrian, reluctant to cross them.”

“The house is always gritty due to the pollution .I can smell the petrol and diesel fumes inside my house.”



Survey Fig. 12

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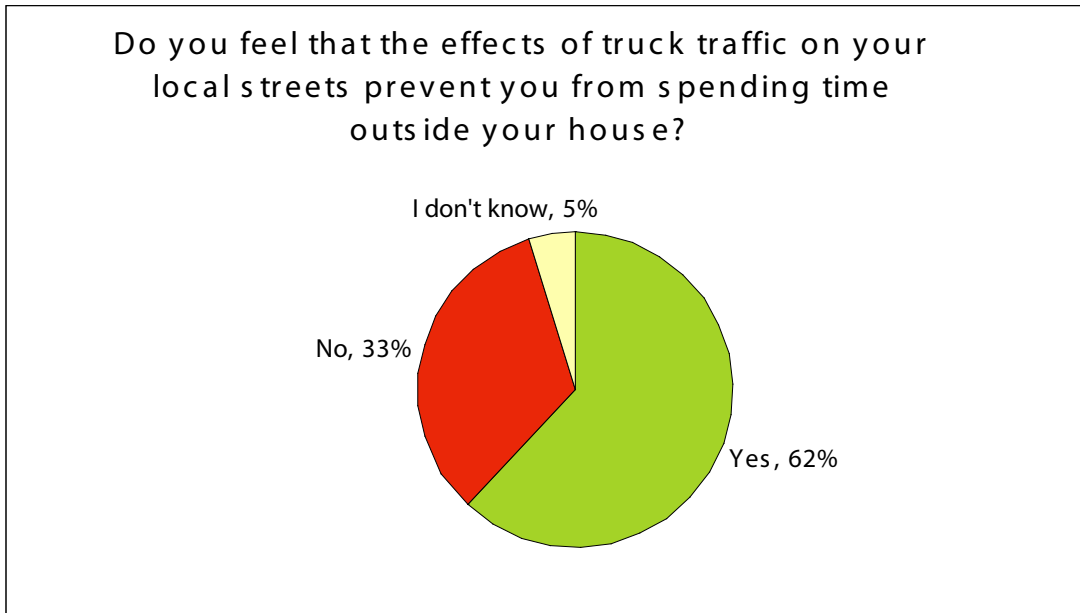
“We never spend time outside as we can never hear each other.”

“I can’t leave the door or window open for fresh air; this is a serious problem in summer.”

“My washing can’t be forgotten on the line, it gets filthy very quickly.”

“I used to live on Hoddle St, Collingwood – the reason I bought a house here was it was quieter but it is NOT and there is more residual soot than Hoddle St!”

“Constant truck noise and vibration day and night is extreme.”



