

# COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

## RESEARCH SUMMARY

LGNSW commissioned Micromex Research and Consulting to undertake research into community perceptions of local government in 2017. The research showed that people trust councils to make decisions about their local areas and value the local knowledge and understanding councils have of their communities.

## KEY FINDINGS



**DECISION MAKING.** 75% of NSW residents believe local government is the best sphere of government to make decisions about their local areas, compared with 27% who believed decisions were best made by state government and 5% who believed they were best made by federal government.



**SATISFACTION.** 82% expressed a degree of satisfaction with their local council (from 'somewhat satisfied' to 'very satisfied'). Only 6% were not at all satisfied with their council's performance.



**BENEFITS.** When asked what benefits local government provides to the community the most common answer (unprompted) was 'knowledge/understanding of the local community'.



**IMAGE.** The overall image of councils has improved significantly in the last five years, and 61% now rate their council's image as good to excellent with only 16% poor or below. Respondents nominated council competency, trust, acting in the best interest of local communities, financial management and value for money as the reasons for their response.



**IMPORTANT ISSUES.** Respondents nominated roads as the most important issue facing local government areas over the next 10 years, with those from large areas also citing the effects of overdevelopment and the need to ensure infrastructure growth matches population increase. Residents of small and medium council areas were concerned with local economies and support for business and employment as well as roads.



**RATES & CHARGES.** Communities are not opposed to paying more if they get better quality local services, facilities and infrastructure: 73% of all responses ranged from 'at least somewhat supportive' to 'very supportive'.

## KEY FINDINGS cont.



**HAVING A SAY.** Almost one-third (30%) of respondents would like to have a say in council decision-making, 14% said they'd like to be actively involved – slightly more than the 12% who said they were already involved. Some 44% said they did not wish to be involved as long as their council was doing a good job.



**INVOLVEMENT.** 9% of respondents said they had considered or were likely to consider running for council, but in small council areas the proportion was almost triple (26%).



**INFORMATION.** Just over half (52%) of people were satisfied with information they received from council, with 46% eager for more.

## PREVIOUS RESEARCH HAS FOUND:

- Overall trust was higher for local councils (60%) than for state (51%) or federal (58%) governments.<sup>1</sup>
- Key drivers of satisfaction with local government were values and vision, with actual performance also contributing to 43% of brand image.<sup>2</sup>
- There was a correlation between information provision/communication and satisfaction with local government.<sup>3,4</sup>
- Residents don't necessarily want to get involved in local decision making if they feel their councils are performing well and their interests are being well represented.<sup>5</sup>

## Methodology

The research comprised desk and quantitative survey research. Surveys were conducted in May 2017 by telephone with a representative sample of 1007 NSW residents over three weeks. This sample size provides a maximum error of +/- 3.1%, at 95% confidence (meaning that if the survey was repeated with a different group of the same size, 19 times out of 20 the results would be similar). Results were weighted to ensure they were representative of the NSW population.



1. Meyer et al (2013), Demographic Indicators of Trust in Federal State and Local Government
2. Micromex (2012) NSW LGA Perceptions Study
3. UTS:CLG (2015), Why Local Government Matters
4. Piotrowski & van Ryzin (2007), Citizen attitudes toward transparency in local government
5. Ipsos Social Research Institute (2010), One World, Many Places