

How do people use AirRater in Port Macquarie?

A user survey



QUESTIONS

We wanted to know more about how people use AirRater in Port Macquarie.



CONVERSATIONS

We surveyed AirRater users in Port Macquarie to find out how, when and why they use the app.



RESULTS

We found that AirRater is used in Port Macquarie to help people make decisions to protect their health when there is poor air quality.

What is AirRater and why did we survey users in Port Macquarie?

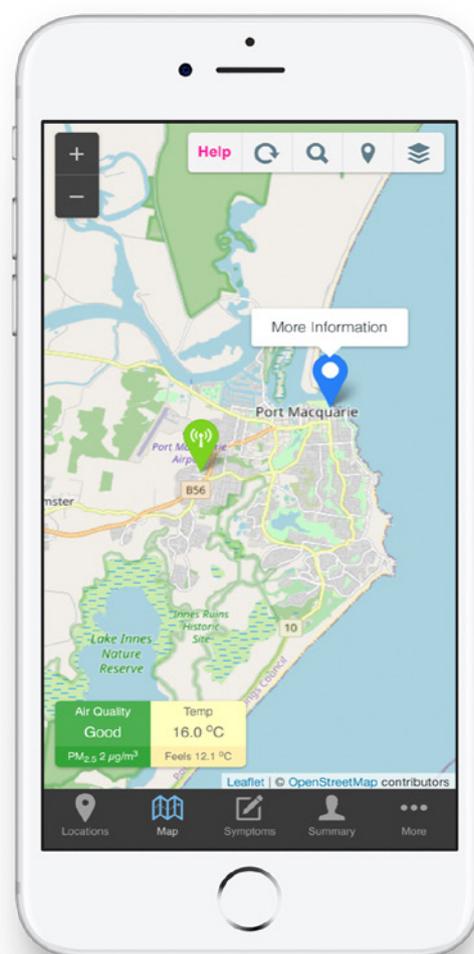
AirRater is a free smartphone app, developed by the University of Tasmania, which helps reduce the impacts of air pollution on public health. AirRater does this by providing the community and agencies with easy access to real-time, locally specific information on air pollutants, fire locations and other environmental hazards (such as heat).

AirRater was made available in Port Macquarie in July 2019, in response to poor air quality from a local peat fire. Soon after, the town was severely affected by smoke from surrounding bushfires.

What did we do?

We sent a survey via Survey Monkey to 382 AirRater users in February 2020. 18 people took the survey. We asked people about:

- » their personal health conditions
- » how they were affected by poor air quality
- » whether poor air quality affected their ability to go to work or school
- » whether they changed their behaviour based on the information AirRater provided, and
- » their thoughts on AirRater.



Who were our participants?



89% of participants use the app to support their own health needs



44% of participants experience—or care for someone with—a lung condition, e.g. asthma