Survey Fig. 13

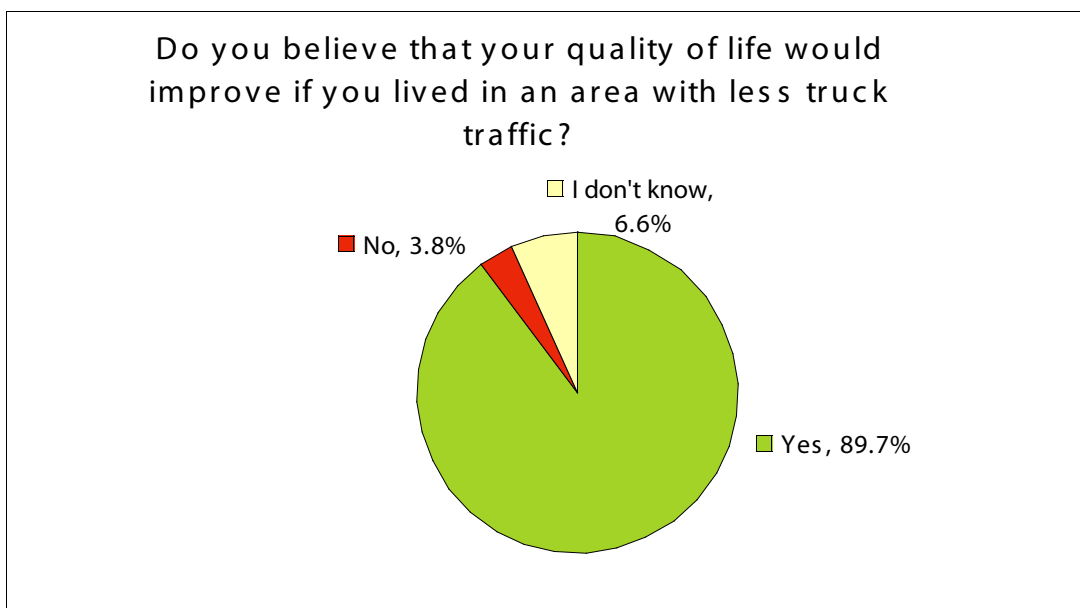
Figure 13 shows that these two factors (noise and fumes) prevented 60% of respondents from spending time outside their residences (ie in their yards). Figure 14 shows that nearly 90% of respondents expressed that their quality of life would improve if they lived elsewhere.

These and other issues of concern prompted these comments:



"Noise and non-compliance of road rules are a major concern. I often hear trucks slamming on brakes to stop at Hyde St lights because they are speeding."

"Some days I feel like a prisoner in my own home. I can't open windows, spend time in my own garden, nor take the dogs for a walk."



Survey Fig. 14

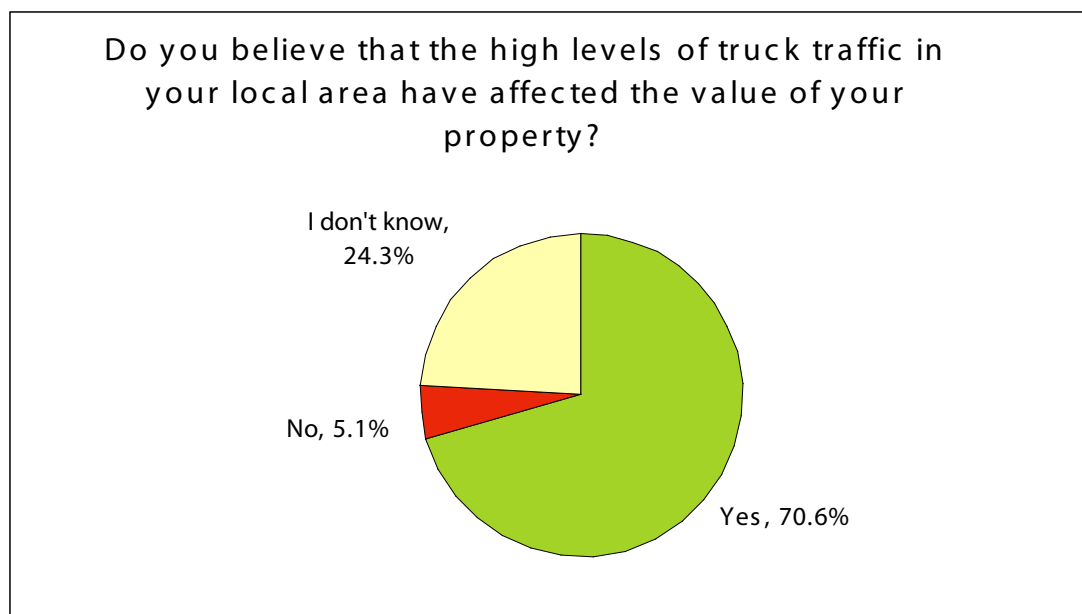
# 014.

