

2016-17 ANNUAL COMMUNITY SURVEY SUMMARY REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2017



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Introduction

This is the fourteenth year that Metropolis Research has conducted the *Community Survey* program for the City of Darebin. The *Community Survey* has been conducted quarterly since 2007 to provide a regular assessment of the community's perceptions throughout each year. Prior to 2007, the *Community Survey* was conducted annually.

The aim of the survey is to provide Council with a comprehensive picture of the community's perception of Council's performance across eighteen services and facilities, aspects of governance and leadership, aspects of planning and housing development, aspects of customer service, as well as Council's overall performance. In addition, each quarterly survey includes a more detailed investigation of one group of services/facilities.

This survey does not aim to replace satisfaction surveys of individual client based services. It does however provide a broad measure of the community's perception of performance for core services and allows for comparison of services across Council.


In addition to measuring community satisfaction with aspects of Council performance, the *Community Survey* measures community perception of safety in public areas of Darebin. The *Community Survey* also quantifies the issues of importance to the community and examines specific questions as required by Council each quarter.

The sample size and methodology employed in this survey is statistically robust and provides results with a level of statistical significance generally greater than that obtained by other individual service specific surveys. Within the margin of error (as detailed for individual services), the results published in this report are an accurate reflection of the community's perceptions. Readers are advised however to be mindful of the sample size for the quarterly results and treat the results appropriately.

Methodology, response rate and statistical strength

The *Community Survey* program is conducted as a face-to-face interview style survey of approximately fifteen to twenty minutes duration, conducted at the door of residential properties located within the City of Darebin. All surveys are conducted daylight hours at weekends to ensure the best opportunity for all residents to participate if invited. The sample is drawn in equal numbers from each of the eight precincts comprising the City of Darebin. The sample has been weighted to ensure that each precinct contributed the correct proportion to the overall results, based on the *2011 Census of Population & Housing*.

A total of approximately 6,419 households were approached to participate in the survey over the course of the four quarterly surveys. Of these households, 3,533 were unattended when approached, were therefore not invited to participate, and played no further part in the research. 1,889 refused to participate and one thousand completed the survey.



This provides a response rate of 34.6%, which almost identical to the 36.9% recorded in 2015-16. This is consistent with the response rate achieved by *Governing Melbourne* across metropolitan Melbourne as well as other municipal *Annual Community Survey* programs conducted by Metropolis Research.

The 95% confidence interval (margin of error) of these results is plus or minus 3.1%, at the fifty percent level. In other words, if a yes / no question obtains a result of fifty percent yes, it is 95% certain that the true value of this result is within the range of 46.9% and 53.1%. This is based on a total sample size of one thousand respondents, and an underlying population of the City of Darebin of 155,022. The 95% confidence interval is approximately 6.2% for the precinct level results.

Governing Melbourne

Governing Melbourne is a new service provided by Metropolis Research since 2010. *Governing Melbourne* is a survey of one thousand respondents drawn in equal numbers from every municipality in metropolitan Melbourne.

Governing Melbourne provides an objective, consistent and reliable basis on which to compare the results of this survey. It is not intended to provide a “league table” for local councils, rather to provide additional context with which to understand the results of this survey.

Glossary of terms

Precinct

The term precinct is used by Metropolis Research to describe the small areas utilised by Council in the *Community Profile*. Readers seeking to use precinct results should seek clarification of specific precinct boundaries if necessary.

Measurable and statistically significant

A measurable difference is one where the difference between or change in results is sufficiently large to ensure that they are in fact different results, i.e. the difference is statistically significant. This is due to the fact that survey results are subject to a margin of error or an area of uncertainty.

Significant result

Metropolis Research uses the term *significant result* to describe a change or difference between results that Metropolis Research believes to be of sufficient magnitude that they may impact on relevant aspects of policy development, service delivery and the evaluation of performance and are therefore identified and noted as significant or important.

Somewhat / notable / marginal

Metropolis Research will describe some results or changes in results as being marginally, somewhat, or notably higher or lower. These are not statistical terms rather they are interpretive. They are used to draw attention to results that may be of interest or relevant to policy development and service delivery. These terms are often used for results that may not be statistically significant due to sample size or other factors but may none-the-less provide some insight.

95% confidence interval

Average satisfaction results are presented in this report with a 95% confidence interval included. These figures reflect the range of values within which it is 95% certain that the true average satisfaction falls.

