Muswellbrook Shire Council

Community Research 2024

Prepared by: Micromex Research

Date: August 2024

Report Outline

micromex research

muswellbrook shire council

Research Objectives

Muswellbrook Shire Council commissioned Micromex Research to conduct a random telephone survey with residents living in the Muswellbrook Shire local government area (LGA).

Objectives (Why?)

- Identify the community's overall level of satisfaction with Council performance and their quality of life living in the area

- Assess and establish the community's priorities and satisfaction in relation to Council activities, services, and facilities

- Assess residents' satisfaction with the communication with Council

- Identify opportunities and challenges for the area and residents' attitudes toward the community strategic plan

Sample (How?)

- Telephone survey (landline N=44 and mobile N=176) to N=220 residents

- We use a 5 point scale (e.g. 1 = not at all satisfied, 5 = very satisfied)

- Greatest margin of error +/- 6.6%

Timing (When?)

- Implementation 25th – 30th July 2024

Methodology and Sample

Sample selection and error

A total of 220 resident interviews were completed. Respondents were selected by means of a computer based random selection process using Australian marketing lists, Sample Pages, List Brokers and Lead Lists.

A sample size of 220 residents provides a maximum sampling error of plus or minus 6.6% at 95% confidence. This means that if the survey was replicated with a new universe of N=220 residents, 19 times out of 20 we would expect to see the same results, i.e. +/- 6.6%. For example, that an answer such as 'yes' (50%) to a question could vary from 43% to 57%.

Interviewing

Interviewing was conducted in accordance with The Research Society Code of Professional Behaviour.

Data analysis

The data within this report was analysed using Q Professional.

Within the report, blue and red font colours are used to identify statistically significant differences between groups, i.e., gender, age, etc.

Significance difference testing is a statistical test performed to evaluate the difference between two measurements. To identify the statistically significant differences between the groups of means, 'One-Way Anova tests' and 'Independent Samples T-tests' were used. 'Z Tests' were also used to determine statistically significant differences between column percentages.

Note: All percentages are calculated to the nearest whole number and therefore the total may not exactly equal 100%.

Ratings questions

The Unipolar Scale of 1 to 5 was used in all rating questions, where 1 was the lowest importance or satisfaction and 5 the highest importance or satisfaction.

This scale allowed us to identify different levels of importance and satisfaction across respondents.

Top 2 (T2) Box: refers to the aggregate percentage (%) score of the top two scores for importance. (i.e. important & very important)

Top 3 (T3) Box: refers to the aggregate percentage (%) score of the top three scores for satisfaction or support. (i.e. somewhat satisfied, satisfied & very satisfied)

We refer to T3 Box Satisfaction in order to express moderate to high levels of satisfaction in a non-discretionary category. We only report T2 Box Importance in order to provide differentiation and allow us to demonstrate the hierarchy of community priorities.
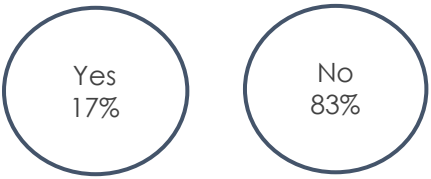
Micromex LGA Benchmark

Micromex has developed Community Satisfaction Benchmarks using normative data from over 80 unique councils, more than 200 surveys and over 100,000 interviews since 2012.

Sample Profile

The sample was weighted by age and gender to reflect the 2021 ABS Census data for the Muswellbrook Shire Council LGA.

Gender

Female 49%
Male 51%
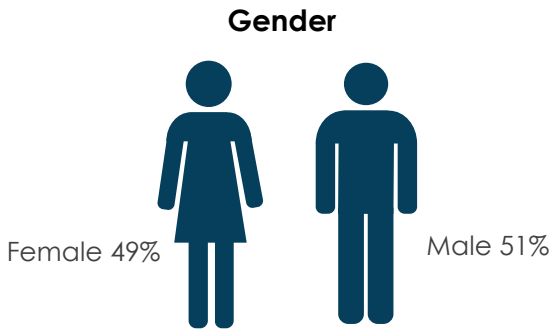
Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander

Yes 17%
No 83%

*1% prefer not to say

Where do you live?

Rural 28%
Urban 72%

Age

38% — 18-39
17% — 40-49
18% — 50-59
13% — 60-69
14% — 70+

Resident Type

I am a ratepayer in the Muswellbrook Shire — 76%
I work in the Muswellbrook Shire — 54%
I study in the Muswellbrook Shire — 7%
None of these — 10%

Time lived in the LGA

Less than 12 months — 1%
1-5 years — 2%
6-10 years — 9%
11-20 years — 20%
More than 20 years — 68%
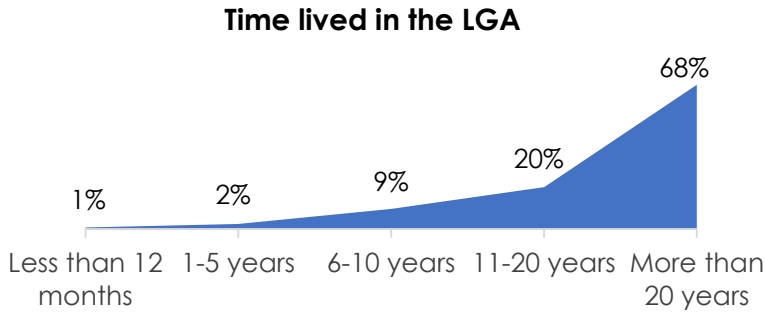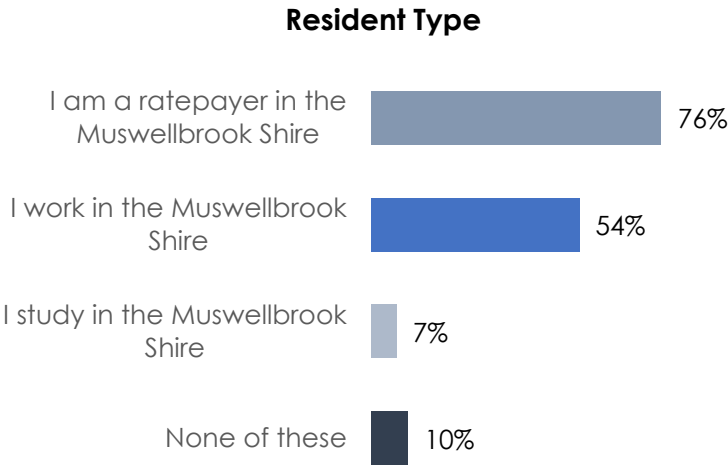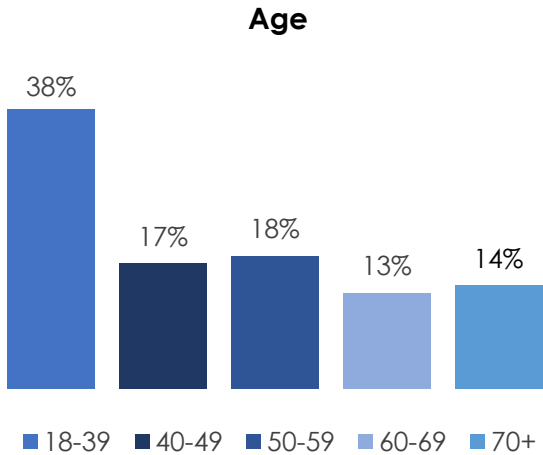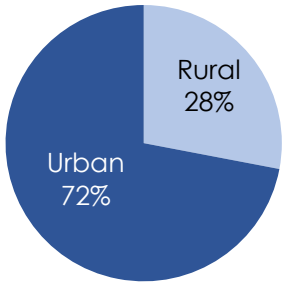
Does anyone living in your household identify as having a disability?

Yes 20%
No 80%
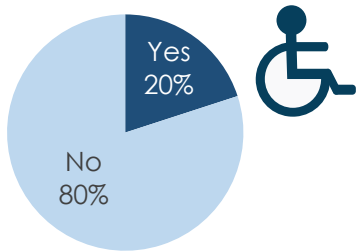
Have children under the age of 18 living in your home?

Yes 50%

Base: N = 220
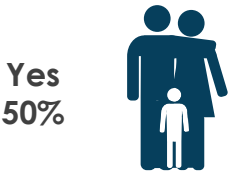
Summary Findings

Where are we now?

Although residents' perceived quality of life has remained relatively stable since last year (72% rating it as 'good' to 'excellent'), there has been a softening in overall satisfaction (58% cf. 81% in 2023) and in the Council's efforts to inform and involve residents.

To explore the potential reasons for the decline in overall satisfaction, we conducted regression analysis, performance gap analysis and year-on-year comparisons across all services and facilities provided by Council. We found that the largest drivers of overall satisfaction centred on 'the way Council communicates with the local community', sealed roads and waste/recycling. However, these three key drivers received the largest performance gaps (high importance but low satisfaction). Additionally, the satisfaction scores for 'the way Council communicates with the local community' and 'waste/recycling' have significantly decreased from 2023.

When asked the major challenges facing the shire, 11% of residents mentioned that they would like to see better Council engagement/ performance. When asked other suggestions about future planning, nearly 1 in 5 (18%) residents mentioned waste management (especially the impact of the bin system after the introduction of FOGO). Other areas of concern include coal mining, job opportunities and retaining people (especially younger residents) in the area.

Moving forward, Council may consider conducting more consultations and meetings with residents to involve them in decision making processes, especially on topics regarding sealed roads and waste services.

Key Measures:

Overall satisfaction

Overall, 58% of residents are at least somewhat satisfied with the performance of Council over the last 12 months.

Satisfaction with Council's customer service

65% of residents are at least somewhat satisfied with the Council's customer service.

Support of community strategic plan

94% of residents are at least somewhat supportive of the current community strategic plan.

Quality of Life in the LGA

72% of residents rate their quality of life as 'good' to 'excellent' in the LGA.

Satisfaction Scorecard

1 in 3 (33%) measures surveyed received good performance satisfaction scores (with more than 80% being at least somewhat satisfied).

There is still room for improvement in 7 measures, including roads, public toilets, waste/recycling, economic development, Council communication and DAs.

Good performance
(T3B sat score ≥80%)

Monitor
(T3B sat score 60%-79%)
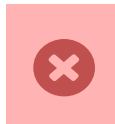
Needs improvement
(T3B sat score <60%)

Parks, Gardens and Infrastructure
Sealed roads
Unsealed roads
Bridges
Footpaths and shared paths
Cleanliness of streets
Public toilets
Weed control
Community halls
Sporting facilities
Parks, reserves and playgrounds
Parking facilities
Public lighting in town centres
Stormwater drainage
Waste and recycling
Water supply
Sewage collection and treatment

Community and Economy
Council pools
Libraries
Youth facilities and activities
Services for the elderly
Economic development and attracting new investment
Council website
Council social media
Art Gallery
Local festivals and events
The way Council communicates with the local community

Health and Environment
Dog control
Development applications (DA's)
Food safety in local restaurants, cafes and take-aways
Protection of the natural environment and wildlife

Living in Muswellbrook Shire

This section explores residents perceived quality of life living in Muswellbrook Shire and determines agreement levels with statements regarding living in the area.

Section One

Quality of Life

72% of residents rated their quality of life as 'good' to 'excellent', which is on par with 2023.

Those who have lived in the LGA for less than 10 years are significantly less likely to give high ratings.

	Muswellbrook Shire Council	Micromex LGA Benchmark – **Regional**
Top 3 Box %	72%↓	91%
Mean rating	4.02↓	4.84
Base	220	18,295

↑↓ = A significantly higher/lower level of satisfaction (compared to the Benchmark)

Excellent (6): 2024 5%, 2023 7%
Very good (5): 2024 32%, 2023 34%
Good (4): 2024 35%, 2023 36%
Fair (3): 2024 19%, 2023 17%
Poor (2): 2024 7%, 2023 4%
Very poor (1): 2024 2%, 2023 2%

■ 2024 (N=220) ■ 2023 (N=402)
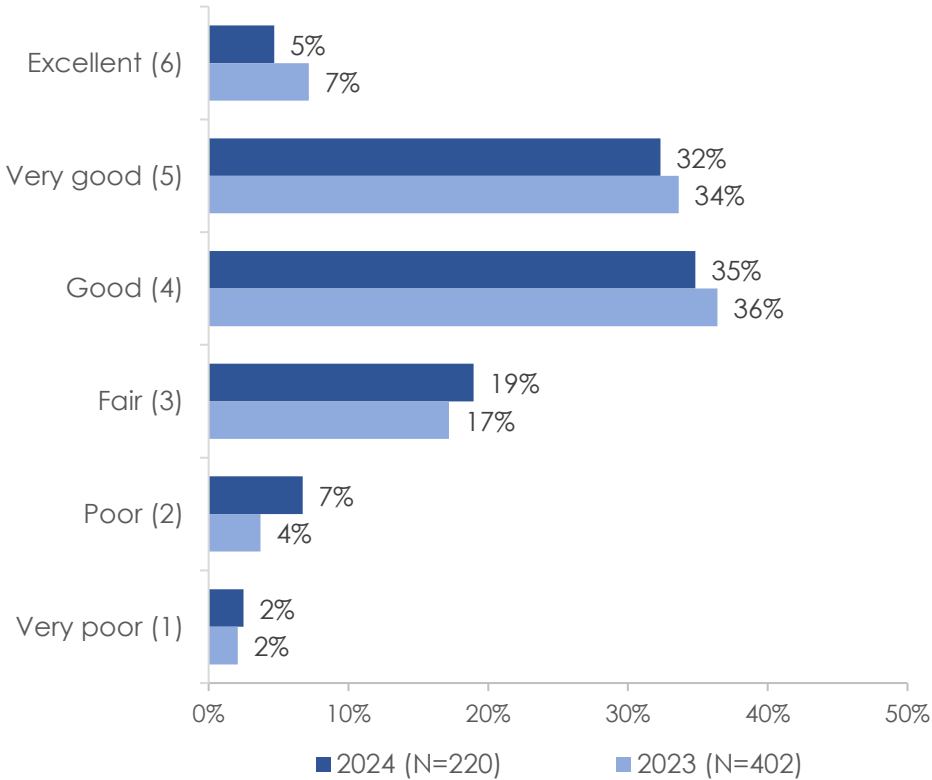
	Overall 2024	Overall 2023	Gender		Age					Time lived in area		
			Male	Female	18-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70+	Less than 10 years	11-20 years	More than 20 years
Top 3 Box %	72%	77%	74%	69%	66%	72%	83%	84%	62%	54%	70%	76%
Mean rating	4.02	4.17	4.12	3.92	3.94	3.96	4.25	4.07	3.95	3.36	4.07	4.13
Base	220	402	112	108	83	37	40	30	30	27	43	149

Local Area Indicators – Agreement Statements

The majority (73%) of residents agree that they are concerned about the cost of living in the LGA, while 55% agree that they feel safe in their home at night. However, 68% disagree that the local roads are in good condition, and 62% disagree that Council delivers good value for our rates dollar.

