

Community
Safety Plan 2025



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MAYORAL FOREWORD



Dear Residents of the Aurukun Shire,

On behalf of the Aurukun Shire Council, I wish to first and foremost acknowledge the Wik, Wik Way, and Kugu Peoples, and pay my respect to Elders past, present, and emerging.

As your Mayor, I am proud to present the 2024 Aurukun Community Safety Plan (CSP), a continuation of the formal work we started with the 2021 CSP, but continuing a long legacy of community led development dating back generations.

Our CSP has been developed through meaningful engagement with you, our valued residents, and with community stakeholders, to ensure your voices, concerns, and aspirations are at the heart of this response.

Aurukun is a place of deep culture, rich history, and resilience. Yet, despite significant investment, our community still faces serious challenges that impact our safety, wellbeing, and sense of security. These challenges are complex and interconnected. Addressing them will require a genuine partnership where everyone plays a role, including your Council, families, clan groups, community organisations, and all levels of government.

Our 2024 CSP builds on the foundations of the 2021 CSP, but it also goes further. It is a plan driven by your experiences, your hopes, and your desire for positive change. The four years between CSP versions have enabled us to directly compare community safety improvements between two distinct points in time. It has enabled us to not only reassess your views on community safety (as occurred in 2021) and your suggestions for improvement (which we have called Action Areas in the CSP), but to additionally assess whether progress has been made over the past four years, and if not, assess why not and what can be done to now to overcome implementation challenges.

Our Council is of the belief that real progress can be achieved when we set aside our differences, focus on what unites us, and work together towards a shared future; A future where our families are safe, where opportunities are created, and where we can all take pride in a stronger and safer Aurukun.

I encourage all stakeholders commit to a collective vision to improve our collective safety and perceptions of safety in Aurukun.

Together, we can face our challenges, seize opportunities, and create a better future for generations to come.

On behalf of the Aurukun Shire Council, I sincerely thank you for your contributions to this important initiative.

Your Council remains committed to listening, acting, and walking this journey with you.

Mayor Barbara Bandicootcha



OUR INTENT

In 2021 we (the Aurukun Shire Council) published the Community Safety Plan (CSP) following extensive consultation with you (our community residents) and our valued community stakeholders. Funded by the Queensland Government through the then Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships (DATSIP) as part of its Local Thriving Communities strategy, the CSP outlined 19 Action Areas to improve your safety and your perceptions of safety in our Shire. These Action Areas were developed collaboratively through surveys, interviews, and your feedback on draft proposals, ensuring community voices shaped the CSP.

Since its publication, Aurukun has experienced change. In 2021, the community was still grappling with the impacts of COVID-19, which disrupted lives, services, and support systems. By 2023, the Voice referendum ignited national conversations about Indigenous self-determination, and in 2024, Council elections ushered in a new era of leadership, alongside a new State Government. During this time, our community mourned the loss of many of our valued members and leaders whose contributions continue to shape Aurukun's identity and aspirations.

It is timely to revisit community safety, re-engaging with you and our valued community stakeholders to understand your combined views on safety and perceptions of safety in Aurukun, and identify opportunities for service enhancement.

Our CSP is more than strategic plan; it is a reflection of our collective voice as a community on matters regarding community safety. Like in our 2021 CSP, we have again taken the opportunity to take a more holistic approach to addressing community safety by considering both alcohol management and wider community safety concerns in the Shire. Our CSP amplifies the diverse stories, truths, and lived experiences of our People, acknowledging that there is no single perspective or solution. Each individual's story, and perception contributes to a richer understanding of our community's collective challenges and aspirations. Our CSP seeks to embrace and honour our diversity while charting a path forward based on shared goals and local knowledge.

Like our 2021 CSP, this 2024 review is not intended to provide an exhaustive list of all of our policy and operational/ capital responses to community safety concerns in our Shire, however it will highlight focus areas raised by you. The Action Areas identified shall provide compelling support for consideration by us in all of our future Government advocacy, as well as our future budget and strategic planning deliberations (including 5-year Corporate Plan and Master Planning).

We cannot provide any guarantee of specific action, which shall be subject to factors such as current community circumstances, priorities and need, legislative responsibility, availability of funding, availability of staff and resources, and technical feasibility.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - ACTION AREAS

Following our engagement with you, we have endorsed the following **Action Areas** to focus our response to your community safety concerns.

1. Leadership
2. Community Education
3. Surveillance
4. Security
5. Drug and Alcohol Management
6. Freight
7. Infrastructure
8. Transport
9. Policing
10. Vulnerable Groups
11. Provider Performance
12. Animal Control
13. Money Management
14. Community Services
15. Tenancy Management
16. Employment
17. Town Planning
18. Telecommunications
19. Local Laws

OUR COMMUNITY

Our People have inhabited these lands for thousands of years. Many of our residents are Traditional Owners of the lands in this region. The traditional homelands of the Wik, Wik Way and Kugu Peoples lie in and around the Aurukun Shire.

The community has a rich tradition in cultural practice. The predominant language is Wik Mungkan with remains of other dialects still spoken. There are five (5) spiritual clan groups in Aurukun: Apalech, Winchanam, Wanam, Sara and Puutch. There has been a long-standing history of conflict between these clans, which is often reported to be the driver of unrest within community.

Aurukun was established as a Presbyterian mission (formerly known as the Archer River Mission Station) in 1904. Aboriginal people were relocated from large surrounding areas to the mission settlement over several decades. Today's township is on the site of the original mission.

The traditional language of our people is still the predominant language in our township. Aurukun is one of the few communities that maintains its traditional language in day-to-day use.

The Queensland Government proclaimed the Shire of Aurukun on 22 May 1978 and granted the new Council Aboriginal Land Lease No.1 for 50 years. On 18 September 2013, Aurukun saw a long-awaited land-transfer come to fruition. Our Land



Lease No. 1 was cancelled, and 750,000 hectares of land became Aboriginal Freehold with two Trustees; We became Trustee of the township and the reserve lands, and the Ngan Aak-Kunch Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC was made Trustee of the balance of the Council Lease and the four (4) State Reserve lots. Both Trustees are responsible for co-managing the land held in trust on behalf of the community members.