Though many people commented that they and their family loved the community they live in, the high levels of truck traffic was a constant source of worry which not only affected their quality of life but created 'physical boundaries' within the community; areas where the high levels of truck traffic meant that people would try to avoid using these roads.

”My children can't play in the front yard, I feel I cannot leave them alone in the front of the house because I fear that might go near the road and be hit by a truck.”

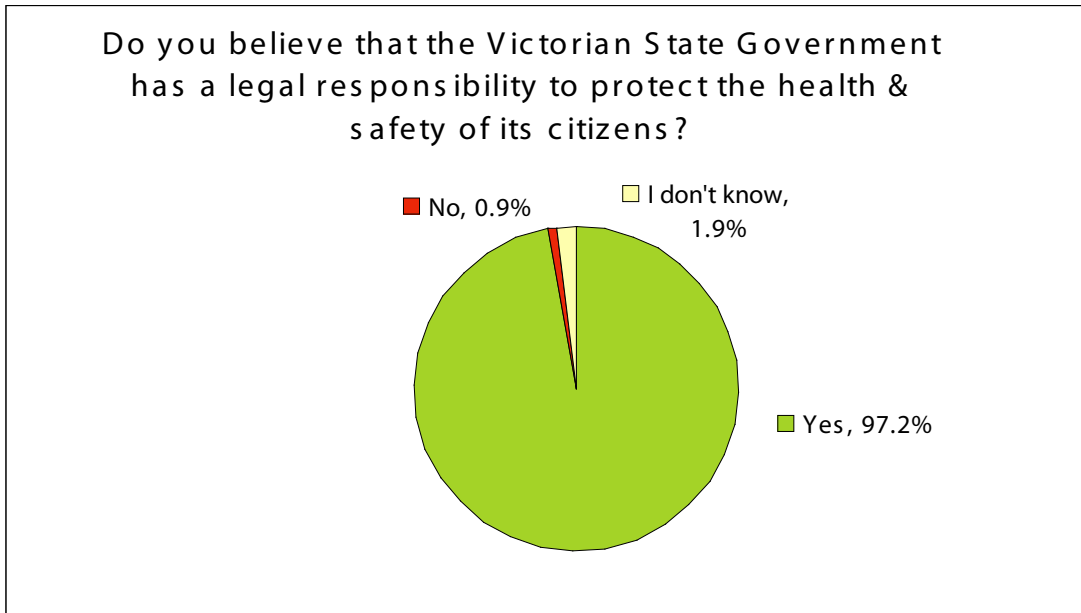
“I love this community and all it has to offer but the trucks are the negative for myself and my family.”

“The trucks make my neighbourhood smaller as I avoid walking on – or crossing – the roads that are heavily used by the trucks.”



