



LITCHFIELD SHIRE COUNCIL COMMUNITY SURVEY 2008

LITCHFIELD COUNCIL



COMMUNITY EFFORT
IS ESSENTIAL

FINAL REPORT

Prepared by

Michels Warren Munday

October 2008

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
 1. INTRODUCTION	
1.1 BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES	5
1.2 SURVEY RESPONSE.....	5
1.3 ROUNDING.....	5
 2. ROLE AND PERFORMANCE OF LITCHFIELD SHIRE COUNCIL	
2.1 IMPORTANCE RATINGS.....	7
2.2 SATISFACTION RATINGS	9
2.3 IMPORTANCE V SATISFACTION	11
2.4 OPINIONS ABOUT LIVING IN LITCHFIELD SHIRE COUNCIL.....	12
2.5 WHAT PEOPLE LIKE MOST ABOUT LIVING IN LITCHFIELD SHIRE	17
2.6 WHAT PEOPLE LIKE LEAST ABOUT LIVING IN LITCHFIELD SHIRE	18
 3. FUTURE PRIORITIES AND ISSUES	
3.1 RATES	19
3.2 SWIMMING POOL.....	21
3.3 FUTURE PRIORITIES.....	23
3.4 MAJOR ISSUES FOR THE FUTURE	28
 4. COMMUNICATION	
4.1 CURRENT METHODS OF RECEIVING COMMUNICATION	29
4.2 PREFERRED METHODS OF RECEIVING COMMUNICATION.....	30
 5. DEMOGRAPHICS	
5.1 AGE	32
5.2 GENDER.....	33
5.3 LENGTH OF TIME AS RESIDENT OF LITCHFIELD SHIRE COUNCIL	34
5.4 LOCATION OF POST OFFICE BOX.....	35
 6. SURVEY RESPONSE	
APPENDIX 1: ADDITIONAL COMMENTS	
APPENDIX 2: ADDITIONAL SURVEY DATA	

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The strong rate of response to the Litchfield Community Survey, combined with the number of additional comments provided by respondents, indicates the high level of interest Litchfield Shire residents have in the plans, priorities and strategic direction of Litchfield Shire Council.

The survey results also demonstrate the need for better communication between the Litchfield Shire Council and the community. It is important that the Council report back to the community on the results of the survey.

Overall Satisfaction with Litchfield Shire Council

The results of the survey indicate that ratepayer satisfaction with the Litchfield Shire Council is average. While ratepayers enjoy living in the Litchfield Shire, they believe that they are not receiving the level of services they pay for.

The main issues people reported being dissatisfied with were lack of recycling facilities, waste management and domestic and feral animal management and control (particularly dogs). These issues received a lot of attention, particularly in the general comments section at the end of the survey.

People were generally satisfied with the recreation services, maintenance of public areas, parks and reserves, art and cultural facilities and litter control and street cleaning. Interestingly, there was a high rate of satisfaction for construction and maintenance of roads in the satisfaction section of the survey, however in other sections, there were a number of negative comments and responses regarding the lack of sealed roads and dangerous roads in the area.

Priorities for Litchfield Shire Council

According to the survey respondents, the areas and issues that should be a very high priority for the Litchfield Shire Council are keeping rates to a minimum, provision of recycling services, weed control and pest reduction, services and facilities for elderly and disabled, and domestic and feral animal management and control.

The areas that respondents believe should be a lower priority are an Olympic swimming pool for Litchfield Shire, provision of council-funded community events and sealing roads with additional funds from ratepayers. The low priority allocated to “sealing roads with additional funds from ratepayers” may not mean that respondents don’t want roads sealed, but that they don’t want to pay additional funds to have them sealed.

Value for Money

The survey respondents were generally very dissatisfied with the level of services for the rates they pay. There were many comments regarding the lack of services, however respondents were not willing to increase their rates for additional services. The main issue appears to be about the regular increase of rates without any corresponding increase to services.

Respondents seem to prefer the low frills approach, however they believe they are receiving minimal services but not paying minimal rates.

Opinions about Litchfield Shire, and Major Issues

The majority of survey respondents said they like the rural lifestyle and peace and quiet in Litchfield Shire, and they placed high importance on maintaining this. The major area of dissatisfaction was the lack of dog controls in the area. The major issues of concern were dogs and animal control, keeping rates to a minimum and rubbish and waste management.

Communication

Survey respondents currently receive information about Litchfield Shire Council by word of mouth, but would prefer to receive information by newsletter, the website and a newspaper column. This was followed by a preference to talk to Councillors at markets and shopping centres.

Overall, the respondents said they don't receive much information from Litchfield Shire Council. Increased communication with Litchfield Shire ratepayers about what services their rates are paying for, and general communication about issues, planning and projects, may improve satisfaction levels with Litchfield Shire Council.

1. INTRODUCTION

This report has been compiled by Michels Warren Munday, to report on the findings of the Litchfield Community Survey.

1.1 BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

The Litchfield Community Survey was mailed out on May 30th to Litchfield Shire ratepayers living in the Top End of the Northern Territory.

The purpose of the Litchfield Community Survey was to find out:

- what residents of the Litchfield Shire think is important in the area
- satisfaction with Council's services
- opinions on particular issues, such as an Olympic swimming pool in Litchfield Shire

The results of the survey are to guide the future activities, priorities and planning for the Litchfield Shire Council.

1.2 SURVEY RESPONSE

There was a high response rate for the Litchfield Community Survey, with a total of 1605 completed surveys received, or 22% of Litchfield Shire ratepayers. 84% of these responses were from people who are residents and ratepayers, 1% from ratepayers who are not residents of the area, and less than 1% were residents but not ratepayers. 14% didn't answer this question.

1.3 ROUNDING

In some cases, percentage totals do not total exactly 100 percent due to rounding.

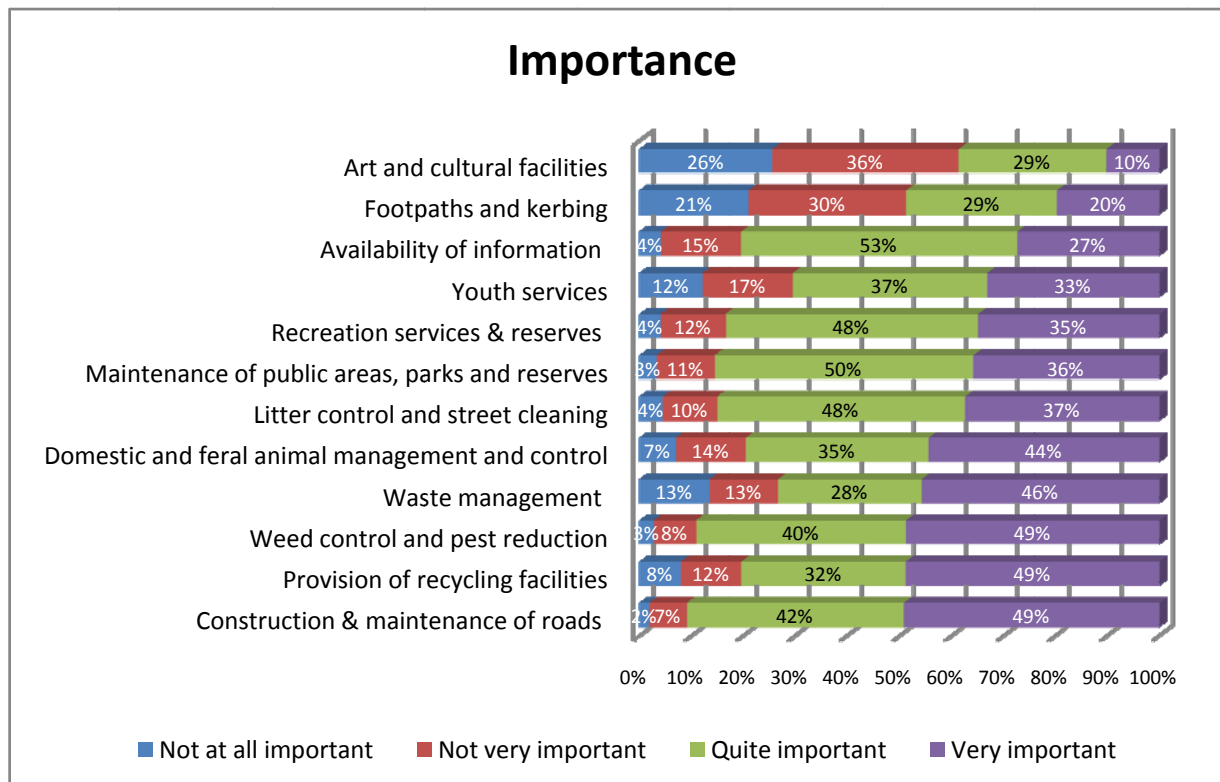
2. ROLE AND PERFORMANCE OF LITCHFIELD SHIRE COUNCIL

Respondents were asked to rate the level of importance of services and facilities in the Litchfield Shire area. They were also asked to rate their level of satisfaction with the delivery of these services and facilities. The services and facilities listed were:

- Construction and maintenance of roads (not including highways and main roads)
- Construction and maintenance of footpaths and kerbing
- Waste management (rubbish collection and disposal)
- Provision of recycling facilities
- Maintenance of public areas, parks and reserves
- Recreation services and reserves (eg Fred's Pass)
- Weed control and pest reduction
- Domestic and feral animal management and control
- Youth services
- Art and cultural facilities
- Litter control and street cleaning
- Availability of information on Council services, facilities and future activities

2.1 IMPORTANCE RATINGS

Respondents were asked to rate the importance to them of each of the services and facilities, on a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 was “not at all important” and 4 was “very important”.



