

2015-16 ANNUAL COMMUNITY SURVEY SUMMARY REPORT

JULY 2016



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Introduction

This is the sixteenth 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 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 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 5,870 households were approached to participate in the survey over the course of the four quarterly surveys. Of these households, 3,160 were unattended when approached, were therefore not invited to participate, and played no further part in the research. 1,710 refused to participate and one thousand completed the survey.

This provides a response rate of 36.9%, which is slightly higher than that 33.9% recorded in 2014-15. 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 150,881. 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

Measurable

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.

Statistically significant

Statistically significant is the technical term for a measurable difference as described above. The term “statistically significant” and the alternative term “measurable” describe a quantifiable change or difference between results. They do not describe or define whether the result or change is of a sufficient magnitude to be important in the evaluation of performance or the development of policy and service delivery.

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.

Discernible / observed

Metropolis Research will describe some results or changes in results as being discernible, observable or notable. These are not statistical terms rather they are interpretive. They are used to draw attention to results that may be of interest or relevance 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.

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

Summary of results

The Darebin City Council continues to maintain a good level of community satisfaction with its performance across all areas of responsibility, as well as for many of the individual services and facilities included in the survey program.

Metropolis Research notes that the overall satisfaction score of 6.69 obtained by Darebin City Council is this year measurably higher than the metropolitan Melbourne average of 6.40, and the northern region average of 5.97, as recorded in the 2016 *Governing Melbourne* research conducted independently by Metropolis Research.

Despite a small decline in satisfaction with aspects of governance and leadership in 2015-16, respondents continue to rate highly Council's performance meeting the needs of the multicultural community, and to a lesser extent Council's performance in ensuring that services and facilities are inclusive of the LGBTIQ community.

The majority of respondents again in 2015-16 agreed that Council provides important services, is trustworthy and reliable, is progressive and up-to-date, has a sound direction for the future, and to a lesser extent offers value for money. Respondents have however become more in agreement than last year that Council is bureaucratic and ineffective.

Particular attention is again in 2015-16 drawn to the consistently high level of satisfaction recorded for the waste and recycling services (weekly garbage, recycling, and green waste), all of which obtained excellent satisfaction scores of more than eight out of ten.

Satisfaction with aspects of planning and housing development remains relatively low, with most aspects being rated as poor in 2015-16.

The issues of importance in the community for Council to focus on have consistently been headed by traffic management issues, and this remains true in 2015-16. Almost one-quarter of respondents identified traffic management issues, which is in 2016 a little higher than the average across metropolitan Melbourne. The importance to the community of traffic management issues is further borne out in Darebin by the fact that Council's performance managing traffic was the service with the lowest satisfaction score of all the services and facilities included in the survey. The solid to very poor level of satisfaction with the volume and speed of traffic on local and main roads also reflects its importance.

Satisfaction with the customer service provided by Council to residents contacting Council declined marginally in 2015-16. It remains true however that for both visits in person and contacts made via the telephone, satisfaction with customer service is rated very good to excellent. This is true of respondents from both English and non-English speaking households.

The perception of safety in the public areas of the City of Darebin remains very high and in fact increased a little again in 2015-16.

Key findings

The following are the key findings from the *Darebin City Council – 2015-16 Annual Community Survey*.

Overall performance

- ⊗ Satisfaction with Council’s overall performance decreased 3.2% from 6.91 to 6.69, although it remains at a level best categorised as “good”.
- ⊗ Respondents from Kingsbury-Bundoora were measurably more satisfied than the municipal average, and respondents from Northcote and Thornbury were measurably less satisfied.
- ⊗ This result is measurably higher than the 2016 metropolitan Melbourne average of 6.40 and very significantly higher than the northern region average of 5.97, as recorded in the Metropolis Research independent *Governing Melbourne* research.
- ⊗ More than four-fifths (82.9% down from 85.1%) of respondents providing a response to this question were satisfied with Council’s overall performance, and 8.4% (up from 5.6%) were dissatisfied.

Governance and leadership

- ⊗ Satisfaction with the six aspects of governance and leadership were as follows:
 - Meeting the needs of the multicultural community (7.48 *dn from* 7.51) “very good”
 - Providing services inclusive of LGBTIQ community (7.09 *dn from* 7.40) “good”
 - Communicating its programs and services (6.97 *dn from* 7.01) “good”
 - Lobbying and making representations on key issues (6.70 *dn from* 6.74) “good”
 - Making decisions in the interests of the community (6.69 *dn from* 6.78) “good”
 - Community consultation and engagement (6.60 *dn from* 6.68) “good”.