The 95% confidence interval based on a one-sample t-test is used for the mean scores presented in this report. The margin of error around the other results in this report at the municipal level is plus or minus 3.1%.

Satisfaction categories

Metropolis Research typically categorises satisfaction results to assist in the understanding and interpretative of the results. These categories have been developed over many years as a guide to the scores presented in the report and are designed to give a general context. These categories are designed to be indicative of the level of satisfaction. They are generally defined as follows:

<i>Excellent:</i>	Scores of 7.75 and above are categorised as excellent
<i>Very Good:</i>	Scores of 7.25 to less than 7.75 are categorised as very good
<i>Good:</i>	Scores of 6.5 to less than 7.25 are categorised as good
<i>Solid:</i>	Scores of 6 to less than 6.5 are categorised as solid
<i>Poor:</i>	Scores less than 6 are categorised as poor
<i>Very Poor:</i>	Scores less than 5.50 are categorised as very poor
<i>Extremely Poor:</i>	Scores less than 5 are categorised as extremely poor



Executive summary

Satisfaction with the performance of the Darebin City Council across all areas of responsibility (**overall performance**) remained stable in 2016-17 at 6.69 out of a potential ten. This level of satisfaction is categorised as “good”. This result was 2.4% higher than the 2017 metropolitan Melbourne average of 6.53 recorded in the Metropolis Research *Governing Melbourne* research program.

Almost four-fifths (79.1%) of respondents were satisfied with Council’s overall performance, whilst 8.8% (up from 8.4%) were dissatisfied.

There was some variation in satisfaction with Council’s overall performance observed across the municipality, with respondents from Reservoir East rating satisfaction measurably and significantly higher than the municipal average.


There was also a significant degree of variation in satisfaction with Council’s overall performance observed by respondent profile, with the following pattern evident:

- ⊗ **Higher than average satisfaction** - adolescents and young adults (aged 15 to 35 years), senior citizens (aged 76 years and over), rental (both public and private) households, respondents from households with a member with a disability, and newer residents of Darebin (less than five years) tended to be more satisfied than average.
- ⊗ **Lower than average satisfaction** – middle-aged and older adults (aged 46 to 75 years), home owners and mortgagees, and long-term residents of Darebin (ten years or more) tended to be less satisfied than average.

This pattern of satisfaction by age structure, housing situation and period of residence is not unique to the City of Darebin, and tends to be a strong theme across metropolitan Melbourne.

It is important to note that there was no meaningful variation in satisfaction with Council’s overall performance observed by the respondents’ gender, or language spoken at home. Consistent with their small numbers in the Darebin community, there was only thirteen respondents identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. These respondents tended to be on average marginally less satisfied with Council’s performance than other respondents.

Metropolis Research notes that whilst satisfaction with Darebin City Council remained stable in 2016-17, in 2016 satisfaction with local government across metropolitan Melbourne tended to decline, with the metropolitan Melbourne average satisfaction in 2016 declining six percent, and recovering by two percent in 2017. A range of issues affected satisfaction with local government in 2016, including the effect of the local government elections which are often a negative influence on community satisfaction with local government. That satisfaction did not decline in the City of Darebin reflects well of the performance of the Darebin City Council over the last twelve months.




Consistent with the stable satisfaction with Council's overall performance, the average satisfaction with the six aspects of [governance and leadership](#) declined by less than one percent, down from 6.92 to 6.86, and remains at a level categorised as "good". Respondents rated as "very good" Council's performance meeting the needs of the multi-cultural community and providing services that are inclusive of LGBTIQ residents. These results strongly suggest that Council is effectively engaging with its diverse and multi-cultural community. This is further borne out by the fact that respondents from multi-lingual households reported similar levels of satisfaction with Council performance than respondents from English speaking households.

Respondents rated as "good" the core aspects of governance and leadership including; communicating its programs and services (6.76), lobbying and making representations (6.61), community consultation and engagement (6.52), and making decisions in the interests of the community (6.50). Satisfaction with these aspects varied by demographic profile (age, gender, language spoken at home, period of residence, disability, and ATSI status) in a similar pattern to overall satisfaction with Council.

[Customer service](#) remains a very positive area of Council performance, with the average satisfaction with the included aspects declining only marginally this year, down 1.3% to 8.13. Despite this marginal decline, satisfaction remains at a level categorised as "excellent", and customer service is again in 2016-17, the area of Council performance with the highest average satisfaction.