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I'm concerned about the cost of living in our local area		-7%	21%	52%
I feel safe in my home at night	-9%	-13%	37%	18%
I feel proud of where I live	-6%	-11%	31%	18%
Our parks and reserves are clean, attractive and welcoming	-9%	-18%	37%	8%
There are good employment prospects for locals within the area	-16%	-13%	33%	11%
I feel part of my community	-8%	-7%	32%	11%
Traffic generally flows well within the main streets of Muswellbrook	-22%	-16%	30%	10%
If the Shire had better public transport, I'd be more likely to use it	-27%	-9%	20%	20%
It is easy to access the Council services I need	-16%	-18%	23%	8%
Generally speaking, the Shire's local infrastructure meets my needs	-18%	-22%	23%	7%
I feel safe walking in my local streets at night	-25%	-20%	24%	5%
Local rivers and creeks are healthy	-18%	-27%	22%	7%
I feel that Council provides opportunities for residents to have a say about the Shire's future	-30%	-19%	11%	7%
Our local Council understands the Community's needs and expectations	-27%	-20%	14%	4%
Local roads are in good condition	-39%	-29%	11%	
Council delivers good value for our rates dollar	-31%	-31%	7%	4%

	Agree / Strongly Agree %			Micromex Benchmark -Regional
	2024 (N=220)	2023 (N=402)	2021 (N=401)	
I'm concerned about the cost of living in our local area	73%	NA	NA	NA
I feel safe in my home at night	55%	58%	68%	NA
I feel proud of where I live	49%↓	59%	62%	66%
Our parks and reserves are clean, attractive and welcoming	44%	49%	47%	NA
There are good employment prospects for locals within the area	44%↑	50%	42%	26%
I feel part of my community	44%↓	56%	57%	68%
Traffic generally flows well within the main streets of Muswellbrook	40%↓	40%	48%	51%
If the Shire had better public transport, I'd be more likely to use it	40%	31%	36%	NA
It is easy to access the Council services I need	32%	40%	39%	NA
Generally speaking, the Shire's local infrastructure meets my needs	31%	36%	NA	NA
I feel safe walking in my local streets at night	30%	31%	32%	NA
Local rivers and creeks are healthy	28%	37%	26%	NA
I feel that Council provides opportunities for residents to have a say about the Shire's future	18%	37%	23%	NA
Our local Council understands the Community's needs and expectations	18%	29%	21%	26%
Local roads are in good condition	13%	12%	26%	NA
Council delivers good value for our rates dollar	11%↓	22%	19%	29%

Base: N = 220
Note: Data labels of <4% have not been shown above
A significantly higher/lower percentage (compared to 2023)
Q2. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means strongly disagree and 5 means strongly agree, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Note: Benchmark differences are based on assumed variants of +/- 10%, with variants beyond +/- 10% more likely to be significant
↑/↓ = positive/negative difference equal to/greater than 10% from Benchmark.

Local Area Indicators – Agreement Statements

Residents who have lived in the area for more than 20 years are more likely to feel safe in their homes at night and to be proud of where they live. Older residents (70+) are more likely to agree with most parts of the statements.

T2B% (Strongly agree + agree)	Overall	Male	Female	18-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70+	Less than 10 years	11-20 years	More than 20 years
I'm concerned about the cost of living in our local area	73%	71%	76%	70%	85%	81%	72%	59%	77%	83%	70%
I feel safe in my home at night	55%	64%	47%	46%	51%	70%	60%	64%	48%	40%	61%
I feel proud of where I live	49%	50%	49%	35%	45%	60%	56%	74%	31%	36%	56%
Our parks and reserves are clean, attractive and welcoming	44%	45%	44%	36%	53%	43%	46%	58%	29%	44%	48%
There are good employment prospects for locals within the area	44%	51%	37%	38%	42%	55%	46%	47%	46%	32%	47%
I feel part of my community	44%	46%	41%	33%	46%	55%	42%	55%	31%	37%	48%
Traffic generally flows well within the main streets of Muswellbrook	40%	38%	42%	37%	49%	44%	28%	45%	54%	36%	39%
If the Shire had better public transport, I'd be more likely to use it	40%	35%	45%	57%	28%	28%	28%	35%	52%	39%	38%
It is easy to access the Council services I need	32%	24%	40%	18%	47%	17%	37%	62%	26%	29%	33%
Generally speaking, the Shire's local infrastructure meets my needs	31%	29%	32%	29%	30%	22%	30%	49%	13%	27%	35%
I feel safe walking in my local streets at night	30%	41%	18%	25%	40%	39%	25%	21%	30%	35%	28%
Local rivers and creeks are healthy	28%	22%	35%	20%	36%	25%	33%	41%	27%	28%	29%
I feel that Council provides opportunities for residents to have a say about the Shire's future	18%	18%	19%	11%	23%	9%	23%	41%	32%	12%	17%
Our local Council understands the Community's needs and expectations	18%	13%	23%	14%	18%	9%	16%	42%	11%	23%	18%
Local roads are in good condition	13%	11%	14%	4%	20%	11%	14%	29%	13%	13%	13%
Council delivers good value for our rates dollar	11%	9%	13%	6%	9%	5%	12%	34%	6%	6%	14%
Base	220	112	108	83	37	40	30	30	27	43	149

A significantly higher/lower percentage (by group) 12

Performance of Council

This section gauges residents' overall satisfaction with Council. This section also summarises the importance and satisfaction ratings for the 30 services and facilities. In this section we explore trends to past research and comparative norms.

Section Two

Summary: Performance of Council

- 58% of residents are at least somewhat satisfied with the performance of Council, which has softened since 2023 (-23%)
  - Largest drivers of overall satisfaction revolve around the way Council communicates with the local community, sealed roads and waste/ recycling.

- Largest gaps in performance (importance score minus satisfaction score):
  - The way Council communicates with the local community
  - Waste and recycling
  - Sealed roads
  - Parking facilities
  - Public toilets

- Compared to the Regional Benchmark, areas that are less satisfactory to the Muswellbrook Shire residents include:
  - Waste and recycling
  - The way Council communicates with the local community
  - Services for the elderly
  - Economic development and attracting new investment
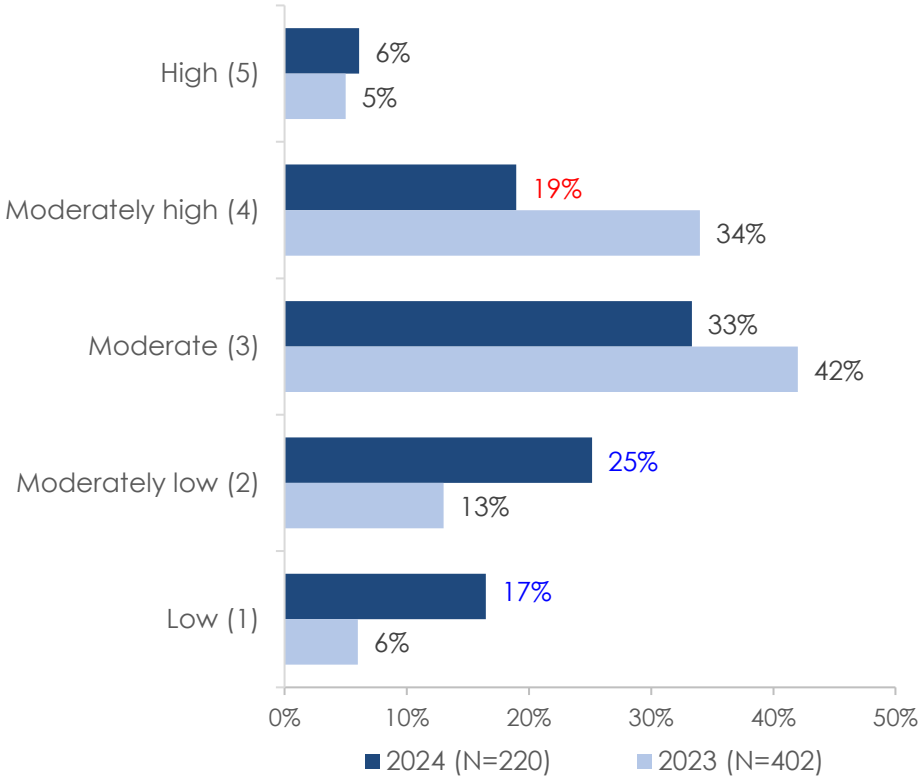 - Public toilets

Overall Satisfaction

58% of residents are at least moderately satisfied with Council's performance, the lowest result seen across the past 5 years*, and significantly below the Regional Benchmark.

Younger residents (18-39) are significantly less likely to be satisfied.

	Muswellbrook Shire Council				Micromex LGA Benchmark – **Regional**
	2024	**2023**	**2021***	**2019***	
Top 3 Box %	58%↓	81%	67%	74%	82%
Mean rating	2.73↓	3.20	2.90	3.10	3.31
Base	220	402	401	505	53,020

↑/↓ = significantly higher/lower percentage/rating compared to Benchmark.

High (5) — 6% / 5%
Moderately high (4) — 19% / 34%
Moderate (3) — 33% / 42%
Moderately low (2) — 25% / 13%
Low (1) — 17% / 6%

■ 2024 (N=220)   ■ 2023 (N=402)

	Overall	Gender		Age					Time lived in area		
		Male	Female	18-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70+	Less than 10 years	11-20 years	More than 20 years
Top 3 Box %	58%	58%	59%	38%	67%	64%	67%	87%	61%	41%	63%
Mean rating	2.73	2.68	2.78	2.37	2.85	2.63	2.91	3.54	2.64	2.42	2.84
Base	220	112	108	83	37	40	30	30	27	43	149

Q4. *Please rate your satisfaction with Council's overall performance on a scale of 1-5 where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction*

Scale: 1 = low, 5 = high

*Note: 2021/2019 results use different scale: 1 = very dissatisfied, 5 = very satisfied
A significantly higher/lower percentage/rating (compared to 2023/by group)

15

Council Services and Facilities

A major component of the 2023 Community Survey was to assess perceived Importance of, and Satisfaction with 30 Council-provided services and facilities – the equivalent of 60 separate questions!

We have utilised the following techniques to summarise and analyse these 60 questions:

Highlights and Comparison with 2023 Results

Comparison with Micromex Benchmarks

Performance Gap Analysis

Quadrant Analysis

Regression Analysis (i.e.: determine the services/ facilities that drive overall satisfaction with Council)

Importance & Satisfaction – Highest/Lowest Rated Services/Facilities

A core element of this community survey was the rating of 30 facilities/services in terms of Importance and Satisfaction. The analysis below identifies the highest and lowest rated services/facilities in terms of importance and satisfaction.

Importance

The following services/facilities received the highest T2 box importance ratings:

Higher importance	T2 Box	Mean
Food safety in local restaurants, cafes and take-aways	97%	4.76
Water supply	93%	4.72
The way Council communicates with the local community	92%	4.61
Waste and recycling	91%	4.60
Protection of the natural environment and wildlife	91%	4.59
Public lighting in town centres	91%	4.56

The following services/facilities received the lowest T2 box importance ratings:

Lower importance	T2 Box	Mean
Art Gallery	44%	3.13
Unsealed roads	45%	3.27
Community halls	60%	3.64
Council social media	61%	3.74
Council website	63%	3.72

T2B = important/very important
Scale: 1 = not at all important, 5 = very important

Satisfaction

The following services/facilities received the highest T3 box satisfaction ratings:

Higher satisfaction	T3 Box	Mean
Libraries	95%	4.17
Bridges	89%	3.78
Art Gallery	87%	3.92
Council pools	87%	3.64
Sewage collection and treatment	85%	3.76
Food safety in local restaurants, cafes and take-aways	85%	3.60
Protection of the natural environment and wildlife	85%	3.37

The following services/facilities received the lowest T3 box satisfaction ratings:

Lower satisfaction	T3 Box	Mean
Waste and recycling	45%	2.51
The way Council communicates with the local community	46%	2.43
Sealed roads	46%	2.48
Unsealed roads	47%	2.52
Public toilets	57%	2.61
Development applications (DA's)	57%	2.70

T3B = somewhat satisfied/satisfied/very satisfied
Scale: 1 = not at all satisfied, 5 = very satisfied

Services and Facilities – <u>Importance</u>: Comparison by Year

The below chart compares the mean importance ratings for 2024 vs 2023.

Importance ratings for all measures have remained consistent from 2023, where no significant differences were noted across 2023 and 2024.

Scale: 1 = not at all important, 5 = very important
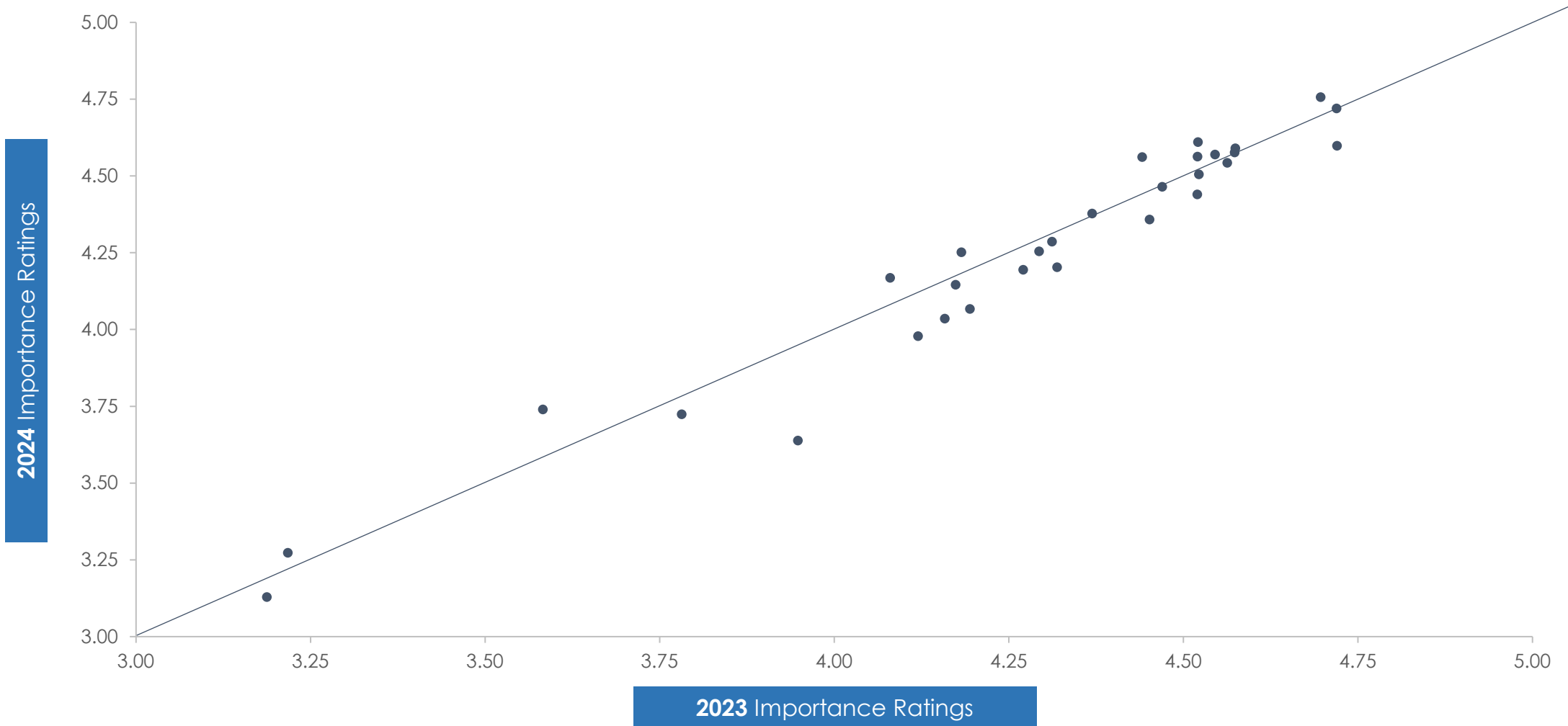
Services and Facilities – <u>Satisfaction</u>: Comparison by Year

The below chart compares the mean satisfaction ratings for 2024 vs 2023.

Satisfaction significantly decreased for 4 of the 30 comparable variables, while there was no significant increase in satisfaction for any of these measures.