We have been operating since 1978 as a Local Government, providing local government related services to the community. We are presently represented by the Mayor and four Councillors, elected every four years.

In recent times, there has been a movement to re-establish the community outstations during the dry season, which has assisted greatly with preserving community culture. These outstations are now governed by our local people.



OUR APPROACH

Our Community Safety Plan (CSP), introduced by Council in 2021, was developed in collaboration with the team at culturev8; professionals enhancing community-led development. Drawing on extensive expertise in areas such as crime prevention, forensic mental health, social policy, legal services, and project management, culturev8 brought a wealth of expertise to the process. Together, Council and culturev8 ensured the CSP was not only grounded in evidence-based practices, but also reflective of the community's priorities, strengths, and aspirations.

Our approach to development of our CSP comprises three (3) stages between 1 September and 30 November 2024 (3 months):

1. Resident Engagement

Five (5) surveys were developed and made exclusively available to Aurukun community residents both online and in paper form. Our engagement team held pop up stalls in Aurukun and held face to face community forums to spend time with you to understand your perceptions of safety across all demographics (youth, elders, vulnerable groups, men and women). In 2024 we received a total of 126 resident responses (compared with 29 in 2021), plus in person interviews with over 50 additional residents, making this easily the most inclusive and representative CSP yet.

Additionally, 27 young residents participated in an age-appropriate workshop.

1. Stakeholder Engagement

Like our 2021 CSP, our 2024 project was officially launched at an Interagency Meeting hosted by us and attended by many community stakeholders in August 2024. Emails were sent to over 50 community stakeholders inviting them to participate in an online survey tailored only for stakeholders, with a one-hour follow up interview with culturev8 to further expand upon their answers.

A total of 23 stakeholders participated in the online survey (compared to 18 in 2021), representing a diverse cross-section of organisations and service providers engaged in Aurukun. Responses were received from:

- Family Responsibilities Commission
- Queensland Police Service
- Cape York Partnership
- Glencore - Aurukun Bauxite Project
- Aurukun State School
- Thaa' Pant Mediation Service
- Department of Local Government
- Department of Treaty, Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Partnerships
- Churches of Christ
- Island & Cape
- National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA)
- Queensland Health
- Koolkan Early Childhood Centre
- Apunipima Cape York Health Council
- Mookai Rosie Bi-Bayan
- First Nations Housing and Homelessness
- Department of Justice and Attorney-General (DJAG)
- Torres and Cape Hospital and Health Service (TCHHS) – Aurukun Primary Health Care Centre (PHCC)
- RREDD (Risk, Response, Engage, Design, Deliver)
- Aurukun Shire Council

These stakeholders brought diverse expertise and perspectives, offering invaluable insights into the successes, challenges, and opportunities in addressing community safety.

The 2024 CSP approach prioritised cultural sensitivity, inclusivity, and depth. By incorporating informal discussions alongside traditional surveys and interviews, the process ensured that the diversity of voices within Aurukun was honoured. This methodology not only builds on the strengths of the 2021 approach but also reflects a deepened commitment to listening, understanding, and amplifying the perspectives of all community members.

This inclusive approach has provided a robust foundation for identifying priorities and formulating actionable strategies to improve community safety and well-being in Aurukun.

3. Research and Community Verification

We reviewed available crime and community safety statistics in Aurukun, undertook research into the current Government policy framework pertaining to alcohol management and community safety, and undertook a comparative study to capture approaches undertaken in other like-communities, each to frame the perspectives expressed by you in this research.





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Stakeholder CSP Progress - 2021 to 2024

Our CSP first introduced in 2021, was designed to address critical issues in Aurukun and provide a coordinated roadmap for improving community safety and well-being. Three (3) years later, progress has been observed as uneven, with mixed levels of awareness and incorporation among stakeholders.

Our data suggests that 17% of interviewed stakeholders were unaware of the CSP in 2024. While this highlights a concerning gap in communication and engagement, the majority of stakeholders (83%) demonstrated that they were aware of the CSP, showing that they had gained some traction on Action Areas identified therein.

Among interviewed stakeholders aware of the CSP in 2024:

- 30% claimed to have fully incorporated its Action Areas into their service delivery models or strategic planning. These organisations demonstrated strong alignment with the CSP, embedding its priorities into their operational frameworks and activities.
- 65% claimed to have partially incorporated CSP Action Areas, indicating that while many organisations align with the CSP to some extent, there are still gaps in fully integrating its objectives into their planning and service delivery.
- 5% claimed not to have incorporated the CSP into their strategies at all, highlighting a lack of engagement or alignment with the broader goals of the plan.

The results reflect both progress and ongoing challenges. The 30% of stakeholders fully aligned with the CSP represent a solid foundation for collaboration and shared action. These

organisations demonstrate the potential for the CSP to guide meaningful change when it is embraced and integrated.

However, the 65% partial incorporation rate indicates that while many stakeholders recognise the importance of the CSP, barriers remain in fully embedding its priorities into their operations (and coordinating with others in their implementation).

These barriers may include competing organisational mandates, resource constraints, or lack of clarity on how to align services with CSP objectives.

The 5% of stakeholders not incorporating the CSP at all, underscores the need for improved communication, collaboration, coordination of CSP Actions, and especially stakeholder transparency and accountability.

While challenges remain, the progress achieved by fully aligned stakeholders provides a strong example of what is possible when the CSP is embraced. Moving forward, fostering greater awareness, alignment, and collaboration will be critical to achieving the CSP's vision of a safer and stronger Aurukun. Greater transparency and accountability by stakeholders of community expectations arising out of the CSP must be achieved in achieving service enhancement. To achieve this, clear and measurable deliverables and timeframes must be established, monitored and reported on to decision-makers in Government and our community itself. Stakeholder performance is paramount. Success must be rewarded and shared; Underperformance must be identified and managed.

Aurukun deserves high performing service providers that meet community expectations. Anything less is unacceptable.



RESPONDENT SUMMARY

In this section, we will summarise the combined resident and community stakeholder survey and interview responses and provide a general summary.