The top five issues rated as being **very important** to residents were:

- Construction and maintenance of roads (49%)
- Provision of recycling facilities (49%)
- Weed control and pest reduction (49%)
- Waste management (rubbish collection and disposal) (46%)
- Domestic and feral animal management and control (44%)

There were ten areas where at least 27% of respondents considered a particular issue to be **very important**.

The top five issues residents rated as being **quite important** were:

- Availability of information on Council services, facilities and future activities (53%)
- Maintenance of public areas, parks and reserves (50%)
- Recreation services and reserves (eg Fred's Pass) (48%)
- Litter control and street cleaning (48%)
- Construction and maintenance of roads (42%)

The two main issues that were rated as either **quite important** or **very important** were construction and maintenance of roads (91%) and weed control and pest reduction (89%)

At the other end of the scale, issues that were rated as **not at all important** were:

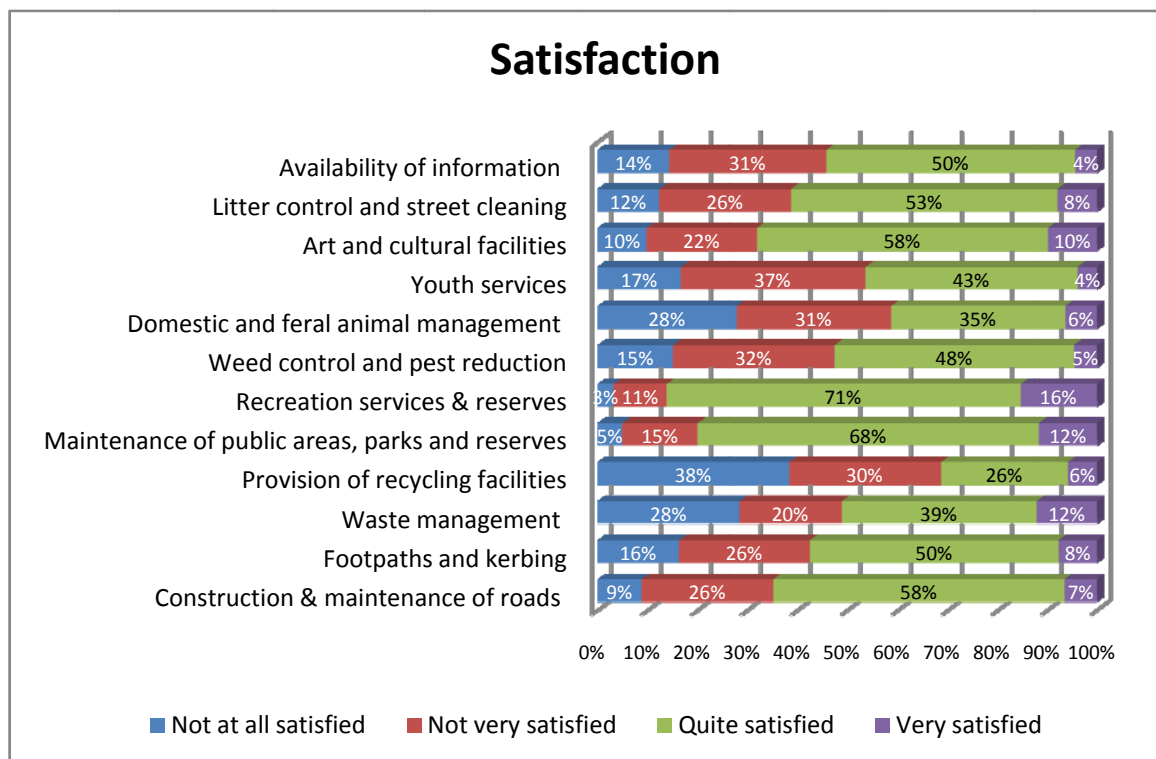
- Art and cultural facilities (26%)
- Construction and maintenance of footpaths and kerbing (21%)

Summary

- Respondents view the construction and maintenance of roads to be a very important issue to them, followed closely by provision of recycling facilities, weed control and pest reduction, waste management and domestic and feral animal management and control.
- Areas that received a lower rating of importance were provision of art and cultural facilities, and construction and maintenance of footpaths and kerbing.
- Far more areas were considered to be quite important or very important, than those considered to be not very important or not at all important.

2.2 SATISFACTION RATINGS

Respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with each of the services and facilities, on a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 was “not at all satisfied” and 4 was “very satisfied”.



Overall, there was not a high rate of response for “very satisfied” in any areas, however the three areas that received the highest level of satisfaction (**very satisfied**) were:

- Recreation services and reserves (eg Fred’s Pass) (16%)
- Maintenance of public areas, parks and reserves (12%)
- Waste management (rubbish collection and disposal) (12%)

The top five areas where people reported being **quite satisfied** were:

- Recreation services and reserves (eg Fred’s Pass) (71%)
- Maintenance of public areas, parks and reserves (68%)
- Construction of maintenance and roads (58%)
- Art and cultural facilities (58%)
- Litter control and street cleaning (53%)

At the other end of the scale, issues where people reported being **not at all satisfied** were:

- Provision of recycling facilities (38%)
- Waste management (rubbish collection and disposal) (28%)
- Domestic and feral animal management and control (28%)

And issues where people reported being **not very satisfied** were:

- Youth services (37%)
- Weed control and pest reduction (32%)
- Availability of information on Council services, facilities and future activities (31%)
- Domestic and feral animal management and control (31%)
- Provision of recycling facilities (30%)

The two main issues where people were **not at all satisfied** or **not very satisfied** were:

- Provision of recycling facilities (68%)
- Domestic and feral animal management and control (59%)

Summary

- Two areas that received a very high rate of response for “quite satisfied” were the recreation services and reserves, and maintenance of public areas, parks and reserves. Construction and maintenance of roads, and art and cultural facilities are also areas where more than half of the respondents report being quite satisfied.
- The two main areas that may need further attention by Litchfield Shire Council, as identified by respondents, are provision of recycling facilities and domestic and feral animal management and control.
- There was not a high rate of response for “very satisfied” for any areas listed.

2.3 IMPORTANCE V SATISFACTION

The ratings for importance and for satisfaction have been cross-referenced to assess how satisfied respondents are with areas they believe are important.

Looking at the top five areas that respondents rated as **very important**, four areas received relatively high rates of dissatisfaction.

- Almost half (49%) the respondents rated ***provision of recycling facilities*** as **very important**, however 68% said they were either **not very satisfied** or **not at all satisfied** with provision of recycling facilities.
- Almost half (48%) the respondents rated ***weed control and pest reduction*** as **very important**, however 47% stated that they were either **not very satisfied** or **not at all satisfied** with weed control and pest reduction.
- 46% said ***waste management (rubbish collection and disposal)*** was **very important**, however 48% said they were either **not very satisfied** or **not at all satisfied** with waste management.
- 44% said ***domestic and feral animal management and control*** was **very important**, but 59% said they were either **not very satisfied** or **not at all satisfied** with domestic and feral animal management and control.

Construction and maintenance of roads was rated as **very important** by almost half the respondents (49%), and only 9% were **not at all satisfied**. 26% were **not very satisfied**.

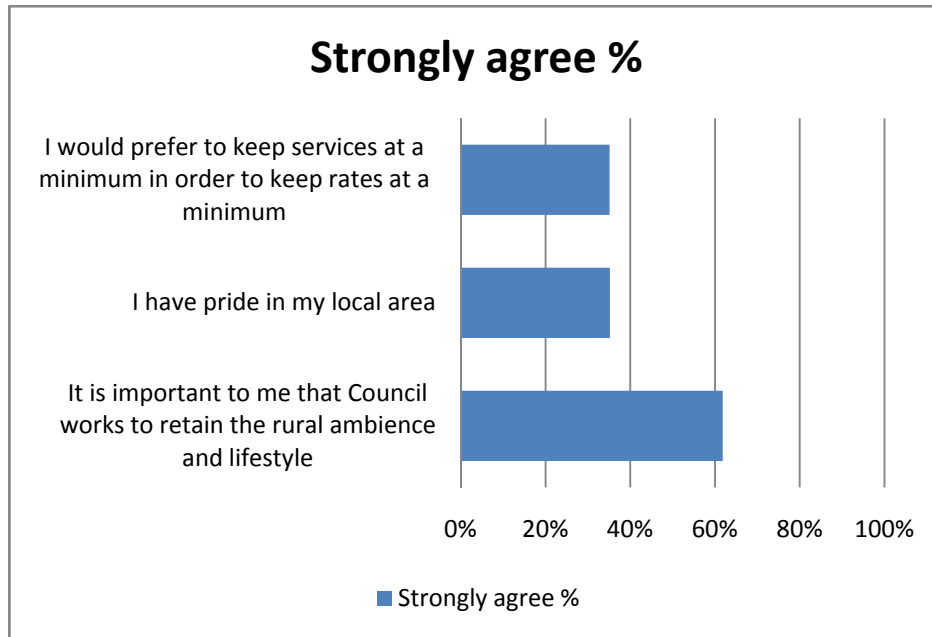
Summary

- Dissatisfaction levels are high for four of the top five areas of importance (provision of recycling facilities, waste management, domestic and feral animal management and control, and weed control and pest reduction). These areas could be considered priority areas for attention by the Litchfield Shire Council.
- Construction and maintenance of roads is an area of importance that respondents are quite satisfied with.

