

2014-15 ANNUAL COMMUNITY SURVEY SUMMARY REPORT

JULY 2015



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Introduction

This is the fifteenth 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.

Previously the *Community Survey* was conducted quarterly, with an annual summary based on calendar years. Beginning this year the survey will be reported in financial years rather than calendar years.

The aim of the survey is to provide Council with a comprehensive picture of the community's perception of Council's performance across ten broad groups of services and facilities, aspects of governance and leadership, aspects of customer service as well as Councils 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 all 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.

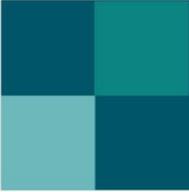
The sample size and methodology employed in this survey is statistically robust and provides results with a level of statistical significance generally greater than that obtained by other individual service specific surveys. Within the margin of error (as detailed for individual services), the results 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 and response rate

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* precinct populations.

A total of approximately 5,018 households were approached to participate in the survey over the course of the four quarterly surveys. Of these households, 2,679 were unattended when approached, 1,557 refused to participate and 800 completed the survey.

This provides a response rate of 33.9%, which is slightly lower than that 36.0% recorded in 2014. 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.



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:

- Excellent:*** Scores of 7.75 and above are categorised as excellent
- Very Good:*** Scores of 7.25 to less than 7.75 are categorised as very good
- Good:*** Scores of 6.5 to less than 7.25 are categorised as good
- Solid:*** Scores of 6 to less than 6.5 are categorised as solid
- Poor:*** Scores less than 6 are categorised as poor
- Very Poor:*** Scores less than 5.50 are categorised as very poor

Summary of results

The Darebin City Council continues to maintain a good level of community satisfaction, both 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 scores obtained by Darebin City Council are consistently measurably higher than the metropolitan Melbourne average as recorded in *Governing Melbourne*.

Respondents have consistently rated highly Council's leadership in social issues such as meeting the needs of the multicultural community and ensuring that services and facilities are inclusive of the LGBTIQ community.

The majority of respondents again in 2014-15 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 are somewhat split as to whether Council is bureaucratic and ineffective.

Particular attention is drawn to the consistently high level of satisfaction recorded for the waste and recycling services (weekly garbage, recycling and green waste).

The issues of importance to the community for Council to focus on have consistently been dominated by traffic management issues, and this is further borne out by the lower than average satisfaction with Council's performance managing traffic. Satisfaction with the volume and speed of traffic as well as the availability of parking reflects the importance of these issues to respondents, with most aspects rated poor or very poorly.

Satisfaction with the level of customer service provided when residents contact Council has remained very high, both for visits in person and contacts made via the telephone. This is true of those both of English and non-English speaking backgrounds.

The perception of safety in the public areas of the City of Darebin is relatively high.

Satisfaction with aspects of planning and housing development is relatively low, with most aspects being rated poorly.

Key findings

The following are the key findings from the *Darebin City Council – 2014-2015 Annual Community Survey*.

Overall performance

- ⊗ Satisfaction with Council's overall performance increased 1.2% to 6.91, and remains best categorised as "good".
- ⊗ There was no statistically significant variation in satisfaction across the eight precincts comprising the City of Darebin.
- ⊗ This result is marginally, but not measurably higher than the 2015 metropolitan Melbourne average of 6.81 and marginally higher than the northern region average of 6.65, as recorded in the 2015 Metropolis Research *Governing Melbourne* research.
- ⊗ 85.1% (up from 70.6%) of respondents providing a response to this question were satisfied with Council's overall performance, and 5.6% (up from 4.6%) were dissatisfied.

Governance and leadership

- ⊗ Satisfaction with the six aspects of governance and leadership were as follows:
 - Meeting the needs of the multicultural community (7.51 up from 7.32) "very good"
 - Providing services inclusive of LGBTIQ community (7.40 up from 7.18) "very good"
 - Communicating its programs and services (7.01 up from 6.83) "good"
 - Making decisions in the interests of the community (6.78 dn from 6.92) "good"
 - Lobbying and making representations on key issues (6.74 up from 6.44) "good"
 - Community consultation and engagement (6.68 up from 6.47) "good"

