



Litchfield Council

2017 Community Survey Report

Prepared by True North Strategic Communication

June 2017

Table of Contents

Executive summary	3
Success measures	5
Introduction	6
Results in summary	7
Key themes	16
Conclusion.....	18
Appendix 1: Survey questions.....	19

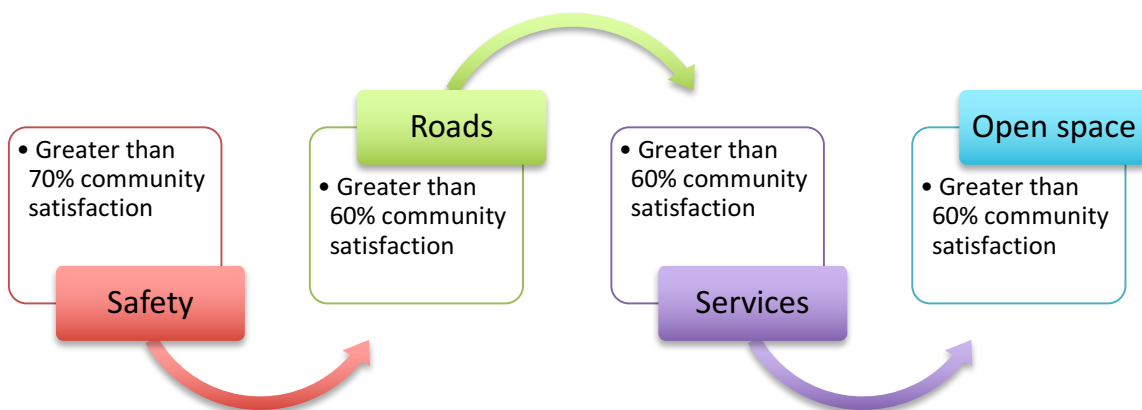
Executive summary

Overview

True North Strategic Communication was engaged by Litchfield Council to prepare a report based on the findings of the 2017 Litchfield Community Survey.

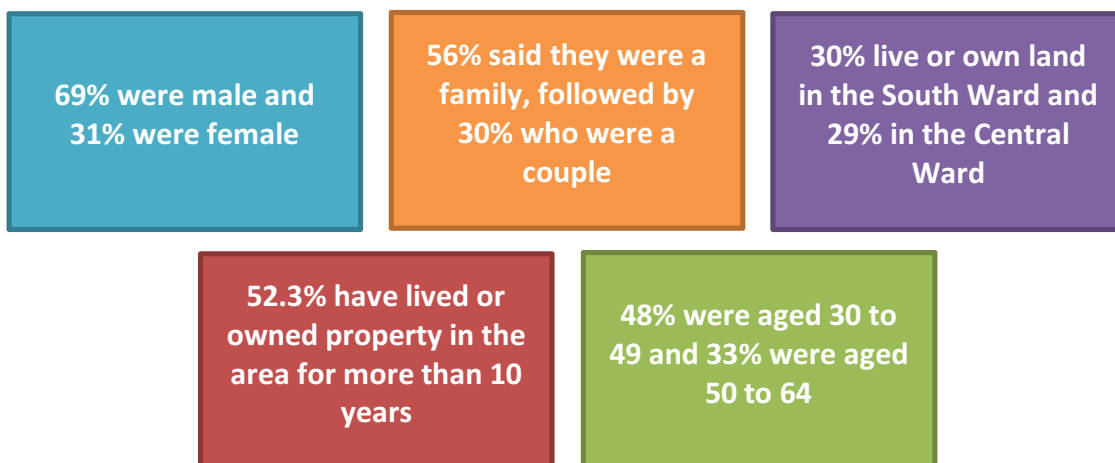
Council was specifically interested in understanding what residents in the Litchfield Municipality like most about living in the area, what they like least and any issues they believe Council should address. Council was also interested in discovering how well it is meeting its success measures outlined in the Litchfield Council 2016 – 2020 Strategic Plan.

As outlined in the Litchfield Council 2016 – 2020 Strategic Plan, Council’s success measures include:

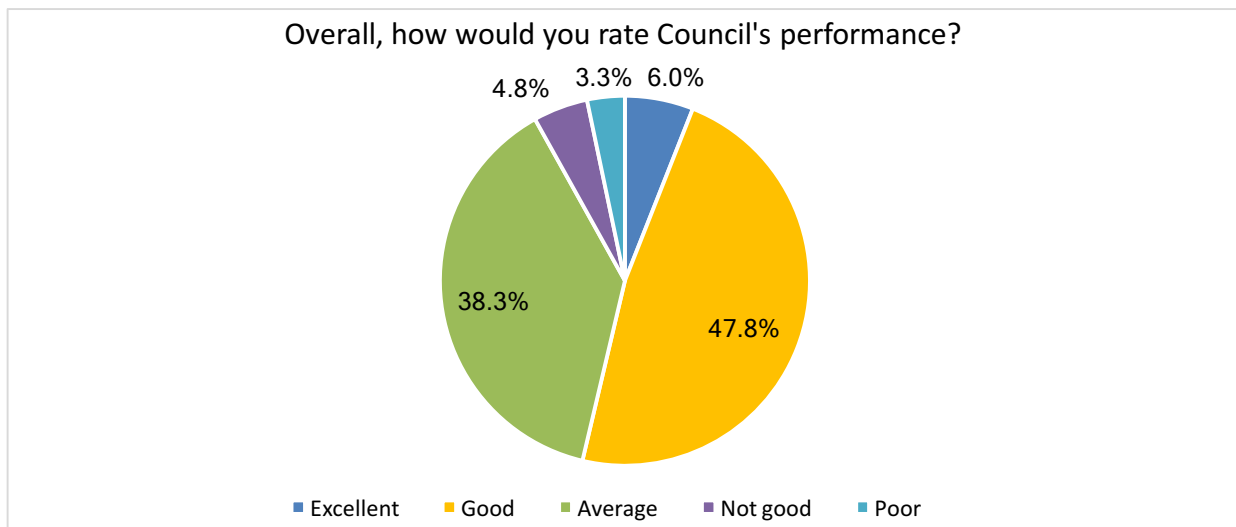


Key findings

The community survey was open to the public for five weeks and attracted 402 respondents. Survey respondents represented a wide demographic.



Respondents were asked to outline their overall satisfaction with Council and a number of services using a rating scale of **excellent**, **good**, **average**, **not good** and **poor**. When respondents were asked how they rate Council’s overall performance, responses were generally positive with 54 per cent rating it as good or excellent. Most respondents (84%) said Council’s contribution to its strategic direction was above average (good or excellent). Respondents also rated Council’s effort to keep residents up-to-date with local issues, projects and events well, with 38 per cent rating it as good or excellent and 41.2 per cent as average.



Common themes raised throughout the survey include:

Strong values tied to rural living

- Respondents said they strongly value the large block sizes, freedom and sense of community spirit
- Some respondents said they were concerned the quiet and peaceful nature of the area, lack of constraints and availability of large block sizes would be compromised through urbanisation of the area

Animal management

- Most respondents said they felt unsafe with unrestrained and aggressive dogs frequently roaming the area
- Some respondents said they were disappointed Council could potentially enforce dog restrictions, however the majority said they felt better animal management is needed

Quad bikes and dangerous driving

- Respondents were concerned with the number of quad bikes and incidence of dangerous driving in the area

Rates and waste removal

- Some respondents said they felt Council's rates were too high considering the types of services available to residents
- Many respondents said they wanted weekly rubbish collection made available to all residents

Weed management

- Many respondents said there was a need for stronger focus on weed management in the area
- Some respondents raised concerns about the fire hazard invasive weeds such as Gamba Grass and Mission Grass create

Safety and crime

- Respondents said they generally felt quite safe in the area, however some said they observed an increase in break-ins more recently

Success measures

The following findings are based on the success measures outlined in the Litchfield Council 2016 – 2020 Strategic Plan. Community satisfaction was gauged based on responses that were above average (good or excellent).