There were eighteen [Council services and facilities](#) included in the *Community Survey*, and the average satisfaction with these services and facilities was 7.26 in 2016-17, a level of satisfaction categorised as "very good". This was a marginal decline of less than one percent on the 7.32 recorded last year. It is important to note that this average satisfaction with services and facilities was measurably and significantly higher than satisfaction with Council's overall performance. Of these eighteen services and facilities, only three reported satisfaction scores lower than overall satisfaction with Council, and only satisfaction with Council's performance managing local traffic (6.38) was measurably lower than overall satisfaction with Council. Satisfaction with services and facilities was broadly similar to the metropolitan Melbourne results, and was higher for five and lower for six services and facilities.

[Traffic](#) remains a significant issue in the City of Darebin in 2016-17, highlighted by a number of questions included in the survey program. Satisfaction with the volume and speed of traffic both on local streets and main roads remains very low. Satisfaction with the volume of traffic on local streets was rated as "poor", and for main roads was rated as "very poor". Satisfaction with the speed of traffic on both main roads and local streets was rated as "solid". As discussed above, satisfaction with the performance of Council managing local traffic was rated as "solid". In addition, as in previous years "traffic management" remains the most commonly identified issue to address in the City of Darebin in the coming twelve months, with 22.8% identifying this issue this year. Respondents identifying "traffic management" as an issue for Council were on average 3.9% less satisfied with Council's overall performance than the municipal average.



Satisfaction with traffic and parking was measurably and significantly lower in the City of Darebin than the metropolitan Melbourne average as recorded in *Governing Melbourne*.

[Parking](#) was also a significant issue, with 10.1% of respondents identifying this issue this year. Satisfaction with the availability of parking on local streets was rated as “solid”, whilst the availability of parking around busy shopping strips and major commercial areas was rated as “poor”.

Parking was also the third most commonly identified issue to address in Darebin, with 10.1% of respondents identifying this issue this year. Respondents identifying this issue were on average ten percent less satisfied with Council’s overall performance than the municipal average.

The third significant issue of concern in the City of Darebin was related to the nature, extent and impact of [planning and new housing development](#) occurring in the municipality. Issues with planning and housing development were a major theme developed throughout this report. Most significantly average satisfaction with the six aspects of planning and housing development outcomes was just 5.23 out of ten, a level of satisfaction categorised as “very poor”. This is a decline of 8.1% on the 2015-16 result, and 9.5% down on the 2014-15 result. This includes a 12.8% decline in satisfaction with planning decisions respecting local neighbourhood character, and a 12.3% decline in satisfaction with the protection of local heritage.

It is also noted that “building, housing, planning and development” related issues were the second most commonly identified issues for the City of Darebin this year, with 14.1% of respondents identifying these issues this year. Respondents that identified “building, planning, housing and development” issues were on average measurably and significantly (12.5%) less satisfied with Council’s overall performance than the municipal average (5.85 compared to 6.69). These results strongly suggest that these issues exert a significant negative influence on community satisfaction with Darebin City Council. Dissatisfaction with planning related issues are not unique to the City of Darebin, and Metropolis Research has consistently found dissatisfaction with planning outcomes growing across metropolitan Melbourne, and in particular inner and middle-ring municipalities. Satisfaction with the appearance and quality of new developments and the protection of local heritage was measurably and significantly lower in the City of Darebin than the 2017 metropolitan Melbourne results.

The [perception of safety](#) in the public areas of the City of Darebin both during the day (down 3.7%) and at night (5.0%) did decline this year; however they remain at quite high levels. The overwhelming majority (90.7%) of respondents felt safe in the public areas of the City of Darebin during the day, and almost three-quarters (71.3%) felt safe in the public areas of the municipality at night. It is noted however that female respondents (6.18) felt measurably and significantly less safe in the public areas of Darebin at night than male respondents (7.04). Significantly it is noted that one-quarter (25.2%) of female respondents felt unsafe at night in the public areas of Darebin at night.

Taken as a whole, the *Community Survey* this year found a steady level of satisfaction with the performance of Darebin City Council, with services and facilities and customer service in particular being very well received by the Darebin community.

The major issues community concern still relate to traffic congestion, car parking, and the nature and extent of new housing development occurring in Darebin.

Key findings

The following are the key findings from the *Darebin City Council – 2016-17 Annual Community Survey*.