This quantitative and qualitative data provides context to the Action Areas selected. Responses shall be summarised by surveyed topic, namely:

1. Alcohol and Drugs
2. Crime and Policing
3. Youth and Vulnerable People
4. Environment
5. Roads and Infrastructure

1. Alcohol and drugs

Survey and Interview Data

- Perception of Alcohol and Drug Issues

Alcohol and drugs remain central to safety concerns in Aurukun, with both community members and stakeholders highlighting the pervasive impacts of substance misuse. Over 73% of combined respondents identified sly grog/ home brew as a significant issue linked to domestic violence, public disturbances, and youth crime. The high demand for sly grog/ home brew has created a lucrative underground market, exacerbating financial strain on families and contributing to social discord.

- Effectiveness of the Alcohol Management Plan (AMP)

Views on the AMP's effectiveness were mixed, reflecting broader frustrations about the current state of alcohol management in Aurukun. Prohibition was frequently criticised for its unintended consequences, such as driving sly grog/ home brew markets and creating hidden alcohol consumption patterns. The deterrence value of penalties was questioned, with erratic, and limited, enforcement and prosecution of sly grog/ home brew-related violations reducing the plan's impact.

Stakeholder respondents noted that sly grog, often mixed with sugary caffeinated drinks, not only fuels violence but also hinders health outcomes, exacerbating community challenges. Further, due to the expense of Sly Grog, people were gambling to generate revenue to purchase it, placing additional financial constraints on families.

There was no clear consensus on the best path forward, only agreement that the current approach is not working.

- Underlying Factors Beyond Alcohol and Drugs

Combined respondents emphasised that focusing narrowly on alcohol and drug misuse diverts attention from underlying drivers such as unemployment, lack of opportunity, and cultural disconnection. These systemic issues perpetuate substance misuse by leaving individuals and families without meaningful pathways for personal and collective growth.

- Emergence of Cannabis Use

An increasing prevalence of cannabis use was reported, with some respondents noting that medicinal cannabis, obtained legally through postal systems, has replaced alcohol for some individuals. While this shift has reduced visible alcohol consumption in certain cases, it also presents new risks and underscores the complexity of substance misuse in the community.

- Appetite for alternative AMP models

Among resident respondents, there is a clear appetite for change. While 37% support keeping the AMP as it is, 48% favour introducing personal carriage limits (allowing limited amounts and types of alcohol), and 43% expressed interest in permanent liquor licensing for venues like taverns or clubs. Additionally, 31% support event-based liquor licensing for



Our Culture and Country
are strong in Aurukun.
Slog Grog and homebrew
poison our community.
Just say NO Sly Grog and
homebrew is not safe for
you and our community.

Don't Let
Sly Grog
Take Away
Your Culture.

Don't let
Sly Grog and
homebrew
control you.

CRIME
STOPPERS
1800 333 000

Aurukun
Shire Council

special occasions, and the same percentage back takeaway liquor sales from local venues.

Stakeholder respondent perspectives reflect similar diversity, with 40% supporting a dry community and an equal 40% favouring personal carriage limits. However, support for permanent liquor licensing is lower at 25%, and only 15% back event-based licenses. Takeaway liquor sales receive minimal support, at just 5%.

Overall, while the safety provided by the current AMP remains important to many, there is growing interest in moderate changes such as personal carriage limits and regulated event-based liquor licensing.

Comparison with 2021 Findings

- Continuity of Sly Grog as a Central Issue

Sly grog’s role as a critical driver of community harm has remained consistent from 2021 to 2024. In both years, over 72% of combined respondents identified it as a major issue linked to domestic violence, financial strain, and social instability. Despite continued efforts to manage sly grog activity, the underlying dynamics, including high profitability and limited enforcement, remain largely unchanged.

- Evolving Substance Use Patterns

While alcohol remained the primary concern in both 2021 and 2024, the latter year saw increased reports of cannabis use. This shift reflects the adaptability of substance misuse patterns and highlights the need for broader, more flexible approaches to addressing substance-related harm.

- Frustration with Current Approaches

Respondents in both years expressed dissatisfaction with the AMP and its limited outcomes. In 2021, frustration centred on the lack of visible progress, while by 2024, there was a growing call to address systemic drivers of substance misuse alongside any alcohol management strategies.

Discussion

The findings highlight the that while there is no consensus on the best path forward, combined respondents agree the current Alcohol Management Plan (AMP) is insufficient and, in some cases, likely worsens issues such as sly grog/ home brew markets and financial strain on families. Many criticised the AMP for failing to tackle the root causes of alcohol misuse, including

Option (multiple choice)	Residents (%)	Stakeholders (%)
No change (remain an entirely dry community)	37%	40%
Allow personal carriage limits	49%	40%
Allow permanent liquor licensing (tavern/club)	43%	25%
Allow temporary event-based liquor licensing	31%	15%
Allow takeaways from local liquor licensed venues	31%	5%

Table 1 – Combined Respondent Perspectives on changes to Alcohol Management Plan (AMP)

unemployment, lack of education, and cultural disconnection. Stakeholders and residents called for broader strategies that move beyond punitive measures to focus on incentive-based approaches, such as community events, and address systemic issues to promote responsibility and shared progress, supported by wrap-around mental health/ drug and alcohol diversionary services

There is growing interest in changes to the AMP, such as introducing personal carriage limits or controlled liquor licensing for specific events. However, stakeholders emphasised that any changes must be phased and community-led, with protective measures, like accessible services, economic opportunities, and strong leadership, in place to mitigate risks.

A key gap is the absence of detox and rehabilitation services in Aurukun. Combined respondents stressed the need for culturally appropriate programs incorporating traditional practices and on-country healing, delivered locally by community members with deep cultural understanding.

Addressing unemployment and creating economic opportunities were identified as critical to reducing reliance on substances, particularly among youth. Job creation, skills development, and youth engagement initiatives are essential to strengthening community resilience.

The data highlights that strengthening partnerships, enhancing service delivery, and fostering collaboration will be critical to the success of a revised AMP, while simultaneously addressing systemic drivers such as unemployment and cultural disconnection through a phased approach to alcohol policy.

What was very clear from combined respondents was that notwithstanding a preliminary combined view that changes should occur to the AMP to

enable access to affordable and safe alcohol in community, more targeted community engagement on these options is required over the coming months and years. Concurrent with consulting on these options is a targeted examination of required wrap-around support services to responsibly enable (which are presently considered to be largely absent in Aurukun).