Safety - greater than 70% community satisfaction

- Respondents indicated how safe they feel according to a rating scale of **quite safe, neither safe nor unsafe, unsafe** or **not applicable**.
- Council satisfied its success measure of 70 per cent community satisfaction for safety, with the majority of respondents (85%) indicating they felt quite safe at home during the day.
- When respondents were asked how safe they felt home alone after dark, walking alone during the day and walking alone after dark responses were mixed. More than half (68.4%) said they felt quite safe home alone after dark and 64.5 per cent said they felt quite safe walking alone during the day. While, 31 per cent said they felt quite safe walking alone at night.

Roads - greater than 60% community satisfaction

- Respondents indicated how satisfied they were with Council's performance in maintenance of local roads, road drainage and roadside maintenance according to a rating scale of **excellent, good, average, not good** or **poor**.
- Council was close to satisfying its success measure of greater than 60 per cent community satisfaction for roads, with 53.3 per cent indicating maintenance of local roads was above average, 59 per cent indicating road drainage was above average and 45 per cent indicating roadside maintenance was above average.

Services - greater than 60% community satisfaction

- Respondents indicated how satisfied they were with Council's performance for a variety of services.
- Council satisfied its success measure of greater than 60 per cent community satisfaction for each service.
- Thorak Regional Cemetery (65%), recreation reserves (65%) and waste transfer stations (78%) were rated the highest by respondents.

Open space - greater than 60% community satisfaction

- Respondents rated their satisfaction levels with recreation reserves in the Litchfield area.
- Council satisfied its success measure of greater than 60 per cent community satisfaction with 81 per cent of respondents indicating they believed recreation reserves were above average.

Introduction

Objectives

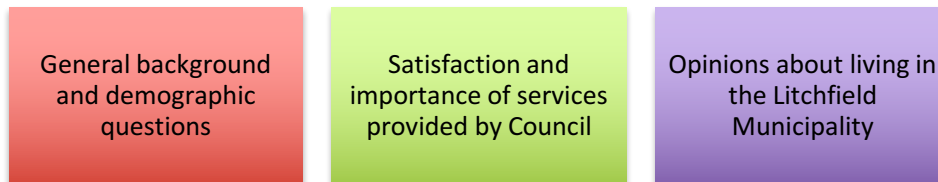
The purpose of the 2017 Litchfield Community Survey was to:

- measure level of importance and satisfaction of services and communication
- establish benchmarks
- guide future priorities for Council.

Methodology

Litchfield Council developed the 2017 community survey in collaboration with True North Strategic Communication, using the online platform Survey Monkey.

The survey contained 22 questions and reflected the goals of Council's 2016 – 2020 Strategic Plan. It covered the following topics:



To encourage participation the survey was incentivised with respondents given the chance to win one of four \$250 fuel vouchers. This proved to be successful with most respondents leaving their contact details to go into the draw.

The survey was promoted primarily through Facebook and was sponsored three times. There was a noticeable spike in survey responses after each Facebook post was sponsored. Other forms of promotion included:

- Litchfield Council website
- Posters at local shopping centres
- Flyers at waste transfer stations
- Ipads at Coolalinga Markets, Freds Pass Rural Show and Council front office
- Radio announcements.

The survey ran for five weeks from 10 April to 14 May and attracted 58 responses in the first week, 163 responses in the second week, 68 responses in the third week, 26 responses in the fourth week and 87 responses in the final week.

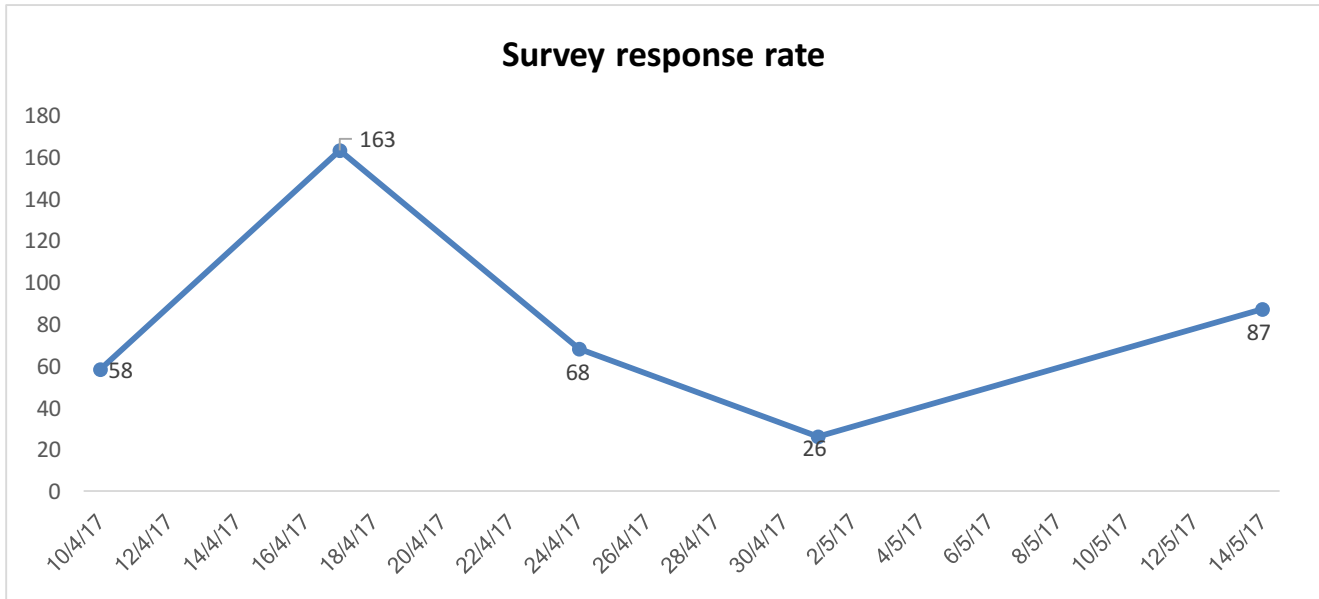


Figure 1: The graph shows the survey response rate over five weeks.

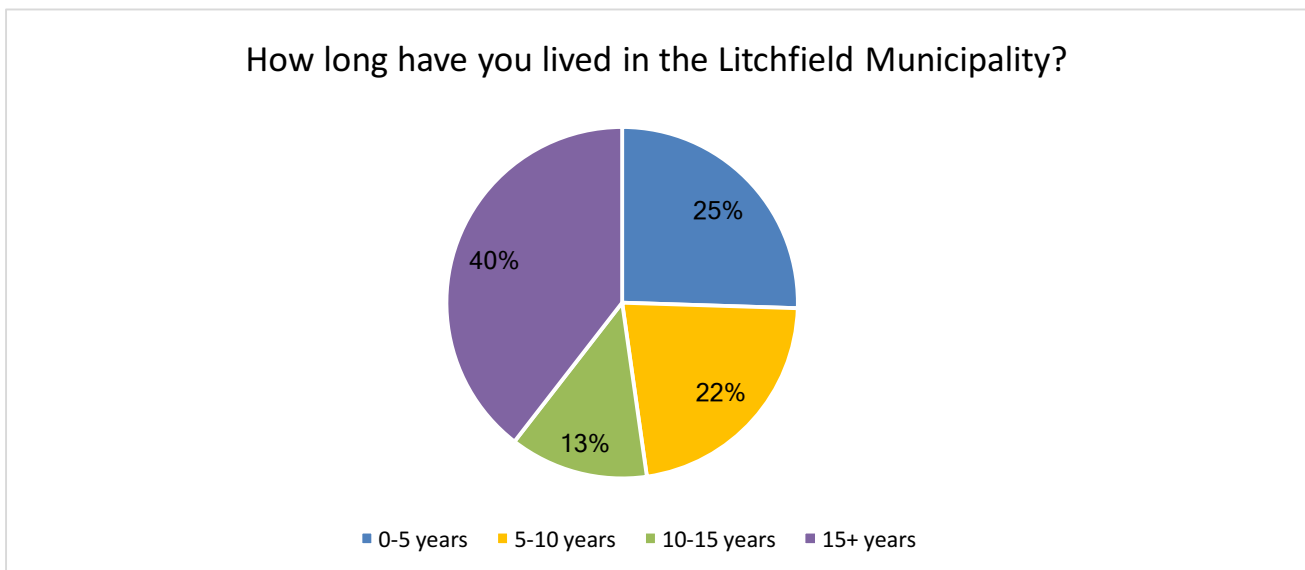
Results in summary

The results section of this report is presented as follows:

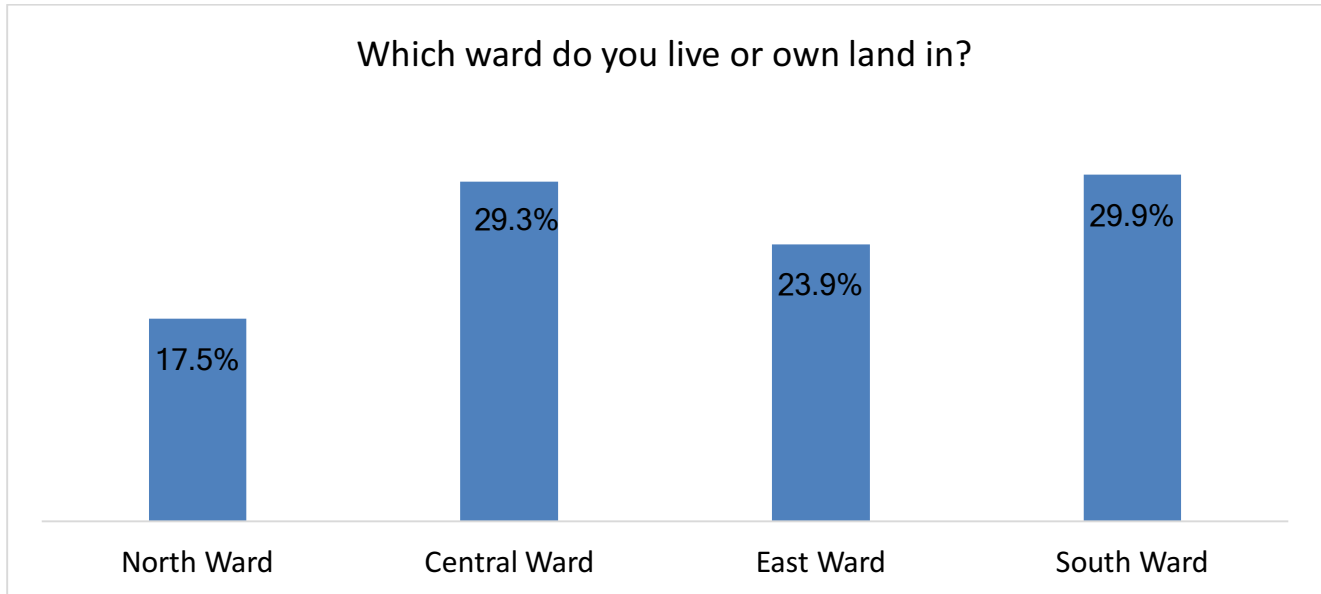
- Respondent breakdown
- Importance of Council roles and services
- Use of Council amenities
- Satisfaction with Council, services and amenities
- Opinions about living in the Litchfield Municipality

Respondent breakdown

Respondents were mostly long-term residents, with more than half indicating they have lived or owned property in the Litchfield area for more than 10 years (52.3%).

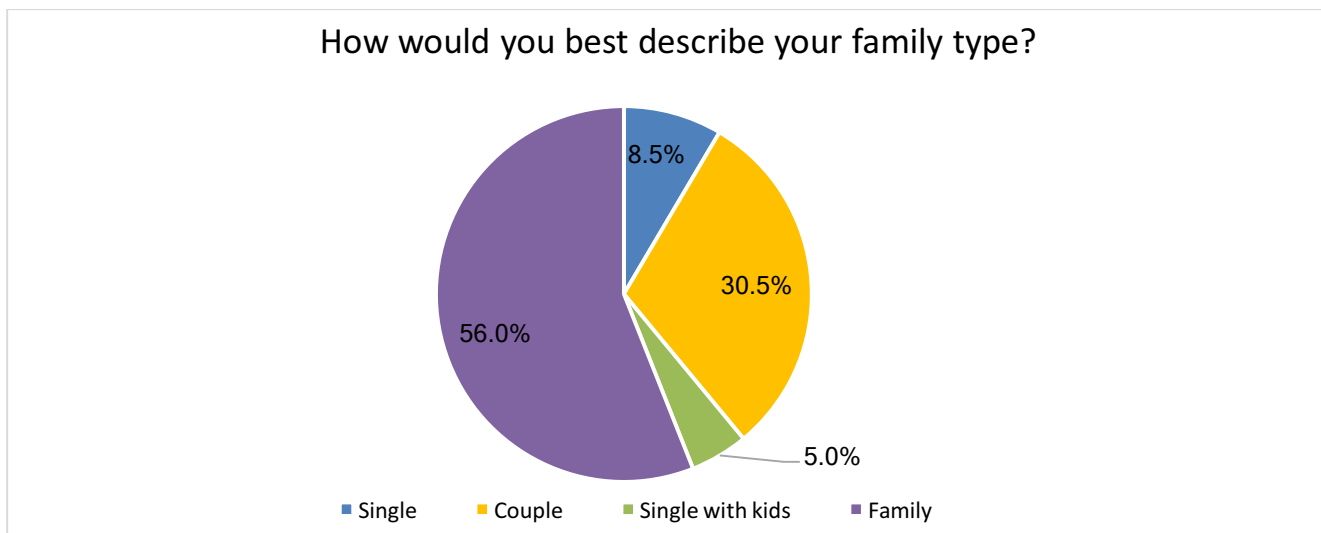


There was a good representation of respondents from across the four wards, with 30 per cent living and/or owning land in the South Ward, 29 per cent in the Central Ward, 24 per cent in the East Ward and 18 per cent in the North Ward.



More than half of respondents said they were female (69%) and indicated that their household status was a family (56%). This was followed by 30 per cent of respondents who said they were a couple, 8.5 per cent who were single and 5 per cent who said they were a single parent with children.

Respondents were mostly aged between 30 to 64, with 48 per cent aged 30 to 49 and 33 per cent aged 50 to 64. This was followed by 11 per cent of respondents who were aged 65 and older, 8 per cent who were 18 to 29 and 0.3 per cent who were under 18.

