

Victorian Safe Communities Network Third Annual Conference, 2005

Report on participant feedback

1 Introduction

This report, prepared by Mark Hennessy, sets out the results of a questionnaire survey handed out to participants in the Third Annual Victorian Conference on Community Safety, held at the Darebin Arts and Entertainment Complex on Thursday, 17 November 2005.

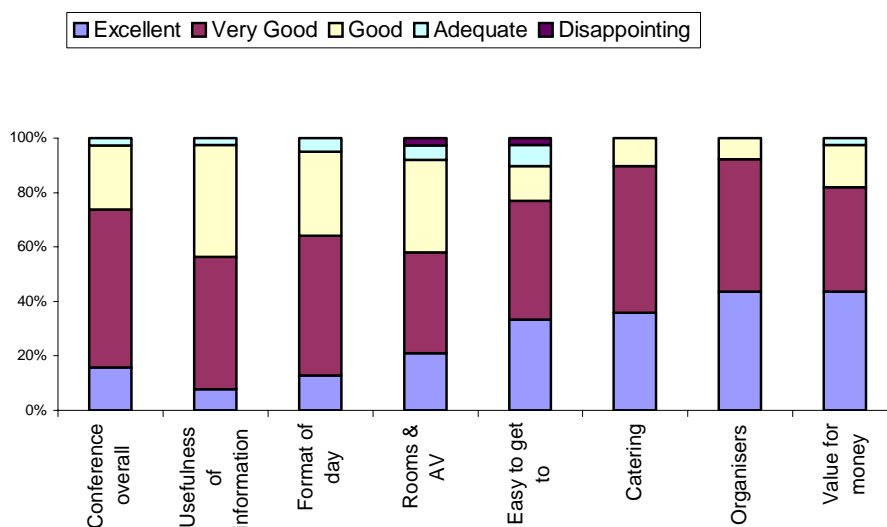
Of approximately 100 attending the conference, thirty-nine completed feedback questionnaires. Participants were asked to rate various aspects of the conference on a 5-point scale – the results are set out in the graph below.

Participants were also offered the opportunity to provide open responses about aspects of the conference, which are grouped under common themes in subsequent pages.

2 Participants' ratings

The ratings by participants of various aspects of the conference are set out in the following graph.

Participant feedback, 3rd VSCN conference, 17 November 2005



Overall responses were very positive, with over 80% of respondents rating the organisation, catering and value for money either very good or excellent. Areas for improvement include usefulness of the information presented, program format, and the conference facilities - rooms and audio-visual support.

3 What did you like best about today?

Particular speakers and sessions

Sessions and/or individual speakers which were well received included keynote speakers - Iain Butterworth, Christos Pantelis, Nicola Rabot and John Tombourou - and workshops on working effectively with young people, and children's safety.

Scope and diversity

Participants appreciated the balance between top down and grass roots projects, and opportunities for networking, the broad range of subjects, diversity of presentation and programs, community-based initiatives, 'Passport to Safety', take-home resources, and the diversity of presenters and topics.

Networking

Respondents particularly mentioned opportunities for networking, sharing ideas and meeting colleagues with similar interests.

Information

The quality of information presented was stimulating throughout the conference. The mixture of presentations added depth to the conference, and the quality of presentations was judged the "best yet". The conference offered opportunities to broaden the thinking of other disciplines, a better understanding of society, and gave policymakers and others exposure to various fields, and a feel for what is happening in the field. It was judged to provide great professional development and stimulating ideas for future planning.

Format

The mix of presentations and workshops was well supported.

4 What did you like least about today?

Chairing, timekeeping of sessions

Some chairs needed to be stricter with timekeeping.

Topics and speakers

Poor quality presentation material and format, poor lighting and incompatibility of PC programs compromised some presentations. Screen displays were unclear due to backlighting, or not pitched at a high enough level, particularly the after-lunch plenary and final sessions.

Venue, facilities

Some participants judged rooms to be cold and noisy, chairs uncomfortable, and the venue not easily accessible.