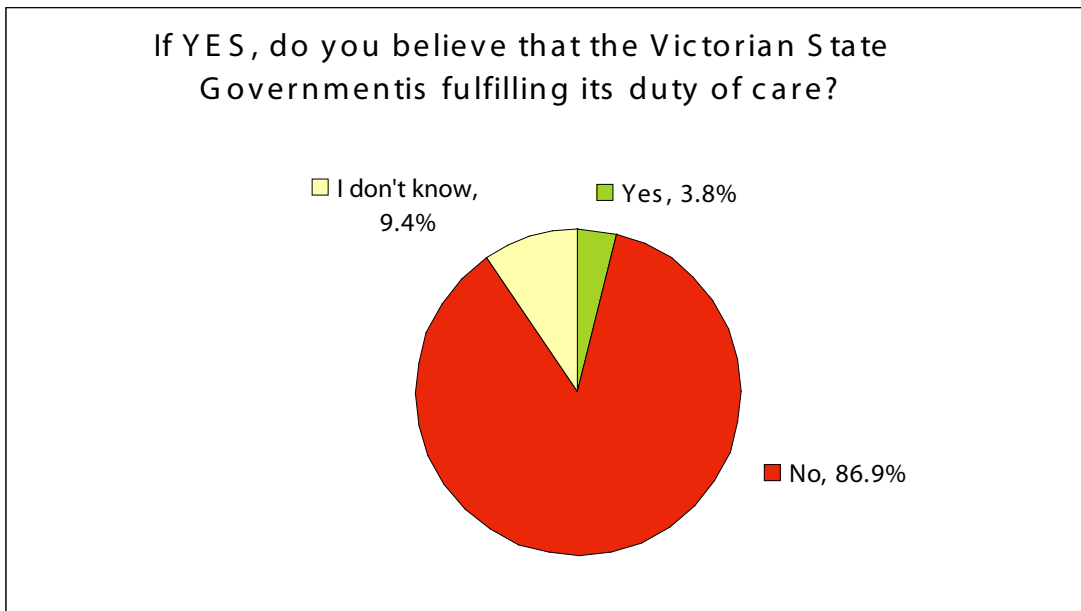
Survey Fig. 15

Respondents were also concerned about affect of the truck traffic on the value of their properties. (Figure 15)



Survey Fig. 16

Figure 16 shows nearly 100% of respondents believed that the Victorian state government was primarily responsible for their health and safety and figure 17 clearly shows that respondents feel the state government is failing in its duty of care to the residents of Maribyrnong.



Survey Fig. 17



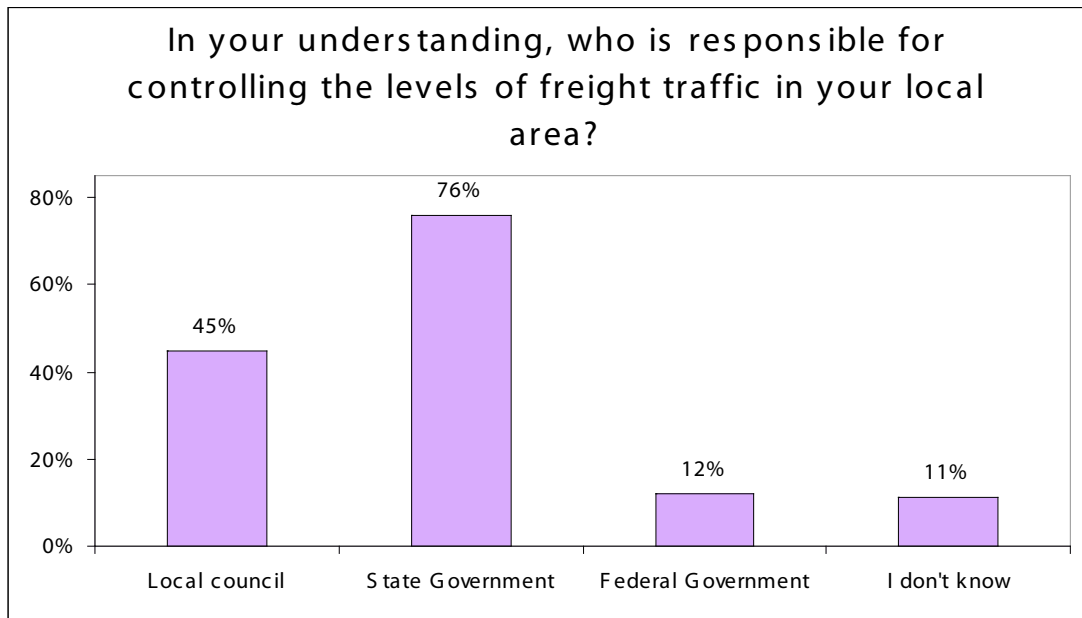
“Although trucks have been banned from my street they continue to use it and damage the corner.”

“The air pollution here on Francis Street is horrendous and curfews are absolutely NOT adhered to.”

