



FRED ROGERS MEMORIAL TRUST

2017

**COMMUNITY SATISFACTION
TRACKING STUDY**



September 2017

MORTON CONSULTING SERVICES PTY LTD and MARKET FACTS (QLD) PTY LTD

1 Background

This 2017 *Community Satisfaction Tracking Study* continues the benchmarking and analysis of community satisfaction with Local Government services in Queensland. In 1997, LGAQ commissioned a project to develop a survey instrument and process to allow Local Government to monitor and track performance against the value systems of their customers. Since the 1997 Benchmark Study, *Community Satisfaction Tracking Studies* have been conducted by LGAQ every two years.

In addition to the basic satisfaction and tracking questions, the survey provides an opportunity to include a number of questions to identify emerging issues and themes.

2 Approach

The research project methodology included:-

- review and update of the survey instrument and methodology used in 2015, and development of specific additional questions;
- telephone surveys of a random cross-section of 700 households, subdivided into the key council categories and covering the diverse situations encountered by Local Government;
- quantification of survey results to provide weighted performance indices for the suite of services and activities within each of five Themes;
- analysis and reporting on the results obtained to provide tracking of performance relative to the previous studies, and to identify issues and actions arising from the research.

The methodology looks at both the importance of a function or service to the community, and the perception of how well a council is performing each function or service. There is little merit in achieving excellence for an activity that has minor value to the community. Nor is mediocre performance desirable in those functions which are judged as crucial by the community.

The concept of a "*weighted performance indicator*" was introduced in the initial research. The overall performance for a Theme or across all elements is an aggregate of all aspects of performance, and takes into account the relative importance of each activity or service.

The findings of the survey are subject to sampling error. The maximum probable error of the total sample is +/- 3.1% at the 90% level of confidence. Small changes in scores for theme elements (eg a rating change from 71% to 70%) may not represent any actual decrease or improvement in overall performance relative to previous surveys.

3 How to Use this Research

The study provides information of relevance to all councils. Those functions where new initiatives would be most effective in moving performance closer to an optimal level are highlighted.

The research is part of ongoing corporate planning and continuous improvement initiatives of Local Government in Queensland.

Councils wishing to obtain more detailed information on performance at a local level could conduct similar research for their own area, enabling benchmarking of individual performance against the measures developed in this research at both a State level and by broad council category.

A significant number of councils have already undertaken such research using the methodology developed.

Where councils wish to focus on a particular aspect of service and to identify needs of the community, then a different type of survey may be appropriate.

The Parameters Evaluated

THEME 1: Basic Services and Infrastructure

Road Construction, Road Maintenance, Footpaths Kerb & Guttering, Street Lighting, Traffic Management, Parking, Public Transport, Water Supply, Sewerage, Drainage/Flood Mitigation, Waste Management, Community Health

THEME 2: Community Lifestyle Services

Parks Playgrounds/Public Amenities, Environmental Controls, Environmental Protection/ Conservation, Heritage Protection, Sporting/Recreational Facilities, Cultural/Entertainment Facilities, Libraries/ Other Information Access, Community Safety, Community Services, Pet/Animal Control, Shopping Centres, Community Development

THEME 3: Managing the Shire/City

Town Planning, Building Control, Economic Development/Local Employment, Tourism Development, Financial Management, Revenue Raising, Staff Management

THEME 4: Customer Services/Communication

Customer Service, Information Services, Informing Community, Consulting Community, Responding to Community, Providing Leadership/Advocacy

THEME 5: Qualities of Council

Elected Council (as a whole), Councillor(s) dealt with, Managerial/ Supervisory Officers, Outdoor Workers, Indoor Staff

The detailed Research Report explains what specific activities/qualities are embodied in each Theme element.

4 Research Results (by Theme)

The perceived importance of the various elements within each Theme, and the performance of their council with respect to each element, were rated by respondents on the following five-point scales:

Importance		Performance	
Crucial	5	Very Good	5
Important	4	Good	4
Nice to Have	3	Fair Only	3
Not Very Important	2	Poor	2
Quite Unimportant	1	Very Poor	1

Graphs showing the performance index for each Theme element are provided in this summary. These include comparisons with surveys since the 2008 amalgamations.