2024 Satisfaction Ratings

2023 Satisfaction Ratings

Waste and recycling (-0.84)
The way Council communicates with the local community (-0.47)
Youth facilities and activities (-0.45)
Local festivals and events (-0.41)

= A significantly higher/lower level of satisfaction (compared to 2023)

Scale: 1 = not at all satisfied, 5 = very satisfied

19
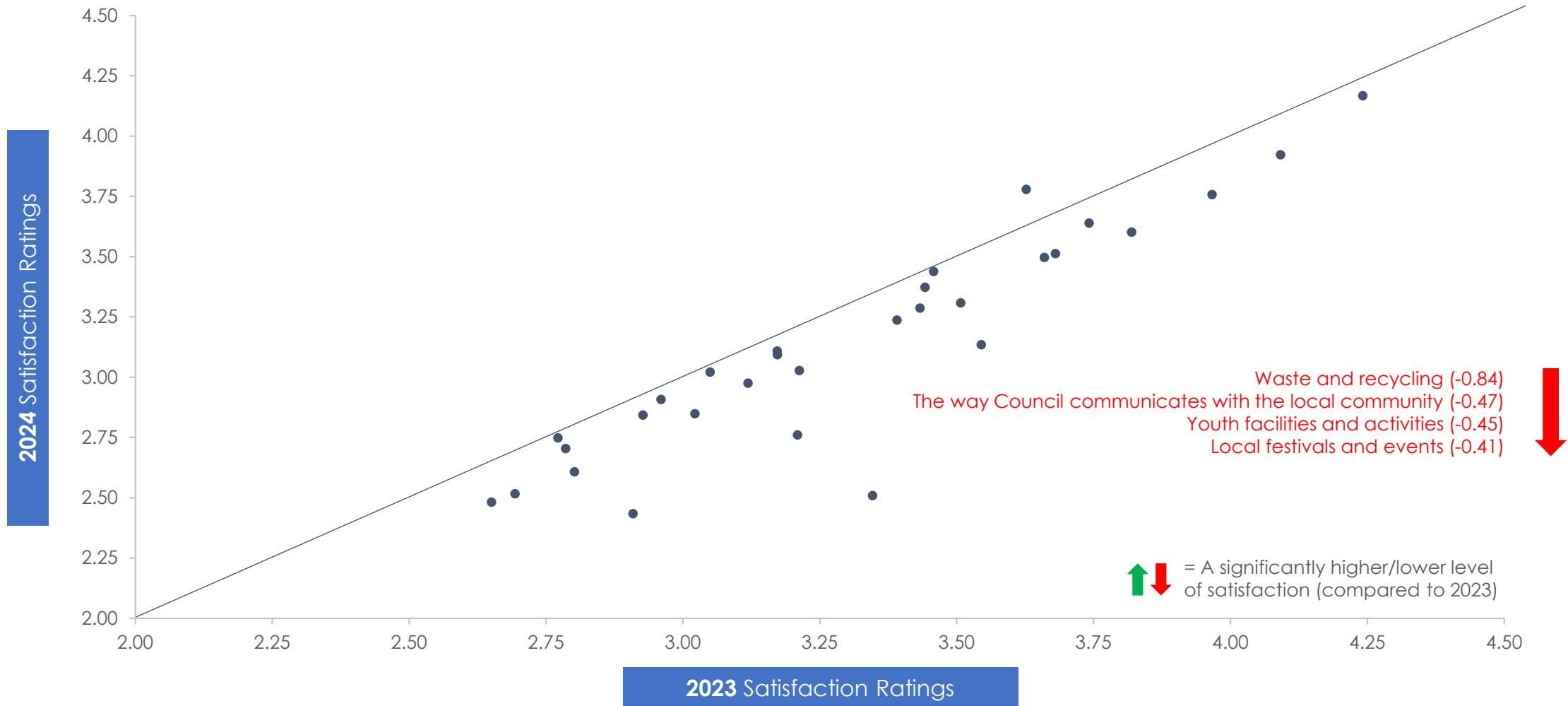
Summary <u>Importance</u> Comparison to the Micromex Benchmark

The chart to the right shows the variance between Muswellbrook Council top 2 box importance scores and the Micromex Regional Benchmark.

Services/facilities shown in the chart highlight larger positive and negative gaps.

Muswellbrook Shire Council Top 2 Box Importance Scores

Service/Facility	Score
Dog control	83%
Local festivals and events	83%
Food safety in local restaurants, cafes and take-aways	97%
Protection of the natural environment and wildlife	91%
Cleanliness of streets	86%
Public lighting in town centres	91%
The way Council communicates with the local community	92%
Parking facilities	90%
Community halls	60%
Sealed roads	85%
Bridges	71%
Art Gallery	44%
Unsealed roads	45%

Variance to the Regional Benchmark

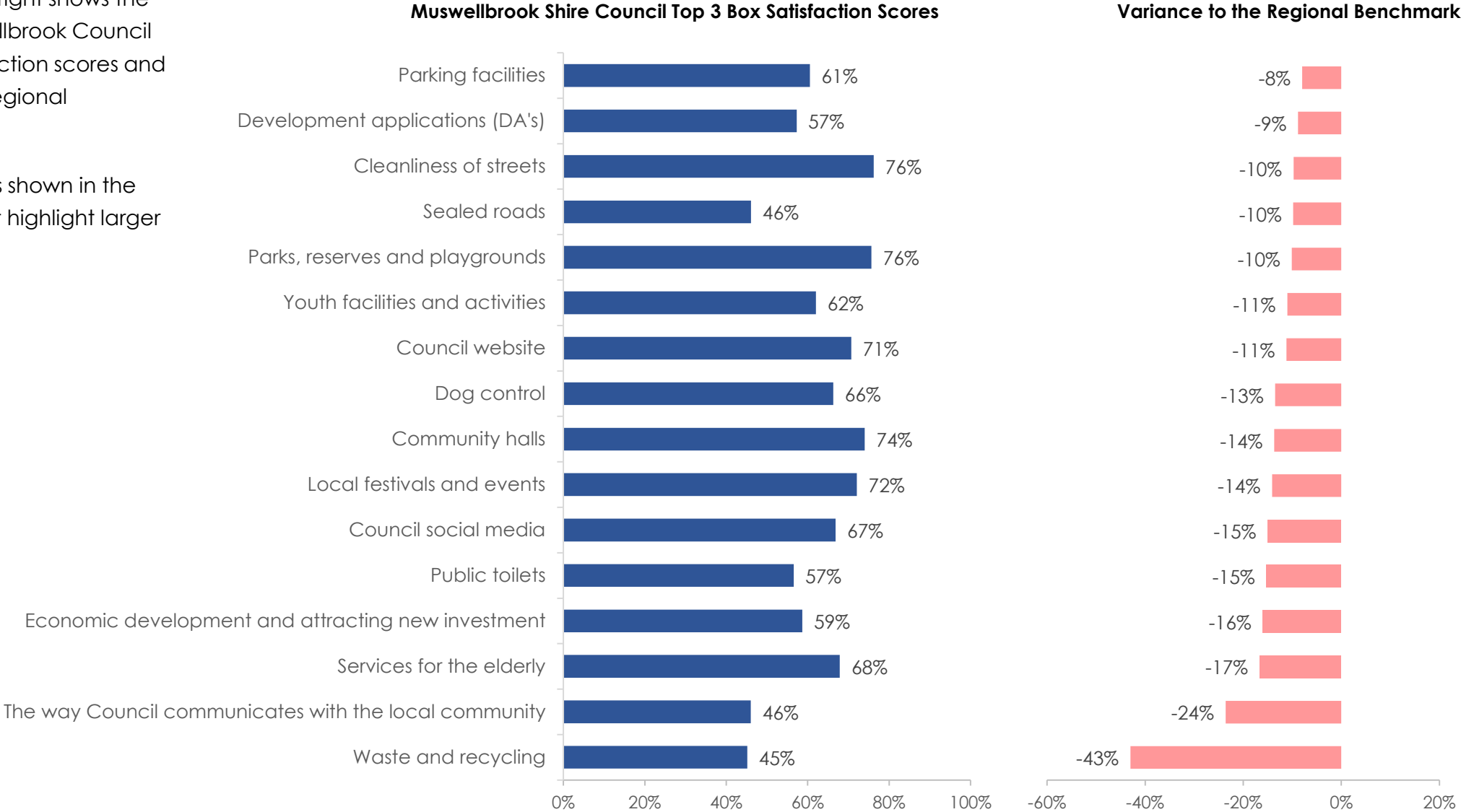| Service/Facility	Variance
Dog control	13%
Local festivals and events	13%
Food safety in local restaurants, cafes and take-aways	11%
Protection of the natural environment and wildlife	10%
Cleanliness of streets	9%
Public lighting in town centres	9%
The way Council communicates with the local community	8%
Parking facilities	8%
Community halls	-8%
Sealed roads	-8%
Bridges	-13%
Art Gallery	-16%
Unsealed roads	-32%

Note: Only services/facilities with a variance of +/- 8% to the Benchmark have been shown above. Please see Appendix 1 for detailed list
Top 2 box = important/very important

Summary <u>Satisfaction</u> Comparison to the Micromex Benchmark

The chart to the right shows the variance Muswellbrook Council top 3 box satisfaction scores and the Micromex Regional Benchmark.

Services/facilities shown in the chart to the right highlight larger negative gaps.

Muswellbrook Shire Council Top 3 Box Satisfaction Scores

Service/Facility	Score	Variance to the Regional Benchmark
Parking facilities	61%	-8%
Development applications (DA's)	57%	-9%
Cleanliness of streets	76%	-10%
Sealed roads	46%	-10%
Parks, reserves and playgrounds	76%	-10%
Youth facilities and activities	62%	-11%
Council website	71%	-11%
Dog control	66%	-13%
Community halls	74%	-14%
Local festivals and events	72%	-14%
Council social media	67%	-15%
Public toilets	57%	-15%
Economic development and attracting new investment	59%	-16%
Services for the elderly	68%	-17%
The way Council communicates with the local community	46%	-24%
Waste and recycling	45%	-43%

Note: Only services/facilities with a variance of +/- 8% to the Benchmark have been shown above. Please see Appendix 1 for detailed list
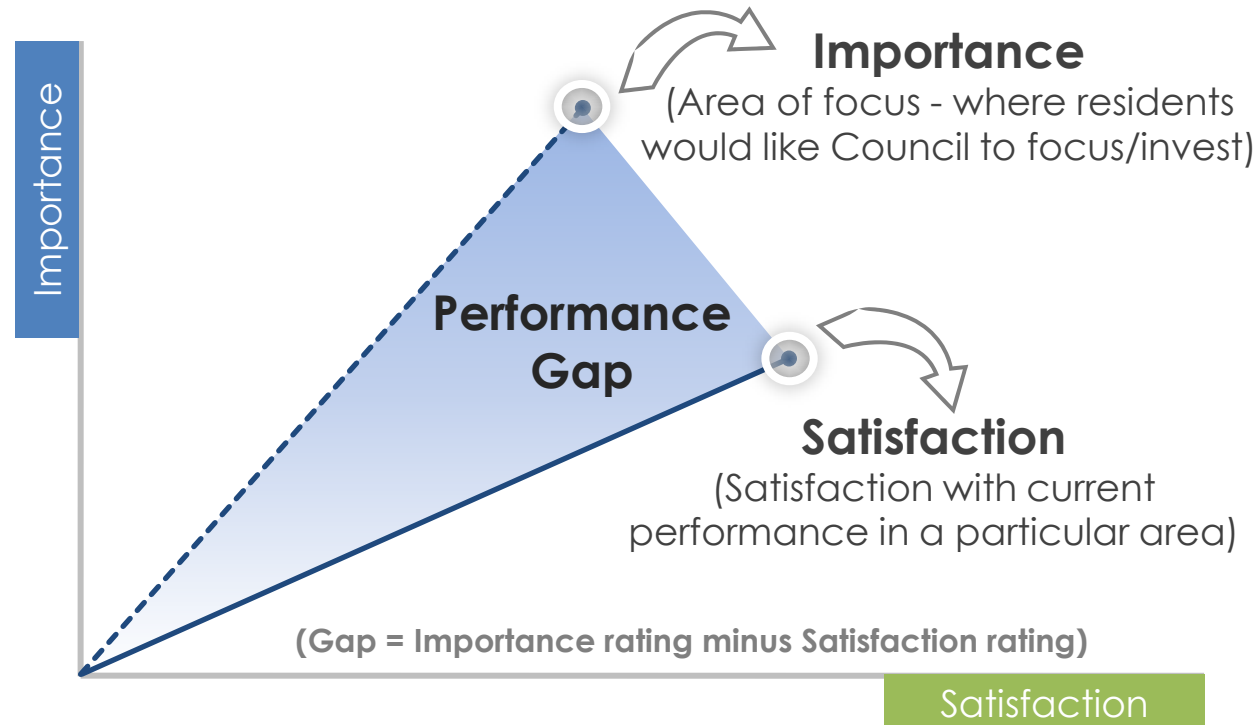Top 3 box = at least somewhat satisfied

Performance Gap Analysis

PGA establishes the gap between importance and satisfaction. This is calculated by subtracting the top 3 satisfaction score from the top 2 importance score. In order to measure performance gaps, respondents are asked to rate the importance of, and their satisfaction with, each of a range of different services or facilities on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = low importance or satisfaction and 5 = high importance or satisfaction. These scores are aggregated at a total community level.

The higher the differential between importance and satisfaction, the greater the difference is between the provision of that service by Muswellbrook Shire Council and the expectation of the community for that service/facility.

In the table on the following page, we can see the services and facilities with the largest performance gaps.

When analysing the performance gaps, it is expected that there will be some gaps in terms of resident satisfaction. Those services/facilities that have achieved a performance gap of greater than 20% may be indicative of areas requiring future optimisation.

Importance
(Area of focus - where residents would like Council to focus/invest)

Performance Gap

Satisfaction
(Satisfaction with current performance in a particular area)

(Gap = Importance rating minus Satisfaction rating)

Importance

Satisfaction

Performance Gap Analysis

When we examine the largest performance gaps, we can identify that all of the services or facilities have been rated as high in importance, whilst residents' satisfaction for all of these areas is between 45% and 68%. 'The way Council communicates with the local community' and 'waste and recycling' received the largest performance gaps (46%).

Service Area	Service/Facility	Importance T2 Box	Satisfaction T3 Box	Performance Gap (Importance – Satisfaction)
Community and Economy	The way Council communicates with the local community	92%	46%	46%
Parks, Gardens and Infrastructure	Waste and recycling	91%	45%	46%
Parks, Gardens and Infrastructure	Sealed roads	85%	46%	39%
Parks, Gardens and Infrastructure	Parking facilities	90%	61%	29%
Parks, Gardens and Infrastructure	Public toilets	80%	57%	23%
Community and Economy	Economic development and attracting new investment	81%	59%	22%
Health and Environment	Development applications (DA's)	79%	57%	22%
Community and Economy	Services for the elderly	89%	68%	21%

Note: Performance gap is the first step in the process, we now need to identify comparative ratings across all services and facilities to get an understanding of relative importance and satisfaction at an LGA level. This is when we undertake step 2 of the analysis.

Quadrant Analysis

Quadrant analysis is often helpful in planning future directions based on stated outcomes. It combines the stated importance of the community and assesses satisfaction with delivery in relation to these needs.

This analysis is completed by plotting the variables on x and y axes, defined by stated importance and rated satisfaction. We aggregate the top 2 box importance scores and top 3 satisfaction scores for stated importance and rated satisfaction to identify where the facility or service should be plotted.

On average, Muswellbrook Shire Council residents rated services/facilities importance on par with our Benchmark, while their satisfaction was, on average, lower.

	Muswellbrook Shire Council	Micromex Comparable Regional Benchmark
Average Importance	79%	78%
Average Satisfaction	70%	79%

Note: Micromex comparable benchmark only refers to like for like measures

Explaining the 4 quadrants (overleaf)

Attributes in the top right quadrant, **CELEBRATE,** such as 'food safety in local restaurants, cafes and take-aways', are Council's core strengths, and should be treated as such. Maintain, or even attempt to improve your position in these areas, as they are influential and address clear community needs.