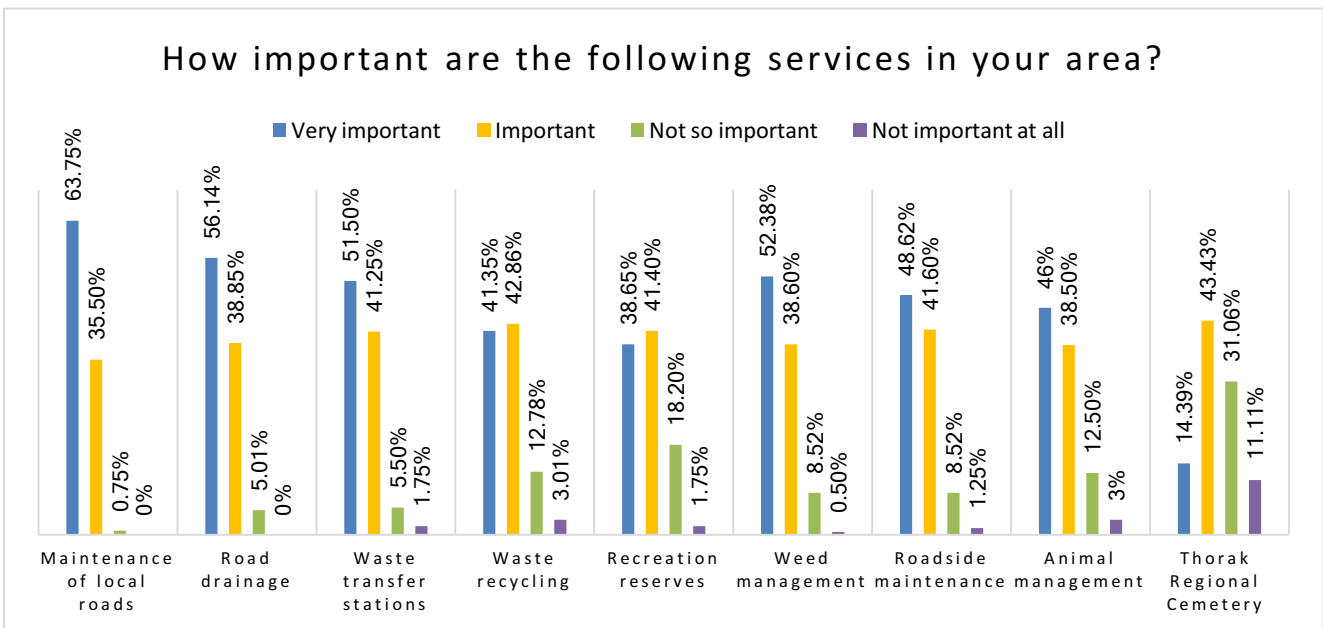


Importance of Council roles and services

Respondents ranked the level of importance they place on Council roles and services according to a rating scale of **very important**, **important**, **not so important** and **not important at all** for two questions.

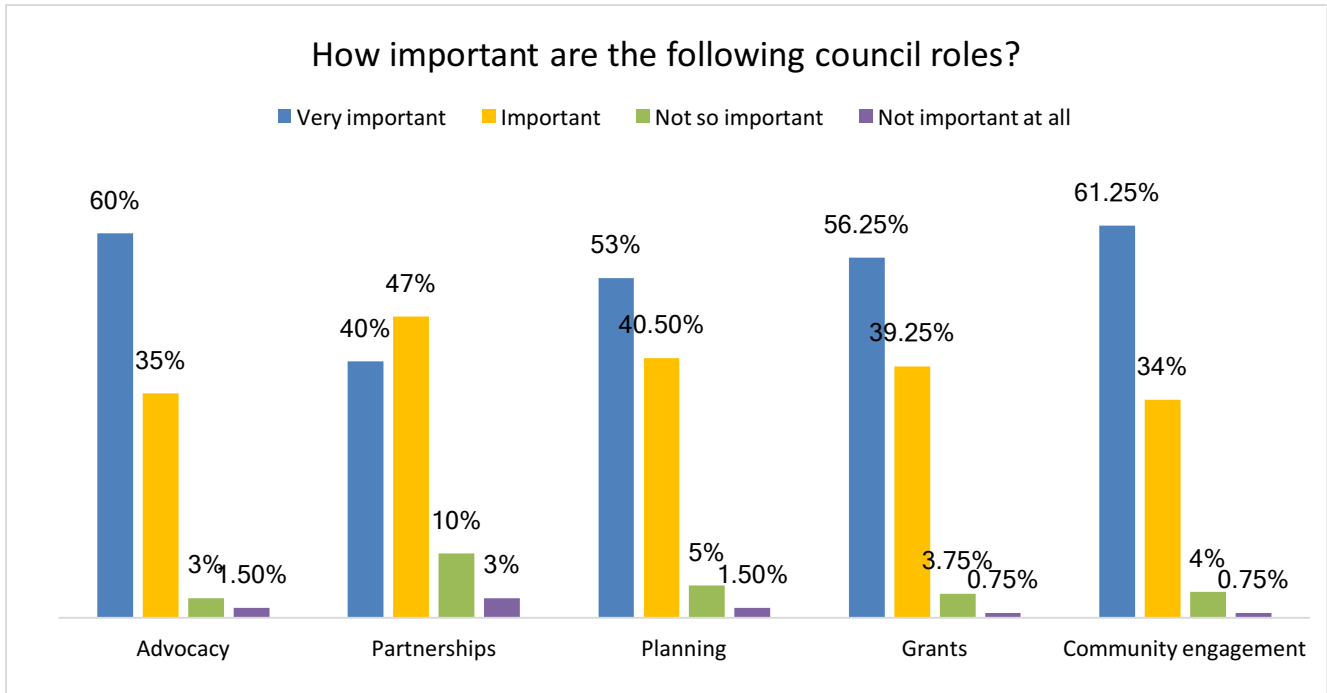
Services and amenities provided by Council

Respondents were asked to rank the importance of several services provided by Council. Maintenance of local roads was regarded as very important by more than half of respondents (64%), followed by road drainage (56%), weed management (52%) and waste transfer stations (51.5%). Thorak Regional Cemetery was regarded as least important with 42 per cent of respondents ranking it as not so important or not at all important.



Importance of Council roles

Respondents were asked to indicate the level of importance they attribute to Council’s roles in advocacy, partnerships, planning, grants and community engagement. Community engagement (61%) and advocacy (60%) were considered very important by most, followed by grant applications (56%), planning application assessments that support positive effects on neighbourhood amenity (53%) and partnerships (40%).

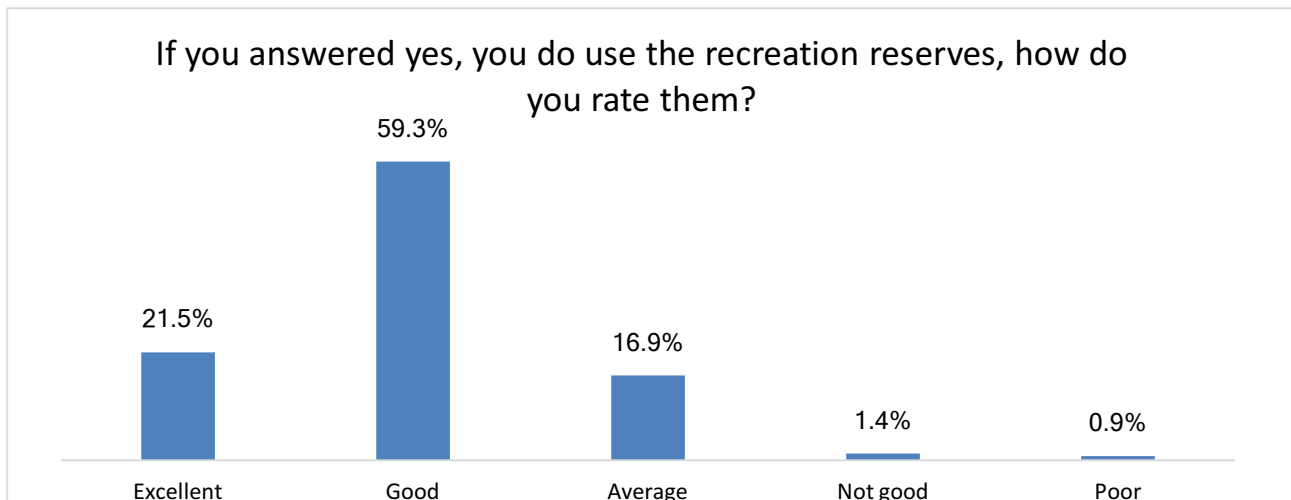


Use of Council amenities

Litchfield has seven recreation reserves; Berry Springs, Freds Pass, Howard Park, Humpty Doo, Knuckey Lagoon, Livingstone and McMinn's Lagoon. Respondents were asked to indicate how regularly they visit the reserves and what activities they generally use the reserves for.

