

Bushwalking News Bulletin – Reader Survey Report

Many thanks to those who responded to our Reader Survey: your participation has provided Bushwalking Victoria with valuable and constructive feedback which will help inform ongoing improvements to the Bulletin.

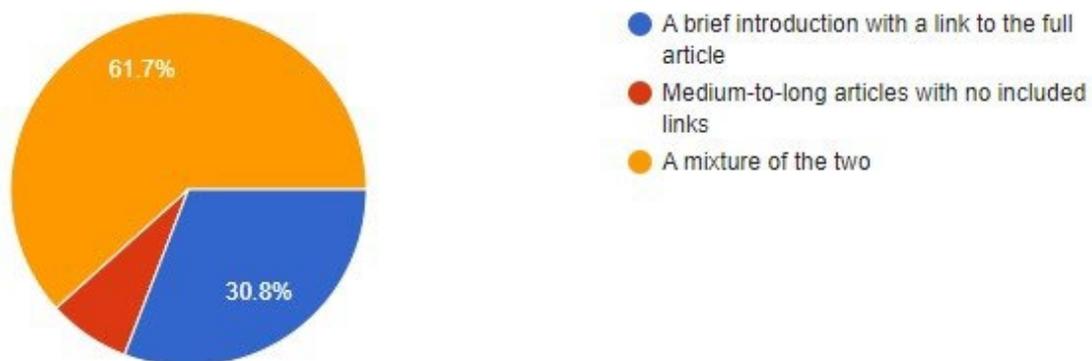
Although the survey period was extended to two months, participation was disappointingly low, with only 107 responses received – a tiny proportion of BWV’s membership. Work will need to be done to understand why so many readers chose not to have their voice heard.

The vast majority of our members belong to an affiliated club. Seventy percent of respondents were members of affiliated clubs and club committees. It was pleasing to note that half of this group received the BWV Bulletin direct from BWV, via their personal email address; the other half received it as an email from their club or via a link in their club’s newsletter. Expanding the Bulletin’s distribution to more club members should, perhaps, become a priority.

Response Summary

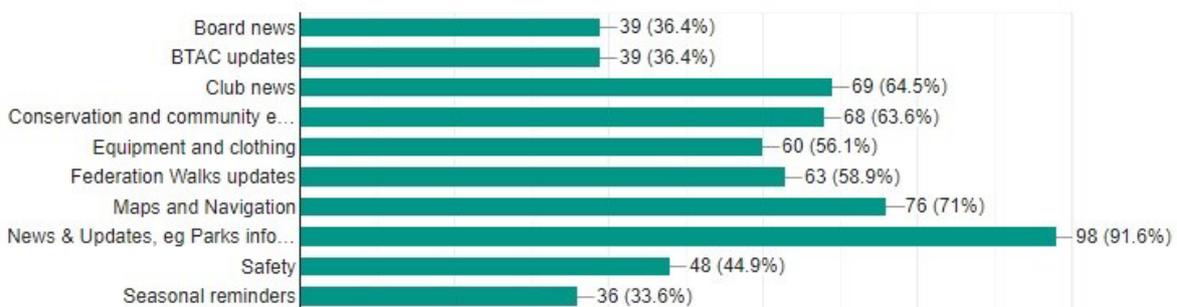
As response numbers were very low, rigorous statistical analysis of the results is not valid. However, some clear trends can be noted:

- The older demographic evident within many walking clubs aligns with the age of the majority of respondents: 37% were aged 70 – 79; 35% were 60 – 69; 13% were 50 – 59 years old.
- It was pleasing to note that 87% of respondents read the Bulletin regularly.
- A clear majority (93%) of respondents think the length of the bulletin is about right.
- Recently, the presentation style of Bulletin articles has been trending towards brief introductions with a link to the full article. Here are respondent preferences:



- Respondents read the Bulletin across a range of devices: the most popular was desktop computers, followed by laptops, mobile phones, then tablets. About one in four read it on more than one device.

- Less than 20% of respondents access BWV's Facebook page; half access the online Bushwalking Manual; over 80% access BWV's website, generally on an occasional basis.
- All regular and occasional content categories were of interest to at least one third of respondents. This graphic illustrates the interest generated per topic:



Comments and Suggestions from Respondents

Almost half of respondents added comments. Thank you for your positivity, encouragement and constructive ideas! Many read to seek information, whilst others seek enjoyment as well. Several key themes were apparent; the following comments are representative:

Additional topics you would like us to include in the Bulletin:

- More articles on walks, walk ideas, walk locations (including Parks & access), walk reports and proposed new walks. *[Many responses were similar.]*
- Occasionally, you may wish to refer to interstate bushwalking bodies.
- More snippets of walk reports and locations to entice others, especially those in older age groups looking for shorter interesting walks.
- Include a small article from the Bushwalking Manual in each edition.
- A brief section on commercial development watch.
- What new bushwalkers are talking about.
- I would like to become a regular bush walker and find out about walks to suit my fitness level and experience.
- Showcase a specific club adopt-a-track.
- Tips from readers.
- Reminder on useful updates on maps from Parks Vic or commercial providers.
- Results of research on bushwalker numbers and activities - both BWA and non-BWA members.
- Perhaps the inclusion of a voluntary piece from either Dept. responsible for the areas we visit, manufacturers or suppliers of equipment or services we might use or indeed reviews by members on walks and/or equipment.
- Engage with sponsors (who provide BWV discounts) to promote useful walking products (e.g. essential items, maps, sales).

- Information on tour companies that offer connection with nature both here and overseas for singles, couples, families. *[Note: BWV must not support any specific commercial enterprises. Paid advertisements which would be of interest to our readers may be published.]*
- I enjoy articles on new tracks. I would like to know BWV's response to the new mountain bike paths proposed around Warburton and the impact on Mt Donna Buang particularly.
- Would like to see bike riding trails included in your bulletins.

What BWV could do to improve your experience:

- Make it easier to print.

What respondents appreciate:

- The Bulletin provides me with the overview of things happening around the clubs and some detail of the issues at a higher level.
- I am a bit busy right now, so I really appreciate getting the BWV newsletter - keeps me in touch with my interest.
- I read the Bulletin to keep informed about activities or issues across the state.
- I enjoy reading about new tracks and the work of volunteers.
- Articles are relevant, lively and varied. I don't have time for waffle. I appreciate the info. you give.
- BWV staff are extremely helpful & proactive with topics of interest & member needs. I appreciate reading about other clubs & places they have been & would like to see my club more engaged with the Bulletin & other BWV activities as they serve us so well.
- I am not usually a fan of on-line newsletters, but BWV's current format works well for both enjoyment & info. Thank you for your commitment.

Next Steps?

The survey participation rate, raw survey data and valuable respondent comments will be analysed by the incoming editor and the BWV board Communications Team before decisions are made regarding the ongoing evolution of BWV's Bushwalking News Bulletin. It's really important that the Bulletin continues to meet the needs and interests of the majority of our audience.

It's worth noting the ongoing challenges faced when endeavoring to produce a quality, informative Newsletter: since November 2021, the Bulletin editor has been a volunteer.

Many respondents would like to see more articles and images about walks and other bushwalkers: that's where readers come in! Your content contributions are vital in helping BWV to maintain a relevant, dynamic and engaging publication.

Liz Robinson, September 2022