2. Crime and Policing (including CCTV)

Survey and Interview Data

Crime remains a significant concern in Aurukun, particularly among young people who expressed feeling unsafe due to frequent crime, fighting, and violence. Among stakeholder respondents, 67% rated crime levels as “moderate,” and 24% identified them as a “major” issue. Positively, 32% observed a decrease in crime, and none reported an increase. Similarly, 54% of community members stated crime had remained stable, while 32% noted a reduction, suggesting incremental progress.

Key crime types reported by stakeholder respondents included drunkenness (86%), disorderly conduct (81%), and anti-social driving (71%). Resident respondents highlighted sly grog (73%) and youth-related disturbances (59%) as major concerns. Violent crimes such as assaults were noted by 43% of stakeholder respondents, alongside property crimes like break-ins (52%) and vandalism (43%).

While 73% of stakeholder respondents reported crimes to the police, feedback on police responsiveness was mixed: 58% rated it as “very responsive” or “extremely responsive,” while 26% found it “somewhat responsive.” Among resident respondents, however, only 37.84% rated the police as ‘very responsive’ or ‘extremely responsive,’ while 37.85% found the police ‘not at all responsive,’ ‘not so responsive,’ or only ‘somewhat responsive.’

Many residents expressed frustration with slow response times and a lack of follow-through on reported cases, which they felt undermined trust in police efficiency. Additionally, concerns about confidentiality and the burdensome nature of reporting processes were frequently mentioned as barriers to engaging with law enforcement.

Preventative measures received mixed levels of support from respondents. Among stakeholders, CCTV cameras were primarily valued for gathering evidence rather than deterring crime, with 43% rating them as 'not very effective' and only 5% considering them 'quite effective.' Similarly, 48% of stakeholders rated patrolling security guards as 'somewhat effective,' while only 19% found them 'quite effective.' Community Police Officers (CPOs) were viewed slightly more favourably, with 29% of stakeholders rating them as 'moderately effective' and 19% as 'quite effective,' though 43% still found them only 'somewhat effective.'

Community members gave more favourable feedback overall, with 35% rating CCTV cameras as 'quite effective' and 41% rating security guards as 'quite effective.' Additionally, 51% of community members rated Community Police Officers as either 'quite effective' or 'very effective.' Interviews identified systemic drivers of crime, such as alcohol misuse, youth disengagement, and social media conflicts. The profitability of sly grog sustains its prevalence, driving domestic violence and public disturbances. Youth disengagement, due to limited activities and opportunities, fosters antisocial behaviour, while social media normalises violence by amplifying conflicts among young people.

There were some positive examples of programs providing wrap-around services to support community members, such as the Family Responsibilities Commission (FRC). Notably, there is evidence of community members voluntarily accessing the FRC. However, the program's overall impact has been limited by the shortage of timely and accessible services to accept

referrals. This gap undermines the FRC's ability to comprehensively address community needs and deliver effective outcomes.

Comparison with 2021 Findings

Perceptions of crime have stabilised since 2021, with 59% of residents then and 54% in 2024 reporting crime levels had "stayed the same." However, perceptions of reduced crime grew from 4% in 2021 to 32% in 2024, reflecting progress in some targeted initiatives.

Fear of crime remains a challenge but has decreased slightly. In 2021, 28% of residents said crime had a "major impact" on their lives, compared to 17% in 2024. Sly grog continues to be a major concern, cited by 73% of combined/ resident? respondents in both 2021 and 2024. CCTV effectiveness also remains stagnant, with combined/ resident? respondents in both years viewing it as more useful for evidence collection than prevention.

Discussion

While crime perceptions are stabilising, significant challenges persist. Sly grog/ home brew continues to drive domestic violence and public disturbances, while youth disengagement and social media exacerbate tensions, particularly among young people. Addressing these issues requires culturally sensitive, community-led initiatives that not only focus on enforcement but also tackle the underlying causes of crime.

The FRC has been acknowledged as a positive force within the community, offering supports and fostering accountability among individuals and families. However, its overall impact has been limited by the insufficient availability of services to accept referrals in a timely and effective manner. Enhancing and expanding the capacity of the FRC to offer comprehensive, wrap-around support for community members is likely to improve outcomes, ensuring that those in need receive the coordinated and holistic assistance required to address complex challenges.

Enhanced policing strategies, such as locally recruited night patrols and tailored cultural training for officers, could rebuild trust, improve relations, and increase the effectiveness of law enforcement. Complementary community programs, including on-country initiatives, expanded lighting in key areas, youth mentorship opportunities, and accessible recreational activities, are vital to addressing root causes and providing positive pathways for disengaged youth. Collaborative efforts between Government, stakeholders, police, the FRC, and community leaders remain critical. By fostering trust, promoting shared responsibility, and leveraging local knowledge, these partnerships can create a safer, more cohesive, and empowered Aurukun.

3. Youth and Vulnerable Groups

Survey and Interview Data

Youth disengagement and challenges for vulnerable groups remain critical issues in Aurukun. Stakeholders and resident respondents highlighted limited access to mental health and substance abuse services, alongside a shortage of mentorship programs to guide youth away from high-risk behaviours. A stronger focus on family support systems was identified as essential for addressing intergenerational challenges.

Community surveys revealed that only 28% of combined respondents felt Aurukun was doing “well” or “very well” in supporting vulnerable groups, while 44% rated the support as “poor” or “average.” Over half (56%) felt uninformed about available services, citing insufficient communication, Fly-In Fly-Out (FIFO) staff unfamiliar with community needs, and inconsistent service availability.

Youth challenges include teenage drinking, marijuana use, and bullying via social media, which normalises violent behaviours and fuels antisocial conduct. All of the young people who participated in the study reported that they had witnessed crime, violence, and fighting,

underscoring the pervasive exposure to these issues. Many young people reportedly lack structured opportunities and mentorship, leaving them disengaged and vulnerable to negative influences. Calls for school reengagement programs and educational support were frequent, highlighting barriers to consistent participation. Support services for women and elders were rated as “partially effective.” Barriers included underfunded women’s shelters, restrictive intoxication rules for safe spaces, and limited entry points for accessing support. Elders were identified as needing better nutrition, medical care, and protection from financial exploitation.