2.4 OPINIONS ABOUT LIVING IN LITCHFIELD SHIRE

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with 20 statements, with a rating of 1 to 4, where 1 is “strongly disagree” and 4 is “strongly agree”. The statements listed were:

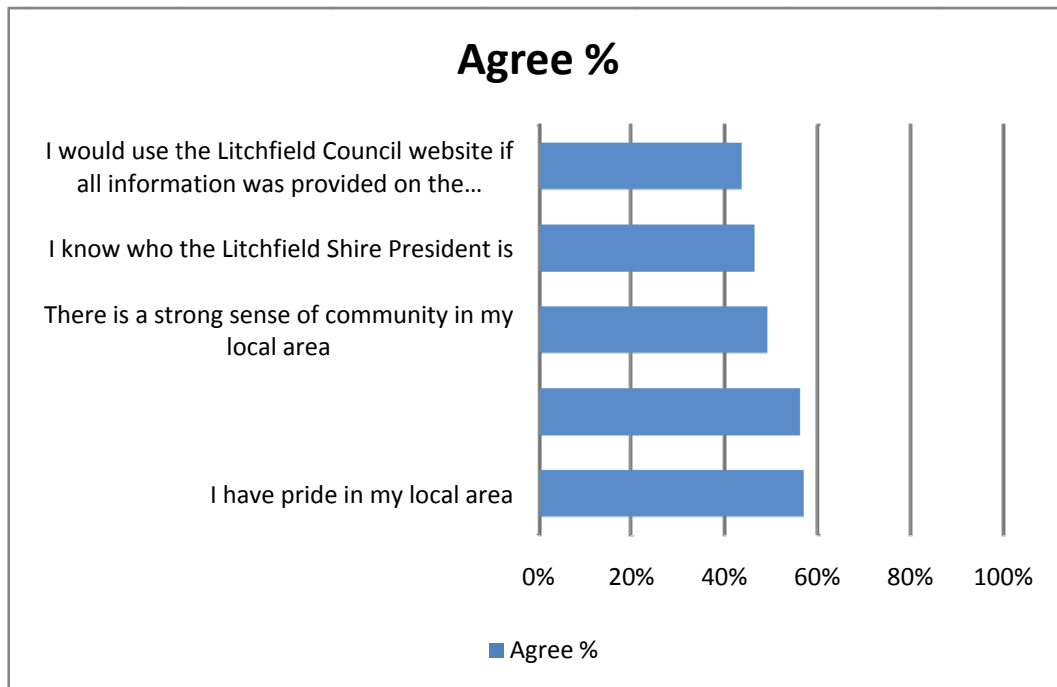
- There is a strong sense of community in my local area
- Waste management and garbage disposal is dealt with effectively by Litchfield Council
- I would prefer to keep services at a minimum in order to keep rates at a minimum
- Overall, I am satisfied with the level of services and facilities provided by Litchfield Council
- Litchfield Council keeps residents well informed about the services and benefits it provides
- Litchfield Council delivers good value for money
- I believe the Council operates in a way that is honest and transparent
- A newspaper column or monthly newsletter on Council activities and plans would be useful to me
- I would use the Litchfield Council website if all information was provided on the website
- I would be prepared to pay higher rates to receive additional services
- I am aware of the services and facilities the Litchfield Council currently provides
- I have pride in my local area
- I believe Litchfield Council is community driven
- I believe Litchfield Council is progressive and proactive
- I would like more council-funded events in the area
- I know who the Litchfield Shire President is
- I would like the opportunity to talk to Councillors on a regular basis (eg at shopping centres)
- It is important to me that Council works to retain the rural ambience and lifestyle



The top three statements that people **strongly agreed** with were:

- It is important to me that Council works to retain the rural ambience and lifestyle (62%)
- I have pride in my local area (35%)
- I would prefer to keep services to a minimum in order to keep rates at a minimum (35%)

Other statements did not receive a high rate of response for “strongly agreed”, therefore only the top three statements have been included here.

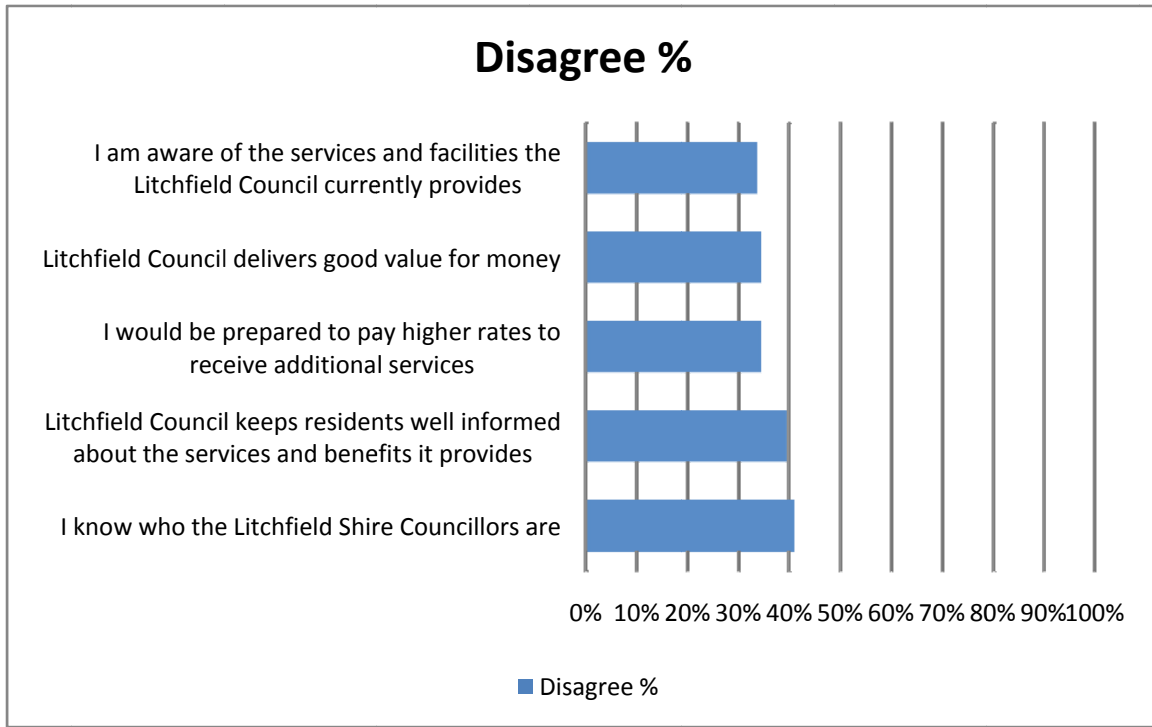


The top five statements that people **agreed** with were:

- I have pride in my local area (57%)
- A newspaper column or monthly newsletter on Council activities and plans would be useful to me (56%)
- There is a strong sense of community in my local area (49%)
- I know who the Litchfield Shire President is (46%)
- I would use the Litchfield Council website if all information was provided on the website (44%)

There was not a high rate of response for “strongly disagree”. The top statement that people **strongly disagreed** with was:

- I would be prepared to pay higher rates to receive additional services (32%)



The top five statements that people **disagreed** with were:

- I know who the Litchfield Shire Councillors are (41%)
- Litchfield Council keeps residents well informed about the services and benefits it provides (39%)
- I would be prepared to pay higher rates to receive additional services (34%)
- Litchfield Council delivers good value for money (34%)
- I am aware of the services and facilities the Litchfield Council currently provides (34%)

Summary

- Respondents see the rural ambience and lifestyle in Litchfield Shire as being very important, and believe Council should ensure this is maintained.
- Respondents would like to receive a monthly newsletter or see a newspaper column so they can find out more about Council activities and plans.
- The Litchfield Council website would be used by a good portion of the population if information was provided on the website.
- People feel strongly against paying higher rates for additional services. Responses in other areas of the survey indicate there is dissatisfaction with the level of rates when considering the level of services provided. They are also not happy with the repeated increases in rates, without any increase in services.
- Respondents don't believe that Litchfield Shire Council keeps them well informed, and they also indicated that they are not aware of the services and facilities that the Council provides. This area is explored further in the Communication section.

2.5 WHAT PEOPLE LIKE MOST ABOUT LIVING IN LITCHFIELD SHIRE

When asked what they liked **most** about living in Litchfield Shire, the majority of respondents reported that they liked the rural lifestyle and rural environment. This was followed closely by peace and quiet, and space. Privacy and community spirit, large blocks, and freedom were also common responses. The following comments are an indication of the typical responses

- *We like living in a rural setting with larger blocks of land*
- *Sense of community, access to bushland for walking, recreation area (Fred`s Pass), lifestyle*
- *The rural lifestyle - peace and quiet and friendly*
- *The lifestyle/ freedom/ space/ ambience/ community feel*
- *A bit of room to move. Peace and quiet of rural living*
- *The `mind your own business` attitude of most people*
- *Rural atmosphere while residing close to city facilities*
- *Proximity to all serviced facilities*
- *Peaceful*
- *Natural environment*
- *Size of rural block / property*
- *Quiet*
- *Freedom, not over regulated*
- *Peace and privacy*
- *Space, rural living, relatively easy access to larger centres eg Palmerston, Coolalinga*
- *Space, trees and fresh air*
- *Rural lifestyle - don't change that*
- *Space - rural lifestyle. Sense of community*

2.6 WHAT PEOPLE LIKE LEAST ABOUT LIVING IN LITCHFIELD SHIRE

When people were asked what they liked **least** about living in Litchfield Shire, the most frequent responses were about dogs, the lack of dog controls, barking dogs, owners who don't control their dogs, and dangerous dogs. This was followed by noise from "hoons" in cars, motorbikes and quad bikes, limited or lack of services, the poor condition of roads, no recycling, no rubbish collection, lack of public transport, no footpaths or bike paths and increasing costs of fuel.