4.1 Basic Services /Infrastructure

As for all previous studies, the survey results show that the community perceives the full range of Local Government services included in this Theme as being at least "important" (mean of 4.28 compared with 4.13 in 2015, 4.41 in 2013, 4.49 in 2011 and 4.29 in 2009). No service rated significantly below the "important" score of 4.

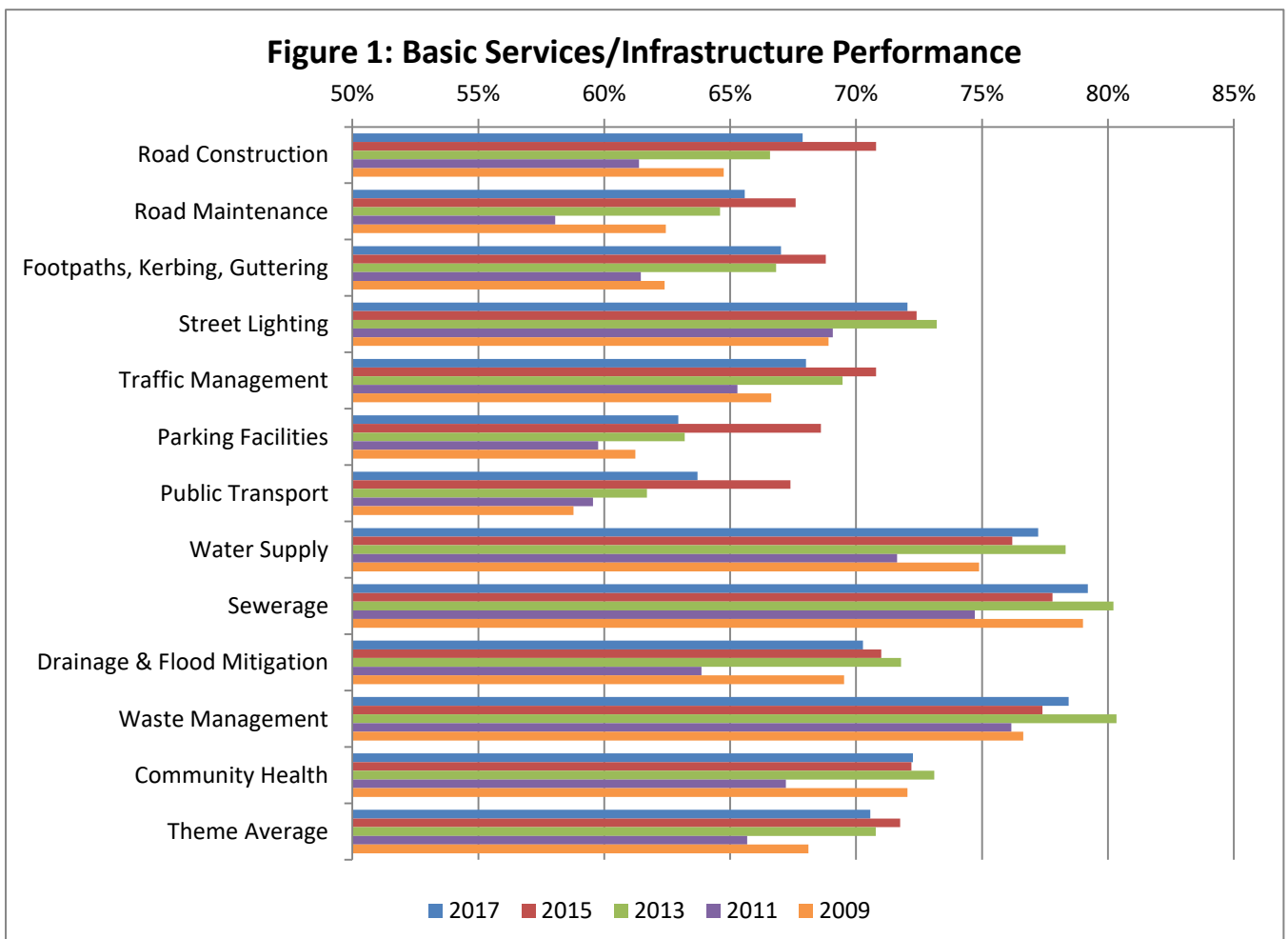
For all elements in this Theme, importance ratings were higher than in 2015, with the highest importance rating of 4.59 being for Water Supply compared with 4.31 in 2015 and 4.69 in 2013.