Mental health and disability services remain inadequate. Residents frequently rely on self-counselling or bush therapy due to a lack of professional resources. Disability services were reported to occur sporadically, with stakeholders expressing concern over the unmet needs of youth affected by Foetal Alcohol Syndrome.

Furthermore, community members highlighted a lack of adequate disability services, noting that service provision is infrequent, for instance, support for young people with intellectual disabilities, many of whom are affected by Foetal Alcohol Syndrome, is often limited to once a month. Community members also emphasised the need to train local residents as National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) carers, stressing the importance of increasing local workforce participation in disability support services.

Comparison with 2021 Findings

The challenges identified in 2024 closely mirror those from 2021. Youth disengagement was a significant concern in 2021, with 76% of residents linking youth disorder to a lack of structured programs. While facilities like PCYC received praise in 2024, underlying issues of boredom, low aspirations, and social media’s influence remain. In summary, there is little to do in Aurukun if you are a young person.

Elder care issues, including inadequate aged care services, poor nutrition, and vulnerability to financial exploitation, were consistent across both years. In 2024, stakeholders stressed the importance of intergenerational programs to connect elders and youth, addressing cultural disconnection and fostering mutual support.

Support for women facing domestic violence showed limited progress. In 2021, gaps in access to safe spaces were a major concern, and by 2024, similar challenges persisted, with stakeholders reporting insufficient facilities and restrictive access rules.

Mental health and disability services saw little improvement. The stigma surrounding mental health identified in 2021 continues to deter help-seeking, while resources for disabilities, such as Foetal Alcohol Syndrome, remain scarce.

Discussion

Aurukun's young people and vulnerable groups face entrenched challenges, reliance on external Fly-In Fly-Out (FIFO) workers, and a lack of culturally grounded and consistent programs. Despite modest progress, such as increased recognition of the PCYC's role in providing structured activities, significant gaps persist.

Youth disengagement remains a particularly urgent issue. The normalisation of antisocial behaviours through social media, compounded by pervasive exposure to violence, crime, and substance misuse, underscores the pressing need for targeted, youth-centric interventions.

Structured mentorship programs, school reengagement initiatives, and recreational opportunities are essential to breaking cycles of disengagement and fostering positive pathways for young people.

Support for vulnerable groups, including women, elders, and individuals with mental health or disability needs, also requires significant strengthening. Women's services, for example, face challenges such as limited capacity and restrictive rules for those under the influence of alcohol or substances, leaving many women without safe alternatives in times of crisis. Mental health and disability services remain some of the most critical gaps. The sporadic availability of disability services, particularly for those affected by Foetal Alcohol Syndrome, further limits the support available to some of the most vulnerable members of the community.

Sustained, wrap-around strategies that integrate cultural values, engage elders and youth, with stakeholders working together as one, are critical to building trust and ensuring services meet the community's needs.

4. Environment

Survey and Interview Data

Aurukun faces persistent environmental challenges in waste management, infrastructure, and public spaces. Stakeholders and resident respondents provided mixed feedback on the township's environment. Among stakeholders, 53% rated the township as "adequately clean and safe," while 37% found it "unclean and unsafe." Community members echoed this divide, with 42% describing the environment as "adequately clean and safe," while 47% rated it as "unclean" or "very unclean." Animal management remains the top priority for both stakeholders (81%) and community members (84%), with the overpopulation of stray (or uncared for) dogs flagged as a significant safety and health risk. This was particularly the case for young people, who reported that a major concern for them was "cheeky dogs." Residents called for stricter animal ownership rules and expanded desexing programs to address this issue.

Pest control was also a recurring concern, identified by 43% of stakeholders and 42% of community members. Mosquitoes, rats, and other vermin, particularly during the wet season, were exacerbated by stagnant water, which 37% of residents observed “often” and 47% reported “sometimes.” Noise disturbances from loud parties and music disrupted sleep for 74% of residents, though stakeholders ranked noise pollution as a lower priority.

Comparison with 2021 Findings

The environmental challenges identified in 2024 closely mirror those raised in 2021. Waste management and stray dog overpopulation remain critical priorities. In 2021, 47% of residents described Aurukun as “unclean and unsafe,” improving slightly to 42% in 2024. However, frustrations with waste disposal and littering persist across both years.

Street lighting inadequacies continue, with over half of respondents in both 2021 and 2024 rating lighting as insufficient. Similarly, stagnant water and pest infestations were recurring issues in both years, with no significant progress in improving drainage systems.

Recycling participation remains low, with 42% of respondents in 2024 reporting they “never” recycle, showing little change since 2021. Despite these challenges, there has been some progress in promoting environmental education and respect for Country, with increased community awareness of these initiatives in 2024.

Discussion

While Aurukun has made modest progress in raising environmental awareness, entrenched challenges persist. Waste management, stray dogs, insufficient lighting, and poor drainage systems



continue to undermine safety and well-being. Telecommunications and power outages further disrupt daily life, highlighting the need for sustained investment in critical infrastructure.

Addressing these challenges requires stricter animal management policies, including desexing programs and enforcement of ownership rules, enhanced waste management services, and targeted pest control measures during the wet season. Investment in infrastructure, particularly street lighting, drainage systems, and telecommunications, is essential for improving safety and connectivity.

The development of family-friendly public spaces, in spaces that are already used by families in high volume (such as the shopping precinct) including shaded areas and playgrounds, is vital for fostering community cohesion. Collaborative efforts between the Council, stakeholders, and residents will be central to achieving sustainable outcomes and creating a cleaner, safer, and more inclusive environment for all.

5. Roads and Infrastructure

Survey and Interview Data

Aurukun's roads and infrastructure present ongoing challenges, with concerns voiced about road quality, safety, and accessibility. Among stakeholders, 56% rated road quality as "poor" or "very poor," with no respondents rating it "good" or "very good." Community members echoed these sentiments, highlighting unsealed roads, potholes, and inadequate maintenance as critical issues. The wet season was singled out as a significant barrier, severely restricting access to outstations and other areas.

Road safety emerged as a critical concern.

Among community members, 53% identified drink driving as the top road safety issue, followed by antisocial driving of vehicles (35%) and motorbikes or quadbikes (24%). Young drivers, particularly those aged 17–25, were identified as the greatest road safety risk, with 47% ranking them as the most dangerous group.