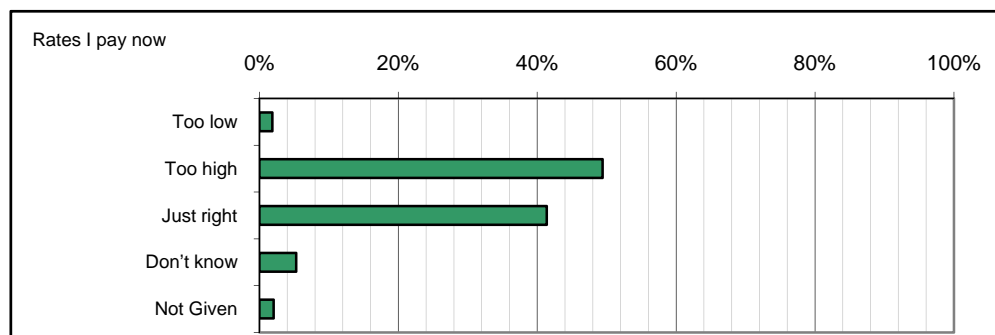
The following is a selection of responses:

- *Barking dogs, quad bikes and mini bikes that are unregistered, dogs chasing/attacking you*
- *Complete lack of laws re dogs/noisy neighbours and lack of road maintenance*
- *Becoming like city life - too many rules and regulations*
- *Bush fires*
- *Enforced increase in bureaucracy and services which will mean increased rates for services that will not be used*
- *Having to fight the Council to keep our road usable in the wet season*
- *High rates for what I see as limited services. I wouldn't mind seeing the percentage of rates to services*
- *increasing number of sub divisions; no water management eg [increasing number of] bores; rising rates, no increased services*
- *Not enough recycling facilities*
- *DOGS - loose on street or racing up to fence when walking on roads*
- *Roaming dogs - other people's dogs roaming free. Nobody - shire, police or owners won't do anything unless someone is hurt*
- *The mongrel dogs*
- *Hoons driving around early hours of the morning*
- *Not enough service centres (shops)*
- *Roads and access to my property*
- *Possibility of soaring rates*

3. FUTURE PRIORITIES AND ISSUES

3.1 RATES

There were a number of questions where the issue of rates and services was raised. The main question relating to this issue asked respondents whether they think the Litchfield Council rates they pay are too low, too high, just right, or don't know. The graph and table below illustrate the results.



Too low	30	2%
Too high	793	49%
Just right	664	41%
Don't know	85	5%
Not Given	33	2%
	1605	100%

Almost half the respondents (49%) think the Litchfield Council rates they pay now are too high, while 41% said they think they are just right. 5% didn't know and 2% said they were too low.

Many respondents who said they thought the rates were **too high** wrote additional comments, some of which are included below:

- *For the services we receive!*
- *For the services I receive, it's too high*
- *Too high - up 68% since 2001*
- *For what services (NIL) we receive*
- *For nothing*
- *What do we get?*
- *Because I don't get any services at all*
- *The reason why I feel the rates are too high is because I don't see any benefits (value for money) for what I pay. I feel like I've been progressively paying more rates over the years but not receiving anything significantly more for that.*

At question three (3iii), 68% **either agreed or strongly agreed** that they would prefer to keep services to a minimum in order to keep rates at a minimum. Additional comments were often written, with a sample provided below:

- *Services are minimal not so rates*
- *We already have minimum services*
- *What services do we get now for the rates we pay!*
- *Our rates are not minimal! But service IS*
- *Too late, they've rocketed*
- *Rates have gone up every year for the 10 years I have lived here and I don't see any extra services for those increases. I would actually be happy to pay more rates for great services*

At question three (3x), 66% **either disagreed or strongly disagreed** that they would be prepared to pay higher rates to receive additional services.

Question four asked respondents to indicate priority the Council should give to keeping council services and rates to a minimum. **74%** said this should be either a **very high or high priority**.

Summary

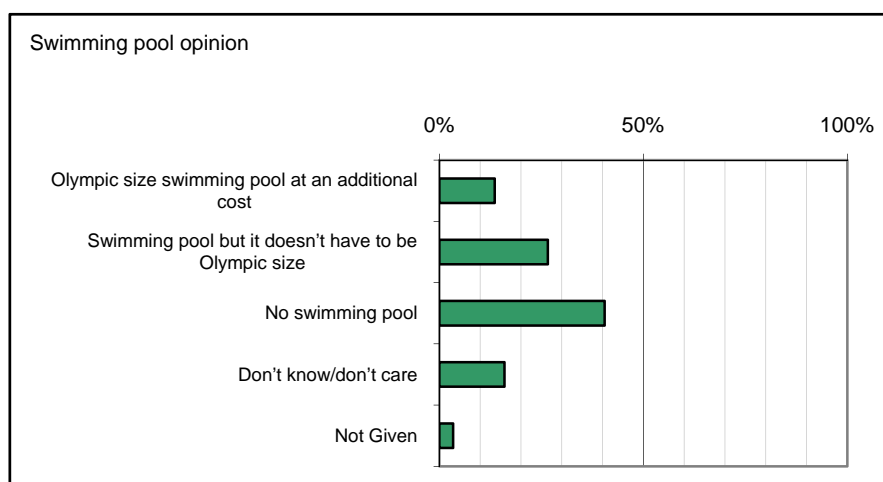
- In general, the responses indicate that Litchfield Shire residents don't feel they are getting value for money for their rates.
- Many of the additional comments indicate that respondents feel they are paying rates to receive minimal or no services.
- While people would like to keep rates to a minimum, they also believe that the level of services should be in line with the rates they pay.
- A number of respondents are dissatisfied with regular increases in rates without any perceived corresponding increase to services.
- It may be possible to reduce this negativity by communicating to ratepayers about the services the Litchfield Council provides to residents, and how much is spent on these services.

3.2 SWIMMING POOL

Respondents were asked about their opinion of a swimming pool for Litchfield Shire, with four options:

- a) I would like an Olympic size swimming pool at an additional cost to ratepayers (ongoing costs of at least \$400 000 p/a – as at 2007)
- b) I would like a swimming pool at an additional cost to ratepayers, but it doesn't have to be Olympic size
- c) I don't want a swimming pool for Litchfield Shire
- d) Don't know/don't care

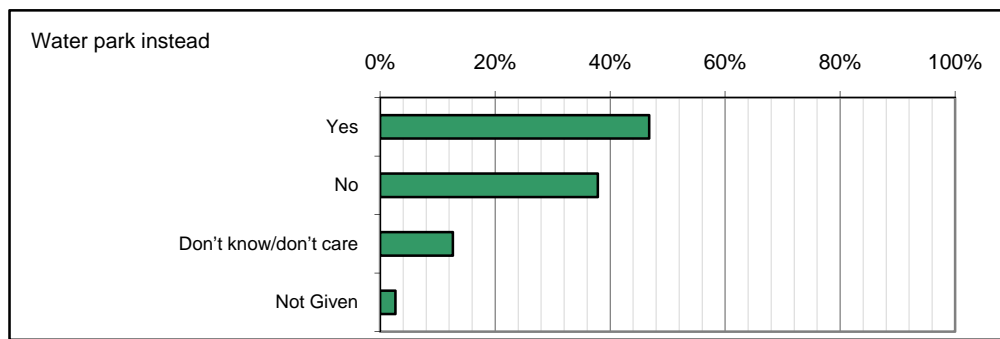
The results are shown in the graph and table below.



I would like an Olympic size swimming pool at an additional cost to ratepayers	218	14%
I would like a swimming pool at an additional cost to ratepayers, but it doesn't have to be Olympic size	427	27%
I don't want a swimming pool for Litchfield Shire	650	40%
Don't know/don't care	256	16%
Not Given	54	3%
	1605	100%

40% of respondents said they did not want a swimming pool for Litchfield Shire. 27% said they would like a swimming pool at an additional cost to ratepayers, but not necessarily an Olympic size swimming pool. 14% said they would like an Olympic size swimming pool. A further 16% said they didn't know or didn't care.

The following question asked respondents if they would prefer to have a water park which includes water play activities for children, as opposed to a swimming pool. As shown in the graph and table below, 47% of respondents said they would prefer a water park which includes water play activities for children, as opposed to a swimming pool. 38% said they would not prefer this option. 13% said they didn't know or didn't care. 3% said they didn't know or didn't care.