## Role of Governing Bodies

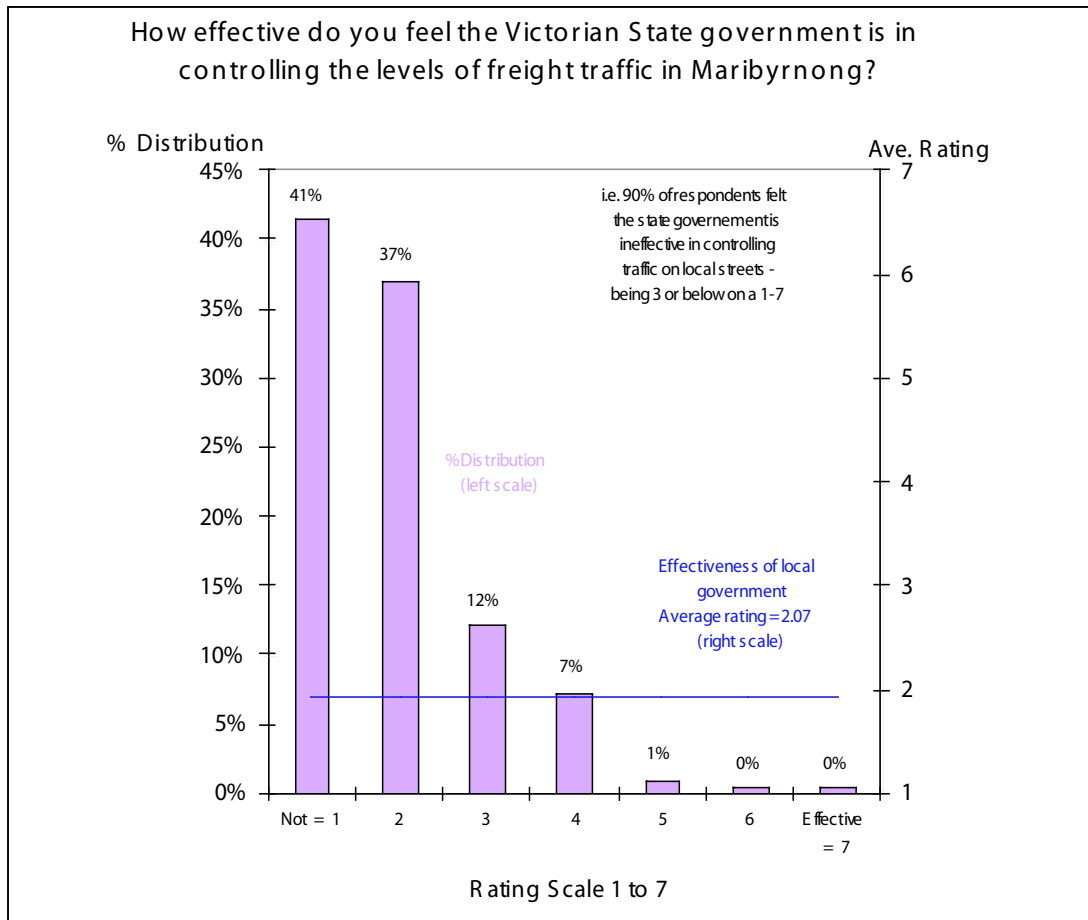


“I used to live on Hoddle St, Collingwood and the reason I bought a house in Yarraville was because I thought it was quieter but it is NOT and there is more residual soot and air pollution than Hoddle St! The intensity of the truck traffic on Francis street is simply unbelievable. I honestly just didn't believe that it would be allowed to be this bad as there are HOUSES on both sides of the street. People actually LIVE here, it's not like it's just a freeway, where pedestrians and cyclists aren't allowed. And these truck drivers seem to show little or no respect for other drivers as they noisily speed down this street at all times of the day and night, pumping out their noxious diesel fumes. I find it quite astonishing, as a recent arrival here, that the curfew means nothing and that the government is prepared to sit by and allow the residents of Yarraville to be poisoned by the diesel fumes from the thousands of trucks that use this street daily. This is no longer a crisis about traffic but one about people's health.”