The majority of respondents (88%) said they visit the recreation reserves, with 23 per cent visiting them one or more times per week, 38 per cent around once a month and 26 per cent around once a year.

More than half (54%) said they generally use the reserves to attend events, 48.5 per cent said to play with kids, 26 per cent said individual exercise and 22 per cent said club sport. Respondents also provided additional commentary outlining other activities, including bird watching and social gatherings.



Satisfaction with Council, services and amenities

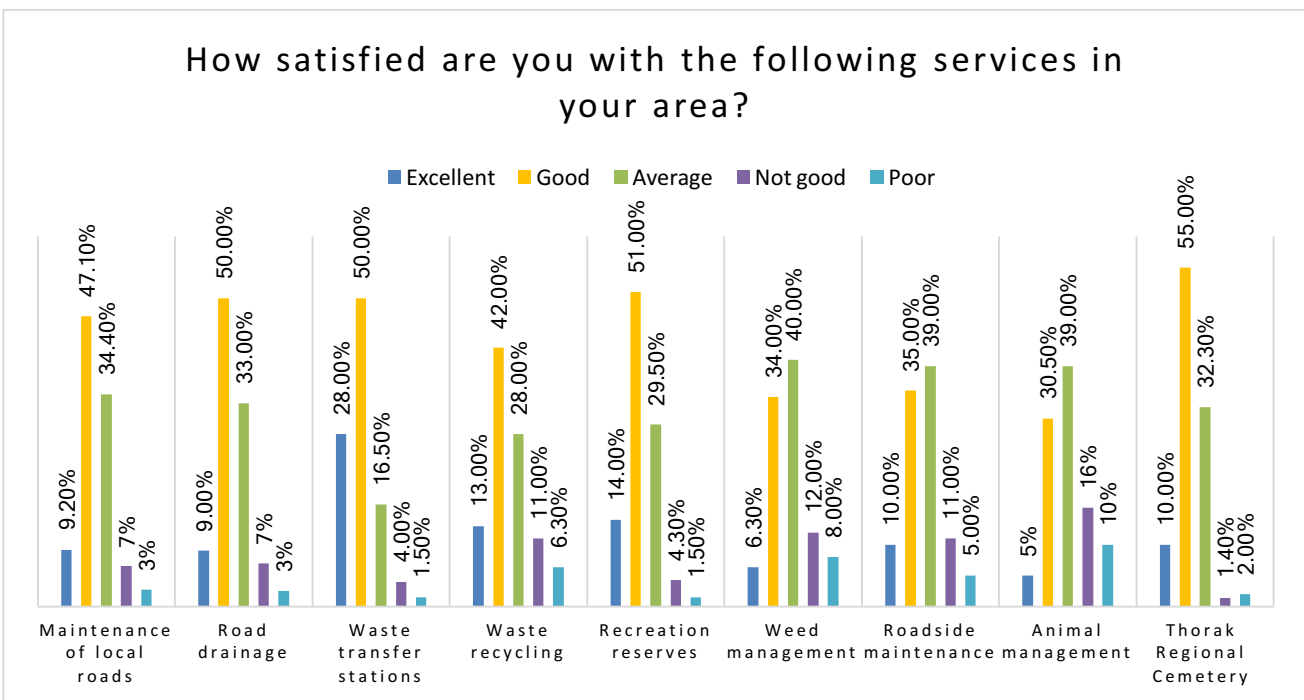
Using the rating scale of **excellent**, **good**, **average**, **not good** and **poor**, respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction level for several questions.

Recreation reserves

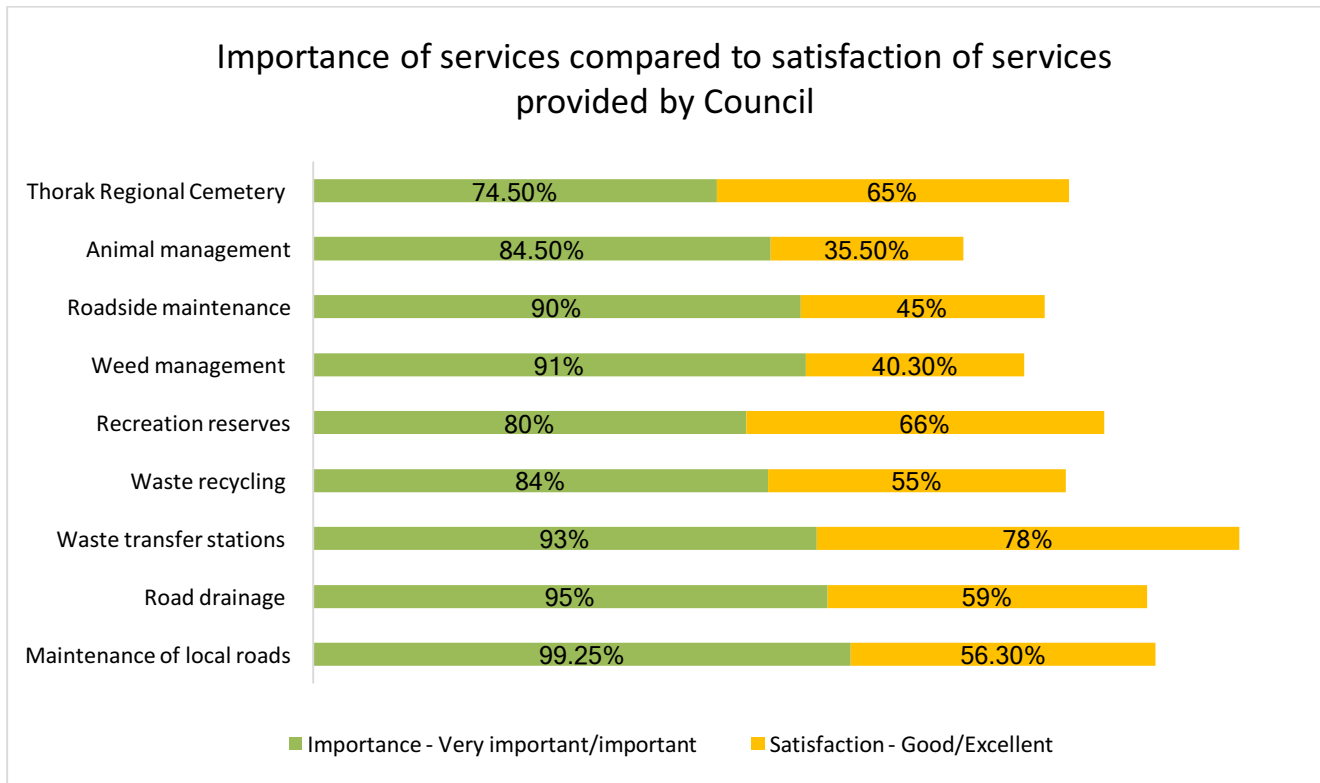
Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with recreation reserves in the area. Of the respondents who use the reserves, 81 per cent rated them as excellent or good. This was well above Council’s success measure of 60 per cent community satisfaction for open spaces and recreation reserves as outlined in the Strategic Plan.

Council’s performance on services

When respondents were asked how satisfied they were with Council’s performance for a number of services, responses varied but were mostly positive. Waste transfer stations (78%), Thorak Regional Cemetery (65%) and road drainage (58%) received the highest ratings with more than half of respondents rating their satisfaction with them as excellent or good. This was followed by 26 per cent of respondents who rated animal management as not good or poor and 20 per cent who said the same for weed management.