Yes	751	47%
No	608	38%
Don't know/don't care	203	13%
Not Given	43	3%
	1605	100%

Summary

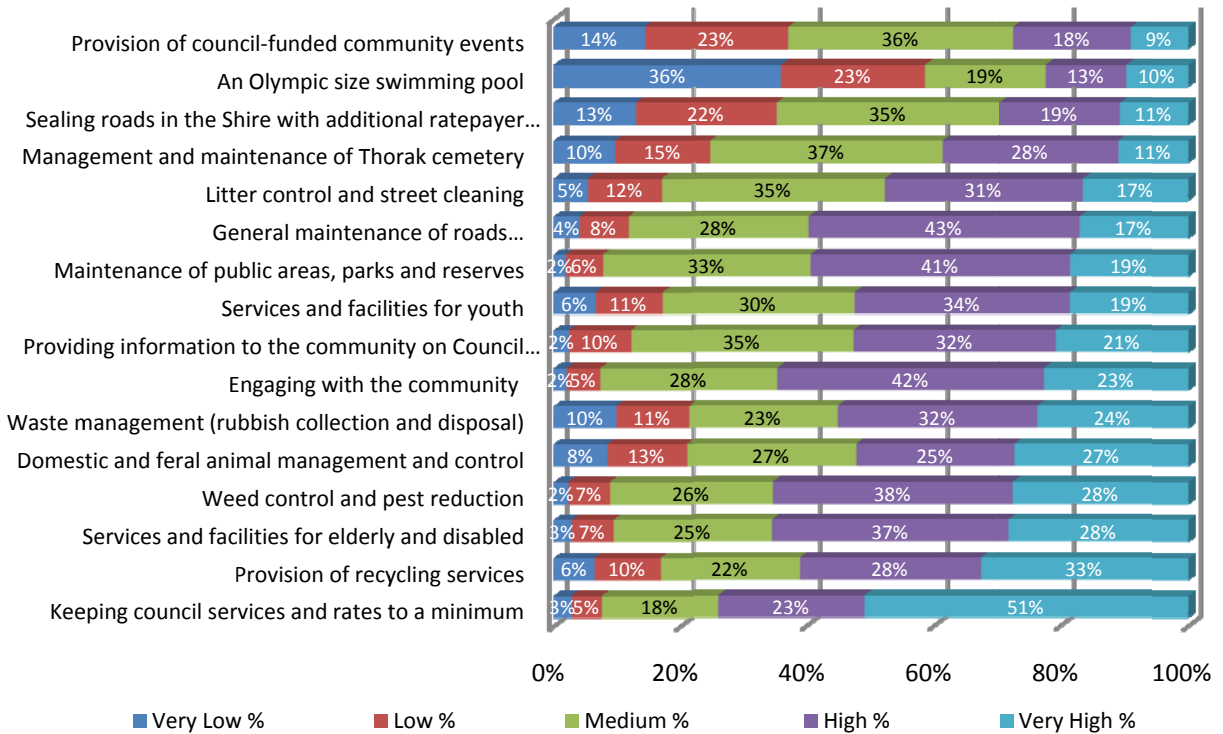
- In summary, an Olympic size swimming pool is not a popular option with ratepayers, with only a minority stating that they would like one.
- A swimming pool, but not necessarily Olympic size is also not very popular, with a little over a quarter of respondents saying they would like a swimming pool, but not necessarily Olympic size.
- A water park was quite popular, with almost half the respondents saying they would prefer a water park, however this doesn't mean that they *want* a water park, it just means that they would prefer one over a swimming pool if the choice was between a water park or a swimming pool.

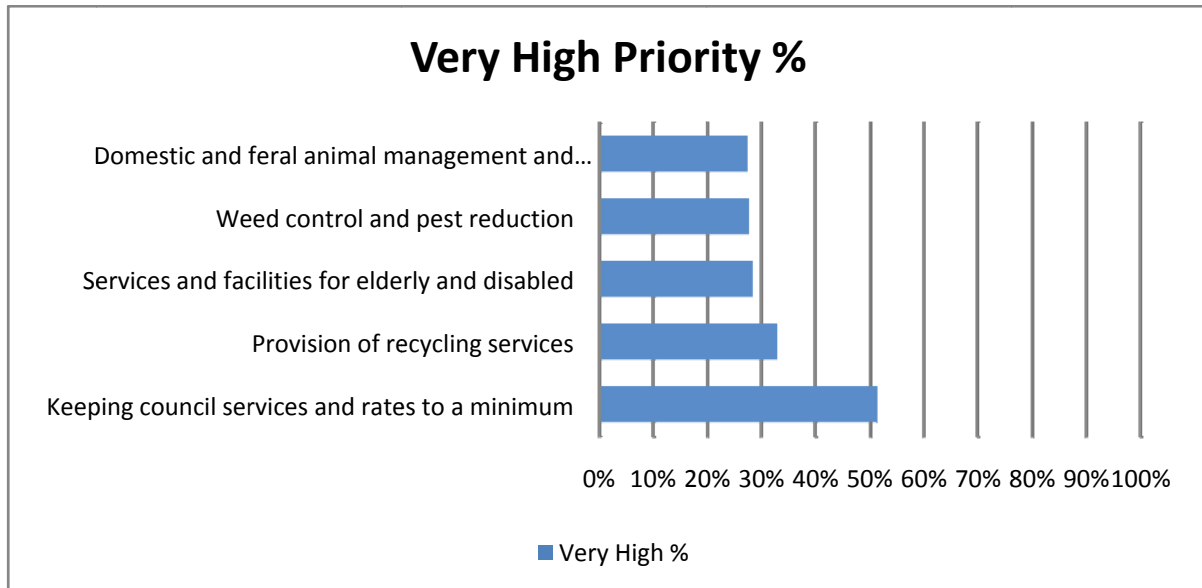
3.3 FUTURE PRIORITIES

Respondents were asked to rate the priority level they think Litchfield Council should allocate to 16 areas/issues, with options ranging from very low priority to very high priority. The issues listed are:

- An Olympic size swimming pool for Litchfield (ongoing annual cost \$400 000 as at 2007)
- Engaging with the community to hear concerns and to seek feedback
- Sealing roads throughout the Shire with additional ratepayer contributions
- General maintenance of roads, footpaths and kerbing (not including highways and main roads)
- Domestic and feral animal management and control
- Waste management (rubbish collection and disposal)
- Provision of recycling facilities
- Litter control and street cleaning
- Maintenance of public areas, parks and reserves
- Weed control and pest reduction
- Management and maintenance of Thorak cemetery
- Keeping council services and rates to a minimum
- Services and facilities for youth
- Services and facilities for elderly and disabled
- Provision of council-funded community events
- Providing information to the community on Council services, facilities and future activities.

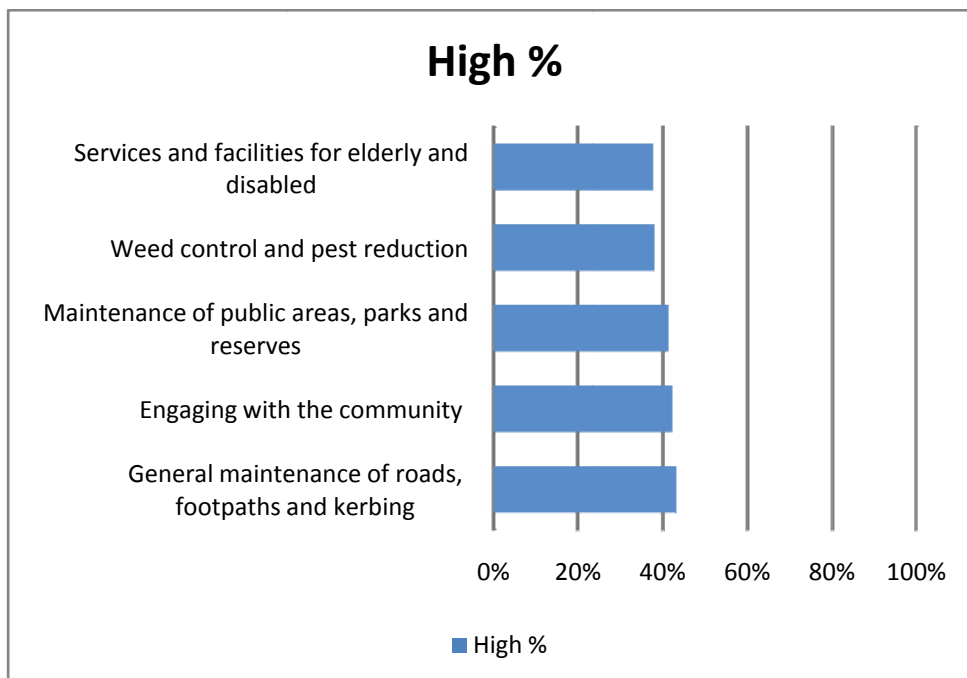
Priority %





The top five issues people think should be a **very high priority** for Litchfield Council are:

- Keeping Council services and rates to a minimum (51%)
- Provision of recycling services (33%)
- Services and facilities for elderly and disabled (28%)
- Weed control and pest reduction (28%)
- Domestic and feral animal management and control (27%)



The top five issues people think should be a **high priority** for Litchfield Council are:

- General maintenance of roads, footpaths and kerbing (not including highways and main roads) (43%)
- Engaging with the community to hear concerns and to seek feedback (42%)
- Maintenance of public areas, parks and reserves (41%)
- Weed control and pest reduction (38%)
- Services and facilities for elderly and disabled (37%)

There was not a high rate of response for “very low priority”. The main issue that people think should be a **very low priority** for Litchfield Council is:

- An Olympic size swimming pool for Litchfield (36%)

There was not a high rate of response for “low priority”. The three main issues that people think should be a **low priority** for Litchfield Council are:

- Provision of Council-funded community events (23%)
- An Olympic size swimming pool for Litchfield (23%)
- Sealing roads with additional ratepayer contributions (22%)

The low priority allocated to sealing roads with additional ratepayer contributions may be due to respondents being unwilling to pay additional contributions, rather than their lack of interest in having roads sealed. This observation is based on additional comments provided by respondents regarding this question. Some examples are provided below:

- Sealing roads through the Shire with additional ratepayer contributions – (additional ratepayer contributions crossed out and the following comment added) – *“already receive these funds”*
- *“Are these ratepayer contributions a once off for residents concerned or are you talking about increasing all round for every ratepayer in the shire? Agree with the former - not the latter”*
- *“With no contribution”* added
- Sealing roads throughout the Shire with additional ratepayer contributions – (additional crossed out and substituted with *“existing”* and a comment *“should already be done with existing rates.”*)

Summary

- Results indicate that Litchfield Council’s main future priority should be keeping services and rates to a minimum, however other responses throughout the survey indicate that the majority of respondents are more concerned with keeping rates to a minimum than keeping services to a minimum.
- Provision of recycling services is another high priority, not only indicated in this question, but in a number of other areas.
- Facilities and services for elderly and disabled rated high on the list of priorities. This may be due to the number of people living in Litchfield Shire over the age of 50. 46% of survey respondents are aged 50 or over, and may be considering their future at Litchfield Shire.
- While a 27% rating at very high priority is still a high rate of response and should be considered to be important (in the top five very high priority list), it is interesting to note that domestic and feral animal management was not the top priority given the extremely high rate of response regarding nuisance and feral dogs in other areas of the survey.
- An Olympic size swimming pool, and the provision of Council-funded community events are considered to be low priorities.