Infrastructure deficiencies compound these safety issues. Both stakeholders and residents identified street lighting as inadequate. 57% of stakeholders described streets as “slightly lit,” a sentiment echoed by residents. When asked, 65% of residents reported that the streets are “slightly lit,” while 12% said they are “unlit” and another 12% rated them as “satisfactorily lit.” Only 12% of residents described the streets as “well lit,” and 0% felt they were “very well lit.”

The absence of footpaths forces pedestrians to share roads with vehicles, further increasing safety risks. High-traffic areas, such as the cemetery and boat ramp, were frequently highlighted as needing urgent upgrades.

Public spaces were also highlighted as insufficient, with 71% of stakeholders and 58% of community members emphasising the need for shaded recreational zones, barbecue areas, and playgrounds to improve community cohesion. Power and telecommunication disruptions remain widespread. Telecommunication outages were reported quarterly by 43% of stakeholders and 42% of residents, while 37% of residents experienced quarterly power outages lasting over three hours. These disruptions hinder productivity and daily life, compounding existing environmental and safety concerns.

Comparison with 2021 Findings

The findings from 2024 closely align with those from 2021, underscoring persistent challenges. Poor road conditions, including potholes, erosion, and flooding, remained significant concerns, with little progress made to improve access to outstations or other critical areas.

Street lighting inadequacies also persisted, with both surveys highlighting insufficient lighting near key locations such as the boat ramp and cemetery as a recurring safety risk. Similarly, drainage issues, leading to stagnant water and associated hazards, were raised in both 2021 and 2024, reflecting limited advancements in addressing these issues. Dangerous driving behaviours, particularly drink driving and hooning, continued to jeopardise road safety in both years. Young drivers were consistently flagged as posing significant risks, while the lack of infrastructure to separate pedestrians from vehicles remained a critical gap.

Discussion

Aurukun’s roads and infrastructure demand sustained attention to improve safety, accessibility, and community connectivity. Persistent challenges, including poor road conditions, insufficient lighting, and a lack of pedestrian infrastructure. Key priorities include sealing roads, particularly those leading to outstations and key locations like Weipa, improving drainage systems to reduce seasonal hazards, and installing streetlights and footpaths to enhance safety for both drivers and pedestrians.

Complementary social strategies, such as professional driver education, increased police patrols to deter antisocial driving behaviours, and community-wide road safety initiatives, are essential to fostering responsible road use. Collaborative efforts between the Council, stakeholders, and community members are critical to ensuring sustainable improvements, enabling Aurukun to build a safer and more connected environment for all.



ACTION AREAS

This section outlines the evolution of Action Areas between 2021 to 2024.

While adapting to emerging challenges and opportunities, our updates reflect a continued core respect for, and acknowledgment of, the priorities and views expressed by you in 2021.

1. Leadership

- a. *Establish as a standing agenda item at Interagency Meetings, for “good news stories” for joint media release to improve national profile of Aurukun.*
- b. *Promote cultural immersion experiences to tourists to improve national profile of Aurukun and improve employment opportunities. Promote cultural immersion experiences to tourists to improve national profile of Aurukun and improve employment opportunities.*
- c. *Host regular community events and activities to promote improved engagement between community service providers and Aurukun residents. Community events and activities should offer options, stimulation and a healthy community rivalry to deescalate underlying community tensions, and reduce resulting youth crime, including but not limited to:*
 - (i) Youth programs (day and night) – 15 to 25 age-group;
 - ii) Sporting/ competition events (darts etc);
 - iii) Holiday and after school programs;
 - iv) Movie nights;
 - v) Video arcade/ gaming centre;
 - vi) Community gardens;
 - vii) Concerts;
 - viii) Community BBQ's;
 - ix) Education sessions;
 - x) Christmas lights competitions.
- d. *Implement regular scheduled meetings with Ngan Aak-Kunch Aboriginal Corporation (RNTBC) to enhance coordination on matters such as Aboriginal land management.*
- e. *Establish and promote “safe places” at our community facilities to improve community engagement.*
- f. *Advocate the primacy of Council as peak body for township coordination and representation.*
- g. *Establish clear Council commitments, expectations and values to counter the rising perception of normalisation in Aurukun of topics such as:*
 - i) Domestic and family violence
 - ii) Drug and alcohol dependence
- h. *Conduct an independent audit of the various task forces, and groups, operating in Aurukun, to clarify their roles, responsibilities, interconnections, and avoid duplication.*

2. Community Education

- a. *Formally adopt Wik Kath Min Community Values Statement 2018 and advocate for effective adoption by lead agencies working in Aurukun and integration into all community programs.*
- b. *Advocate for community and cultural awareness training to be mandated for all long-term new arriving staff and contractors entering Aurukun.*
- c. *Advocate for education to be provided to community on effective use of social media (i.e.. Facebook/Twitter/Tik Tok/ Instagram) to reduce the incidence of community unrest (i.e.. via O-Hub).*
- d. *Health and Well-being - Advocate for education on critical issues including:*
 - i) excessive sugar consumption
 - ii) sly grog, and homebrew
 - iii) the dangers of skin infections
 - iv) practical strategies for promoting clean housing and hygiene
 - v) planned parenthood, and parenting
- e. *Practical Skills and Empowerment - Advocate for workshops on:*
 - i) elder financial abuse prevention
 - ii) Blue Card processes (including, when Blue Cards are, and are not, needed, and the appeals process)
 - iii) financial literacy, budgeting, saving and debt management
 - iv) small business

3. Surveillance

- a. *Acknowledge the effectiveness of CCTV in Aurukun for enforcement over deterrence, whilst advocating for a new deal including divestment of the function to the Queensland Government who are more adequately funded and stand to gain more from, the technology than Council (e.g. QPS).*
- b. *Obtain funding to expand CCTV into “black spots”.*

4. Security

- a. *Acknowledge the effectiveness of security guards in Aurukun in the deterrence of crime, whilst advocating for a new deal including central funding and coordination of all security personnel for Aurukun, in conjunction with Community Police, the QPS and Government security guards.*
- b. *Enhance security guard patrols.*
- c. *Advocate via interagency meetings the adoption of interagency best-practice principles, systems and support, including but not limited to:*
 - i) vehicle safety protocol
 - ii) lockdown circumstances and procedures
 - iii) an Early Warning System for disaster management and community safety concerns, with automated text-message functionality
 - iv) additional funding from State and Federal Government for other safety information mechanisms e.g., weather monitoring devices.
- d. *Increase the number of locally recruited security guards and provide comprehensive training programs to ensure they are well-equipped to address community-specific challenges.*
- e. *Employ residents for night patrols to monitor and support safety in high-risk areas.*
- f. *Improve Safe Transport Options:*
 - (i) Invest in transportation services to help residents travel safely, particularly at night, and facilitate access to on-country activities to reduce tensions and promote cultural healing
 - (ii) Advocate for an audit of current transport services, and scheduling.