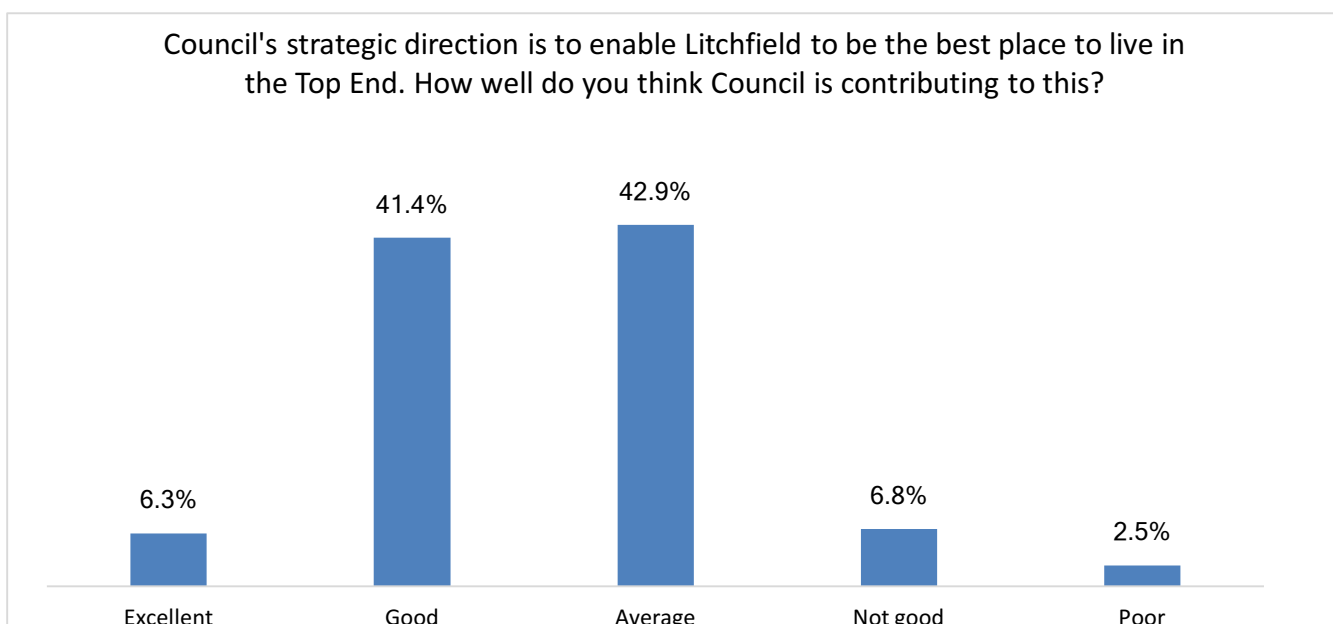


The graph below shows the level of importance respondents placed on services provided by Council compared to their level of satisfaction with the services.



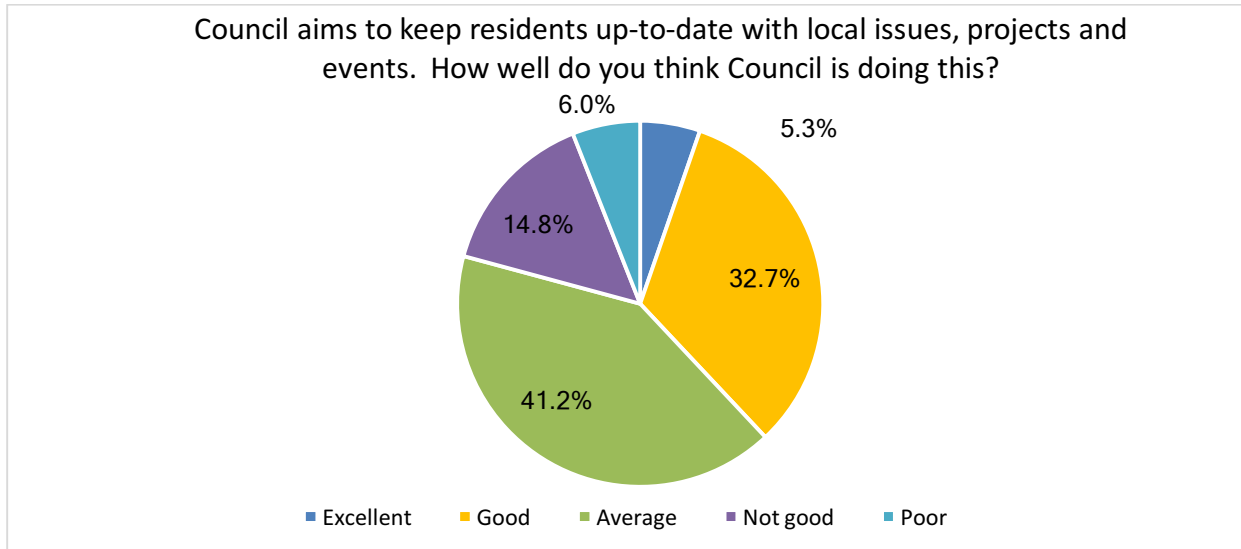
Strategic direction

Respondents were asked to rate how well Council has contributed to its strategic direction in making Litchfield the best place to live in the Top End. Responses were generally positive, with 41 per cent who said good and 43 per cent who said average.



Informing the community

Many respondents (38%) rated Council’s ability to keep residents up-to-date with local issues, projects and events as good or excellent, followed by 41 per cent who said average.

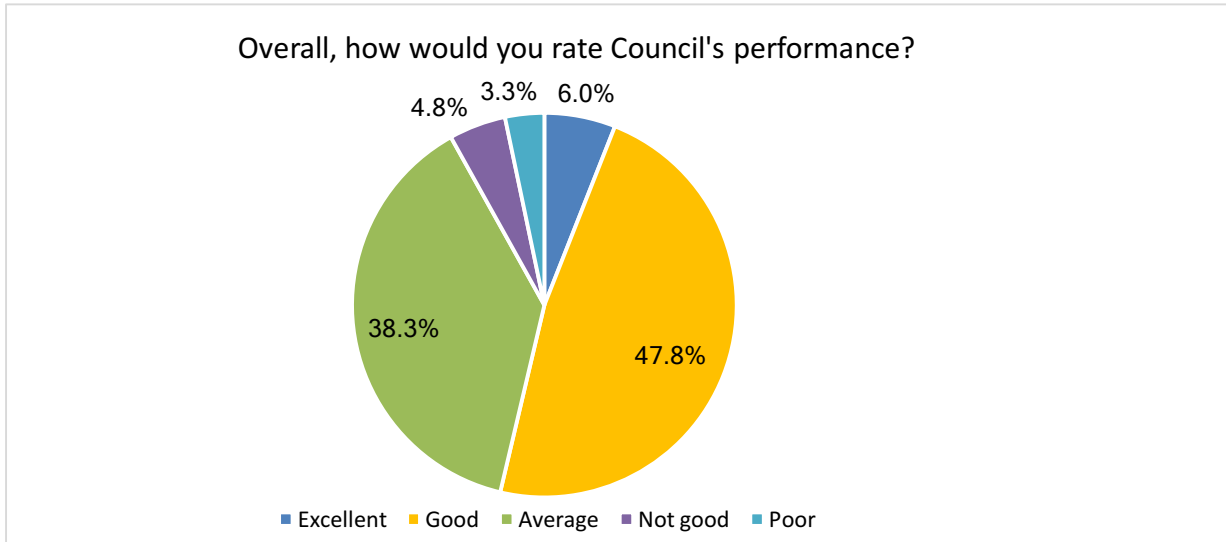


When respondents were asked how they would like to be kept informed by Council, 65 per cent said social media. This was followed by 43 per cent who said email, 37 per cent who said the website and 28 per cent who said posters on community noticeboards. Respondents provided additional commentary for this question, with many indicating they do not have internet access and did not see the survey promoted through Facebook. Some respondents said they would prefer to receive updates via mail, community newsletters and face-to-face conversations with councillors.