Attributes in the top left quadrant, **IMPROVE,** such as 'the way Council communicates with the local community' are key concerns in the eyes of your residents. In the vast majority of cases you should aim to improve your performance in these areas to better meet the community's expectations.
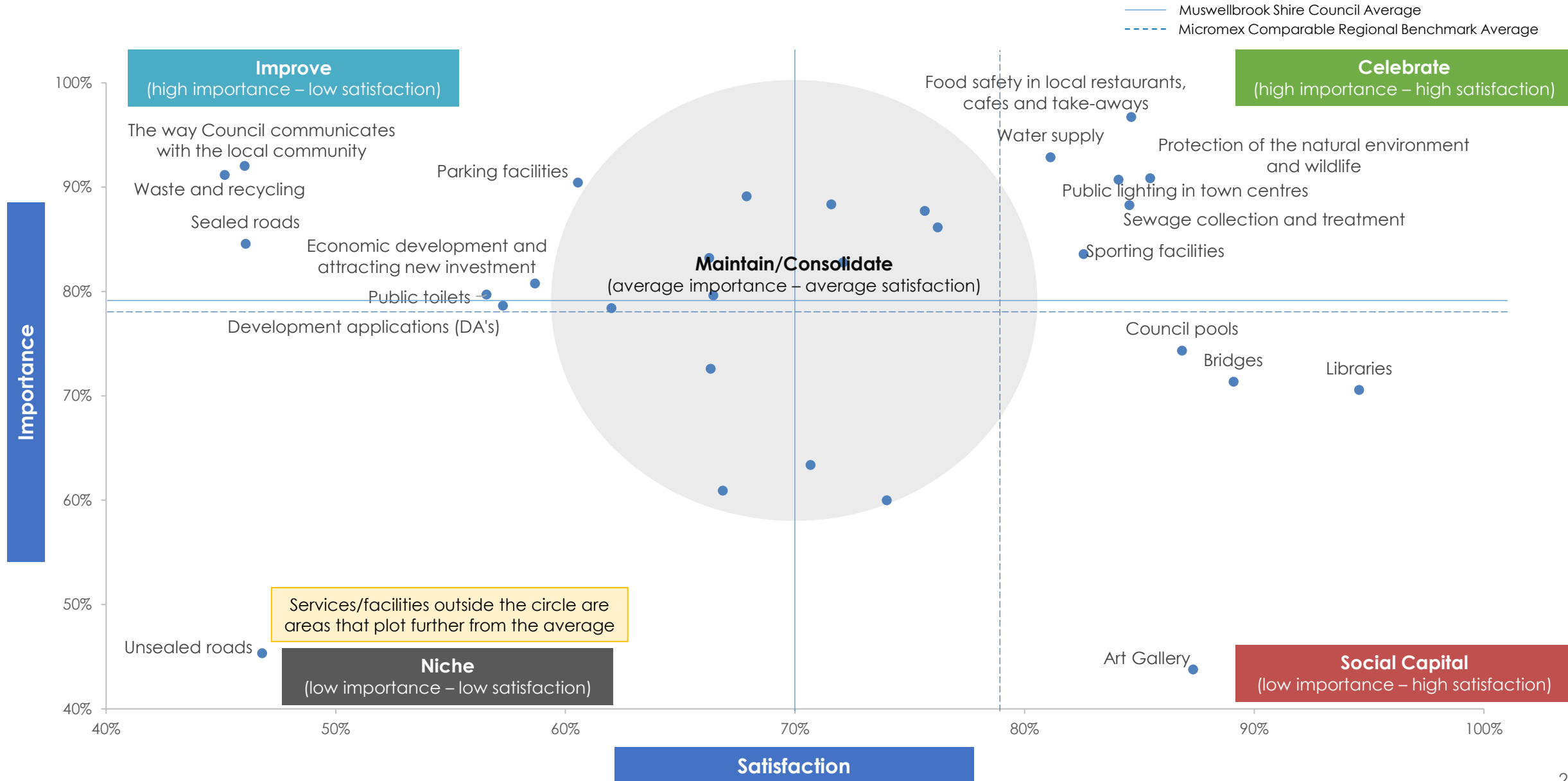
Attributes in the bottom left quadrant, **NICHE,** such as 'unsealed roads', are of a relatively lower priority (and the word 'relatively' should be stressed – they are still important). These areas tend to be important to a particular segment of the community.

Finally, attributes in the bottom right quadrant, **SOCIAL CAPITAL**, such as 'Art Gallery', are core strengths, but in relative terms they are considered less overtly important than other directly obvious areas. However, the occupants of this quadrant tend to be the sort of services and facilities that deliver to community liveability, i.e. make it a good place to live.

Recommendations based only on stated importance and satisfaction have major limitations, as the actual questionnaire process essentially 'silos' facilities and services as if they are independent variables, when they are in fact all part of the broader community perception of council performance.

Quadrant Analysis – Mapping Priority Against Delivery

The chart below shows the satisfaction (T3B%) with service/facilities measures plotted against importance (T2B%).

Muswellbrook Shire Council Average
Micromex Comparable Regional Benchmark Average

Improve
(high importance – low satisfaction)

Celebrate
(high importance – high satisfaction)

Food safety in local restaurants, cafes and take-aways

The way Council communicates with the local community

Water supply

Protection of the natural environment and wildlife

Waste and recycling

Parking facilities

Public lighting in town centres

Sewage collection and treatment

Sealed roads

Economic development and attracting new investment

Maintain/Consolidate
(average importance – average satisfaction)

Sporting facilities

Public toilets

Development applications (DA's)

Council pools

Bridges

Libraries

Services/facilities outside the circle are areas that plot further from the average

Unsealed roads

Art Gallery

Niche
(low importance – low satisfaction)

Social Capital
(low importance – high satisfaction)

Importance

Satisfaction

25

Quadrant Analysis – Mapping Priority Against Delivery

Following on the previous Slide, the chart below shows the measures in the 'maintain/consolidate' area.
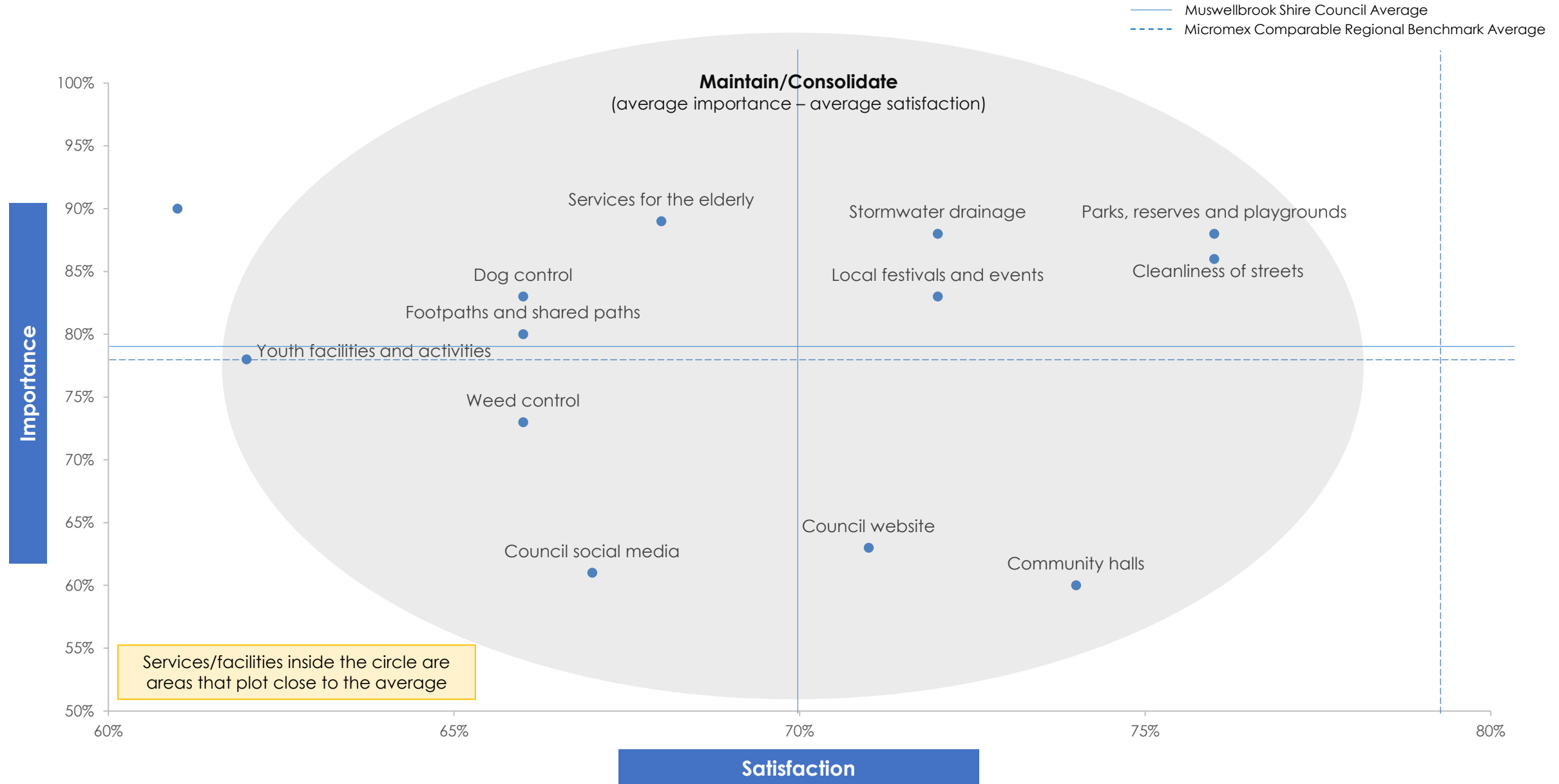
Regression Analysis

The outcomes identified in stated importance/satisfaction analysis often tend to be obvious and challenging. No matter how much focus a council dedicates to 'sealed roads', it will often be found in the **IMPROVE** quadrant. This is because, perceptually, the condition of local roads can always be better.
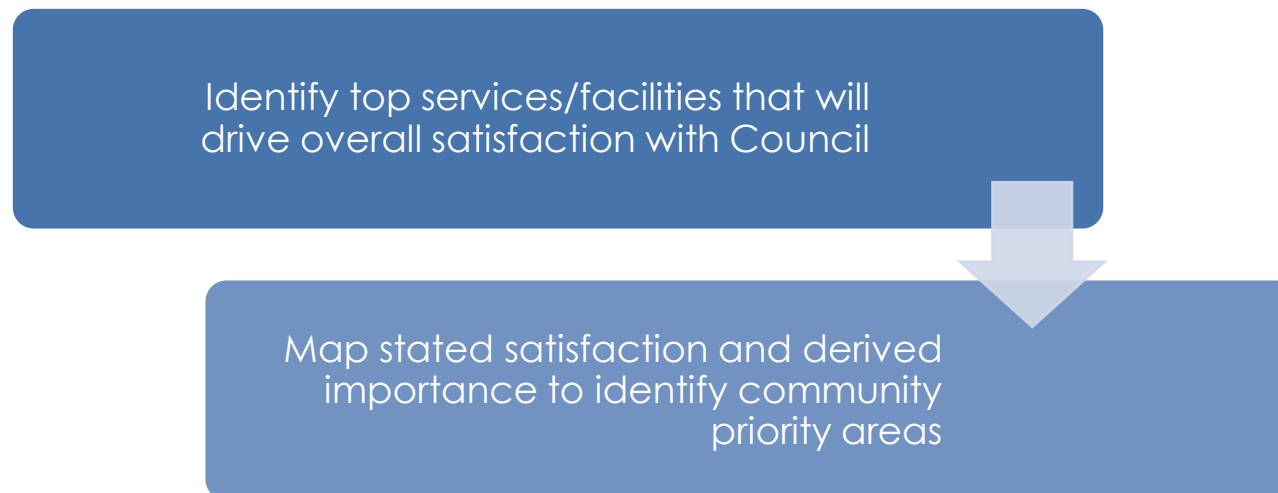
Furthermore, the outputs of stated importance and satisfaction analysis address the current dynamics of the community, they do not predict which focus areas are the most likely agents to change the community's perception of Council's overall performance. Therefore, in order to identify how Muswellbrook Shire Council <u>can actively drive overall community satisfaction,</u> we conducted further analysis

Explanation of Analysis

Regression analysis is a statistical tool for investigating relationships between dependent variables and explanatory variables. Using a regression, a category model was developed. The outcomes demonstrated that increasing resident satisfaction by actioning the priorities they stated as being important would not necessarily positively impact on overall satisfaction.
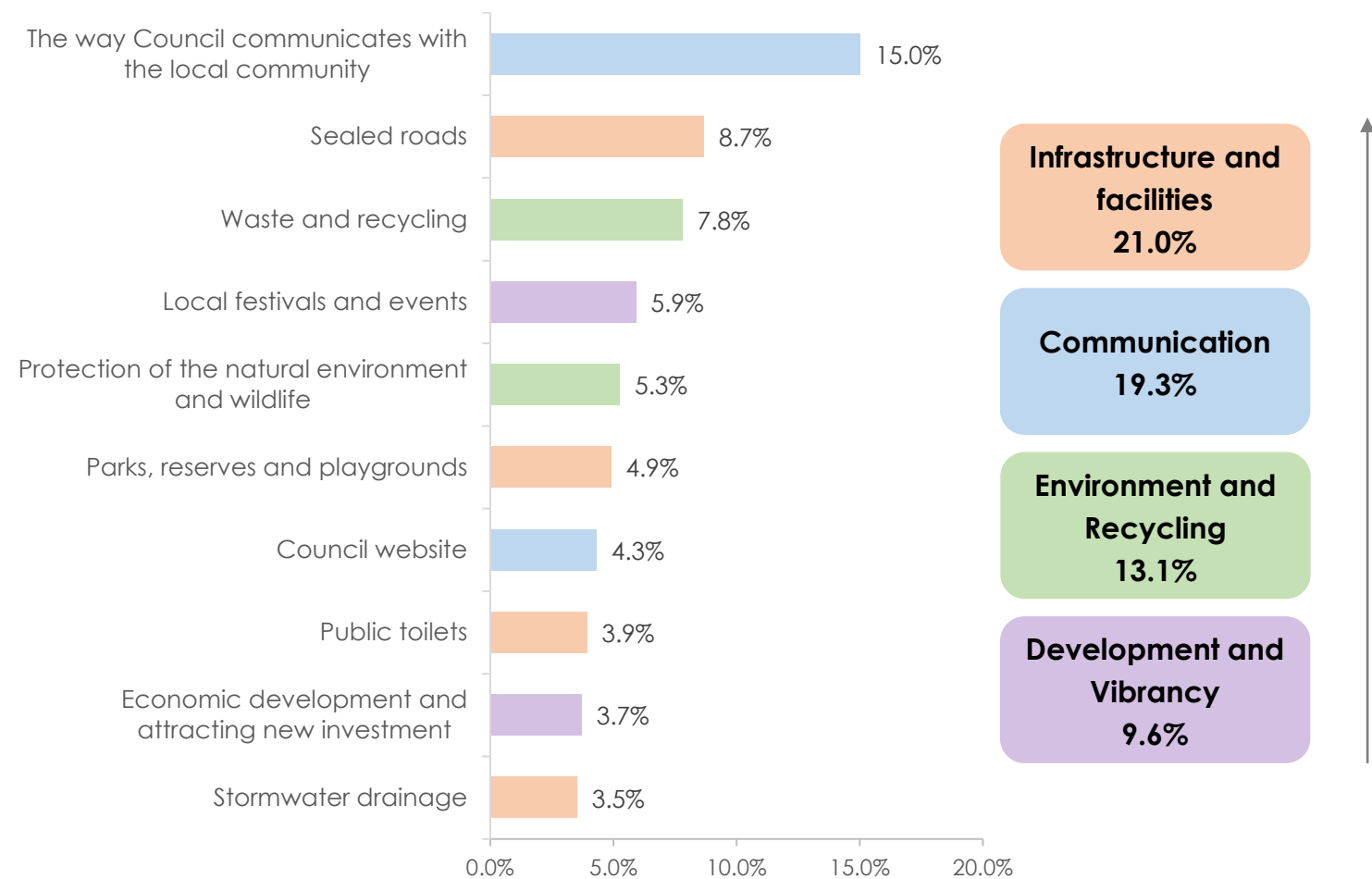
What Does This Mean?

The learning is that if we only rely on the stated community priorities, we will not be allocating the appropriate resources to the actual service attributes that will improve overall community satisfaction. Using regression analysis, we can identify the attributes that essentially build overall satisfaction. We call the outcomes 'derived importance'.

Identify top services/facilities that will drive overall satisfaction with Council

Map stated satisfaction and derived importance to identify community priority areas

Key Drivers of Overall Satisfaction with Council

The score assigned to each area is not a measure of performance, rather, it indicates the percentage of influence each measure contributes to overall satisfaction with Council.
All services/facilities are important – but if Council can increase satisfaction in these key driver areas, they will likely see an improvement in overall community satisfaction.