Overall performance was just over half way between "good" and "fair only" (mean 3.52 compared with 3.59 in 2015, 3.54 in 2013, 3.28 in 2011, and 3.41 in 2009). Sewerage, Waste Management and Water Supply achieved the highest ratings (> 3.85).

The lowest performance score was for Parking Facilities (3.15 compared with 3.43 in 2015 and 3.16 in 2013). Only one element (Road Maintenance) had a 'gap' between importance and performance greater than 1. No element had a 'gap' greater than one in 2015 while 3 elements in this Theme had a 'gap' greater than 1 in 2013.

The weighted Total Performance Index (TPI) calculated for the Basic Services/Infrastructure Theme was 70.57%. This compares with 71.82% in 2015, 71.01% in 2013, 65.80% in 2011, and 68.31% in 2009.

Successful initiatives in relation to Road Maintenance, Parking and Drainage/Flood Mitigation would be most effective in moving overall future performance closer to the optimum level.



4.2 Community Lifestyle Services

As for earlier surveys, elements in this Theme had lower levels of perceived importance than Basic Services/ Infrastructure. The average for the Theme was just below "important" (mean 3.95 compared with 3.94 in 2015, 4.10 in 2013, 4.14 in 2011 and 4.0 in 2009).

Community Safety was again the highest in importance (4.16) while Community Development (3.84) and Cultural & Entertainment Facilities (3.74) were the lowest, although the overall range of scores was not great.

Overall performance was over half way between the "fair only" and "good" range (mean 3.60 compared with 3.63 in 2015, 3.62 in 2013, 3.44 in 2011 and 3.52 in 2009). Libraries (4.00), Parks & Playgrounds (3.81) and Sporting & Recreation Facilities (3.77) achieved the higher ratings. Environmental Protection and Conservation (3.33) and Environmental Controls (3.40) had the lowest ratings.

The weighted Total Performance Index (TPI) calculated for this Theme was 72.02%. This compares with 72.62% in 2015, 72.41% in 2013, 68.79% in 2011, and 70.43% in 2009,.

Successful initiatives in Environmental Protection and Conservation would be most effective in moving overall performance in this Theme closer to the optimum level.

4.3 Managing the Shire/City/Region

Elements in this Theme averaged above "important" (mean 4.21 compared with 4.08 in 2015, 4.42 in 2013, 4.37 in 2011 and 4.28 for 2009). Financial Management (4.48) and Economic Development (4.33) were highest in importance although the score range was not great.

Overall performance of councils was under half way between "fair only" and "good" (mean 3.28 compared with 3.48 in 2015, 3.26 in 2013, 3.10 in 2011, and 3.24 in 2009).

There was little significant variation in the performance score for any element as in previous surveys. Building Control (3.40) and Town Planning (3.39) were the highest and Economic Development (3.11) the lowest.

In this 2017 survey, Financial Management had a 'gap' between the importance and performance scores at 1.25 (0.79 in 2015, 1.45 in 2013, 1.57 in 2011 and 1.35 in 2009).