Respondents rated the level of service they received if they had contacted Council in the past six months. 36 per cent of respondents indicated that this question was not applicable to them. Of the respondents who said they had contacted Council in the past six months, the majority (86%) rated their service as excellent, good or average.

Overall performance by Council

Most respondents rated Council’s overall performance positively, with 48 per cent rating it as good, 38 per cent as average and 6 per cent as excellent. Just 8 per cent of respondents rated Council’s overall performance as not good or poor.



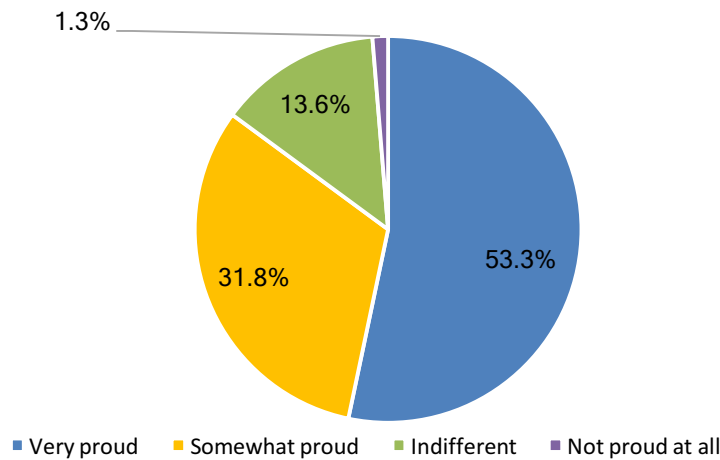
Opinions about living in the Litchfield Municipality

Respondents were asked two rating scale questions and two open-ended questions to explore their attitudes and perceptions towards living in the Litchfield region.

Sense of pride

Respondents indicated how proud they are to live in the area according to a rating scale of **very proud**, **somewhat proud**, **indifferent** and **not proud at all**. Responses were generally positive with 85 per cent indicating they were very proud or somewhat proud. This was followed by 14 per cent who said they were indifferent and 1.3 per cent who said they were not proud at all. Some respondents made comments, with many saying they loved living in the area because of the “laidback” and “peaceful” lifestyle.

How proud are you to live in the Litchfield region?

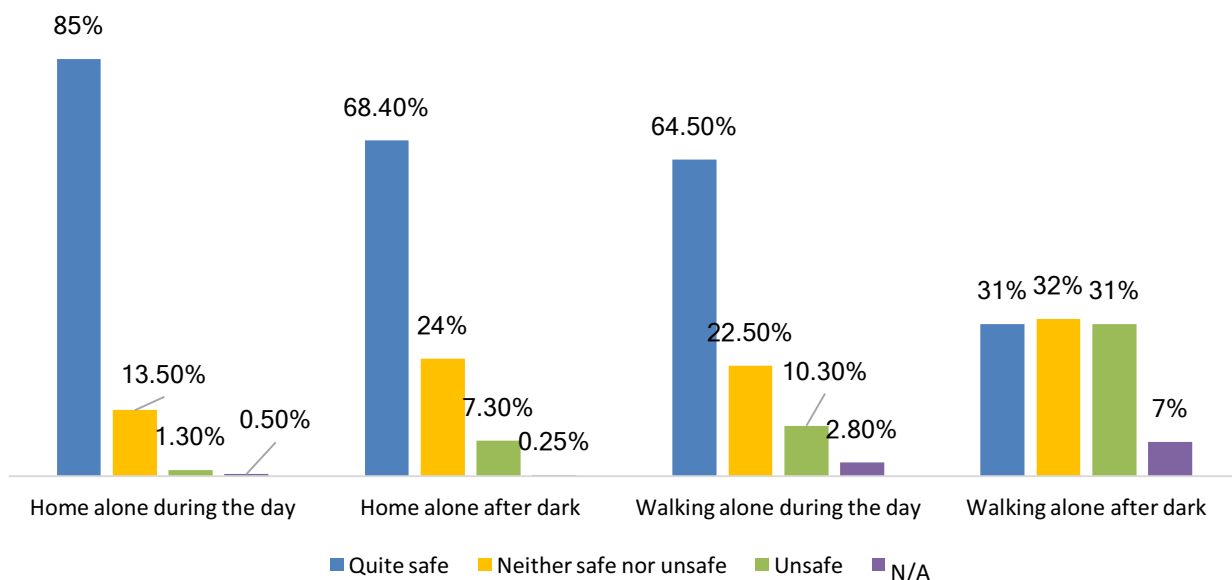


Safety

Respondents indicated how safe they feel in the Litchfield area according to a rating scale of **quite safe, neither safe nor unsafe, unsafe** or **not applicable**.

Respondents were asked how safe they feel at home alone during the day and most said quite safe (85%). More than half (68.4%) said they felt quite safe at home alone after dark and 64.5 per cent said they felt quite safe walking alone during the day. When respondents were asked how safe they feel walking alone after dark responses varied with 31 per cent saying they felt quite safe, 32 per cent neither unsafe nor safe and 31 per cent who said they felt unsafe. Council’s success measure for safety is greater than 70 per cent community satisfaction.

How safe do you feel in the following situations?



Open-ended questions

Respondents were asked two open-ended questions which prompted a descriptive response rather than a multiple-choice answer. These questions focused on what respondents like most and least about living in the Litchfield Municipality.

The themes and issues raised from these questions are covered in the 'key themes' section.

When respondents were asked to identify what they like most about living in the area, the majority of people said they liked the rural lifestyle, community spirit, large block sizes, space and freedom.



Figure 3: A word cloud showing the most popular responses for what respondents like most about living in the Litchfield Municipality.

When questioned over what they like least, responses varied with many raising different concerns or issues they have about living in the area. Most respondents said animal management was a significant issue, including stray, vicious and barking dogs. Respondents also said they were wary of the number of quad bikes in the area, concerned with increasing crime rates and worried about future urbanisation of the area.

Key themes

A number of key themes were raised throughout the survey. Summaries of these themes and direct feedback are outlined below.

Rural living

Throughout the survey, it was evident the main driver for people wanting to live in Litchfield is the rural lifestyle. Respondents were mostly long-term residents who strongly value their lifestyle, including the large block sizes, freedom, and strong sense of community spirit. Some respondents said they were worried the quiet and peaceful nature of the area, lack of constraints and availability of large block sizes would be compromised through urbanisation.

"I like the space, peace and quiet and the fact we are not living on top of each other."

"We enjoy our rural lifestyle and we do not want it destroyed by developers and people moving to the rural area wanting small blocks, street lighting, kerbing, council rubbish removal and dog registration - if they want these services stay in town."

"Community spirit and pride in each of the rural communities is great to be part of."

"The smaller block sizes and re-zoning, for development. It is changing the "rural" area to just another suburb."

"More and more regulation bringing a reduced freedom."

Service delivery

Animal management

Animal management was a key concern for many respondents. Many respondents said they felt unsafe with unrestrained and aggressive dogs frequently roaming the area. Some respondents expressed disappointment that Council would restrict the number of dogs residents are allowed to have at their properties, however the majority of respondents felt better animal management is needed.

"Owners not taking responsibility for aggressive dogs. Do not feel safe at all walking outside our block with the kids."

"People owning too many dogs."

"Other people's wandering dogs and no assistance available when they come to your property and kill your animals."

"(I like) having freedoms not associated with local city councils (dog restrictions/animal restrictions)."