5. Drug and Alcohol Management

- a. *Develop a phased, three-year plan to address the complex issues surrounding alcohol in Aurukun, anchored in measurable milestones and robust performance metrics, including: Advocate via interagency meetings for Aurukun community service providers and employers (including Council) within the Aurukun Shire to better acknowledge drug and alcohol dependence and offer diversionary support.*
 - i) Path to Decriminalisation - Establish a clear roadmap toward the decriminalisation of alcohol, using options including:
 - 1) takeaways from local liquor licensed venues
 - 2) temporary event-based liquor licensing
 - 3) personal carriage limits
 - 4) permanent liquor licensing (tavern/club)
 - ii) Strengthen the availability and accessibility of social and emotional well-being services, including trauma recovery and addiction support, to address underlying issues driving alcohol misuse.

- iii) Build mutual trust between stakeholders and community members through transparent actions, consistent engagement, and demonstrable progress on agreed-upon goals.
- iv) Allocate resources to community-led justice initiatives that address the root causes of crime, reduce recidivism, and build pathways to safer, healthier outcomes.
- v) Advocate via interagency meetings for Aurukun community service providers and employers (including Council) within the Aurukun Shire to better acknowledge drug and alcohol dependence and offer diversionary support in advance of disciplinary action.

6. Freight

- a. *Advocate with State and Federal government to reduce the cost of freight.*

7. Infrastructure

- a. *Footpaths - Construct and maintain shared and shaded, footpaths for pedestrians, for people using disability aids, people with prams, and cyclists, to improve safety, accessibility, and promote healthy activities.*
- b. *Investigate alternate methods of street light repair and maintenance on Ergon Energy poles to reduce outages and current delays (i.e. Ergon Energy agency arrangement with Council to undertake urgent repairs and maintenance, or divestment of streetlights/ poles to Council).*
- c. *Undertake a lighting audit in conjunction with Ergon Energy and identify and improve lighting in "black spots" around the Aurukun township, prioritising in high-traffic, high-risk, and high-use areas, including the shopping precinct, boat ramp, and cemetery*
- d. *Redesign and construct the shopping precinct to make it an accessible family-friendly hub, incorporating vegetation, shaded seating areas, and improved aesthetics to foster community connection and pride.*
- e. *Enhance existing Sporting and Playgrounds facilities and construct new ones, in alignment with best practice standards. Improvements should include adequate shading, safe and durable flooring, and accessibility features. New infrastructure must be situated in culturally appropriate locations, determined through consultation and agreement with all clan groups to ensure inclusivity and respect for cultural values.*
- f. *Business Space - Create affordable, accessible, business spaces for community members to operate within, to support economic activity and opportunities.*
- g. *Advocate for a digital hub infrastructure, with education to support the implementation of the CSP Action Areas.*

8. Transport

- a. *Support local business initiatives to offer professional driving lessons, including car and motorbike training, 4WD skills, and road safety education in furtherance of a new policing approach – engagement (education) over enforcement (infringement) (See Action Area 9 (Policing)).*
- b. *Investigate the provision of a transit bus to operate throughout the Aurukun Shire to ensure community members and workers can move safely around community and facilitate increased work and school attendance.*
- c. *Active Transport Promotion – Develop initiatives to encourage walking and cycling as healthy, cost-effective, and environmentally friendly transport options.*

9. Policing

- a. *Advocate with the QPS for a policing approach which embraces engagement (education) and discretion over enforcement (infringement).*
- b. *Undertake a feasibility study with the QPS to absorb Community Police Officers into the QPS Protective Services model, for more seamless policing and community safety coordination. This will also provide greater career progression and training opportunities for local Community Police Officers, whilst maintaining local employment.*
- c. *Advocate to the Queensland Government and QPS for a review of sly grog fines as considered to be set too low compared with the lucrative sly grog industry and as such, are not acting as a deterrent*
- d. *Investigate the possibility of imposing a youth curfew to deter loud music and antisocial behaviour after dark (See also Action Area 19 (Local Laws)).*
- e. *Engage with the Justice Group Mediation Services to promote an earlier intervention/ de-escalation approach to community safety in the Aurukun Shire.*
- f. *Investigate options for increasing patrols by local security, as opposed to being stationed only at strategic locations (i.e. supermarket/ business precinct), including mode of transport (ie. bicycles/ scooters etc).*
- g. *Consider in the local recruitment of vacant Community Police Officer/ security positions, coverage over the five (5) Aurukun clans, with both male and female representation*
- h. *Engage with QPS as to why Police Link and other call centres are not knowing where Aurukun is and being unable to transfer calls to local police station in a timely manner, with a view to improving crime reporting, and collection and collating of data.*
- i. *Establish an interagency taskforce to investigate options for reducing the financial distress caused by gambling circles and public nuisance (loud music and hooning) in the Aurukun Shire (See also Action Items 15 (Tenancy Management) and 19 (Local Laws).*
- j. *Build trust between community members and police through culturally sensitive engagement, consistent communication, and visible, respectful policing practices.*

k. *Sly Grog and Offences - Work with law enforcement to minimise delays in addressing reports of sly grog and other offences, ensuring timely action, confidentiality and improved accountability.*

l. *Strengthen enforcement of noise pollution laws to address social disturbances and improve community well-being, particularly at night, and empower community members to confidentially report noise pollution.*

m. *Promote and support early intervention, diversionary, and post custodial supports for young people and adults, whilst exploring options for further voluntary utilisation of current supports including the Family Responsibilities Commission.*