3.4 MAJOR ISSUES FOR THE FUTURE

The survey asked respondents what they think is a major concern for the Litchfield Shire overall. A wide range of issues were identified as being a major concern for the Litchfield Shire, however by far the most commonly mentioned issue related to dogs and animal control. This was followed by keeping rates to a minimum, rubbish and waste management, recycling, road maintenance, road sealing and safety, and maintaining the rural lifestyle. Other issues that were often mentioned were weed control, public transport, Government imposing city rules and regulations, and rates too high for services provided. The following is a selection of responses:

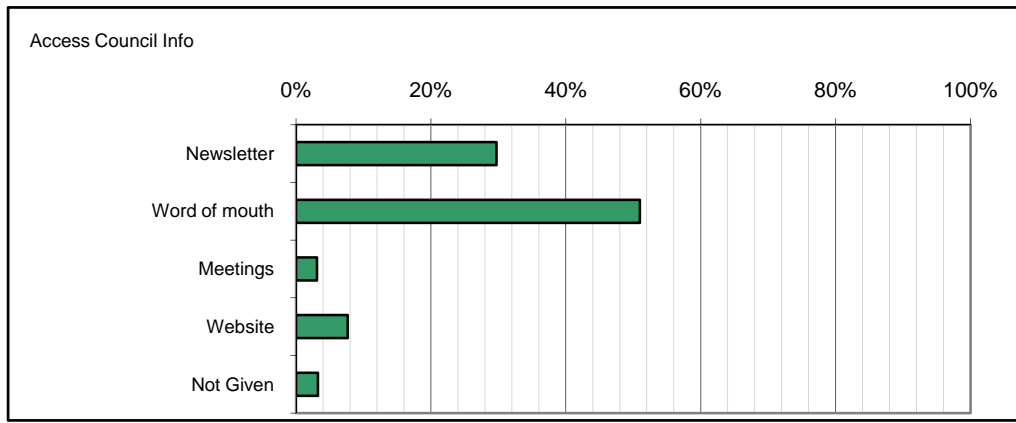
- *Keep rates low and maintain involvement for locals to have a say in the new "council" set-up.*
- *Maintaining the natural environment/Lessening our impact. Future zoning of land eg block sizes to normal residential size would have a major impact - subdivisions are yielding smaller blocks*
- *All the new Litchfield residents who want city services for rural rates - it's not feasible*
- *Transparent council, listen to residents, you take our money. Who are the councillors? Dog control, limits on the number of animals per block*
- *That we don't lose our identity and our way of life by over regulations. Remembering you can't legislate against insanity*
- *To keep rates low and keep big government out of our life*
- *Recycling needs addressing as an urgent need to assist in looking after the environment!*
- *Road maintenance, particularly access culverts.*
- *Rubbish tip availability in future*
- *WILD FIRES!!! Over-populated. Litter problem. Feral animals. Keeping rates down. No amalgamation in future*
- *Animal control/weeds/waste management*
- *Public transport - importance increasing as fuel rises*
- *WEEDS (marked increase in gamba and mission grass - the burnings have been too late - not enough emphasis on land management), feral animals, people who want freedom but no responsibility. Population and housing pressure raising land prices.*
- *Strongly suggest serious consideration of recycling facility. More community engagement/activities would be appreciated. Keep up road maintenance*
- *Increasing rates to service the area. Ratepayers already pay substantial amounts for very little in return*
- *Dog control, land clearing and too much usage of ground water*

4. COMMUNICATION

4.1 CURRENT METHODS OF RECEIVING COMMUNICATION

When asked how survey respondents currently access information about Council, word of mouth was the most common form of communication (51%), followed by newsletters (30%), website (8%), and meetings (3%). 29% selected “other”, with the most frequent “other” responses being “I don’t get any information”, the newspaper, Council office, or Gerry Wood.

The responses to this question don’t total 100% as respondents could select more than one answer.

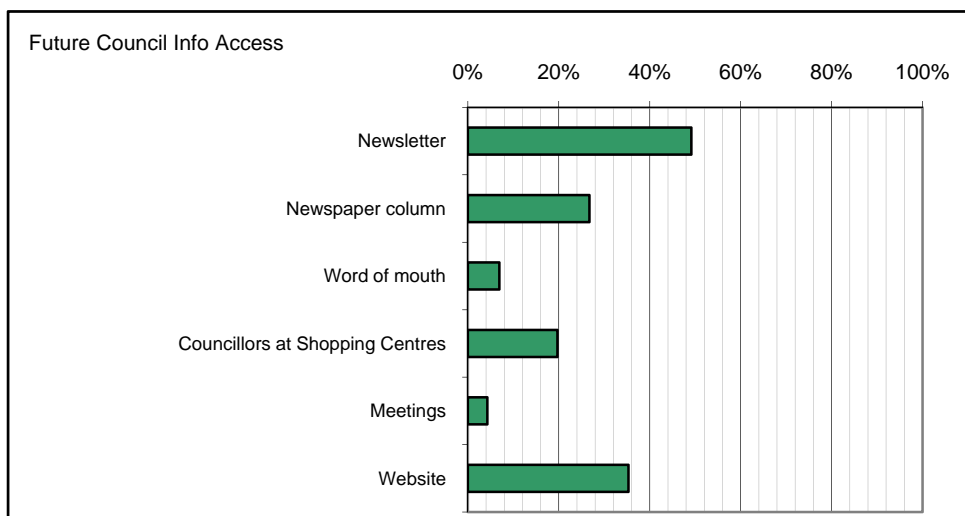


Newsletter	477	30%
Word of mouth	818	51%
Meetings	50	3%
Website	123	8%
Not Given	52	3%

4.2 PREFERRED METHODS OF RECEIVING COMMUNICATION

When respondents were asked how they would like to receive information about the Council in the future, almost half (49%) said a newsletter, 35% said the website, 27% said a newspaper column, 20% said Councillors at shopping centres, 7% selected word of mouth, and 4% said meetings. 5% selected other which included email, email newsletter, and noticeboards.

The responses to this question don't total 100% as respondents could select more than one answer.



Newsletter	789	49%
Newspaper column	429	27%
Word of mouth	111	7%
Councillors at Shopping Centres	316	20%
Meetings	69	4%
Website	567	35%

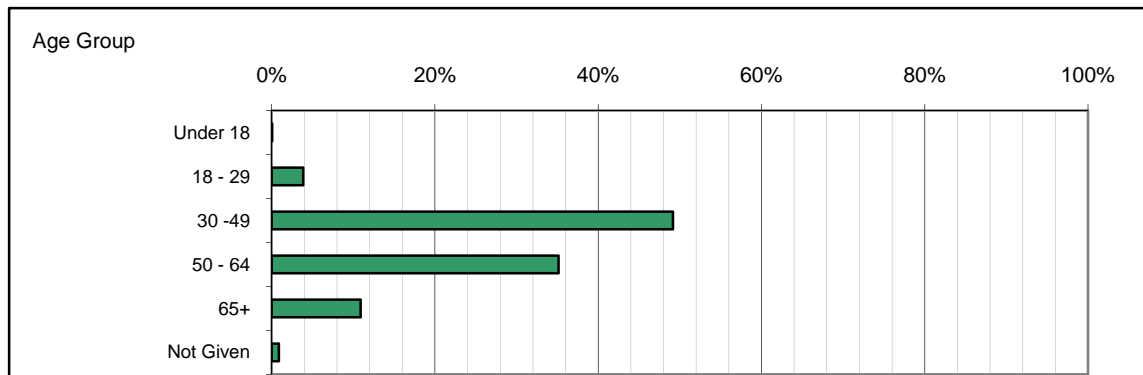
Summary

- Respondents don't believe that Litchfield Shire Council keeps them well informed, and they also indicated that they are not aware of the services and facilities that the Council provides. This result indicates the need for Council to improve communication with the community.
- Only 7% of respondents said they would like to receive information about Litchfield Shire Council by word of mouth. This is a low rate, given that half the respondents currently receive information about Litchfield Shire Council by word of mouth. This indicates that generally the survey respondents are not satisfied with the current method of receiving information (word of mouth), and would like to receive information in other ways.
- The most popular method people would like to receive information about Litchfield Shire Council is by newsletter. This is followed by the website and a newspaper column, and Councillors at shopping centres. A combination of these communication methods would satisfy respondents.

5. DEMOGRAPHICS

5.1 AGE

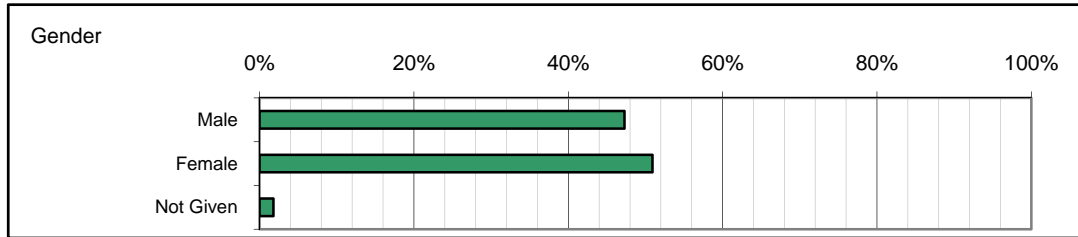
The graph and table below show the age breakdown of the survey respondents. Almost half the respondents are 30 – 49, and almost half are 50 or over.