Service/Facility	Score
The way Council communicates with the local community	15.0%
Sealed roads	8.7%
Waste and recycling	7.8%
Local festivals and events	5.9%
Protection of the natural environment and wildlife	5.3%
Parks, reserves and playgrounds	4.9%
Council website	4.3%
Public toilets	3.9%
Economic development and attracting new investment	3.7%
Stormwater drainage	3.5%

Infrastructure and facilities 21.0%

Communication 19.3%

Environment and Recycling 13.1%
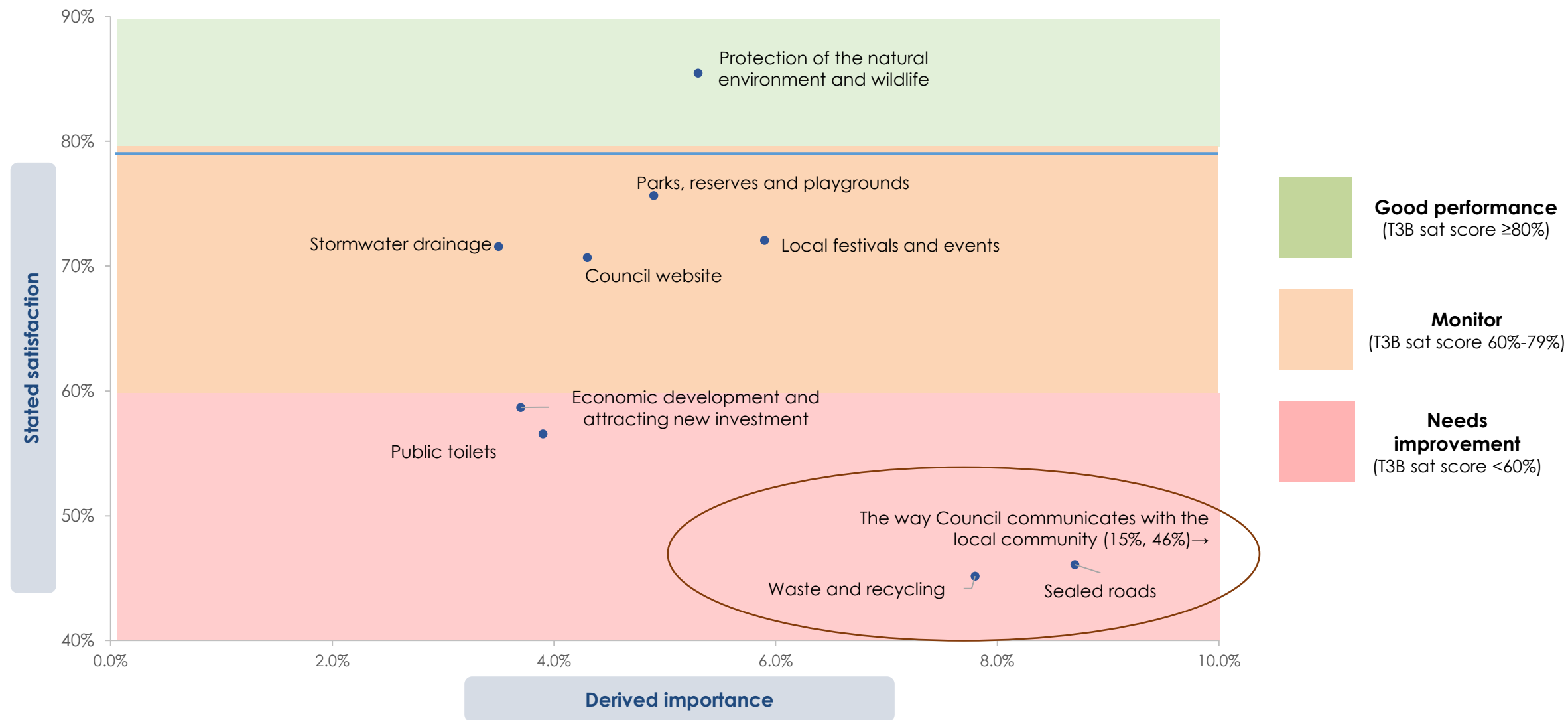
Development and Vibrancy 9.6%

These top 10 services/facilities (so 33% of the 30 services/facilities) account for over 60% of the variation in overall satisfaction.

As we can see from the chart to the left, 'the way Council communicates with the local community' is the most vital driver of overall satisfaction, followed by sealed road and waste and recycling.

After summarising them into thematic groups, 'infrastructure and facilities' has the highest relative importance scores (Nett: 21%), where 'sealed roads' contributes the most (8.7%).

R^2 value = 0.66

Dependent Variable: Q4. Please rate your satisfaction with Council's overall performance on a scale of 1-5 where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction

Note: Please see Appendix 1 for complete list

Mapping Stated Satisfaction and Derived Importance Identifies the Community Priority Areas

The below chart looks at the relationship between stated satisfaction (top 3 box) and derived importance (Regression result) to identify the level of contribution of each measure. Any services/facilities below the blue line could potentially be benchmarked to target in future research to elevate satisfaction levels in these areas.
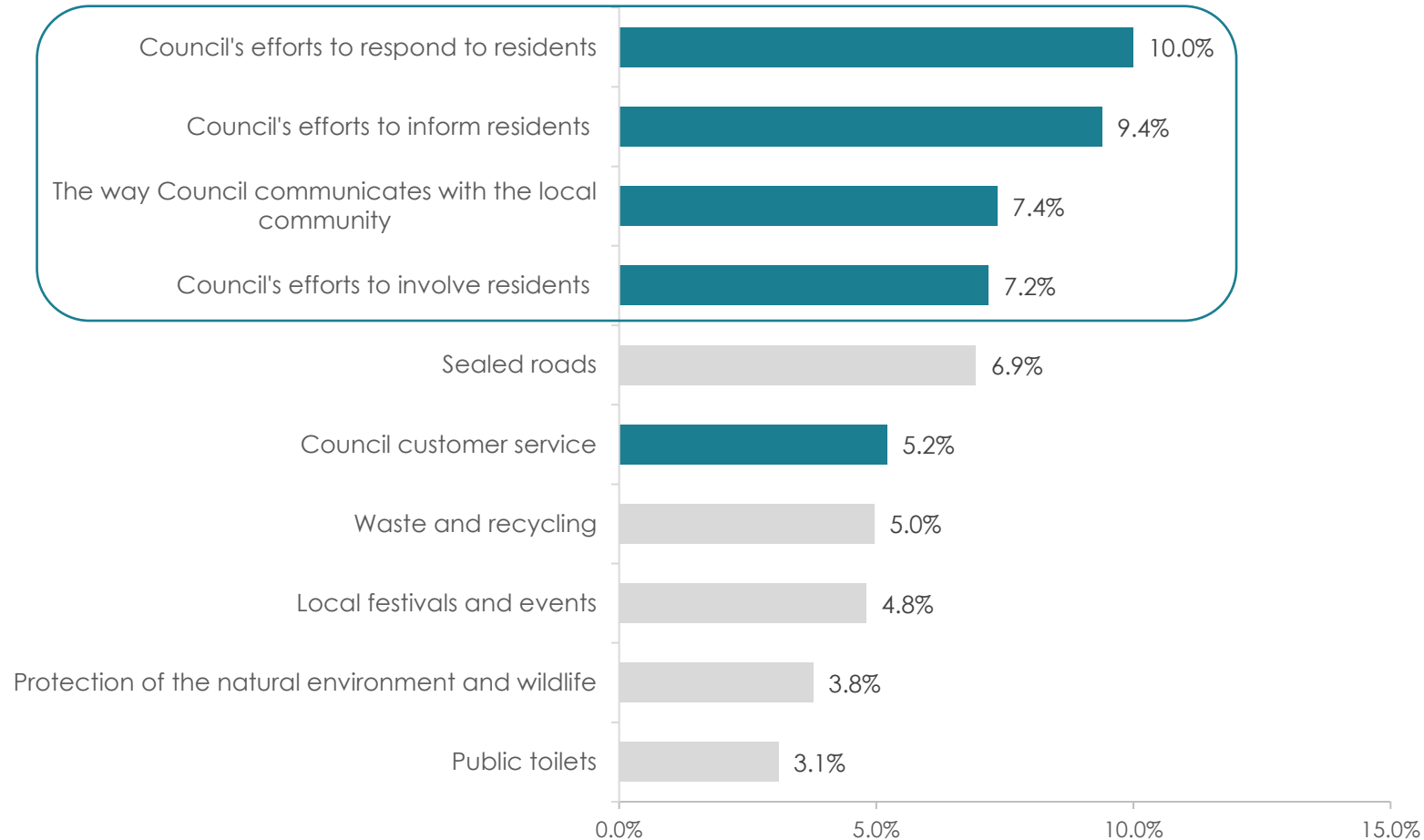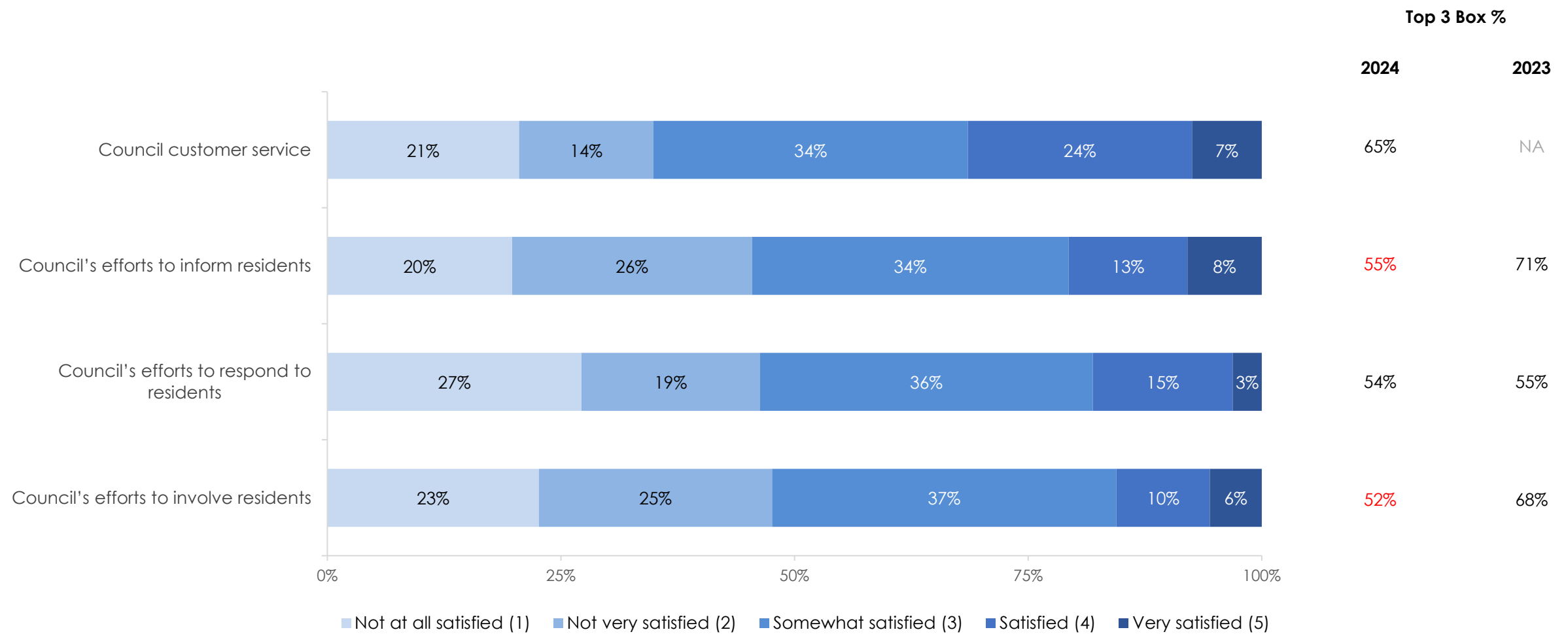

Stated satisfaction (y-axis)

- Protection of the natural environment and wildlife
- Parks, reserves and playgrounds
- Stormwater drainage
- Council website
- Local festivals and events
- Economic development and attracting new investment
- Public toilets
- The way Council communicates with the local community (15%, 46%)→
- Waste and recycling
- Sealed roads

Derived importance (x-axis)

Good performance (T3B sat score ≥80%)

Monitor (T3B sat score 60%-79%)

Needs improvement (T3B sat score <60%)

Note: Blue line represents the average top 3 box (at least somewhat satisfied) of all 30 measures

Key Drivers of Overall Satisfaction with Council – Re-run

The below chart is a re-run of the key drivers contributing to overall satisfaction, but with the inclusion of the four additional measures from Q6:
Council's efforts to inform residents
Council's efforts to involve residents
Council's efforts to respond to residents
Council customer service

Driver	Value
Council's efforts to respond to residents	10.0%
Council's efforts to inform residents	9.4%
The way Council communicates with the local community	7.4%
Council's efforts to involve residents	7.2%
Sealed roads	6.9%
Council customer service	5.2%
Waste and recycling	5.0%
Local festivals and events	4.8%
Protection of the natural environment and wildlife	3.8%
Public toilets	3.1%

Council's communication with residents contributes to nearly 40% of overall satisfaction with Council

R^2 value = 0.74

Dependent Variable: Q4. Please rate your satisfaction with Council's overall performance on a scale of 1-5 where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction

Communication and Contact

This section explores satisfaction with Council's efforts to communication and residents' methods of receiving information about Council.

Section Three

Satisfaction with Communication Efforts

65% of residents are at least somewhat satisfied with Council's customer service, making it the highest among these 4 measures. Satisfaction with Council's efforts to inform/involve residents decreased significantly from 2023, reflecting residents' desire for sufficient communication with the Council.

Top 3 Box %

		2024	2023
Council customer service	21% / 14% / 34% / 24% / 7%	65%	NA
Council's efforts to inform residents	20% / 26% / 34% / 13% / 8%	55%	71%
Council's efforts to respond to residents	27% / 19% / 36% / 15% / 3%	54%	55%
Council's efforts to involve residents	23% / 25% / 37% / 10% / 6%	52%	68%

■ Not at all satisfied (1)   ■ Not very satisfied (2)   ■ Somewhat satisfied (3)   ■ Satisfied (4)   ■ Very satisfied (5)

A significantly higher/lower percentage (compared to 2023)   32

Satisfaction with Communication Efforts

Similar to overall satisfaction, younger residents (18-39) are less likely to be satisfied with Council's efforts to inform/ involve residents. Those who have lived in the area for more than 20 years are significantly more likely to be satisfied with Council's overall customer service and Council's efforts to respond to residents.

T3B% (At least somewhat satisfied)	Overall	Male	Female	18-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70+	Less than 10 years	11-20 years	More than 20 years
Council customer service	65%	67%	63%	61%	66%	60%	63%	85%	51%	51%	72%
Council's efforts to inform residents	55%	52%	57%	42%	55%	61%	58%	77%	49%	45%	58%
Council's efforts to respond to residents	54%	55%	52%	55%	52%	45%	42%	76%	40%	39%	61%
Council's efforts to involve residents	52%	48%	57%	44%	45%	59%	53%	77%	50%	46%	55%
Base	220	112	108	83	37	40	30	30	27	43	149

Methods to Receive Information about Council

Word of mouth has remained the most common means of receiving information about Council, followed by social media platforms and brochures/flyers.


