# NSW LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMUNITY SATISFACTION SURVEY EDWARD RIVER COUNCIL

# **2016 RESEARCH REPORT**

COORDINATED BY THE NSW DEPARTMENT OF PREMIER AND CABINET ON BEHALF OF NEWLY ESTABLISHED COUNCILS

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#### **BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES**

This report outlines the results and recommendations of the 2016 NSW Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey for Edward River Council.

In a first for the NSW Local Government sector, the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) coordinated delivery of this Community Satisfaction Survey amongst newly established councils in NSW in 2016. The survey is intended to produce data that will assist new councils in measuring success of implementation.

DPC together with new councils developed a success framework to guide the implementation of new councils and to measure progress. The Stronger Councils Framework defines a strong council as one that delivers results for their community, builds relationships and partnerships, and has the culture, people and capability to make this happen. An agreed measure of success in the Stronger Councils Framework is community satisfaction with council's overall performance.

The 2016 survey is intended to provide baseline information on community views towards, and satisfaction with, the services of council. The research will be an important tool for councils to better understand what matters to their communities and enable them to focus their implementation activities to improve services, focus communications, enhance community perceptions of council and build stronger relationships between councils and their communities.

It is anticipated that the 2016 Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey will be the genesis of an ongoing sector-wide annual local government survey regime.



#### CONTEXT

The 2016 survey is intended to provide baseline information on community views towards, and satisfaction with, the services of council, so as **to inform priority areas for the newly formed councils to focus on**.

The survey has been designed to be repeatable. In this the first year, where only baseline data is available, councils can compare results to other newly formed councils, either State-wide, or within the metropolitan or regional/ rural group. For further comparison, should they wish, councils can refer to results in the Victorian State-wide report, which is available at: <a href="http://www.dtpli.vic.gov.au/local-government/publications-and-research/council-community-satisfaction-survey">http://www.dtpli.vic.gov.au/local-government/publications-and-research/council-community-satisfaction-survey</a>.

It is intended that this baseline data will be replicated to provide trend data for measurement and review in future years.

It is important to note that most Councils participating in this research were formed on the 12<sup>th</sup> May, 2016. Respondents were asked to reflect specifically on the performance of the newly formed council. Notwithstanding this, there is potential that the results could also reflect respondents' perceptions of the former councils.



#### SURVEY METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLING

This survey was conducted by Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) as a representative random probability survey of residents aged 18+ years in Edward River Council.

Survey sample was purchased from an accredited supplier of publicly available phone records, including up to 30% mobile phone numbers to cater to the diversity of residents within Edward River Council, particularly younger people.

A total of n=400 completed interviews were achieved in Edward River Council. Survey fieldwork was conducted in the period of 1<sup>st</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2016.

Minimum quotas of gender within age groups were applied during the fieldwork phase. Post-survey weighting was then conducted to ensure accurate representation of the age and gender profile of the Edward River Council area.

Any variation of +/-1% between individual results and net scores in this report or the detailed survey tabulations is due to rounding. In reporting, '—' denotes not mentioned and '0%' denotes mentioned by less than 1% of respondents. 'Net' scores refer to two or more response categories being combined into one category for simplicity of reporting.

This research was conducted in compliance with AS-ISO 20252.



## SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES EXPLAINED

Within tables and index score charts throughout this report, statistically significant differences at the 95% confidence level are represented by upward directing blue and downward directing red arrows. Significance when noted indicates a significantly higher or lower result for the analysis group in comparison to the 'total' or overall result for the council for that survey question. Therefore in the example below:

- > The State-wide result is significantly <u>higher</u> than the overall result for the council.
- > The result among 40-64 year olds is significantly <u>lower</u> than the overall result for the council.



#### Overall Performance – Index Scores (example extract only)



#### **INDEX SCORES EXPLAINED**

Many questions ask respondents to rate council on a five-point scale, for example, performance from 'very good' to 'very poor', with 'can't say' also a possible response category. To facilitate ease of reporting and comparison of results over time (following this benchmark wave), and measured against the State-wide result and the council group, an 'Index Score' has been calculated for such measures.

The Index Score is calculated and represented as a score out of 100 (on a 0 to 100 scale), with 'can't say' responses excluded from the analysis. The '% RESULT' for each scale category is multiplied by the 'INDEX FACTOR'. This produces an 'INDEX VALUE' for each category, which are then summed to produce the 'INDEX SCORE', equating to '60' in the following example.

SCALE CATEGORIES	% RESULT	INDEX FACTOR	CALCULATION		
Very good	9%	100	9% x 100 =	9	
Good	40%	75	40% x 75 =	30	
Average	37%	50	37% x 50 =	19	
Poor	9%	25	9% x 25 =	2	
Very poor	4%	0	4% x 0 =	0	
Can't say	1%			INDEX SCORE 60	



#### **INDEX SCORE IMPLICATIONS**

Index scores are indicative of an overall rating on a particular service area. In this context, index scores indicate:

- a) how well council is seen to be performing in a particular service area; or
- b) the level of importance placed on a particular service area.