"There is talk about limiting the number of dogs allowed and we live on 5 acres or more...this is not even in place by Darwin City Council or Palmerston City Council and people live on 200sqm blocks."

Rates and waste removal

Many respondents said they felt Council's rates were too high considering the types of services available to residents. Some respondents said they believed weekly rubbish collection should be available to all residents.

"You should have a rubbish collection weekly, we pay our rates and this should be included as a service. Instead we have to pay someone else to collect our weekly wheelie bin at a cost."

"No return for your rates, expensive."

"The increasing trend of Litchfield Council to bring in regulations/services that not all ratepayers use, and then increase rates for ALL ratepayers to pay for them."

"I don't see the value for money in my rates which are not far off suburb rate prices with a lot more services such as rubbish collection, mail delivery and street lights."

Weed management

Many respondents said there was a need for stronger focus on weed management in the area. Some respondents raised concerns about the fire hazard invasive weeds such as Gamba Grass and Mission Grass create.

"Spread of weeds by slashing road verges."

"Lack of weed control in public spaces and no monitoring of private property weeds."

"Burning of the bush which enhances the growth of invasive grasses like Gamba."

"Gamba grass and mission grass clogging people's firebreaks and causing a serious fire hazard for others."

Advocacy

Quad bikes and dangerous driving

The number of quad bikes and incidence of dangerous driving in the area were also key concerns raised by many respondents.

“As much as quads/buggies/motorbikes are a part of rural living, it's out of control on Gunn Point Rd, especially on weekends, they carry on right up until 4am.”

“Quads and motor bikes unlawful use of roads. Also they are causing damage to the roads and drains.”

“Worry about drink drivers on the road.”

“The bloody HOONS and excess speeding on main roads.”

Safety and crime

Respondents said they generally felt quite safe in the area, however some said they observed an increase in break-ins more recently. Respondents who said they noticed an increase in crime attributed this to growth of the area and an increase population.

“Break-ins are now occurring regularly.”

“Feeling unsafe with increase in robberies and intruders and houses being stalked.”

“Minimal crime, though we believe that is changing for the worse.”

Conclusion

The purpose of the 2017 Litchfield Community Survey was to measure levels of importance and satisfaction of services, establish benchmarks and guide Council's future priorities. Respondents were generally satisfied with Council's overall performance, with the majority of respondents indicating that they believe Council is contributing well to its strategic direction. Respondents said Council could improve on animal and weed management, as well as keeping residents up-to-date.

Appendix 1: Survey questions

Litchfield Council Annual Customer Satisfaction Survey

Litchfield Council conducts an annual customer satisfaction survey to hear from people living in the Litchfield Municipality. The municipality is experiencing unprecedented growth and activity and responses to this survey provide Council with information on what people like about living in this region, what they don't like and how they believe the Council is performing.

Survey responses are confidential, however if you would like to go in the draw to win one of four \$250 fuel vouchers we ask that you provide your contact details at the end of the survey.

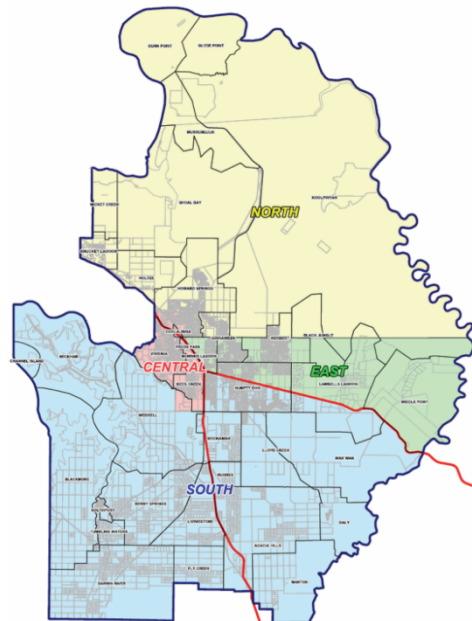
1. Please select the statement that best describes you
 - a. I am a resident and landowner
 - b. I am a resident but do not own land
 - c. I am not a resident but I own land

2. How long have you lived in the Litchfield Municipality?
 - a. 0-5 years
 - b. 5-10 years
 - c. 10-15 years
 - d. 15+ years

3. Which ward do you live or own land in (please see map to assist)?
 - a. North Ward
 - b. Central Ward
 - c. East Ward
 - d. South Ward

4. Please indicate your gender
 - a. Male
 - b. Female

5. What is your age range?
 - a. Under 18
 - b. 18-29
 - c. 30-49
 - d. 50-64
 - e. 65+



How would you best describe your family type?
Litchfield Council 2017 Community Survey Report

- a. Single
 - b. Couple
 - c. Family
 - d. Single with kids
6. How important are the following services in your area? Very important, somewhat important, not so important, not important at all.
- a. Maintenance of local roads
 - b. Road drainage
 - c. Waste recycling
 - d. Waste transfer stations
 - e. Recreation reserves
 - f. Weed management
 - g. Roadside maintenance (e.g. mowing)
 - h. Animal management
 - i. Thorak Regional Cemetery
7. How do you rate Council's performance in these services in your area? Very good, good, average, not good, poor
- a. Maintenance of local roads
 - b. Road drainage
 - c. Waste recycling
 - d. Waste transfer stations
 - e. Recreation reserves
 - f. Weed management
 - g. Roadside maintenance (e.g. mowing)
 - h. Animal management
 - i. Thorak Regional Cemetery
8. How important are the following Council roles? Very important, somewhat important, not so important, not important at all.
- a. Advocacy (Council lobbying on behalf of the community)
 - b. Partnerships (Council submitting grant funding requests for projects such as road upgrades)
 - c. Planning application assessments
 - d. Community engagement
9. If you have you contacted Council in the last six months, please rate your service? Very good, good, average, not good, poor, Not Applicable

10. Do you use the recreation reserves in your area? (There are seven recreation reserves in the Litchfield region; Berry Springs, Freds Pass, Howard Park, Humpty Doo, Knuckey Lagoon, Livingstone and McMinns Lagoon)
- Yes, very frequently (one or more times a week)
 - Yes, sometimes (maybe once a month)
 - Yes, but rarely (maybe once a year)
 - No, not at all

If yes, how do you rate the condition of the recreation reserves?

- Very good
- Good
- Average
- Not good
- Poor

Please comment on how you think Council could improve the recreation reserves.

11. Please comment on what you use the recreation reserves for i.e. playing with kids, sport, exercise?

10. How proud are you to live in the Litchfield region?

- Very proud
- Somewhat proud
- Indifferent
- Not proud at all

Please feel free to give some examples.

11. What do you like most about living in the Litchfield municipality?

Please comment

12. What do you like least about living in the Litchfield municipality?

Please comment

13. How safe do you feel in the Litchfield area in the following situations? Quite safe, neither safe nor unsafe, unsafe

- At home by yourself during the day?
- At home by yourself after dark?
- Walking in your local area alone during the day?
- Walking in your local area alone after dark?

14. Council's strategic direction is to enable Litchfield to be the best place to live in the Top End. How well do you think Council is contributing to this? Very good, good, average, not good, poor

15. Council aims to keep residents up to date with local issues, projects and events. How well is Council doing this?

Very good, good, average, not good, poor

16. How would you like to receive information about what Council is doing?

- a. Website
- b. Social media (Facebook)
- c. Email
- d. Advertising
- e. Radio
- f. Posters on community noticeboards
- g. Other, please comment

17. Overall, how would you rate Council's performance?

Very good, good, average, not good, poor

Thank you for participating in Council's survey. Please provide your name and contact details to go into the draw to win one of four \$250 vouchers for fuel.

Name:

Email:

Phone number:

*privacy clause about using their personal details for this purpose only.