Method	2024	2023
Word of mouth	81%	76%
Social media platforms	67%	63%
Brochures/flyers	61%	54%
Web/Internet	51%	56%
Direct mail	48%	44%
Newspapers	31%	35%
Council facilities	29%	37%
Council's newsletter	29%	34%
Council representatives	28%	
At Council administration buildings	26%	
Email	23%	25%
The mayors listening post	10%	6%
Other	4%	5%
None of these	1%	1%

■ 2024 (N=220) ■ 2023 (N=402)
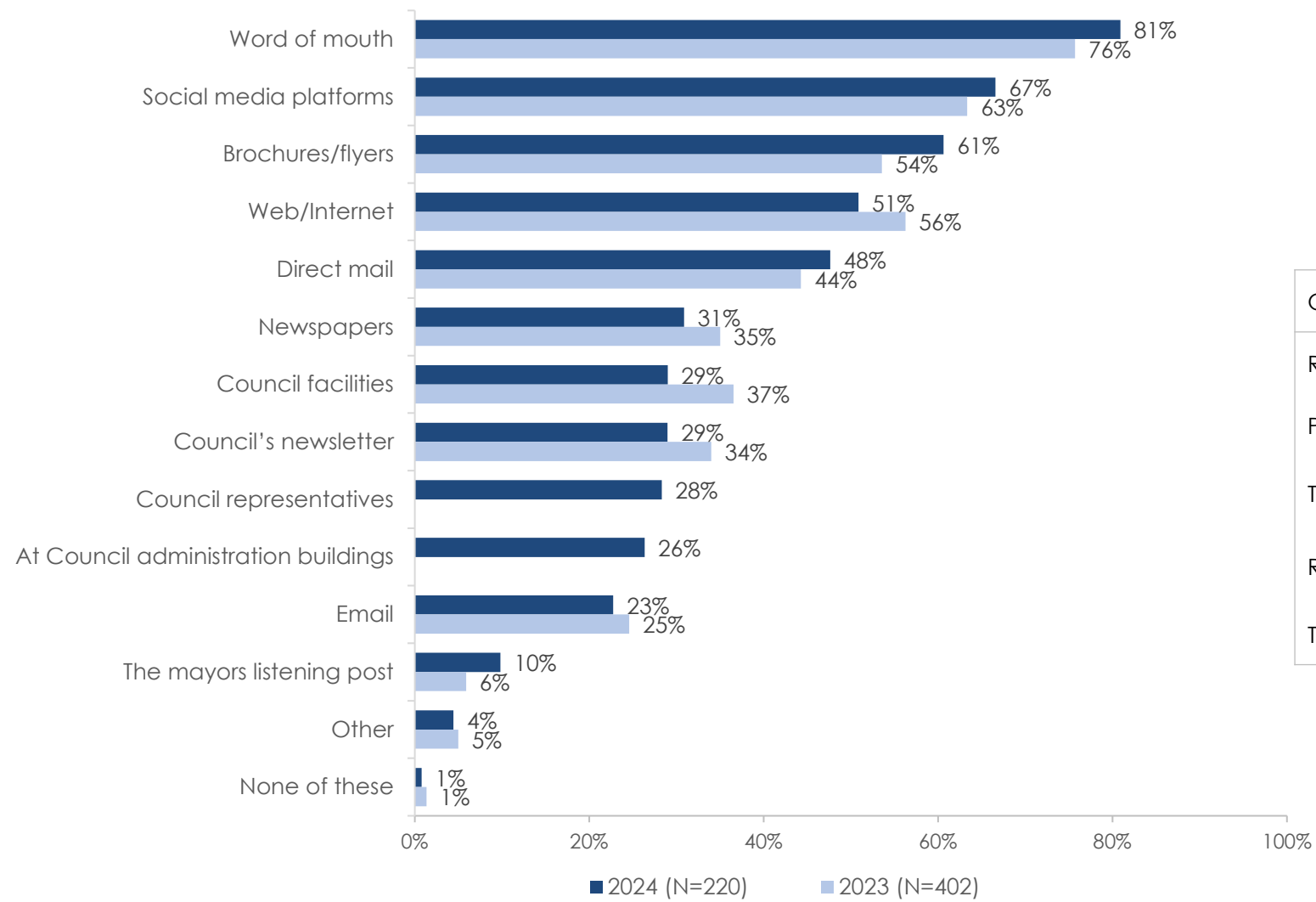
Other specified (2024)	Count
Radio	6
Phone	2
TV	1
Rates notice	1
Text messages	1

Q5.   *Through which of the following means do you receive information about Council*

Methods to Receive Information about Council

Younger residents (18-39) and those who have lived in the area for more than 20 years are significantly more likely to received information about Council by word of mouth. Younger residents are significantly more likely to use social media platforms and web/internet to receive Council information while older residents are more likely to use traditional methods (such as direct mails, newspapers and brochures/flyers).

	Overall	Male	Female	18-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70+	Less than 10 years	11-20 years	More than 20 years
Word of mouth	81%	81%	81%	92%	72%	78%	77%	69%	58%	77%	86%
Social media platforms (Facebook and LinkedIn)	67%	59%	75%	76%	85%	81%	40%	26%	76%	89%	58%
Brochures/flyers	61%	59%	62%	47%	70%	62%	72%	72%	59%	55%	63%
Web/Internet	51%	43%	59%	49%	61%	66%	44%	29%	61%	61%	46%
Direct mail	48%	49%	47%	39%	48%	48%	53%	64%	42%	44%	50%
Newspapers (Hunter River Times)	31%	25%	37%	21%	17%	32%	39%	66%	17%	12%	39%
Council facilities (i.e Libraries & community centres)	29%	27%	31%	16%	35%	31%	33%	52%	25%	32%	29%
Council's newsletter	29%	30%	28%	13%	31%	19%	46%	67%	28%	17%	33%
Council representatives i.e. Councillors, committee representatives, council staff	28%	23%	34%	18%	22%	46%	28%	43%	16%	15%	34%
At Council administration buildings	26%	21%	32%	18%	24%	25%	30%	49%	16%	18%	31%
Email	23%	21%	24%	14%	22%	34%	35%	22%	23%	21%	23%
The mayors listening post	10%	7%	12%	5%	10%	5%	7%	32%	0%	9%	12%
Other	4%	5%	4%	0%	3%	10%	9%	6%	2%	5%	5%
None of these	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	2%	4%	0%	0%
Base	220	112	108	83	37	40	30	30	27	43	149
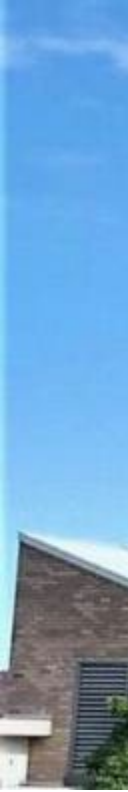
Community Strategic Plan

This section focuses on residents' attitudes toward Council's community strategic plan and future priorities for the LGA.
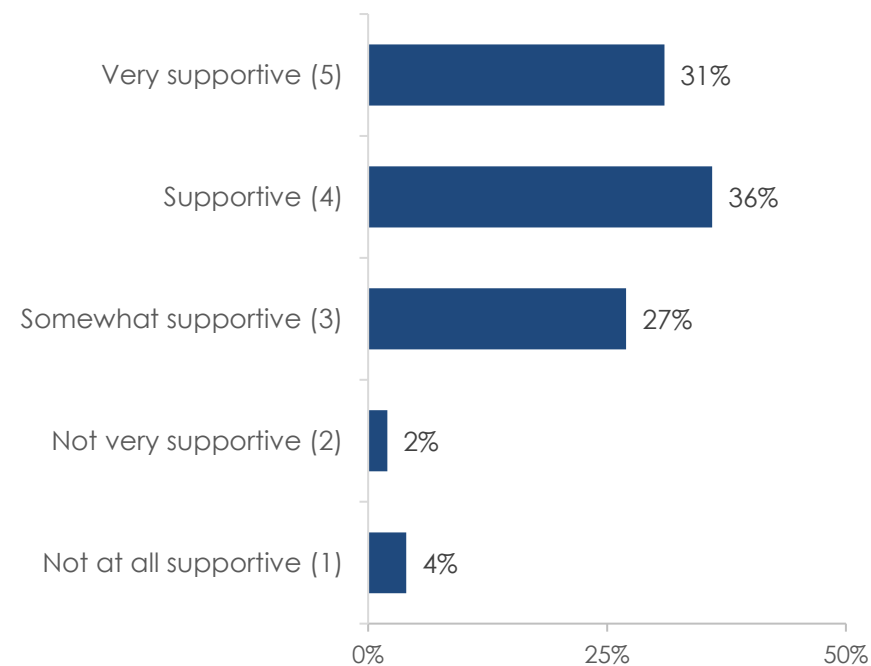
Section Four

Summary: Community Strategic Plan

- 94% of residents are at least somewhat supportive of the current community strategic plan, with 67% being strongly supportive/supportive. When asking the reasons for the levels of support:
  - Among those who are supportive/strongly supportive, 32% commented that 'it is good for the community/ it is a good idea', 24% mentioned it is important for the future/growth of the area.
  - The most common reason for not being supportive is a lack of trust in Council's actions regarding the current community strategic plan.

- Major opportunities for the shire:
  - Coal mining
  - Community services and Council engagement
  - Renewable energy
  - Jobs and employment
  - Retail/small business

- Major challenges for the shire:
  - Future of the coal industry/coal fired power generation
  - Job security/unemployment
  - Council's performance/community engagement
  - Impact of mining
  - Economic diversification

Support of Community Strategic Plan

Very supportive (5) — 31%
Supportive (4) — 36%
Somewhat supportive (3) — 27%
Not very supportive (2) — 2%
Not at all supportive (1) — 4%

Encouragingly, 94% of residents are at least somewhat supportive of the current community strategic plan, with 67% being supportive/very supportive. Females and those who have lived in the area for less than 10 years are more likely to be supportive.

> Texts below were read to the respondents before they answer this question:
>
> *Council is reviewing the Community Strategic Plan over the next 7 months. This plan incorporates the community's aspirations for the area in the future.*
>
> *The vision highlighted in the current Community Strategic Plan is: "Engaging with our community to achieve an inclusive, vibrant and sustainable future."*

	Overall	Male	Female	18-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70+	Less than 10 years	11-20 years	More than 20 years
T3B (at least somewhat supportive)	94%	91%	97%	97%	93%	92%	91%	92%	98%	95%	93%
T2B (supportive + very supportive)	67%	61%	73%	58%	75%	77%	70%	70%	80%	71%	64%
Mean rating	3.88	3.78	3.99	3.76	4.00	4.06	3.82	3.90	4.27	4.04	3.76
Base	220	112	108	83	37	40	30	30	27	43	149

Base: N = 220
Q7a. How supportive are you of this community vision?

Scale: 1 = not at all supportive, 5 = very supportive
A significantly higher/lower percentage/rating (by group)   38

Reasons for the Level of Support

67% of residents are at least somewhat supportive of the current community strategic plan. Among them, 32% commented that 'it is good for the community/ it is a good idea', 24% mentioned it is important for the future/growth of the area. The most common reason for not being supportive is a lack of trust in Council's actions regarding the current community strategic plan.

Supportive/very supportive (67%)	Total %
Good for the community/good idea	32%
Important for the future/growth of the area	24%
Depends if Council follow through/take actions	9%
Inclusive/everyone should be involved	8%
Need to be informed/more information to community	3%
Vague vision/needs to cover more	2%
Happy with Council	2%
Born in the area	2%
Other	2%
Don't know	2%

Somewhat supportive (27%)	Total %
Don't believe Council will follow through/don't like Council's actions	16%
Interested in the future/happy with the idea	8%
Vision is too broad	3%
Need more information	3%
Could do better	1%
Other	2%
Don't know	2%

Not at all supportive/not very supportive (6%)	Total %
Don't believe Council will follow through/don't like Council's actions	4%
Haven't involved the community enough	1%
Vision is too broad/needs to include more	1%
Haven't heard about the vision	1%
Other	<1%
Don't know	1%

Base: N = 220
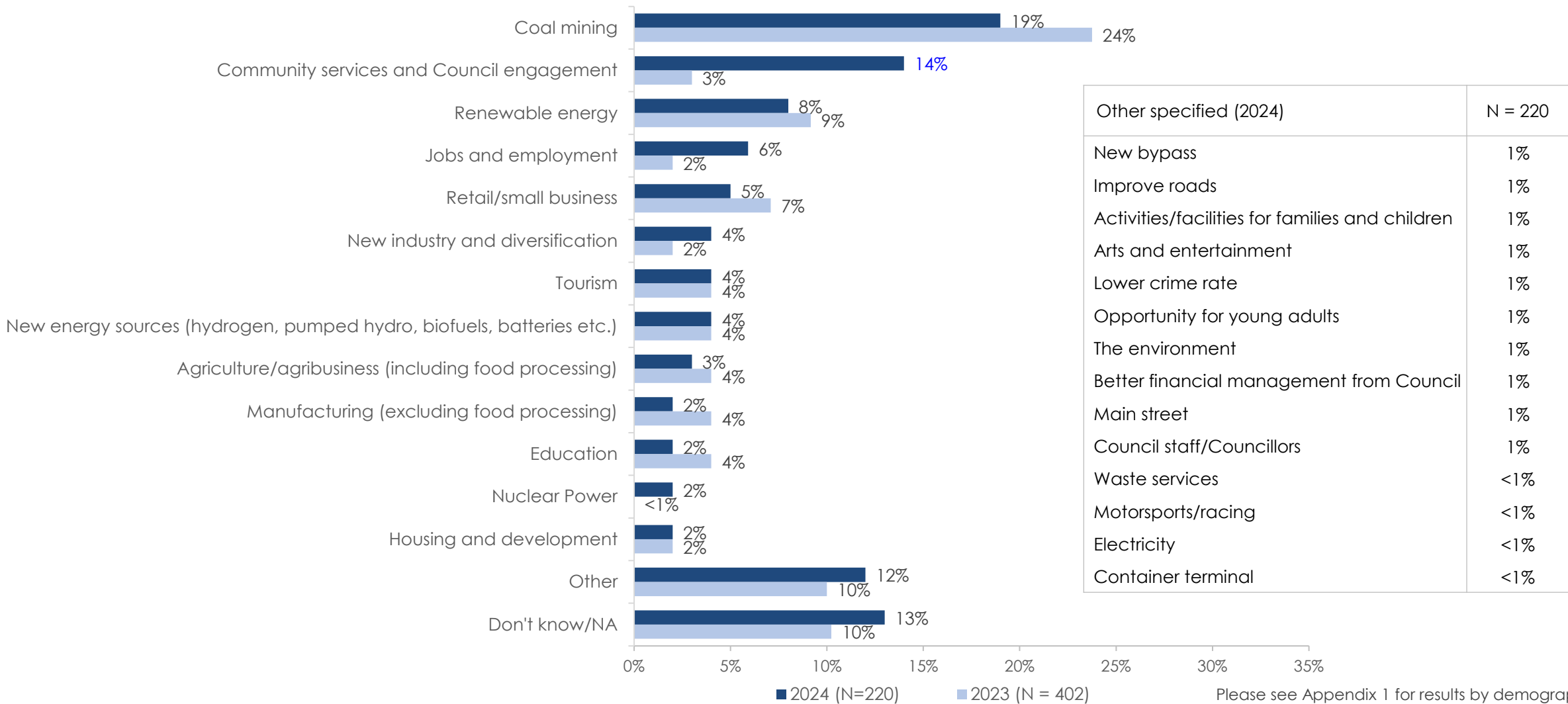*Q7a. How supportive are you of this community vision?*
Q7b. Why do you say that?