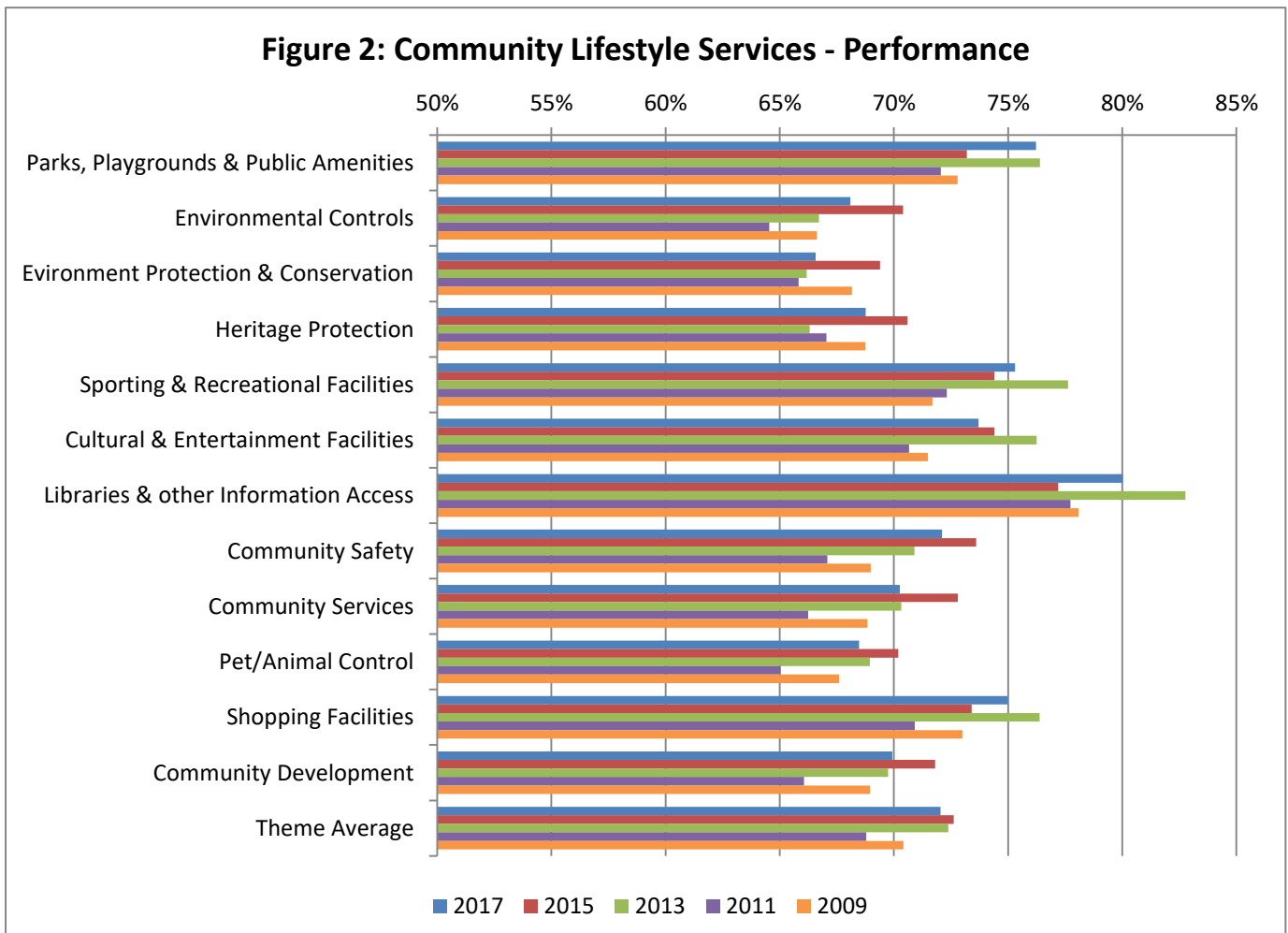
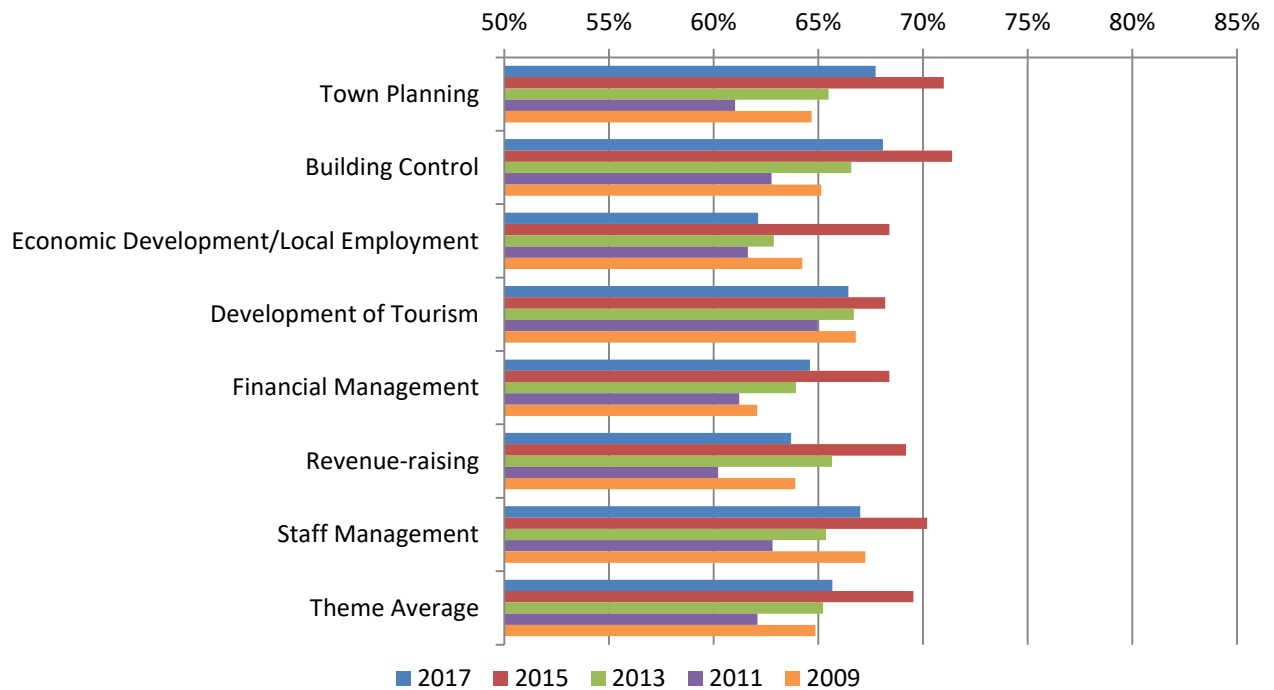