For ease of interpretation, index score ratings can be categorised as follows:

INDEX SCORE	Performance implication	Importance implication		
80 – 100	Council is performing <b>very well</b> in this service area	This service area is seen to be extremely important		
60 - 80	Council is performing <b>well</b> in this service area, but there is room for improvement	This service area is seen to be very important		
40 – 60	Council is performing <b>satisfactorily</b> in this service area but needs to improve	This service area is seen to be <b>fairly important</b>		
0 - 40	Council is performing <b>poorly</b> in this service area	This service area is seen to be <b>not that important</b>		



# **KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**



#### **EDWARD RIVER COUNCIL**

#### **TOP 3 PERFORMING AREAS**





#### **OVERALL COUNCIL PERFORMANCE**

State-wide result is inclusive of all newly formed councils. Results shown are index scores out of 100.

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#### **TOP 3 AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT**



## **OVERALL PERFORMANCE**

Overall, Edward River Council is performing at a satisfactory level across a number of core measures. The **overall performance index is on par with newly formed regional and rural councils** (index score of 56), and *slightly* (but not significantly) lower than the State-wide average of 58. Analysis by demographics on this measure shows:

- 65+ year olds (index score of 62) rate overall performance of Edward River Council as significantly higher than the Council average, and women also provide Council with a slightly higher rating of 58.
- Men, 18-39 year olds and 40-64 year olds (all with an index scores of 54) are *slightly* less favourable in their view of Council's overall performance.

A third of Edward River Council residents rate Council's overall performance as 'good' or 'very good' (37%), while fewer than one fifth rate it as 'poor' or 'very poor' (18%)

- 12% of 65+ year olds rate performance as 'very good', by contrast with the Council-wide average of 7%.
- 40% of 18-39 year olds rate performance as 'good' or 'very good'; however, 1 in 4 (26%) of those in this age group rate performance as 'poor' or 'very poor'.



#### **OVERVIEW OF CORE PERFORMANCE MEASURES**

Review of core performance measures (as shown on page 21) shows that Edward River Council is performing at a statistically significantly *higher* level (at the 95% confidence interval) than State-wide and regional/ rural councils on a range of measures, as follows:

- Recreational facilities
- Community consultation and engagement
- > Informing the community.

Edward River Council is also rated significantly *higher* than the regional/rural average on decisions made in the interest of the community, and slightly higher than the State-wide average.

However, other measures display significantly *lower* ratings than State-wide and regional/ rural averages. Negativity on each of these lower rated measures is being driven by 18-39 year olds, 40-64 year olds and (to some extent) men, as they are more likely to view Council performance unfavourably. The specific services are:

- > The condition of local streets and footpaths in your area
- Providing value for money for my rates
- Being a well-run and managed council.

**Ease of access to services** (index score of 62) **and customer service** (index score of 67) are measures rated as *slightly* below State-wide and regional/ rural averages.



## **AREAS WHERE COUNCIL IS PERFORMING WELL**

With a performance index score of 69, **recreational facilities** is Council's highest rated performance measure; this rating is higher than that of the State-wide and regional/rural group.

- However, residents aged 18-39 gave the highest importance rating on this measure (index score of 79) and the lowest performance rating (index score of 63).
- Parks and gardens were mentioned by 11% of respondents as being one of the best things about living in the council area.

**Informing the community** is another service area on which Council is performing at a higher level (index score of 59) than the State-wide and regional/rural group averages (index scores of 56).

- Women (index score of 82) and 65+ year olds (index score of 80) gave the highest importance ratings on this measure and also express the highest levels of satisfaction towards Council's performance, with index scores of 60 and 64 respectively.
- However, these cohorts still display a high differential between importance and performance index scores, suggesting that there is still room for improvement.

It is important to note that each of the **most highly rated measures are also viewed as the least important comparative to other measures**. Council should shore up and build on these positive areas while also focusing attention on other, more important service areas.



## **SERVICE AREAS IN NEED OF ATTENTION**

The areas that stand out as being most in need of Council attention involve the condition and maintenance of local streets and footpaths and providing values for money for rates.

The **condition of local streets and footpaths is Council's lowest-rated performance area** (index score of 41), despite a high importance rating (index score of 80). This performance rating is significantly *below* that of State-wide and regional/rural averages (53 and 52 respectively).

65+ year olds rate performance on this measure as 47, which is significantly *higher* than Council's average; however, this score remains in the yellow zone, indicating that, even here, Council must work towards improvement here too.