5 How did you find out about the conference?

Most respondents listed email, word of mouth, the website, or work colleagues as the sources of information.

6 Suggestions for 2006

Suggestions included:

- a two day conference
- presenters be asked to cover only key points
- a venue in the south east
- Rob Moodie as a keynote speaker
- more grass roots / practitioner presentations
- increased interaction between presenters and audience
- improved A/V
- more workshops and interactive sessions
- providing outcomes from workshops
- bullying as a topic - in all contexts (school, home, workplace).

7 Conclusions

The conference was again very well received by participants, with 97% rating it as good (or better), including 77% who rated it very good or excellent. The organisers were praised, with 92% rating the job they did as very good or excellent. The spontaneous comments of praise in sections 4 and 6 above are a good indication that the conference is highly valued by some participants.

The basic format was rated as good, very good or excellent by 95% of respondents. Some participants would have liked better opportunities for interaction and discussion. The wide range of topics and people was valued.

There are a number of practical suggestions for improvement, especially in information provision:

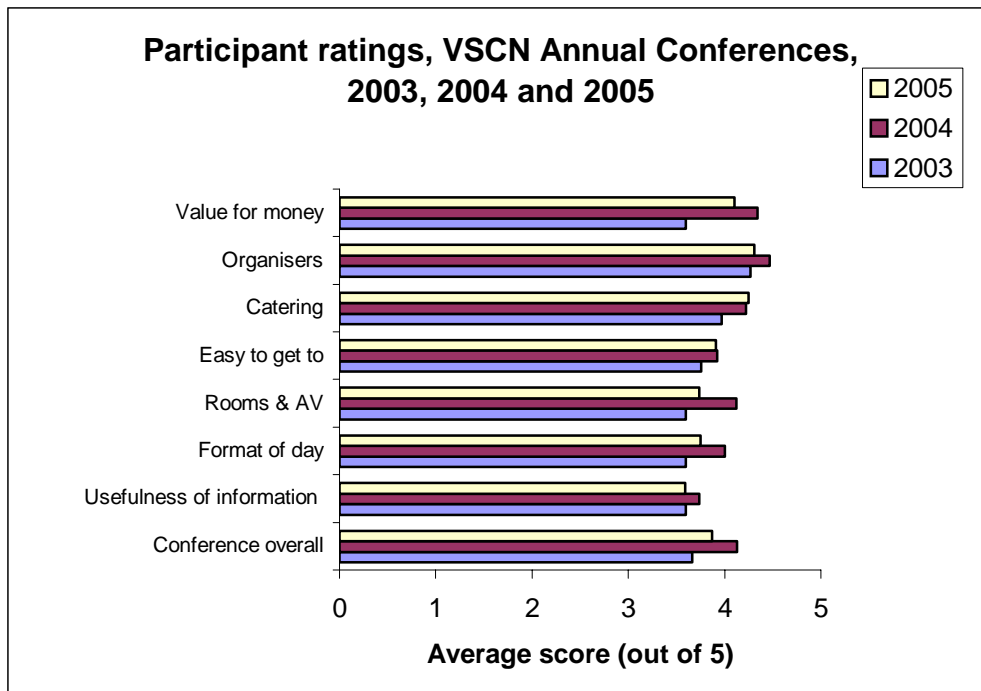
- Consider a 2 day conference (2 participants suggested this).
- More grass roots / practitioner presentations.
- Need more interactivity between presenters and audience.
- Hold it in the South East.

The main criticisms this year centred on lack of comfort (chairs, cold dark rooms) and the poor quality of a couple of power point presentations (including computer program compatibility, and some light entering, making the display lose contrast).

Comparison with 2004

Many of the criticisms of last year did not reappear, and many of the suggestions had been acted upon. The participants' ratings were close to last year's, and were better than for the 2003 conference in all areas, as shown on the following graph. The scale of the graph is:

1. Disappointing
2. Adequate
3. Good
4. Very good
5. Excellent



10 February 2006