Reasons for the Level of Support

Example verbatims

Good for the community/ good idea

"Can see it is good for the community"

"It benefits everyone in the community"

Important for the future/ growth of the area

"Would love to see Muswellbrook thrive"

"We need to plan and adapt to thrive without coal mines"

Inclusive/ everyone should be involved

"Everyone should be involved with decisions"

"Inclusivity is important"

Don't believe Council will follow through/ don't like Council's actions

"No work is being done"

"Council needs to consider what the people want"

Depends if Council follow through/ take actions

"As long as council stick to it and actually take action"

"As long as it is carried out"

Need to be informed/ more information to community

"If Council let us know about these things i would be supportive"

"I like to know what's going on and help when I can"

Vague vision/ needs to cover more

"It is a very general statement"

"Vague vision, broad"

Haven't involved the community enough

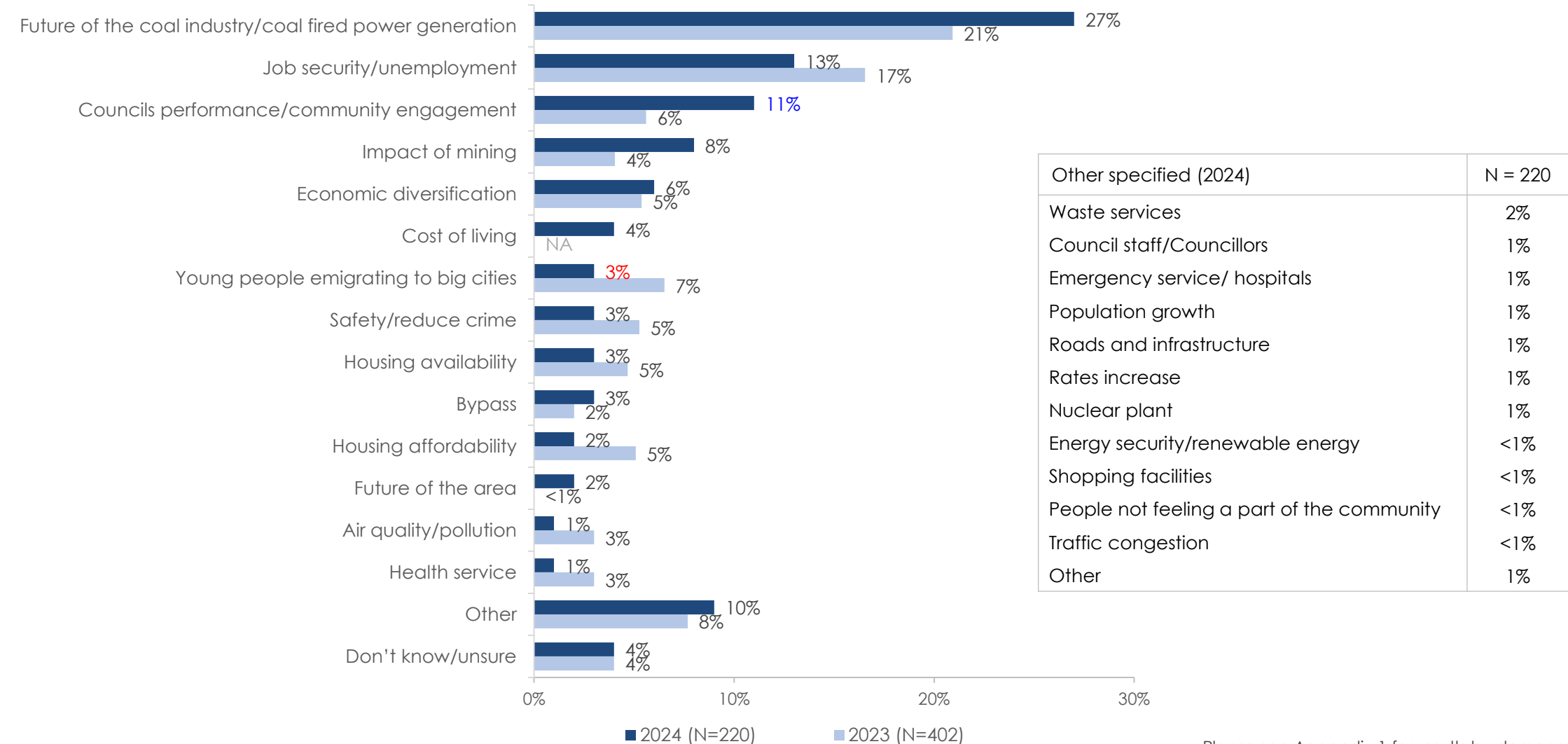"Council seems to be pushing towards renewable energy without consulting the community"

Major Opportunities for the Shire

Although there has been a slight decrease from last year, coal mining remains the most commonly mentioned opportunity for the Shire. Notably, significantly more residents see community service and Council engagement as opportunities for the LGA compared to 2023, reflecting a growing desire among residents to receive more information from Council.

Other specified (2024)	N = 220
New bypass	1%
Improve roads	1%
Activities/facilities for families and children	1%
Arts and entertainment	1%
Lower crime rate	1%
Opportunity for young adults	1%
The environment	1%
Better financial management from Council	1%
Main street	1%
Council staff/Councillors	1%
Waste services	<1%
Motorsports/racing	<1%
Electricity	<1%
Container terminal	<1%

Chart values:

- Coal mining: 19% (2024), 24% (2023)
- Community services and Council engagement: 14% (2024), 3% (2023)
- Renewable energy: 8% (2024), 9% (2023)
- Jobs and employment: 6% (2024), 2% (2023)
- Retail/small business: 5% (2024), 7% (2023)
- New industry and diversification: 4% (2024), 2% (2023)
- Tourism: 4% (2024), 4% (2023)
- New energy sources (hydrogen, pumped hydro, biofuels, batteries etc.): 4% (2024), 4% (2023)
- Agriculture/agribusiness (including food processing): 3% (2024), 4% (2023)
- Manufacturing (excluding food processing): 2% (2024), 4% (2023)
- Education: 2% (2024), 4% (2023)
- Nuclear Power: 2% (2024), <1% (2023)
- Housing and development: 2% (2024), 2% (2023)
- Other: 12% (2024), 10% (2023)
- Don't know/NA: 13% (2024), 10% (2023)

■ 2024 (N=220) ■ 2023 (N = 402)

Q9. *What do you think is the MAJOR OPPORTUNITY for the future prosperity of the Shire?*
Please see Appendix 1 for results by demographics
A significantly higher/lower percentage (by year) 41

Major Challenges for the Shire

'Future of the coal industry/coal fired power generation' has remained the most commonly mentioned major challenge for the Shire, followed by job security/unemployment. Similar to major opportunities shown in the previous slide, significantly more mentioned Council performance and community engagement compared to 2023.

Other specified (2024)	N = 220
Waste services	2%
Council staff/Councillors	1%
Emergency service/ hospitals	1%
Population growth	1%
Roads and infrastructure	1%
Rates increase	1%
Nuclear plant	1%
Energy security/renewable energy	<1%
Shopping facilities	<1%
People not feeling a part of the community	<1%
Traffic congestion	<1%
Other	1%

Chart values:

- Future of the coal industry/coal fired power generation: 27% (2024), 21% (2023)
- Job security/unemployment: 13% (2024), 17% (2023)
- Councils performance/community engagement: 11% (2024), 6% (2023)
- Impact of mining: 8% (2024), 4% (2023)
- Economic diversification: 6% (2024), 5% (2023)
- Cost of living: 4% (2024), NA (2023)
- Young people emigrating to big cities: 3% (2024), 7% (2023)
- Safety/reduce crime: 3% (2024), 5% (2023)
- Housing availability: 3% (2024), 5% (2023)
- Bypass: 3% (2024), 2% (2023)
- Housing affordability: 2% (2024), 5% (2023)
- Future of the area: 2% (2024), <1% (2023)
- Air quality/pollution: 1% (2024), 3% (2023)
- Health service: 1% (2024), 3% (2023)
- Other: 10% (2024), 8% (2023)
- Don't know/unsure: 4% (2024), 4% (2023)

■ 2024 (N=220) ■ 2023 (N=402)

Other Suggestions for Future Planning

24% of residents indicate that they would like to see more/improved services and facilities (e.g., youth and elderly activities and facilities, education), 22% mentioned the maintenance of road and other infrastructure. 18% mentioned better waste management.

Other frequently mentioned suggestions include better Council actions (e.g., communication, information), better business support, job security/opportunities, green space/parks and more infrastructure for growth.

Example Verbatim Comments:

"Kmart, everyone wants Kmart here, bigger shopping centre, everyone has to go down to Maitland to buy things"

"Better road access in/out of the area e.g., purpose-built access roads to town coming from the highway"

"FOGO bins service needs to be separate to green waste bin, not enough green bin collection"

"Need weekly red bin waste collection especially in summer"

"Get feedback from the community before doing something"

22% Road maintenance/ infrastructure

13% Council action

9% Business support

9% Job security/ opportunities

Other Suggestions

18% Waste management

9% Green space/parks

9% More infrastructure for growth

24% Service and facilities

Base: N = 220

Q8. Are there any areas or considerations that you think we should be including in our future planning for the region

Please see Appendix 1 for the full list of results 43

Additional Analyses

Appendix 1

Comparison to Previous Research

Service/Facility	Importance		Satisfaction		
	2024	2023	2024	2023	2023*
Sealed roads	4.44	4.52	2.48	2.65	2.66
Unsealed roads	3.27	3.22	2.52	2.69	2.71
Bridges	4.07	4.19	3.78	3.63	3.49
Footpaths and shared paths	4.25	4.29	3.02	3.05	3.05
Cleanliness of streets	4.46	4.47	3.29	3.43	3.36
Public toilets	4.25	4.18	2.61	2.80	2.78
Weed control	3.98	4.12	2.91	2.96	2.97
Community halls	3.64	3.95	3.24	3.39	3.33
Sporting facilities	4.29	4.31	3.50	3.66	3.54
Parks, reserves and playgrounds	4.51	4.52	3.31	3.51	3.47
Parking facilities	4.56	4.52	2.84	2.93	2.94
Public lighting in town centres	4.56	4.44	3.44	3.46	3.42
Stormwater drainage	4.57	4.55	3.11	3.17	3.14
Waste and recycling	4.60	4.72	2.51	3.35	3.32
Water supply	4.72	4.72	3.51	3.68	3.63

Service/Facility	Importance		Satisfaction		
	2024	2023	2024	2023	2023*
Sewage collection and treatment	4.54	4.56	3.76	3.97	3.89
Council pools	4.15	4.17	3.64	3.74	3.66
Libraries	4.04	4.16	4.17	4.24	4.06
Youth facilities and activities	4.19	4.27	2.76	3.21	3.17
Services for the elderly	4.58	4.57	2.98	3.12	3.11
Economic development and attracting new investment	4.36	4.45	2.75	2.77	2.76
Council website	3.72	3.78	3.09	3.17	2.99
Council social media	3.74	3.58	3.03	3.21	3.03
Art Gallery	3.13	3.19	3.92	4.09	3.40
Local festivals and events	4.20	4.32	3.13	3.55	3.42
The way Council communicates with the local community	4.61	4.52	2.43	2.91	2.88
Dog control	4.38	4.37	2.85	3.02	3.00
Development applications (DA's)	4.17	4.08	2.70	2.79	2.76
Food safety in local restaurants, cafes and take-aways	4.76	4.70	3.60	3.82	3.76
Protection of the natural environment and wildlife	4.59	4.57	3.37	3.44	3.37

Scale: 1 = not at all important/not at all satisfied, 5 = very important/very satisfied
A significantly higher/lower level of importance/satisfaction (by year)

*Note: Unfiltered satisfaction scores were used on specific slides in the 2023's report (based on all respondents, not just those selected 4/5 in importance), while there were barely any significant differences between these two versions of satisfaction scores 45

Importance Compared to the Micromex Benchmark

Service/Facility	Muswellbrook Shire Council T2 box importance score	Micromex LGA Benchmark – Regional T2 box importance score	Variance
Dog control	83%▲	70%	13%
Local festivals and events	83%▲	70%	13%
Food safety in local restaurants, cafes and take-aways	97%▲	85%	12%
Protection of the natural environment and wildlife	91%▲	81%	10%
Cleanliness of streets	86%	77%	9%
Public lighting in town centres	91%	82%	9%
The way Council communicates with the local community	92%	84%	8%
Parking facilities	90%	82%	8%
Sewage collection and treatment	88%	81%	7%
Development applications (DA's)	79%	72%	7%
Sporting facilities	84%	77%	7%
Stormwater drainage	88%	82%	6%
Services for the elderly	89%	83%	6%
Water supply	93%	88%	5%
Parks, reserves and playgrounds	88%	83%	5%

Note: Benchmark differences are based on assumed variants of +/- 10%, with variants beyond +/- 10% more likely to be significant
▲/▼ = positive/negative difference equal to/greater than 10% from Benchmark.

Note: T2 = important/very important

Importance Compared to the Micromex Benchmark

Service/Facility	Muswellbrook Shire Council T2 box importance score	Micromex LGA Benchmark – Regional T2 box importance score	Variance
Youth facilities and activities	78%	75%	3%
Council pools	74%	71%	3%
Economic development and attracting new investment	81%	79%	2%
Libraries	71%	70%	1%
Waste and recycling	91%	91%	0%
Footpaths and shared paths	80%	81%	-1%
Public toilets	80%	82%	-2%
Council website	63%	66%	-3%
Council social media	61%	66%	-5%
Weed control	73%	78%	-5%
Community halls	60%	68%	-8%
Sealed roads	85%	93%	-8%
Bridges	71%▼	84%	-13%
Art Gallery	44%▼	60%	-16%
Unsealed roads	45%▼	77%	-32%

Note: Benchmark differences are based on assumed variants of +/- 10%, with variants beyond +/- 10% more likely to be significant
▲/▼ = positive/negative difference equal to/greater than 10% from Benchmark.

Note: T2 = important/very important

Satisfaction Compared to the Micromex Benchmark

Service/Facility	Muswellbrook Shire Council T3 box satisfaction score	Micromex LGA Benchmark – Regional T3 box satisfaction score	Variance
Bridges	89%	84%	5%
Council pools	87%	85%	2%
Protection of the natural environment and wildlife	85%	84%	1%
Libraries	95%	94%	1%
Footpaths and shared paths	66%	68%	-2%
Public lighting in town centres	84%	86%	-2%
Art Gallery	87%	90%	-3%
Unsealed roads	47%	50%	-3%
Water supply	81%	85%	-4%
Stormwater drainage	72%	76%	-4%
Food safety in local restaurants, cafes and take-aways	85%	90%	-5%
Sewage collection and treatment	85%	90%	-5%
Sporting facilities	83%	89%	-6%
Weed control	66%	74%	-8%
Parking facilities	61%	69%	-8%

Note: Benchmark differences are based on assumed variants of +/- 10%, with variants beyond +/- 10% more likely to be significant
▲/▼ = positive/negative difference equal to/greater than 10% from Benchmark.

Note: T3 = at least somewhat satisfied

Satisfaction Compared to the Micromex Benchmark

Service/Facility	Muswellbrook Shire Council T3 box satisfaction score	Micromex LGA Benchmark – Regional T3 box satisfaction score	Variance
Development applications (DA's)	57%	66%	-9%
Cleanliness of streets	76%▼	86%	-10%
Sealed roads	46%▼	56%	-10%
Parks, reserves and playgrounds	76%▼	86%	-10%
Youth facilities and activities	62%▼	73%	-11%
Council website	71%▼	82%	-11%
Dog control	66%▼	80%	-14%
Community halls	74%▼	88%	-14%
Local festivals and events	72%▼	86%	-14%
Council social media	67%▼	82%	-15%
Public toilets	57%▼	72%	-15%
Economic development and attracting new investment	59%▼	75%	-16%
Services for the elderly	68%▼	85%	-17%
The way Council communicates with the local community	46%▼	70%	-24%
Waste and recycling	45%▼	88%	-43%

Note: Benchmark differences are based on assumed variants of +/- 10%, with variants beyond +/- 10% more likely to be significant
▲/▼ = positive/negative difference equal to/greater than 10% from Benchmark.

Note: T3 = at least somewhat satisfied

Performance Gap Analysis

When analysing performance gap data, it is important to consider both stated satisfaction and the absolute size of the performance gap.