Survey Fig. 18

Figure 18 shows that most respondents correctly believe the Victorian State government is responsible for controlling the freight traffic, but 90% believe they are ineffectual in this responsibility (figure 19).

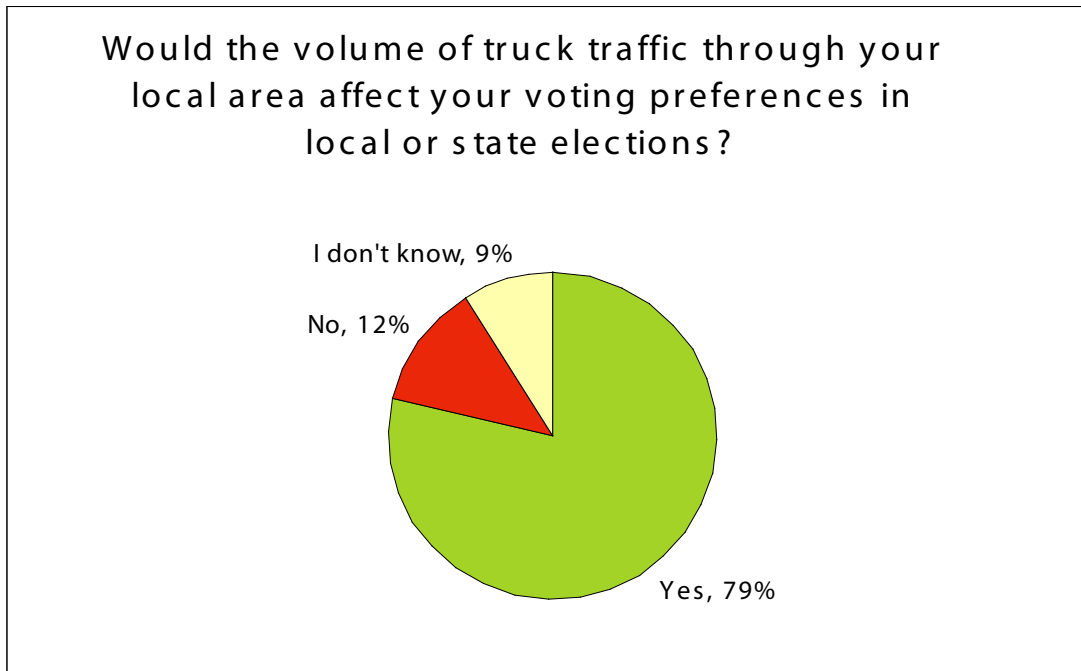


Survey Fig. 19



“Its hard not to feel dispirited by where we live. Its hard to feel a pride of place or feel proud of our suburb.”

“Inappropriate mix of uses (residential activity vs. industrial through traffic), cuts off sections of community as you don't want to cross these streets unless you absolutely have to.”



Survey Fig. 20

Nearly 80% of respondents said the volume of truck traffic would affect their voting preferences (*figure 20*) and many commented that although they felt people in the community voiced their concerns about this issue, government – both local and state – were simply not listening.



“People don’t bother (voicing their concerns) because they don’t think it does any good.”

“Promises are always made but never kept.”