17% of participants were aged 65 years or over

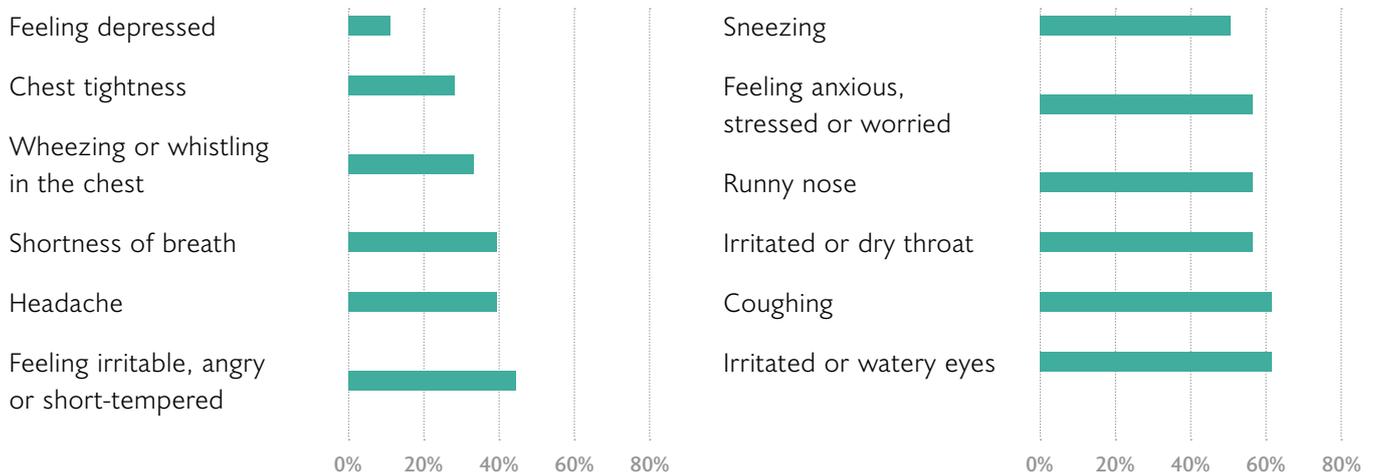


11% of participants experience—or care for someone with—a heart condition, e.g. heart disease

What did we find?

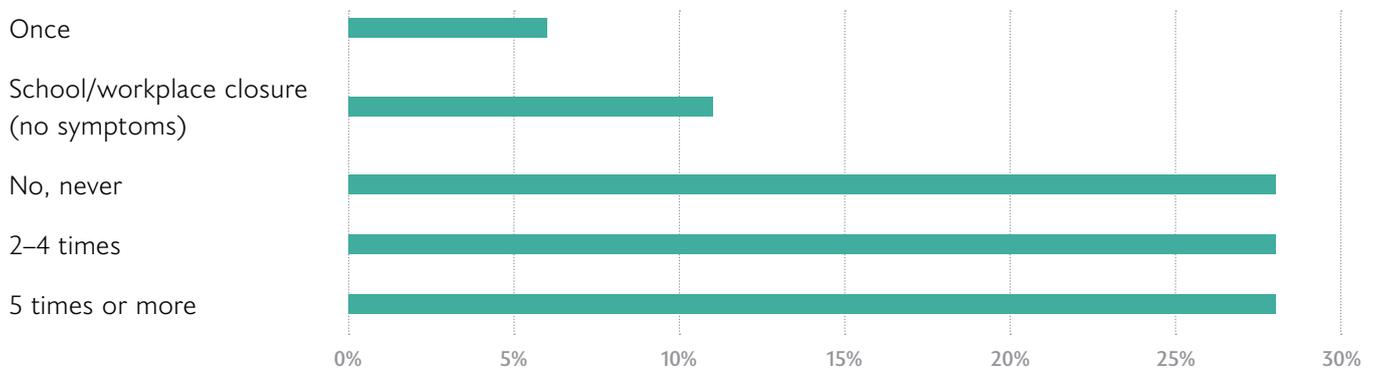
Poor air quality effects

A majority of respondents said they had physical and mental symptoms from the period of poor air quality. Of those who experienced symptoms, over half reported experiencing coughing, irritated eyes and/or throat, runny nose and feeling anxious.



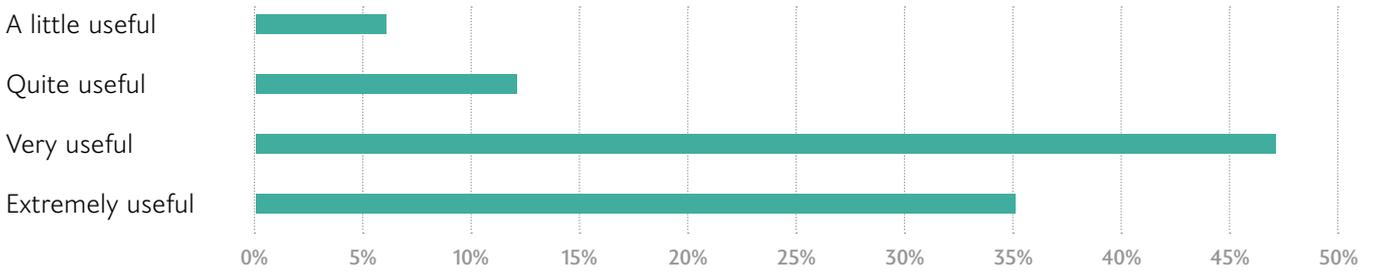
Impacts on work or study

Over half the respondents said they missed study or work at least once due to their symptoms. Two users said their school or workplace closed due to fire or smoke risk.