Council services and facilities

- ⊗ Satisfaction with the eighteen services and facilities included in the 2015-16 quarterly surveys were as follows:
 - Regular recycling (8.40 *up from* 8.35) “excellent”
 - Weekly garbage collection (8.39 *up from* 8.15) “excellent”
 - Green waste collection service (8.28 *dn from* 8.33) “excellent”
 - Arts and culture (*incl. libraries, Homestead, DAEC*) (8.02 *up from* 7.65) “excellent”
 - Council’s festivals and events (7.80 *up from* 7.59) “excellent”
 - Maintenance & repairs of parks, reserves, open spaces (7.37 *dn from* 7.47) “very good”
 - Council’s overall environmental performance (7.25 *up from* 7.21) “very good”
 - Transfer station – tip in Reservoir (7.20 *dn from* 7.36) “good”
 - Maintenance and cleaning of shopping strips (7.16 *up from* 7.09) “good”
 - Condition of storm water drains (7.11 *up from* 7.01) “good”
 - The level of street lighting (7.08 *up from* 6.54) “good”
 - Condition of sealed local roads (7.08 *up from* 6.93) “good”
 - Litter collection in public areas (6.96 *up from* 6.84) “good”
 - Street sweeping (6.87 *dn from* 6.88) “good”
 - Footpath maintenance and repairs (6.81 *up from* 6.57) “good”
 - Performance in assisting community reduce GGE (6.76 *up from* 6.75) “good”
 - The level of dumped rubbish (6.70 *up from* 6.63) “good”
 - The performance of Council managing traffic (6.46 *up from* 6.43) “solid”.

Traffic and parking

- ⊗ Satisfaction with the six aspects of traffic and parking remains relatively low, and can best be summarised as follows:

○ Volume of traffic on local roads	(6.04 <i>dn from</i> 6.19)	“solid”
○ Speed of traffic on main roads	(6.08 <i>dn from</i> 6.12)	“solid”
○ The availability of parking on local roads	(6.30 <i>up from</i> 5.98)	“solid”
○ Speed of traffic on local roads	(5.90 <i>dn from</i> 5.95)	“poor”
○ The availability of parking in, around shopping strips	(5.79 <i>up from</i> 5.61)	“poor”
○ Volume of traffic on main roads	(5.41 <i>dn from</i> 5.43)	“very poor”.

Planning and housing development

- ⊗ Satisfaction with the six aspects of planning and housing development remains relatively low, and can best be summarised as follows:

○ The protection of local heritage	(6.10 <i>up from</i> 5.83)	“solid”
○ Opportunities to participate in planning consultations	(5.86 <i>dn from</i> 6.22)	“poor”
○ Planning decisions respecting local neighborhood character	(5.71 <i>up from</i> 5.45)	“poor”
○ The appearance and quality of new developments	(5.52 <i>dn from</i> 5.86)	“poor”
○ The size, height, set-back of buildings being developed	(5.52 <i>dn from</i> 5.83)	“poor”
○ The number of new developments	(5.46 <i>dn from</i> 5.48)	“very poor”.

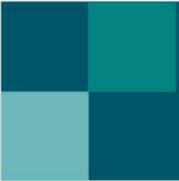
Customer service

- ⊗ A little less than half of the respondents (40.4% down from 40.8%) had contact with Council in the last twelve months.
- ⊗ The most common forms of contacting Council remain telephone (62.5% up from 60.2%) and visits in person (15.4% down from 23.1%), and email (10.9% up from 7.4%).
- ⊗ Satisfaction with the six aspects of customer service can best be summarised as follows:

○ Staff understanding of language needs (NESB only)	(8.34 <i>dn from</i> 8.57)	“excellent”
○ Satisfaction with the Darebin website (visitors only)	(8.23 <i>up from</i> 7.26)	“excellent”
○ Ease of contact	(7.62 <i>dn from</i> 7.95)	“very good”
○ Attitude of staff	(7.58 <i>dn from</i> 7.99)	“very good”
○ Helpfulness of the information provided	(7.30 <i>dn from</i> 7.56)	“very good”
○ Speed of service	(6.83 <i>dn from</i> 7.29)	“good”.

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

- ⊗ The perception of safety during the day remains very high, and increased by less than one percent to 8.45.
- ⊗ The perception of safety at night also remains relatively high, and increased by 4.8% to 6.93.



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 very consistent in 2015-16 with those recorded in 2014-15.
- ⊗ Agreement with the statements was as follows:
 - Darebin City Council provides important services *(7.16 dn from 7.18)*
 - Is trustworthy and reliable *(6.70 dn from 6.81)*
 - Is progressive and up-to-date *(6.55 dn from 6.70)*
 - Has a sound direction for the future *(6.40 up from 6.23)*
 - Offers value for rates *(5.89 dn from 6.06)*
 - Is bureaucratic and ineffective *(5.49 up from 5.19)*.

Council advocacy campaigns

- ⊗ A total of 158 responses were received from ninety-eight respondents identifying Council advocacy campaigns. Some of the campaigns most commonly identified by respondents related to culture and diversity, refugees, and anti-domestic / family violence campaigns.

Improvements noticed in the local area in the last twelve months

- ⊗ A total of 389 (38.9% up from 37.5%) respondents identified 502 improvements they had noticed in the last twelve months.
- ⊗ The most commonly identified improvements were:
 - Parks, gardens and open space related *(15.4% up from 9.5%)*
 - Street trees *(4.5% up from 4.0%)*
 - Road maintenance and repair related *(3.9% dn from 11.5%)*.

Issues for Council to address in the coming twelve months

- ⊗ A total of 730 respondents (73.0% up from 69.1%) identified 1,445 individual issues, the top five of which were as follows:
 - Traffic management *(24.2% dn from 25.9%)*
 - Building, housing, planning and development related *(16.9% up from 12.3%)*
 - Parking *(7.5% dn from 8.9%)*
 - Parks, gardens and open spaces *(7.4% up from 6.9%)*
 - Road maintenance and repairs *(7.4% up from 4.8%)*.