Overall performance

- ⊗ Satisfaction with Council’s overall performance remained stable in 2016-17 at 6.69, a level of satisfaction best categorised as “good”.
- ⊗ This result was 2.4% higher than the 2017 metropolitan Melbourne average of 6.53.
- ⊗ Almost four-fifths (79.1% down from 82.9%) of respondents were satisfied with Council’s overall performance, whilst 8.8% (up from 8.4%) were dissatisfied.
- ⊗ Respondents from Reservoir East were measurably more satisfied than the municipal average.
- ⊗ Adolescents and young adults (aged 15 to 35 years) were measurably more satisfied with Council’s overall performance, whilst middle-aged adults (aged 46 to 60 years) were measurably less satisfied.
- ⊗ Rental household respondents (both public and private) were measurably more satisfied with Council’s overall performance.
- ⊗ Satisfaction with Council’s overall performance tended to decline with the period of residence in the City of Darebin.
- ⊗ There was no meaningful variation in satisfaction with Council’s overall performance based on the respondents’ gender or language spoken at home.

Governance and leadership

- ⊗ The average satisfaction with the six included aspects of governance and leadership declined by less than one percent in 2016-17, down from 6.92 to 6.86, although it remains at a level categorised as “good”.
- ⊗ Satisfaction with the six aspects of governance and leadership were as follows:
 - Meeting the needs of the multicultural community (7.48 - stable) “very good”
 - Providing services inclusive of LGBTIQ community (7.27 up from 7.09) “very good”
 - Communicating its programs and services (6.76 dn from 6.97) “good”
 - Lobbying and making representations on key issues (6.61 dn from 6.70) “good”
 - Making decisions in the interests of the community (6.50 dn from 6.69) “good”
 - Community consultation and engagement (6.52 dn from 6.60) “good”.

Council services and facilities

- ⊗ The average satisfaction with the eighteen included Council services and facilities declined by less than one percent in 2016-17, down from 7.32 to 7.26, although it remains at a level categorised as “very good”.
- ⊗ Satisfaction with the eighteen services and facilities included in the 2016-17 quarterly surveys were as follows:
 - Weekly garbage collection (8.41 up from 8.39) “excellent”
 - Green waste collection service (8.36 up from 8.28) “excellent”
 - Regular recycling (8.24 dn from 8.40) “excellent”
 - Arts and culture (*incl. libraries, Homestead, DAEC*) (8.03 up from 8.02) “excellent”
 - Council’s festivals and events (7.74 dn from 7.80) “very good”
 - Maintenance and repair of parks, reserves, open space (7.40 up from 7.37) “very good”
 - Transfer station – tip in Reservoir (7.25 up from 7.20) “very good”
 - Maintenance and cleaning of shopping strips (7.23 up from 7.16) “good”
 - Council’s overall environmental performance (7.20 dn from 7.25) “good”
 - The level of street lighting (7.09 up from 7.08) “good”
 - Condition of sealed local roads (7.04 dn from 7.08) “good”
 - Litter collection in public areas (6.85 dn from 6.96) “good”
 - Condition of storm water drains (6.83 dn from 7.11) “good”
 - Footpath maintenance and repairs (6.75 dn from 6.81) “good”
 - Street sweeping (6.75 dn from 6.87) “good”
 - Performance in assisting community reduce GGE (6.57 dn from 6.76) “good”
 - The level of dumped rubbish (6.53 dn from 6.70) “good”
 - The performance of Council managing traffic (6.38 dn from 6.46) “solid”.

Traffic and parking

- ⊗ Satisfaction with the six aspects of traffic and parking remains relatively low, and can best be summarised as follows:
 - Speed of traffic on main roads (6.31 up from 6.08) “solid”
 - Speed of traffic on local streets (6.11 up from 5.90) “solid”
 - The availability of parking on local streets (6.02 dn from 6.30) “solid”
 - The availability of parking in, around shopping strips (5.81 up from 5.79) “poor”
 - Volume of traffic on local streets (5.76 dn from 6.04) “poor”
 - Volume of traffic on main roads (5.42 up from 5.41) “very poor”.
- ⊗ Satisfaction with the volume of traffic on both local residential streets and main roads was measurably and significantly lower than the 2017 metropolitan Melbourne results.
- ⊗ Satisfaction with the speed of traffic on both local residential streets and main roads, as well as parking on local residential streets was marginally but not measurably lower than the 2017 metropolitan Melbourne results.

