



Fact Sheet 4 – What makes Broken Hill special? A snapshot.

To find out what makes Broken Hill special and why, the community of Broken Hill was invited to take part in an on-line survey.

This Fact Sheet gives a snapshot of the survey responses.

Thanks to all of you who took the time to respond.

Background

As part of the assessment of the City of Broken Hill by the Australian Heritage Council for inclusion in the National Heritage List, the community of Broken Hill was invited to share their views about what makes Broken Hill special.

The survey and responses received have contributed to research into the aesthetic and social significance of Broken Hill.

The survey was available on-line only and was open from 25 May, initially for three weeks, but it was then extended for an extra two weeks. The survey contained 6 key questions. The survey was anonymous. It sought basic information about each respondent and their connection to Broken Hill.

The survey offers interesting insights into why Broken Hill is a special place to those who choose to live here. Thanks to everyone who took the time to respond to the survey.

Who responded?

Over the 5 week period that the survey was on-line, 118 people responded, with most completing the whole survey. More males than females responded (53.5% to 46.5%). The percentage of people who responded in each age group was relatively similar to the last census, with slightly more people in the 40-59 age group responding and fewer in the 60-79 age group. This may be a result of the on-line nature of the survey.

The vast majority of those responding were Broken Hill residents, most current residents with a small number of former residents. Around 40% said they had lived in Broken Hill for their whole life,

approximately 26% had lived in Broken Hill for 10 to more than 20 years, with around a third for 10 years or less.

Summary of responses

Why is Broken Hill important to you?

Asked 'Why is Broken Hill important to you?' more than half chose 'history' from a list eleven words. Next most popular was people/community, followed by landscape. Art, home, lifestyle, mining, family connections were each supported by around a quarter of those who answer this question.

How would you describe the landscape of the city and the surrounds?

Choosing three words – out of a list of 14 - that best described the landscape of the city and its surrounds resulted in nearly half choosing the word 'powerful', closely followed by the words beautiful, dramatic and inspiring, and then by iconic, desert and spiritual. At the very bottom of the list was 'empty'.

"Broken Hill wouldn't be Broken Hill if ..."

The next question explored the essence of Broken Hill, asking 'Broken Hill wouldn't be Broken Hill if ... disappeared'. Top of the list was the Line of Lode, selected by more than two-thirds of those who responded. Coming a distant second were the 'Landscape – Living Desert, Willyama Common and the Regeneration Areas', the streetscapes and buildings of Argent and Bromide Streets and third were the 'tinnies' – Broken Hill's corrugated iron houses and mining infrastructure'.

If you could take one photograph of Broken Hill to capture its essence, what would it be?

Can a place as diverse as Broken Hill be captured in a single snapshot? The next question asked people to describe the one photograph they would take to capture the essence of Broken Hill. Many of the imagined photographs included the Line of Lode – either as the backdrop of key town buildings, or a view from the Line of Lode over the town, or just the Line of Lode itself.

Other mining infrastructure was a popular choice – headframes and workings – often as landmarks seen from a distance.

Likewise the fine buildings that grace the centre of Broken Hill were a popular choice.

The landscape that surrounds the city, its vastness, the views to the Barrier Ranges, and the changing colours of the land enhanced by spectacular sunsets was also strongly described.

Some people chose a personal place – their home, school or local events.

Testing ideas about why Broken Hill is special

The next question posed a series of 10 different statements asking those responding to select how strongly they agreed or disagreed with each statement, using a 5 point scale.

Two statements were almost universally agreed:

- The Line of Lode is extraordinary and dramatic: it's Broken Hill's landmark
- Broken Hill has a strong sense of identity - forged through hard times, industrial struggle and isolation.

Also very strongly supported were the statements:

- Broken Hill is like a museum without walls – history is everywhere
- The stark mining landscape gives Broken Hill its beauty
- Broken Hill people feel deeply connected to this town and landscape – even if they move away
- There is a special 'spirit' in the landscape of Broken Hill
- Broken Hill's remarkable landscape is what attracts so many artists
- The story of Broken Hill is an important and well known part of Australia's history.

The idea that 'Broken Hill is just like any other town' was strongly rejected, with the idea that 'Broken Hill people are more passionate about Broken Hill than other communities are about their towns' gaining support.

Some people say that there is nowhere else in Australia like Broken Hill.

Broken Hill is often spoken of as unique and distinct, a place like no other. A vast majority agreed that there was nowhere else in Australia like Broken Hill.

Why? The reasons were diverse, but the strongest response was it is the people of Broken Hill – as a community – that make Broken Hill unique. The

qualities of this special community include its warmth and friendliness, the spirit that binds people together, resilience and determination, a commitment to supporting each other. Isolation and remoteness has helped shape and strengthen the community.

Equally strong is the history and identity of Broken Hill, as a place known across Australia through the history of mining and workers' struggles, and as a place where history is ever-present and alive in the community itself. Along with the mining and industrial struggles, art is seen as an important and very distinctive element of Broken Hill.

Anything else that you would like to add

Many people used this last open-ended question to write about their connections to Broken Hill and what it meant to them.