10. Vulnerable Groups

- a. *Advocate for tailored and locally staffed programs to address vulnerable groups in Aurukun (not SEQ-centric). When community lockdowns occur and residents need support, service providers generally leave community.*
- b. *Advocate for the provision of standardised conflict resolution training to community service providers (in early intervention and de-escalation). This might be offered by the Justice Group Mediation Service.*
- c. *Establish options for an operational after-hours youth service to provide structured activities, supervision, and support for young people during high-risk times.*
- d. *Support the use of the Men's Shed space for men to de-escalate family violence, engage in mentorship, skill-building, and cultural activities that promote well-being and community cohesion.*
- e. *Develop a comprehensive women's centre with tailored support, including safe spaces for intoxicated women, counselling services, and wraparound programs to address domestic violence and substance misuse.*
- f. *Sobering up, Detox and Rehab Facilities - Invest in local detox and rehabilitation centres to support individuals struggling with substance abuse, ensuring access to culturally informed, trauma-sensitive care.*
- g. *Parenting Programs - Deliver parenting programs aimed at strengthening family bonds, providing education on child development, and supporting intergenerational healing and cultural knowledge transmission.*
- h. *Combine mentorship programs, education support, and substance abuse prevention initiatives to address youth disengagement. Develop pathways that encourage participation in work, education, and community leadership opportunities.*
- i. *Advocate for a permanent Ambulance Officer position based in Aurukun.*



11. Provider Performance

- a. *Establish Service Enhancement Forums, to oversee the implementation, monitoring, and review of the Action Areas arising out of the CSP, reporting to Council. There should be one forum for each the 5 CSP topics, and only include stakeholders with actions against it to keep meetings targeted and concise. Meetings should be entirely for service enhancement tracking (traffic light). Decision-makers should be present. Preference is for this to be independently facilitated for and on behalf of Council including reporting and advocacy.*

12. Animal Control

- a. *Enhance Council's animal control service to increase pet ownership responsibilities and further reduce dogs wandering at large and dog attacks as well as increase owner animal management responsibility (see also Action Area 17 (Town Planning)).*
- b. *Implement a stray animal removal program – Work with animal welfare organisations to actively rehome, remove and / or transport unwanted or unregistered animals.*
- c. *Support to improve pet care – Provide targeted information and support on pet care, registration, and the health and safety risks posed by neglected and stray animals. Facilitate connections between pet owners and animal management services to ensure responsible pet ownership.*
- d. *Collaborate with veterinary services for humane solutions – Partner with veterinary providers and universities to offer spaying, neutering, and vaccination services, including new technologies and pharmaceuticals, to supporting the long-term reduction of stray and neglected animal populations.*

13. Money Management

- a. *Consult with residents and community service providers on the feasibility of trialling the Federal Government's Basics Card in Aurukun to assist with financial management by residents (and reduce discretionary spending currently being spent on drugs, alcohol and gambling).*
- b. *Financial savings tool – In lieu of a Basics Card, work with existing stakeholders to utilise tools that are currently available, such as the Pama Platform.*
- c. *Offer one-on-one financial counselling – Establish confidential, culturally sensitive financial counselling services to support individuals and families in addressing debt, managing income, and achieving financial stability.*
- d. *Foster partnerships for economic resilience – Work with local businesses, financial institutions, and non-profit organisations to enhance economic opportunities.*

14. Community Services

- a. *Establish a Council service-level for the aesthetic standard of its facilities to set an example in community and undertake necessary Repair & Maintenance to meet that standard. Consider community murals as an uplifting, vibrant and collaborative community-led option.*
- b. *Recycling and Waste Reduction – Improve waste management through more efficient rubbish collection, recycling initiatives, and community education on proper disposal and waste reduction. Explore opportunities for local businesses to participate in recycling and waste reduction efforts, supporting both sustainability and economic development.*
- c. *Improve operating capacity for Council's childcare centre to enable maximum child attendance and enable parent attendance at their workplaces.*
- d. *Establish and promote a Council community grants program to provide financial support to community organisations with the aim of improving safety and perceptions of safety in the Aurukun Shire.*
- e. *Advocate for community education about being waterwise.*
- f. *Advocate for the establishment of defence reserves.*

15. Tenancy Management

- a. *Advocate to the Department of Housing and Public Works for the improvement of tenancy management and housing allocation practices to reduce prospects of conflicts between neighbouring residents.*
- b. *Advocate to the Department of Housing and Public Works for them to do more (as Tenancy Manager) in relation to enforcement of tenancy conditions to reduce public nuisance (such as loud noise, overgrown allotments, harbouring vermin etc) and also gambling.*
- c. *Ensure timely and quality building maintenance – Work closely with the Department of Housing and Public Works to ensure that housing maintenance adheres to high standards, with timely repairs and upkeep that meet safety and living condition requirements*

16. Employment

- a. *Advocate for more targeted engagement with Community Development Program (CDP) provider(s) and major employers in the Aurukun Shire to improve employment opportunities by providing purpose to presently unemployed residents and reduce environmental factors which may lead to increased crime and associated community safety concerns.*
- b. *Promote local business and economic growth – Support small businesses and local entrepreneurship to strengthen the community economy.*
- c. *Encourage flexible working arrangements – Work with employers to implement family-friendly and culturally appropriate policies to support local employment and training.*
- d. *Foster youth training and mentoring – Collaborate with organisations to create pathways for young people through skills development and mentorship programs.*
- e. *Prioritise local recruitment – Advocate for council and service providers to employ local residents in meaningful roles, including National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) services.*

17. Town Planning

- a. *Masterplan – Develop a renewed Masterplan for Aurukun's community infrastructure that integrates principles of situational crime prevention to foster a safer and more welcoming environment, accounts for future population growth, and aligns with cultural land use protocols while respecting community values.*

18. Telecommunications

- a. *Advocate for improved internet bandwidth and reliability – Collaborate with the State Government and telecommunication providers, to upgrade to enhance internet bandwidth and reliability, ensuring consistent and efficient digital access for residents, businesses, and service providers.*

19. Local Laws

- a. *Undertake a targeted community safety/ law and order Local Law review, incorporating local consultation, to support implementation of the CSP Action Areas.*





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