Planning and housing development

- ⊗ The average satisfaction with the six included aspects of planning and housing development declined measurably and significantly in 2016-17, down 8.1% to 5.23, a level of satisfaction categorised as “very poor”.
- ⊗ Satisfaction with the six aspects of planning and housing development remains relatively low, and can best be summarised as follows:
 - Opportunities to participate in planning consultations (5.59 dn from 5.86) “poor”
 - The protection of local heritage (5.35 dn from 6.10) “very poor”
 - The number of new developments (5.20 dn from 5.46) “very poor”
 - The appearance and quality of new developments (5.16 dn from 5.52) “very poor”
 - The size, height, set-back of buildings being developed (5.10 dn from 5.52) “very poor”
 - Planning decisions respecting local neighborhood character (4.98 dn from 5.71) “extremely poor”.

Customer service

- ⊗ A little less than half of the respondents (41.7% up from 40.4%) had contact with Council in the last twelve months.
- ⊗ The most common forms of contacting Council remain telephone (59.1% down from 62.8%), visits in person (19.5% up from 15.5%), and email (7.9% down from 11.0%).
- ⊗ Average satisfaction with the six included aspects of customer service declined marginally but not measurably in 2016-17, down 1.3% to 8.13, however it remains at a level categorised as “excellent”.
- ⊗ Satisfaction with the six aspects of customer service can best be summarised as follows:
 - Staff understanding language needs (multi-lingual only) (8.60 up from 8.34) “excellent”
 - Satisfaction with the Darebin website (visitors only) (8.12 dn from 8.23) “excellent”
 - Attitude of staff (7.82 up from 7.58) “excellent”
 - Ease of contact (7.78 up from 7.62) “excellent”
 - Helpfulness of the information provided (7.28 dn from 7.30) “very good”
 - Speed of service (6.75 dn from 6.83) “good”.

Perception of safety in the public areas of the City of Darebin

- ⊗ The perception of safety during the day remains very high, although it declined by 3.7% in 2016-17 to 8.14 (down from 8.45).
- ⊗ The perception of safety at night declined somewhat, albeit not measurably in 2016-17, down five percent to 6.59.
- ⊗ The perception of safety in the public areas of the City of Darebin was very similar to the 2017 metropolitan Melbourne results as recorded in *Governing Melbourne*.

Council as an organisation

- ⊗ Respondents were asked to rate their agreement with six statements about the Darebin City Council as an organisation. The average agreement results remained relatively consistent in 2016-17 with those recorded in previous years.
- ⊗ Agreement with the statements was as follows:
 - Darebin City Council provides important services *(7.09 dn from 7.16)*
 - Is progressive and up-to-date *(6.58 up from 6.55)*
 - Is trustworthy and reliable *(6.55 dn from 6.70)*
 - Has a sound direction for the future *(6.31 dn from 6.40)*
 - Offers value for rates *(5.68 dn from 5.89)*
 - Is bureaucratic and ineffective *(5.33 dn from 5.49)*

Council advocacy campaigns

- ⊗ A total of 129 responses were received from eighty-nine respondents identifying Council advocacy campaigns. Some of the campaigns most commonly identified by respondents related to the Preston Market redevelopment (11 responses), Level Crossing Removal (10 responses), and The Greens Advocacy (6 responses).

Improvements noticed in the local area in the last twelve months

- ⊗ A total of 378 (37.8% down from 38.9%) respondents identified 502 improvements they had noticed in the last twelve months.
- ⊗ The most commonly identified improvements were:
 - Parks, gardens and open space related *(14.8% dn from 15.4%)*
 - Road maintenance and repair related *(7.8% up from 3.9%)*
 - Footpath maintenance and repair related *(3.5% up from 1.9%)*

Issues for Council to address in the coming twelve months

- ⊗ A total of 734 respondents (73.4% up from 73.0%) identified 1,492 individual issues for Council to address in the coming twelve months.
- ⊗ It is important to note that these issues are not all within the remit of local government, nor are they a list of complaints.
- ⊗ The top five issues to address in the City of Darebin in 2016-17 are as follows:
 - Traffic management *(22.8% dn from 24.2%)*
 - Building, housing, planning and development related *(14.1% dn from 16.9%)*
 - Parking *(10.1% up from 7.5%)*
 - Parks, gardens and open spaces *(8.6% up from 7.4%)*
 - Safety, policing, and crime related issues *(6.3% up from 5.3%)*