Performance Gap Ranking

Service/Facility	Importance T2 Box	Satisfaction T3 Box	Performance Gap (Importance – Satisfaction)
The way Council communicates with the local community	92%	46%	46%
Waste and recycling	91%	45%	46%
Sealed roads	85%	46%	39%
Parking facilities	90%	61%	29%
Public toilets	80%	57%	23%
Economic development and attracting new investment	81%	59%	22%
Development applications (DA's)	79%	57%	22%
Services for the elderly	89%	68%	21%
Dog control	83%	66%	17%
Stormwater drainage	88%	72%	16%
Youth facilities and activities	78%	62%	16%
Footpaths and shared paths	80%	66%	14%
Food safety in local restaurants, cafes and take-aways	97%	85%	12%
Parks, reserves and playgrounds	88%	76%	12%
Water supply	93%	81%	12%

Note: T2 = important/very important
T3 = at least somewhat satisfied

Performance Gap Analysis

Performance Gap Ranking Continued…

Service/Facility	Importance T2 Box	Satisfaction T3 Box	Performance Gap (Importance – Satisfaction)
Local festivals and events	83%	72%	11%
Cleanliness of streets	86%	76%	10%
Public lighting in town centres	91%	84%	7%
Weed control	73%	66%	7%
Protection of the natural environment and wildlife	91%	85%	6%
Sewage collection and treatment	88%	85%	3%
Sporting facilities	84%	83%	1%
Unsealed roads	45%	47%	-2%
Council social media	61%	67%	-6%
Council website	63%	71%	-8%
Council pools	74%	87%	-13%
Community halls	60%	74%	-14%
Bridges	71%	89%	-18%
Libraries	71%	95%	-24%
Art Gallery	44%	87%	-43%

Note: T2 = important/very important
T3 = at least somewhat satisfied

Regression Analysis – Influence on Overall Satisfaction

The chart to the right summarises the influence of the 30 facilities/ services on overall satisfaction with Council's performance, based on the Regression analysis.

Facility/Service	Influence
The way Council communicates with the local community	15.0%
Sealed roads	8.7%
Waste and recycling	7.8%
Local festivals and events	5.9%
Protection of the natural environment and wildlife	5.3%
Parks, reserves and playgrounds	4.9%
Council website	4.3%
Public toilets	3.9%
Economic development and attracting new investment	3.7%
Stormwater drainage	3.5%
Food safety in local restaurants, cafes and take-aways	3.4%
Cleanliness of streets	3.3%
Weed control	3.1%
Council social media	2.8%
Sewage collection and treatment	2.5%
Council pools	2.3%
Youth facilities and activities	2.3%
Services for the elderly	2.1%
Water supply	2.1%
Parking facilities	1.9%
Community halls	1.9%
Footpaths and shared paths	1.8%
Sporting facilities	1.7%
Development applications (DA's)	1.2%
Dog control	1.1%
Unsealed roads	0.9%
Public lighting in town centres	0.8%
Libraries	0.6%
Bridges	0.5%
Art Gallery	0.5%

Major Opportunities for the Shire

	Overall	Male	Female	18-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70+	Less than 10 years	11-20 years	More than 20 years
Coal mining	19%	20%	18%	14%	31%	17%	21%	19%	10%	21%	20%
Community services and Council engagement	14%	21%	7%	28%	0%	5%	5%	16%	0%	2%	20%
Renewable energy	8%	12%	5%	2%	11%	10%	25%	4%	13%	3%	9%
Jobs and employment	6%	2%	10%	12%	7%	0%	2%	0%	14%	18%	1%
Retail/small business	5%	1%	10%	8%	2%	2%	5%	6%	8%	0%	6%
New industry and diversification	4%	4%	5%	1%	3%	8%	7%	6%	0%	3%	5%
Tourism	4%	5%	3%	0%	7%	11%	5%	0%	11%	4%	2%
New energy sources (hydrogen, pumped hydro, biofuels, batteries etc.)	4%	6%	3%	5%	3%	7%	5%	2%	0%	7%	4%
Agriculture/agribusiness (including food processing)	3%	4%	2%	3%	2%	5%	7%	0%	7%	6%	2%
Manufacturing (excluding food processing)	2%	4%	0%	2%	3%	3%	2%	0%	5%	0%	2%
Education	2%	1%	3%	0%	0%	4%	0%	7%	3%	0%	2%
Nuclear Power	2%	3%	1%	0%	3%	0%	5%	4%	0%	4%	1%
Housing and development	2%	1%	2%	1%	0%	4%	0%	2%	4%	3%	1%
Healthcare	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other	12%	9%	15%	12%	14%	15%	7%	9%	12%	19%	10%
Don't know/NA	13%	7%	18%	13%	12%	9%	5%	24%	14%	9%	13%
Base	220	112	108	83	37	40	30	30	27	43	149

Major Challenges for the Shire

	Overall	Male	Female	18-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70+	Less than 10 years	11-20 years	More than 20 years
Future of the coal industry/coal fired power generation	27%	30%	24%	31%	37%	26%	19%	16%	27%	42%	23%
Job security/unemployment	13%	12%	13%	4%	25%	10%	14%	22%	9%	19%	11%
Councils performance/community engagement	11%	15%	7%	18%	5%	2%	12%	10%	7%	6%	13%
Impact of mining	8%	12%	5%	15%	6%	3%	5%	2%	5%	3%	10%
Economic diversification	6%	7%	4%	4%	5%	5%	9%	10%	11%	2%	6%
Cost of living	4%	4%	5%	7%	0%	8%	0%	2%	4%	8%	3%
Young people emigrating to big cities	3%	3%	3%	1%	2%	9%	5%	0%	4%	2%	3%
Safety/reduce crime	3%	0%	7%	5%	2%	2%	5%	0%	7%	0%	4%
Housing availability	3%	2%	3%	0%	4%	8%	0%	4%	6%	4%	2%
Bypass	3%	2%	5%	5%	0%	0%	7%	4%	0%	0%	5%
Housing affordability	2%	0%	3%	4%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	2%
Future of the area	2%	3%	0%	0%	3%	2%	5%	2%	2%	2%	2%
Air quality/pollution	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	2%	2%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Health services	1%	0%	2%	1%	0%	2%	0%	0%	4%	0%	1%
Other	10%	6%	14%	6%	10%	12%	14%	14%	13%	11%	9%
Don't know/unsure	4%	3%	6%	1%	0%	8%	2%	14%	0%	5%	5%
Base	220	112	108	83	37	40	30	30	27	43	149

Other Suggestions for Future Planning

Other suggestions	N=220 (Total %)	Other suggestions	N=220 (Total %)
More/improved services and facilities e.g. youth services, healthcare, disability, education	24%	More activities/events in the area	4%
Road maintenance/infrastructure	22%	Traffic congestion management	3%
Improved waste management	18%	Crime reduction	2%
Improved Council action e.g. communication, planning, information	13%	Stormwater/drainage	2%
Support/more local shops/business in the area	9%	Parking	1%
Job security/opportunities	9%	Keep renewable energy out of the area	1%
More/improved green spaces/parks	9%	More public transport	1%
Infrastructure to support growth	9%	Housing types/distribution of housing in the area	1%
Affordability e.g., rates, housing	8%	Other	7%
Future thinking e.g., mine closure, renewable energy, industry	7%	Don't know	17%
Maintenance and cleanliness of the area	6%		

Q8. Are there any areas or considerations that you think we should be including in our future planning for the region?

Council's Used to Create the Micromex Regional Benchmark

The Regional Benchmark was composed from the Council areas listed below:		
Albury City Council	Hawkesbury City Council	Parkes Shire Council
Ballina Shire Council	Kempsey Shire Council	Port Macquarie-Hastings Council
Bathurst Regional Council	Lachlan Shire Council	Richmond Valley Council
Bland Shire Council	Lake Macquarie City Council	Singleton Shire Council
Blue Mountains City Council	Leeton Shire Council	Tamworth Regional Council
Byron Shire Council	Lismore City Council	Tenterfield Shire Council
Cabonne Shire Council	Lithgow City Council	Tweed Shire Council
Central Coast Council	Liverpool Plains Shire Council	Upper Hunter Shire Council
Cessnock City Council	Maitland City Council	Wagga Wagga City Council
City of Newcastle	MidCoast Council	Walgett Shire Council
Coffs Harbour City Council	Mid-Western Regional Council	Weddin Shire Council
Devonport City Council	Moree Plains Shire Council	Wingecarribee Shire Council
Dungog Shire Council	Murray River Council	Wollondilly Shire Council
Eurobodalla Shire Council	Murrumbidgee Council	Yass Valley Council
Forbes Shire Council	Narrabri Shire Council	
Glen Innes Severn Shire Council	Narrandera Shire Council	

Questionnaire

Appendix 2

Muswellbrook Shire Council
Community Research
March 2024

Hi my name is .... and I'm calling from Micromex Research, on behalf of Muswellbrook Shire Council. We are seeking community views on a range of local issues, Council services and future priorities for the Shire. This survey takes less than 15 minutes, and all answers are confidential. Would you be willing to assist by completing a short survey?

S1. May I have your postcode of where you live? (SR)

Position	Answers	Notes
1	2328 (Denman etc.)	
2	2333 (Muswellbrook, Sandy Hollow etc.)	
3	Other	Terminate

S2. Please stop me when I read out your age group. (SR) *Prompt*

Position	Answers	Notes
1	18-29	
2	30-39	
3	40-49	
4	50-59	
5	60-69	
6	70+	

S3. Can you tell me which, if any of the following, apply to you? Please answer yes or no as I read each one. (MR) *Prompt*

Position	Answers	Notes
1	I work in the Muswellbrook Shire	
2	I study in the Muswellbrook Shire	
3	I am a ratepayer in the Muswellbrook Shire	
4	NONE OF THESE	

Part A – Living in Muswellbrook Shire

Q1. Overall, how would you rate the quality of life you have living in Muswellbrook Shire? (SR) *Prompt*

Value	Answers	Notes
6	Excellent	
5	Very good	
4	Good	
3	Fair	
2	Poor	
1	Very poor	

Q2. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means strongly disagree and 5 means strongly agree, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? *Prompt*

Value	Answers	Notes
5	5 - Strongly agree	
4	4	
3	3	
2	2	
1	1 – Strongly disagree	

Position	Answers	Notes
1	Our local Council understands the Community's needs and expectations	
2	Council delivers good value for our rates dollar	
3	I feel that Council provides opportunities for residents to have a say about the Shire's future	
4	It is easy to access the Council services I need	
5	Generally speaking, the Shire's local infrastructure meets my needs	
6	Traffic generally flows well within the main streets of Muswellbrook	
7	Local roads are in good condition	
8	If the shire had better public transport, I'd be more likely to use it	
9	Local rivers and creeks are healthy	
10	Our parks and reserves are clean, attractive and welcoming	
11	I feel safe in my home at night	
12	I feel safe walking in my local streets at night	
13	There are good employment prospects for locals within the area	
14	I feel part of my community	
15	I feel proud of where I live	
16	I'm concerned about the cost of living in our local area	

Part B - Community Priorities and Council Services

Q3.	In this section I will read out different Council services or facilities. For each one could you please rate your opinion of the importance of the service/facility to you, and your level of satisfaction with Council's performance/delivery of that service during the last 12 months. The scale is from 1 to 5, where 1 is low importance and low satisfaction and 5 is high importance and high satisfaction. *Prompt*

(Importance & satisfaction asked for all)

Parks, Gardens and Infrastructure

Position	Answers	Importance Low 1 2 3 4 5 High	Satisfaction Low 1 2 3 4 5 High NA
1	Sealed roads		
2	Unsealed roads		
3	Bridges		
4	Footpaths and shared paths		
5	Cleanliness of streets		
6	Public toilets		
7	Weed control		
8	Community halls		
9	Sporting facilities		
10	Parks, reserves and playgrounds		
11	Parking facilities		
12	Public lighting in town centres		
13	Stormwater drainage		
14	Waste and recycling		
15	Water supply		
16	Sewage collection and treatment		

Community and Economy

Position	Answers	Importance Low 1 2 3 4 5 High	Satisfaction Low 1 2 3 4 5 High NA
1	Council pools		
2	Libraries		
3	Youth facilities and activities		
4	Services for the elderly		
5	Economic development and attracting new investment		
6	Council website		
7	Council social media		
8	Art Gallery		
9	Local festivals and events		
10	The way Council communicates with the local community		

Health and Environment

Position	Answers	Importance Low 1 2 3 4 5 High	Satisfaction Low 1 2 3 4 5 High NA
1	Dog control		
2	Development applications (DA's)		
3	Food safety in local restaurants, cafes and take-aways		
4	Protection of the natural environment and wildlife		

Q4.	Please rate your satisfaction with Council's overall performance on a scale of 1-5 where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction. (SR)

Position	Answers	Notes
1	1 - Low	
2	2	
3	3 - Moderate	
4	4	
5	5 - high	

Part C – Communication & Engagement

Q5.	Through which of the following means do you receive information about Council? (MR) *Prompt*

Position	Answers	Notes
1	Web/Internet	
2	Newspapers (Hunter River Times)	
3	Word of mouth	
4	Email	
5	Brochures/flyers	
6	Council's newsletter	
7	Social media platforms (Facebook and Linkedin)	
8	Direct mail	
9	Council facilities (i.e Libraries & community centres)	
10	At Council administration buildings	
12	The mayors listening post	
13	Council representatives ie. Councillors, committee representatives, council staff	
14	None of these (Do not prompt)	
15	Other	Specify

Q5i.	Other (Please specify). (TEXT)

Position	Answers	Notes
1		5 lines

Q6. Can you please rate the following criteria regarding Council's efforts to communicate with residents? Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is not at all satisfied, and 5 is very satisfied. *Prompt*

Value	Answers	Notes
5	5 – Very satisfied	
4	4	
3	3	
2	2	
1	1 – Not at all satisfied	

Position	Answers	Notes
1	Council's efforts to inform residents	
2	Council's efforts to involve residents	
3	Council's efforts to respond to residents	
4	Council Customer Service	

Part D - Community Strategic Plan

Council is reviewing the Community Strategic Plan over the next 7 months. This plan incorporates the community's aspirations for the area in the future.

The vision highlighted in the current Community Strategic Plan is:

"Engaging with our community to achieve an inclusive, vibrant and sustainable future."

Q7a. How supportive are you of this community vision? (SR) Prompt

Value	Answers	Notes
1	Not at all supportive	
2	Not very supportive	
3	Somewhat supportive	
4	Supportive	
5	Very supportive	

Q7b. Why do you say that?

Position	Answers	Notes
1		5 lines

Q8. Are there any areas or considerations that you think we should be including in our future planning for the region?

Position	Answers	Notes
1		5 lines

Q9. What do you think is the MAJOR OPPORTUNITY for the future prosperity of the Shire? DO NOT PROMPT (SR)

Position	Answers	Notes
1	Coal mining	
2	Renewable energy	
3	New energy sources (hydrogen, pumped hydro, biofuels, batteries etc.)	
4	Tourism	
5	Agriculture/agribusiness (including food processing)	
6	Education	
7	Healthcare	
8	Retail/small business	
9	Manufacturing (excluding food processing)	
10	Other	Specify

Q9i. Other (Please specify). (TEXT)

Position	Answers	Notes
1		1 line

Q10. What do you think is the MAJOR CHALLENGE for the future of the Muswellbrook Shire going forward? DO NOT PROMPT

Position	Answers	Notes
1	Job security/unemployment	
2	Future of the coal industry/coal fired power generation	
3	Air quality/pollution	
4	Impact of mining	
5	Housing affordability	
6	Housing availability	
7	Health services	
8	Economic diversification	
9	Young people emigrating to big cities	
10	Don't know/unsure	
11	Other	Specify

Q10i. Other (Please specify). (TEXT)

Position	Answers	Notes
1		1 line

Demographics

We're very close to the end of the survey. I just have a couple of demographic questions to ask you.

D1. Can you tell me if you live in an urban or rural area? (SR)

Position	Answers	Notes
1	Rural area	
2	Urban area	

D2. Do you have any children under the age of 18 living in your home? (SR)

Position	Answers	Notes
1	Yes	
2	No	

D3. How long have you lived in the Muswellbrook Shire? (SR) *Prompt*

Position	Answers	Notes
1	Less than 12 months	
2	1-5 years	
3	6-10 years	
4	11-20 years	
5	More than 20 years	

D4. And do you identify as being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?

Position	Answers	Notes
1	Yes	
2	No	
3	Prefer not to say	

D5. And does anyone living in your home have a disability?

Position	Answers	Notes
1	Yes	
2	No	
3	Prefer not to say	

D6. Gender:

Position	Answers	Notes
1	Male	
2	Female	
3	Non Binary	

Thank you for your time and assistance. This market research is carried out in compliance with the Privacy Act, and the information you provided will be used only for research purposes. Just to remind you, I am calling from Micromex Research on behalf of Muswellbrook Shire Council.

micromex
research

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