Under 18	1	0%
18 - 29	62	4%
30 - 49	789	49%
50 - 64	564	35%
65+	175	11%
Not Given	14	1%
	1605	100%

5.2 GENDER

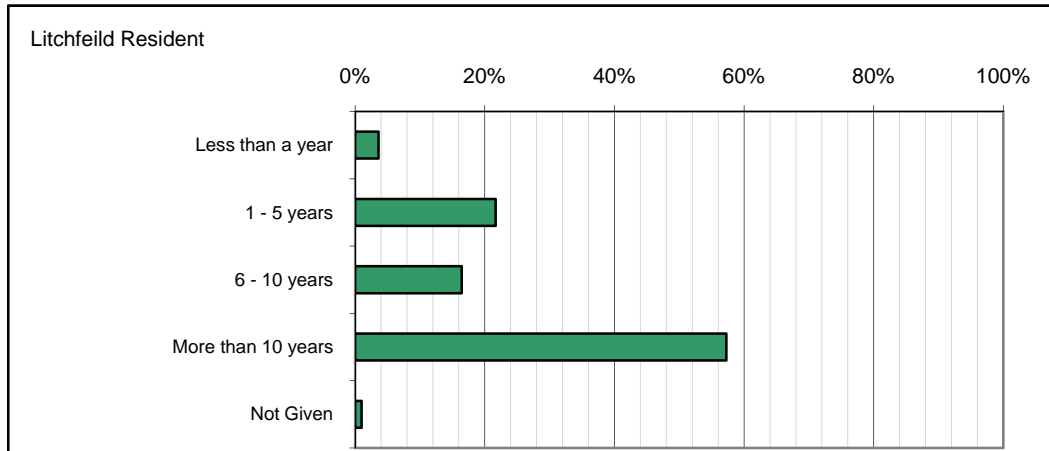
The split between male and female was almost even, with 47% male respondents and 51% female respondents.



Male	759	47%
Female	817	51%
Not Given	29	2%
	1605	100%

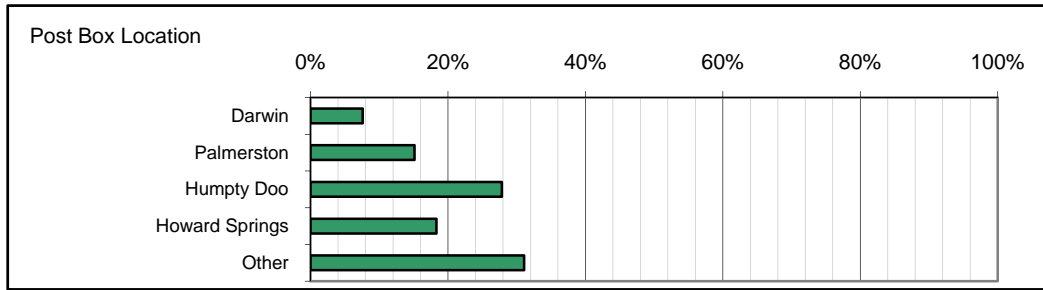
5.3 LENGTH OF TIME AS RESIDENT OF LITCHFIELD SHIRE

More than half the respondents (57%) have lived in the Litchfield Shire for more than 10 years. Almost a quarter (22%) have lived in the region for one to five years, and 16% have lived in the Shire for six to 10 years. 4% have lived in the region for less than a year.



Less than a year	58	4%
1 - 5 years	348	22%
6 - 10 years	264	16%
More than 10 years	919	57%
Not Given	16	1%
	1605	100%

5.4 LOCATION OF POST OFFICE BOX



Darwin	122	8%
Palmerston	243	15%
Humpty Doo	447	28%
Howard Springs	294	18%
Other	499	31%
	1605	100%

Over a quarter (28%) of respondents' post office boxes are located at Humpty Doo. 31% of respondents selected "other" for the location of their post office box. The main "other" responses were Winnellie (6% of total respondents), Virginia (5%), Noonamah (5%), Darwin River, Casuarina, Berrimah, and Berry Springs.

6. SURVEY RESPONSE

LEVELS OF IMPORTANCE

- 1. Construction and Maintenance of Roads (not including highways and main roads)**
 - 49% very important
 - 42% quite important
 - 7% not very important
 - 2% not at all important

- 2. Construction and maintenance of footpaths and kerbing**
 - 20% very important
 - 29% quite important
 - 30% not very important
 - 21% not at all important

- 3. Waste management (rubbish collection and disposal)**
 - 46% very important
 - 28% quite important
 - 13% not very important
 - 13% not at all important

- 4. Provision of recycling facilities**
 - 49% very important
 - 32% quite important
 - 12% not very important
 - 8% not at all important

- 5. Maintenance of public areas, parks and reserves**
 - 36% very important
 - 50% quite important
 - 11% not very important
 - 3% not at all important

- 6. Recreation services and reserves (eg Fred's Pass)**
 - 35% very important
 - 48% quite important
 - 12% not very important
 - 4% not at all important

7. Weed control and pest reduction

49% very important
40% quite important
8% not very important
3% not at all important

8. Domestic and feral animal management and control

44% very important
35% quite important
14% not very important
7% not at all important

9. Youth Services

33% very important
37% quite important
17% not very important
12% not at all important

10. Art and cultural facilities

10% very important
29% quite important
36% not very important
26 % not at all important

11. Litter control and street cleaning

37% very important
48% quite important
10% not very important
4% not at all important

12. Availability of information on Council services, facilities and future activities

27% very important
53% quite important
15% not very important
4% not at all important

LEVELS OF SATISFACTION**1. Construction and Maintenance of Roads (not including highways and main roads)**

7% very satisfied
58% quite satisfied
26% not very satisfied
9% not at all satisfied

2. Construction and maintenance of footpaths and kerbing

8% very satisfied
50% quite satisfied
26% not very satisfied
16% not at all satisfied

3. Waste management (rubbish collection and disposal)

12% very satisfied
39% quite satisfied
20% not very satisfied
28% not at all satisfied

4. Provision of recycling facilities

6% very satisfied
26% quite satisfied
30% not very satisfied
38% not at all satisfied

5. Maintenance of public areas, parks and reserves

12% very satisfied
68% quite satisfied
15% not very satisfied
5% not at all satisfied

6. Recreation services and reserves (eg Fred's Pass)

16% very satisfied
71% quite satisfied
11% not very satisfied
3% not at all satisfied

7. Weed control and pest reduction

5% very satisfied
48% quite satisfied
32% not very satisfied
15% not at all satisfied

8. Domestic and feral animal management and control

6% very satisfied
35% quite satisfied
31% not very satisfied
28% not at all satisfied

9. Youth Services

4% very satisfied
43% quite satisfied
37% not very satisfied
17% not at all satisfied

10. Art and cultural facilities

10% very satisfied
58% quite satisfied
22% not very satisfied
10% not at all satisfied

11. Litter control and street cleaning

8% very satisfied
53% quite satisfied
26% not very satisfied
12% not at all satisfied

12. Availability of information on Council services, facilities and future activities

4% very satisfied
50% quite satisfied
31% not very satisfied
14% not at all satisfied

LEVELS OF AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENTS

- 1. There is a strong sense of community in my local area**
 - 10% strongly agree
 - 49% agree
 - 20% neither agree nor disagree
 - 18% disagree
 - 4% strongly disagree

- 2. Waste management and garbage disposal is dealt with effectively by Litchfield Council**
 - 6% strongly agree
 - 40% agree
 - 12% neither agree nor disagree
 - 27% disagree
 - 17% strongly disagree

- 3. I would prefer to keep services to a minimum in order to keep rates at a minimum**
 - 35% strongly agree
 - 33% agree
 - 7% neither agree nor disagree
 - 21% disagree
 - 4% strongly disagree

- 4. Overall, I am satisfied with the level of services and facilities provided by Litchfield Council**
 - 12% strongly agree
 - 43% agree
 - 10% neither agree nor disagree
 - 27% disagree
 - 9% strongly disagree

- 5. Litchfield Council keeps residents well informed about the services and benefits it provides**
 - 4% strongly agree
 - 23% agree
 - 21% neither agree nor disagree
 - 39% disagree
 - 13% strongly disagree

- 6. Litchfield Council delivers good value for money**
4% strongly agree
25% agree
23% neither agree nor disagree
34% disagree
13% strongly disagree
- 7. I believe the Council operates in a way that is honest and transparent**
5% strongly agree
26% agree
50% neither agree nor disagree
13% disagree
6% strongly disagree
- 8. A newspaper column or monthly newsletter on Council activities and plans would be useful to me**
18% strongly agree
56% agree
14% neither agree nor disagree
8% disagree
3% strongly disagree
- 9. I would use the Litchfield Council website if all information was provided on the website**
13% strongly agree
44% agree
23% neither agree nor disagree
16% disagree
5% strongly disagree
- 10. I would be prepared to pay higher rates to receive additional services**
3% strongly agree
21% agree
9% neither agree nor disagree
34% disagree
32% strongly disagree

11. I am aware of the services and facilities the Litchfield Council currently provides

- 3% strongly agree
- 42% agree
- 15% neither agree nor disagree
- 34% disagree
- 6% strongly disagree

12. I have pride in my local area

- 35% strongly agree
- 57% agree
- 6% neither agree nor disagree
- 2% disagree
- 0% strongly disagree