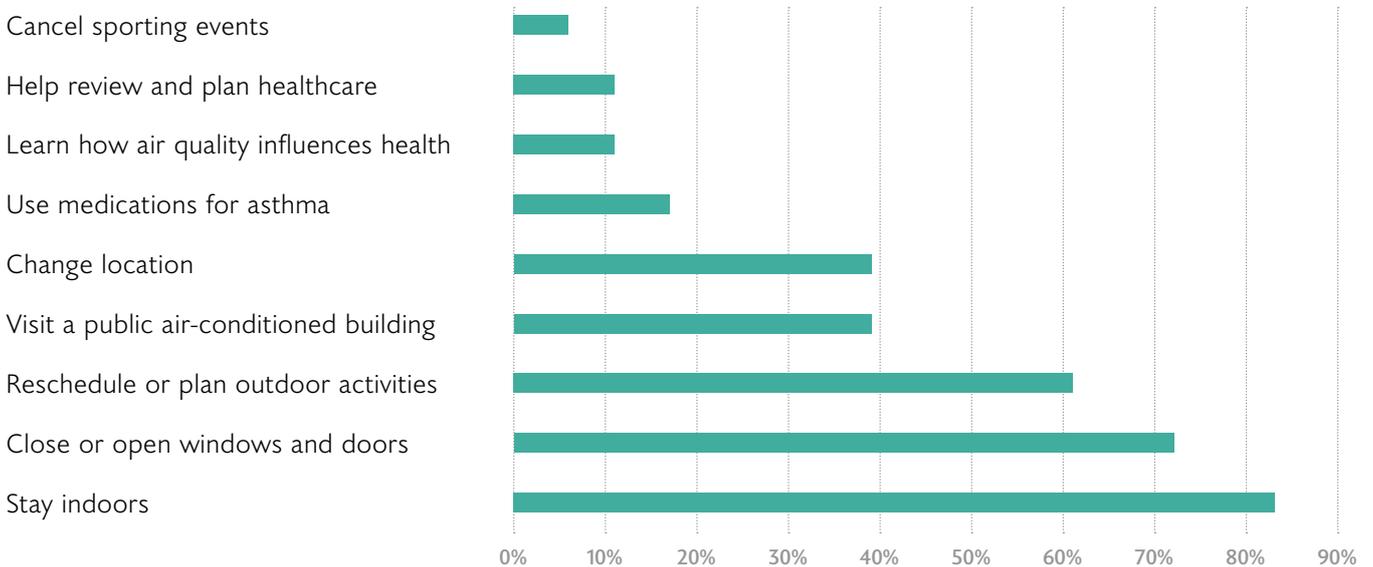
Usefulness of AirRater

A third of respondents rated AirRater as 'extremely useful' while nearly half said the app was 'very useful'. Around one in five found the app either 'quite useful' or 'a little useful'.



Behaviour change and AirRater

A majority of respondents said they used information provided by AirRater to help them decide whether to stay indoors. A similar number of respondents said they used information from AirRater to help them decide when to open or close doors.



What's next?

The feedback we received from users in different locations helps us to understand different experiences of and responses to environmental hazards, such as poor air quality and extreme heat. The results presented above are useful, however should be considered in context given the small number of respondents.

We will use this feedback to review AirRater and make sure the app is as useful as it can be, so that people continue to be supported to make decisions to protect their health.

Acknowledgements

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