Council services and facilities

- ⊗ Satisfaction with the eighteen services and facilities included in the 2014-15 quarterly surveys were as follows:
 - Regular recycling (8.35) "excellent"
 - Green waste collection service (8.33) "excellent"
 - Weekly garbage collection (8.15 up from 7.97) "excellent"
 - Arts and culture (7.65 dn from 7.75) "very good"
 - Council's festivals and events (7.59 up from 7.49) "very good"
 - Maintenance & repairs of parks, reserves, open spaces (7.47 dn from 7.52) "very good"
 - Transfer station – tip in Reservoir (7.36) "very good"
 - Council's overall environmental performance (7.21 up from 7.14) "good"
 - Maintenance and cleaning of shopping strips (7.09 up from 7.08) "good"
 - Condition of storm water drains (7.01 up from 6.77) "good"
 - Condition of sealed local roads (6.93 up from 6.78) "good"
 - Street sweeping (6.88 up from 6.80) "good"
 - Litter collection in public areas (6.84 up from 6.80) "good"
 - Performance in assisting community reduce GGE (6.75 up from 6.52) "good"
 - The level of dumped rubbish (6.63) "good"
 - Footpath maintenance and repairs (6.57 up from 6.44) "good"
 - The level of street lighting (6.54) "good"
 - The performance of Council managing traffic (6.43 up from 6.22) "solid"

Traffic and parking

- ⊗ Satisfaction with the six aspects of traffic and parking was rated relatively low, and can best be summarised as follows:
 - Volume of traffic on local roads (6.19) “solid”
 - Speed of traffic on main roads (6.12) “solid”
 - Speed of traffic on local roads (5.95) “poor”
 - The availability of parking on local roads (5.98) “poor”
 - The availability of parking in and around shopping strips (5.61) “poor”
 - Volume of traffic on main roads (5.43) “very poor”

Planning and housing development

- ⊗ Satisfaction with the six aspects of planning and housing development was rated relatively low, and can best be summarised as follows:
 - Opportunities to participate in planning consultations (6.22) “solid”
 - The appearance and quality of new developments (5.86) “poor”
 - The size, height, set-back of buildings being developed (5.83) “poor”
 - The protection of local heritage (5.83) “poor”
 - The number of new developments (5.48) “very poor”
 - Planning decisions respecting local neighborhood character (5.45) “very poor”

Customer service

- ⊗ A little less than half of the respondents (40.8% down from 42.0%) had contact with Council in the last twelve months.
- ⊗ The most common forms of contacting Council remain telephone (60.2% down from 63.0%) and visits in person (23.1% up from 19.4%)
- ⊗ Satisfaction with the six aspects of customer service can best be summarised as follows:
 - Staff understanding of language needs (NESB only) (8.57 *dn from* 8.64) “excellent”
 - Attitude of staff (7.99 *up from* 7.97) “excellent”
 - Ease of contact (7.95 *dn from* 8.01) “excellent”
 - Helpfulness of the information provided (7.56 *dn from* 7.58) “very good”
 - Speed of service (7.29 *dn from* 7.31) “very good”
 - Satisfaction with the Darebin website (7.26) “very good”

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

- ⊗ The perception of safety during the day declined less than one percent to 8.38.
- ⊗ The perception of safety at night increased less than one percent to 6.61.

Council as an organisation

- ⊗ Respondents were asked to rate their agreement with six statements about the Darebin City Council as an organisation. Agreement with the statements was as follows:
 - Darebin City Council provides important services (7.18 *dn from* 7.35)
 - Is trustworthy and reliable (6.81 *up from* 6.51)
 - Is progressive and up-to-date (6.70 *up from* 6.55)
 - Has a sound direction for the future (6.23)
 - Offers value for rates (6.06 *dn from* 6.11)
 - Is bureaucratic and ineffective (5.19)



Council advocacy campaigns

- ⊗ A total of thirty-four responses were received from respondents identifying Council advocacy campaigns, with Aboriginal engagement, free worm farms, Reservoir crossing and Welcome Refugee the most common.

Improvements noticed in the local area in the last twelve months

- ⊗ A total of 148 respondents identified 198 improvements they had noticed in the last twelve months. The most commonly identified improvements were road maintenance and repairs (11.5%) and parks, gardens and open space related (9.5%).

Issues for Council to address in the coming twelve months

- ⊗ A total of 552 (up from 535) respondents (69.1%) identified 1,122 individual issues, the top five of which were as follows:
 - Traffic management *(25.9% up from 21.1%)*
 - Building, housing, planning and development related *(12.3% up from 10.3%)*
 - Parking *(8.9% up from 5.5%)*
 - Parks, gardens and open spaces *(6.9% down from 8.3%)*
 - Environment, conservation and climate change *(6.6% down from 7.0%)*