Figure 3: Managing the Shire/City/Region - Performance



The weighted Total Performance Index (TPI) calculated for this Theme was 65.65%. This compares with 69.54% in 2015, 65.21% in 2013, 62.05% in 2011, and 64.83% in 2009.

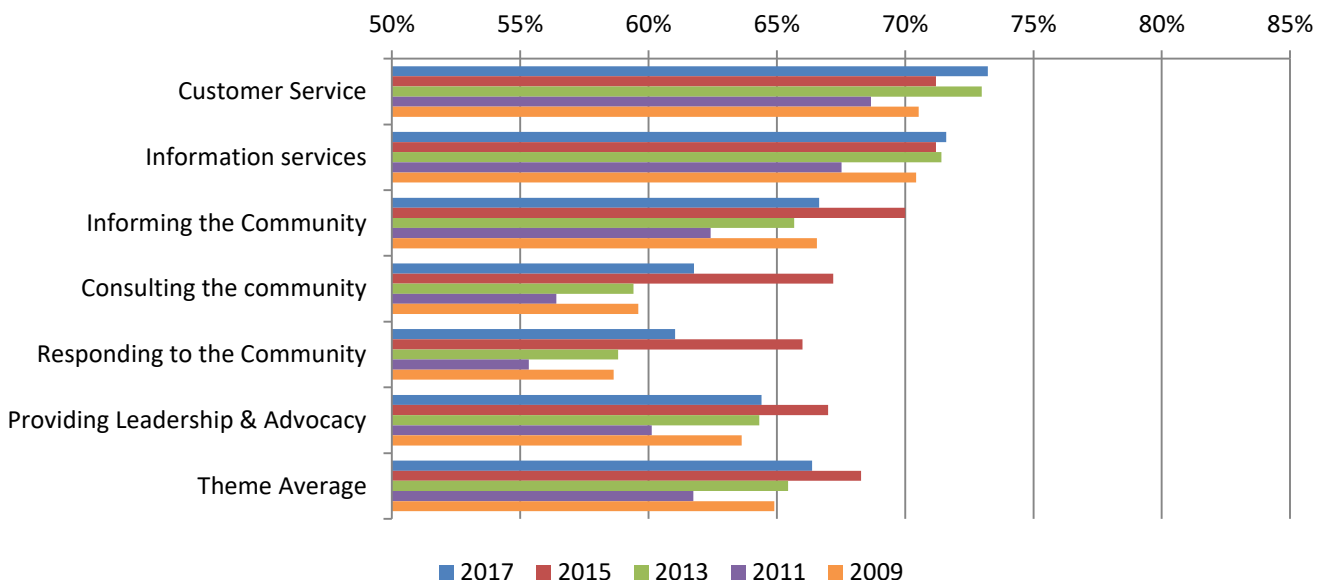
Successful initiatives in Financial Management, Economic Development/Local Employment and Revenue Raising would be most effective in moving overall performance in this Theme closer to the optimum level, as in 2015.