**Providing value for money for rates is a clear area in need of improvement**. Councils' performance on this measure (index score of 43) sits significantly *below* the State-wide and regional/ rural averages (index scores of 51 and 48 respectively).

- The importance of this area is evidenced by a high index score of 87; the differential between importance and performance is therefore very high (margin of 44 points).
- Almost one in five (17%) rate Council's performance as 'very poor'. This is over three times the proportion who rate performance in this service area as 'very good' (5%).

Each of these low performing measures may feed perceptions that the **Council is not performing strongly as a well-run and managed council**; the index score of 50 on this measure is significantly *lower* than State-wide and regional/rural averages.



## **CUSTOMER CONTACT AND SERVICE**

Almost half (49%) of Edward River Council residents have had recent contact with Council. The main methods for communicating with Council are in person (25%) and by telephone (20%).

Those under 50 years of age are significantly more likely to have communicated via writing (16%), suggesting that, unless behaviour change is nudged, traditional forms of communication are likely to be around for some time, as they are used by those over and under 50 years of age alike.

Newsletters, sent via mail or email, and advertising in the local newspaper, remain the preferred ways for Council to inform residents about news, information and upcoming events. However, there is a significantly *higher* incidence of nominating social media (e.g. Facebook or Twitter) as a preferred means of communication among those aged under 50 years compared to those aged over 50 years.

Edward River Council's customer service rating of 67 is *slightly lower* than the State-wide and regional/rural council averages (index scores of 69 and 70 respectively).

- In order to improve perceptions of customer service, attention should be focused on the younger cohort. The 18-39 year age group has the highest levels of contact (54%), but the lowest customer service index rating (64).
- Key cohorts to learn from are those aged 65+ years, of whom 67% rate customer service as 'good' or 'very good', and women, of whom a high 35% rate customer service as 'very good'.



#### FOCUS AREAS FOR COMING 12 MONTHS

For the coming 12 months, Edward River Council should pay particular attention to the service areas where stated importance exceeds rated performance by more than 10 points. Key priorities are those where the differential is more than 25 points, including:

- Providing value for money for my rates (margin of 44 points)
- > The condition of local streets and footpaths in your area (margin of 39 points)
- Being a well-run and managed council (margin of 38 points)
- > Decisions made in the interest of the community (margin of 30 points).

The above areas, with the exception of decisions made in the interest of the community, are also those in which Council is underperforming on a relative basis in comparison to the State-wide and regional/rural groups.

On the positive side, Council should **maintain its solid performance in the areas of customer service and recreational facilities**, and aim to shore up and build upon service areas currently rated higher than others, such as the **ease of access to services**, **informing the community**, and **community consultation and engagement**.

It will also be important to learn from what is working well amongst groups with more favourable views towards Council, such 65+ year olds, and use these lessons to build favourability amongst 18-39 year olds and 40-64 year olds.



#### **SNAPSHOT OF KEY FINDINGS**





# SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

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# SUMMARY OF CORE PERFORMANCE MEASURES: INDEX SCORE RESULTS

Performance Measures	Edward River Council	Regional/ Rural	State-wide	Highest score	Lowest score
Overall performance	56	56	58	65+ years	18-39 years 40-64 years Men
Being a well-run and managed council	50	53	55	65+ years	40-64 years
Decisions made in the interest of the community	54	52	52	65+ years	40-64 years
Community consultation and engagement	57	54	53	65+ years	18-39 years 40-64 years
Informing the community	59	56	56	65+ years	18-39 years
Ease of access to services	62	63	63	65+ years	18-39 years
The condition of local streets and footpaths in your area	41	52	53	65+ years	18-39 years
Recreational facilities	69	65	66	65+ years	18-39 years
Providing value for money for my rates	43	48	51	65+ years	Men 18-39 years
Customer service	67	70	69	Women	Men 18-39 years
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## INDIVIDUAL SERVICE AREAS INDEX SCORE SUMMARY Importance VS performance



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# INDIVIDUAL SERVICE AREAS SUMMARY COUNCIL'S PERFORMANCE VS STATE-WIDE AVERAGE



# INDIVIDUAL SERVICE AREAS SUMMARY **COUNCIL'S PERFORMANCE VS REGIONAL/RURAL AVERAGE**



engagement

Significantly higher than

- Informing the community
- Recreational facilities -

- Being a well-run and managed council
- The condition of local streets and footpaths in your area
- Providing value for money for my rates

Significantly lower than regional/rural average

## POSITIVES AND AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT Summary



Q9. What does Council MOST need to do to improve its performance in the next 12 months? Once again, it could be about any of the issues or services we have covered in this survey or it could be about something else altogether?

Q10. Please tell me what is the ONE BEST thing about Council? It could be about any of the issues or services we have covered in this survey or it could be about something else altogether? Base: All respondents.