13. I believe Litchfield Council is community driven

- 8% strongly agree
- 35% agree
- 34% neither agree nor disagree
- 17% disagree
- 6% strongly disagree

14. I believe Litchfield Council is progressive and proactive

- 4% strongly agree
- 25% agree
- 43% neither agree nor disagree
- 22% disagree
- 7% strongly disagree

15. I would like more Council-funded community events in the area

- 6% strongly agree
- 33% agree
- 32% neither agree nor disagree
- 20% disagree
- 8% strongly disagree

16. I know who the Litchfield Shire Councillors are

- 3% strongly agree
- 24% agree
- 14% neither agree nor disagree
- 41% disagree

19% strongly disagree

17. I know who the Litchfield Shire President is

21% strongly agree

46% agree

7% neither agree nor disagree

15% disagree

10% strongly disagree

18. I would like the opportunity to talk to Councillors on a regular basis (eg shopping centres)

8% strongly agree

41% agree

35 % neither agree nor disagree

13% disagree

3% strongly disagree

19. It is important to me that Council works to retain the rural ambience and lifestyle

62% strongly agree

33% agree

3% neither agree nor disagree

1% disagree

1% strongly disagree

PRIORITIES

1. **An Olympic size swimming pool for Litchfield (ongoing annual cost \$400 000 – as at 2007)**
 - 10% very high priority
 - 13% high priority
 - 19% medium priority
 - 23% low priority
 - 36% very low priority

2. **Engaging with the community to hear concerns and to seek feedback**
 - 23% very high priority
 - 42% high priority
 - 28% medium priority
 - 5% low priority
 - 2% very low priority

3. **Sealing roads throughout the Shire with additional ratepayer contributions**
 - 11% very high priority
 - 19% high priority
 - 35% medium priority
 - 22% low priority
 - 13% very low priority

4. **General maintenance of roads, footpaths and kerbing (not including highways and main roads)**
 - 17% very high priority
 - 43% high priority
 - 28% medium priority
 - 8% low priority
 - 4% very low priority

5. **Domestic and feral animal management and control**
 - 27% very high priority
 - 25% high priority
 - 27% medium priority
 - 13% low priority
 - 8% very low priority

6. Waste management (rubbish collection and disposal)

24% very high priority
32% high priority
23% medium priority
11% low priority
10% very low priority

7. Provision of recycling services

33% very high priority
28% high priority
22% medium priority
10% low priority
6% very low priority

8. Litter control and street cleaning

17% very high priority
31% high priority
35% medium priority
12% low priority
5% very low priority

9. Maintenance of public areas, parks and reserves

19% very high priority
41% high priority
33% medium priority
6% low priority
2% very low priority

10. Weed control and pest reduction

28% very high priority
38% high priority
26% medium priority
7% low priority
2% very low priority

11. Management and maintenance of Thorak cemetery

- 11% very high priority
- 28% high priority
- 37% medium priority
- 15% low priority
- 10% very low priority

12. Keeping council services and rates to a minimum

- 51% very high priority
- 23% high priority
- 18% medium priority
- 5% low priority
- 3% very low priority

13. Services and facilities for youth

- 19% very high priority
- 34% high priority
- 30% medium priority
- 11% low priority
- 6% very low priority

14. Services and facilities for elderly and disabled

- 28% very high priority
- 37% high priority
- 25% medium priority
- 7% low priority
- 3% very low priority

15. Provision of Council-funded community events

- 9% very high priority
- 18% high priority
- 36% medium priority
- 23% low priority
- 14% very low priority

16. Providing information to the community on Council services, facilities and future activities

- 21% very high priority
- 32% high priority
- 35% medium priority
- 10% low priority
- 2% very low priority

What is your opinion of a swimming pool for Litchfield Shire?

- I would like an Olympic size swimming pool at an additional cost to ratepayers (ongoing costs of at least \$400 000 p/a – as at 2007) 14%
- I would like a swimming pool at an additional cost to ratepayers, but it doesn't have to be Olympic size 27%
- I don't want a swimming pool for Litchfield Shire 40%
- Don't know/don't care 16%

Would you prefer to have a water park over a swimming pool?

- Yes 47%
- No 38%
- Don't know/Don't care 13%

I think the Litchfield Council rates I pay now are:

- Too high 49%
- Too low 2%
- Just right 41%
- Don't know 5%

GENERAL COMMENTS

The majority of respondents included comments in the section provided at the end of the survey. Comments varied widely, but mostly reflect issues raised in other areas of the survey. A random selection of comments is included below:

- *I like the rubbish transfer station, but why be charged if you want to pick something that someone has dumped, eg \$5 - for a plastic drum, etc. Why compact the tip?!? Why \$600+ for rates, no rubbish removal, my road frontage is less than 30mt.*
- *Pool or water park should be in village centre, ie around shops, Police Station, use Government land before real estate agents sell it.*
- *More bike paths along the main roads*
- *More regular refresh of Girraween Road line markings*
- *I believe that a bicycle path joining Coolalinga to Palmerston/Darwin is becoming a major need as more residents try to save money on fuel and reduce carbon emissions from vehicles. Animal bi-laws needed to stop irresponsible ownership and allow victims some form of regulation/response rather than police involvement with attacks. A swimming pool or water park for residents to meet and recreate*
- *Our rates ONLY cover rubbish picked up outside the front of our block and a slasher maybe twice a year! That's all!*
- *Weed spraying before seed heads form and not when its very windy.*
- *Be very clear and prepared for environmental changes, social changes including increasing redevelopment and increasing numbers of extended family living on one parcel of land. Explore how peer pressure can tackle some of the tough tasks/issues ahead such as water use (waste), waste disposal, recycling*
- *Traffic calming initiatives in the Howard Springs centre - hooning and dangerous driving is an issue especially considering the school is there - kids and elderly are especially at risk when crossing from the supermarket to the bakery.*
- *PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE start to manage our domestic waste appropriately! Anyone in the rural area should be able to dispose of their own "wet and green" waste, eg veggie scraps, garden waste on their blocks. Cardboard can also be composted. Leaving glass, plastic and metal of which most is recyclable. The remaining items of garbage would be a very small percentage. WE NEED TO CATCH UP TO THE REST OF AUSTRALIA! WE ARE ONLY A SMALL POPULATION! A GOOD EDUCATION AND MANAGEMENT PROGRAM COULD REALLY MAKE A HUGE DIFFERENCE! DON'T PUT YOUR HEADS IN THE SAND - THIS IS A REAL ISSUE. WE NEED TO APPROPRIATELY MANAGE AS THE POPULATION KEEPS GROWING!*

- *I think Gerry Wood is the only person who goes out of his way to provide information to us Residents. eg side of road and shopping centres also take for example the bore meetings. He is approachable and honest. That's what I want from Councillors*
- *Although rural living is much more private and pleasant without the interference of the city's louts, the cost is rising daily. The escalating cost must eventually force many senior citizens to seek more convenient and less costly surroundings. Fuel cost is the largest problem, reflecting into everything else.*
- *Consider having all dogs registered with the council and micro-chipped and make owners accountable for their pets*
- *Comparing 2 shires against one another can be like comparing chalk and cheese - however my parents who live in WA pay the same rates as my husband and I and the differences in services provided by their council is unbelievable. They receive everything that question 4 is trying to gauge and more. The only thing I see for my rates is the verge of the road mowed and sprayed for weeds every 6 months. Unfortunately I do not SEE the other achievements of the council or what my money is used for.*
- *Provision of Human Services (youth, aged, cultural, swimming pools etc) is not the proper province of local government. Shires should stick to the 3 Rs - roads, rates and rubbish (sorry 4 Rs add rats). Shires should not get ideas above their station.*
- *Would prefer the council assess current service to rate payers before planning future projects. Also believe rates should be commensurate with services received - not a standard rate.*
- *All new roads should be built with bike path included in costs at the time of building.*
- *This is VERY Important. Why should we and other people pay our rates, and others believe they just don't have to. I know it goes on. Start acting on this subject now.*
- *Why should rate payers pay for a pool that everyone including visitors can use. If rate payers are having to pay for it then only rate payers should use it for free. I think its silly to pay so much money on something so stupid - that sort of money could go towards something more useful.*
- *Thank you for sending this survey - it is a good way to get my thoughts into council. I'd be happy to do one of these annually so council keeps things correct.*
- *Fire breaks maintenance (outside my fence line) is the Council's responsibility. Give me some warning before I get a fire if the Council will not be mowing more than once during the wet season*
- *Overall, the Litchfield Council does a pretty good job, but some of the roads are shocking in the wet season, including my road Letchford Rd (Cox Pen side) Also they need to constantly grade or bitumen Finn Rd and Jenkins Rd. It's all the Govt cars and trucks that use it, and they stuff it up for everyone. These roads cut off 40kms for me to go to town and with the price of fuel that is a big saving don't you agree??*

- *Be good to see a bike path along Pioneer Dve, its very unsafe.*
- *A question: How do you register as a member to vote for next Councillors? PO Box 1279, 0835 NT*
- *Thank you for the opportunity to give feedback*
- *I don't think you do a very good job, for the rates we pay*
- *It defies logic and belief, that fireworks can be purchased and used in a rural area in the middle of the dry season. The organised public displays are spectacular and safe and could be promoted more.*
- *Introduce dog and cat registration (owner accountability is overdue)*
- *Currently our main issue is we pay rates but this does not include rubbish removal or town water - why not?*
- *As we don't have garbage collection, mail delivered or other services provided for the rates we pay, I feel it's time we start receiving something in return. Maybe if garbage collection was contracted out, there wouldn't be such a problem with litter on sides of roads. If we had w/park/swim pool, there may be a reduction in vandalism etc.*