4.4 Customer Service & Communication

As in previous surveys, all elements in this Theme ranked above “important” (mean 4.26 compared with 4.07 in 2015, 4.37 in 2013 and 2011 and 4.26 in 2009).

There was little difference in the importance ratings given to each element. Responding to the Community (4.37) was the highest in importance, while Information Services (4.12) was the lowest.

Figure 4: Customer Services & Communication - Performance



Overall performance (mean of 3.32 compared with 3.44 in 2015, 3.27 in 2013, 3.09 in 2011, and 3.19 in 2009) was relatively low, and again similar to that for Managing the Shire/City/Region.

Responding to the Community (3.05 compared with 3.33 in 2015, 2.94 in 2013, 2.77 in 2011, and 2.93 in 2009) received the lowest performance rating in this Theme, and the lowest score for any element in this 2017 survey, as in the 2015 survey.

Customer Service (3.66) and Information Services (3.58) received the highest rating.

The weighted Total Performance Index (TPI) calculated for the Customer Service/Communication Theme was 66.38%.

This compares with 68.27% in 2015, 63.85% in 2013, 61.67% in 2011, and 64.88% in 2009.

As has been the case with all previous surveys, successful initiatives in relation to Consulting with and Responding to the Community would be most effective in moving overall performance closer to the optimum level. Greater effort in providing Leadership and Advocacy would also assist.

Responding to the Community had the largest 'gap' between importance and performance in this Theme (1.31). This was a significant increase from the 'gap' of 0.79 for this element in the 2015 survey.

4.5 Qualities of Council

As for previous surveys, all elements in this Theme ranked above "important" (mean of 4.30 compared with 4.10 in 2015, 4.40 in 2013, 4.38 in 2011 and 4.28 in 2009).