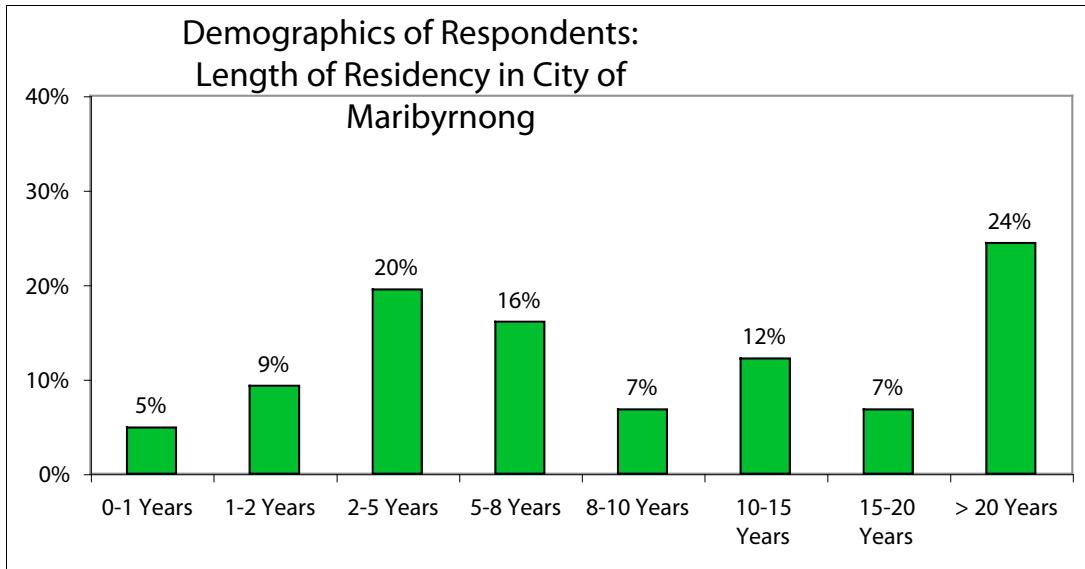
“No one listens – nothing is done.”

“Residents are...just not listened to. The local MP’s are not interested.”

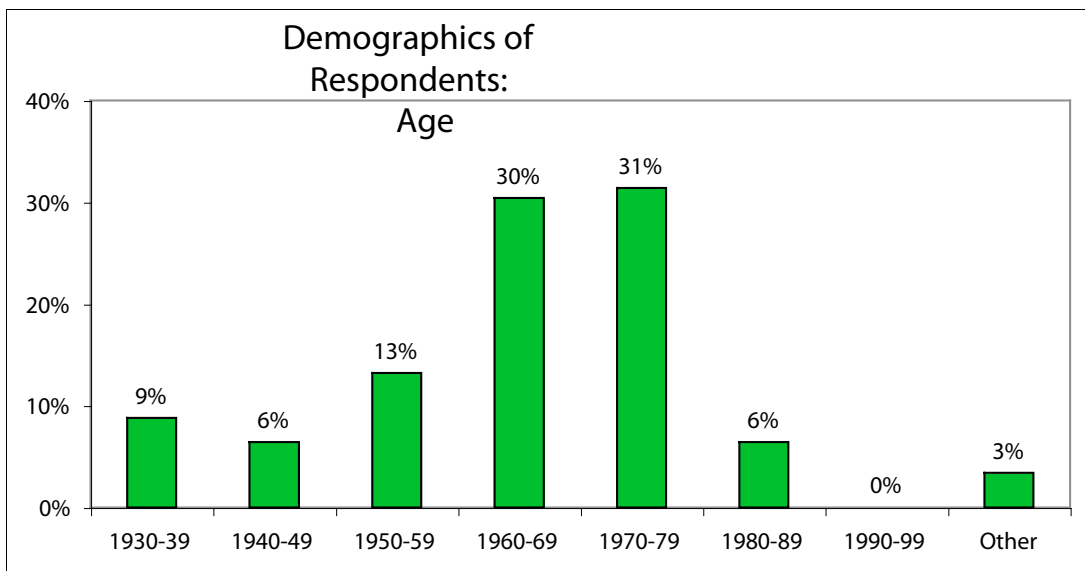
“But who is listening?”

## Demographics

Whilst the surveys demonstrated a variation amongst the age and length of residency of the survey respondents, it was of particular interest that a high percentage of the respondents had lived within the Maribyrnong Municipality for 20 years or more.



Survey Fig. 21



Survey Fig. 22