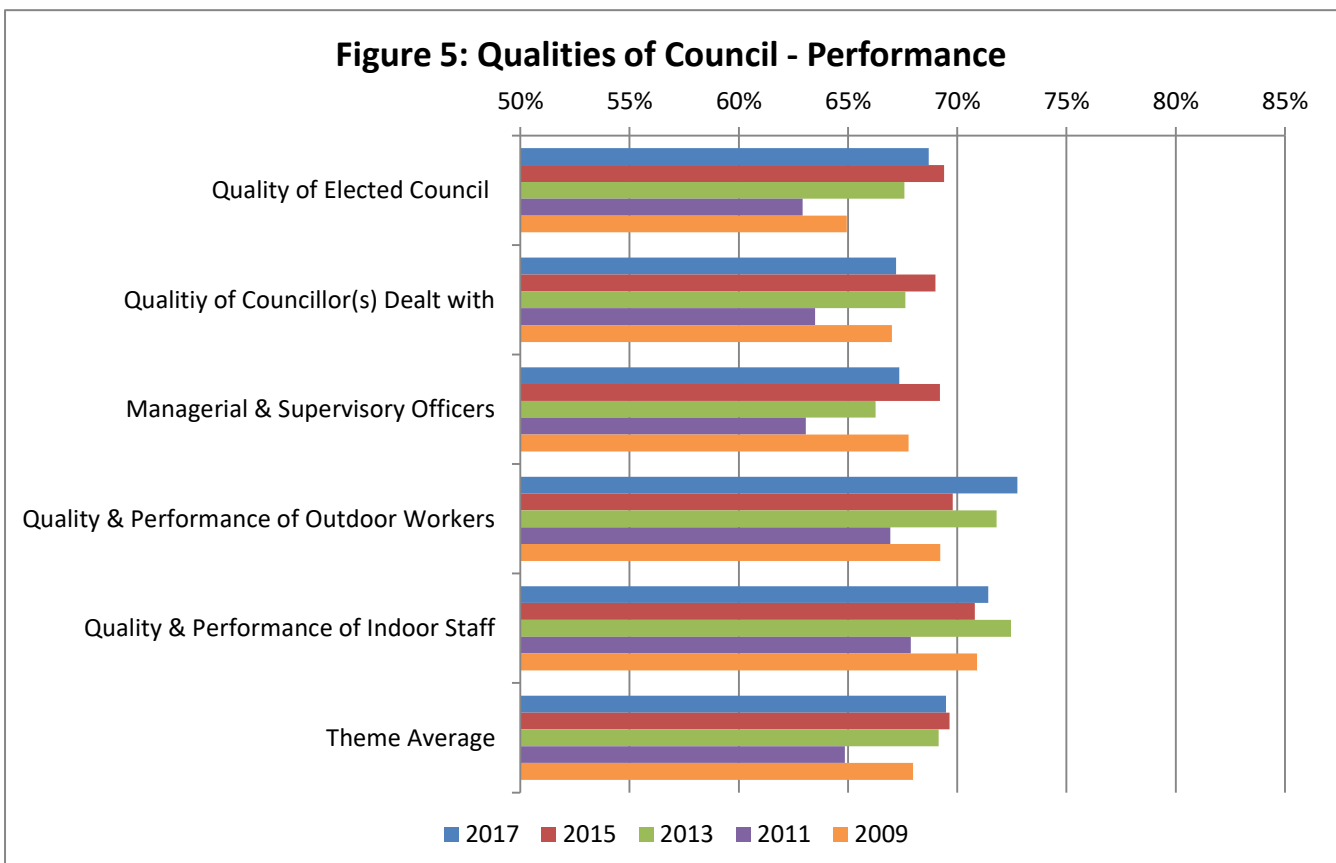
Quality of Elected Council (4.52) was highest in importance while Quality/Performance of Indoor Staff (4.18) had the lowest importance rating.

Overall performance in this Theme was judged as half way between "fair only" and "good" (mean 3.47 compared with 3.48 in 2015, 3.46 in 2013, 3.24 in 2011 and 3.4 in 2009).

Quality of Outdoor Staff received the highest rating (3.64). Quality of Councillors dealt with (3.36) received the lowest performance rating in this Theme, although this is not significantly lower than other elements.

The weighted Total Performance Index (TPI) calculated for this Theme was 69.45%. This compares with 69.63% in 2015, 69.08% in 2013, 64.83% in 2011, and 67.94% in 2009.

Perceptions about the Quality of the Elected Council remains as a challenge for councils. The 'gap' between importance and performance for this element is now 1.09, higher than the 0.73 in 2015, but lower than the 1.21 in 2013 and 1.43 in 2011.



5 Aggregated Overall Performance (Weighted)

As revealed by all previous studies, the community places a relatively high level of importance on the delivery aspects of council performance, notably the basic range of services and infrastructure responsibilities of local government.

However, as in previous surveys, Financial Management and the Quality of the Elected Council are also given high levels of importance.

While Community Lifestyle Services are still assigned the lowest importance scores, they are nevertheless still regarded as “important”.

The results for 2017 reveal an increased range of importance scores compared to the 2015 survey. In the 2017 study, importance scores ranged from a high of 4.59 for Water Supply (4.31 in 2015) to a low of 3.74 for Cultural and Entertainment Facilities (3.84 in 2015).

Performance scores (for each Theme and for most elements) show a small decrease in satisfaction since 2015, although generally higher than for 2013 and 2011. Overall performance across each Theme dropped to the lowest level in 2011 since this benchmark series began in 1997.

Figure 6 presents a summary of the Total Performance Indices for each Theme along with an aggregated score across all Themes for the 2017,

2015, 2013, 2011 and 2009 studies.

The figure shows that the aggregated rating of performance in 2017 is at a level of 69.39% (70.96% in 2015, 69.35% in 2013, 65.27% in 2011, 67.75% in 2009).

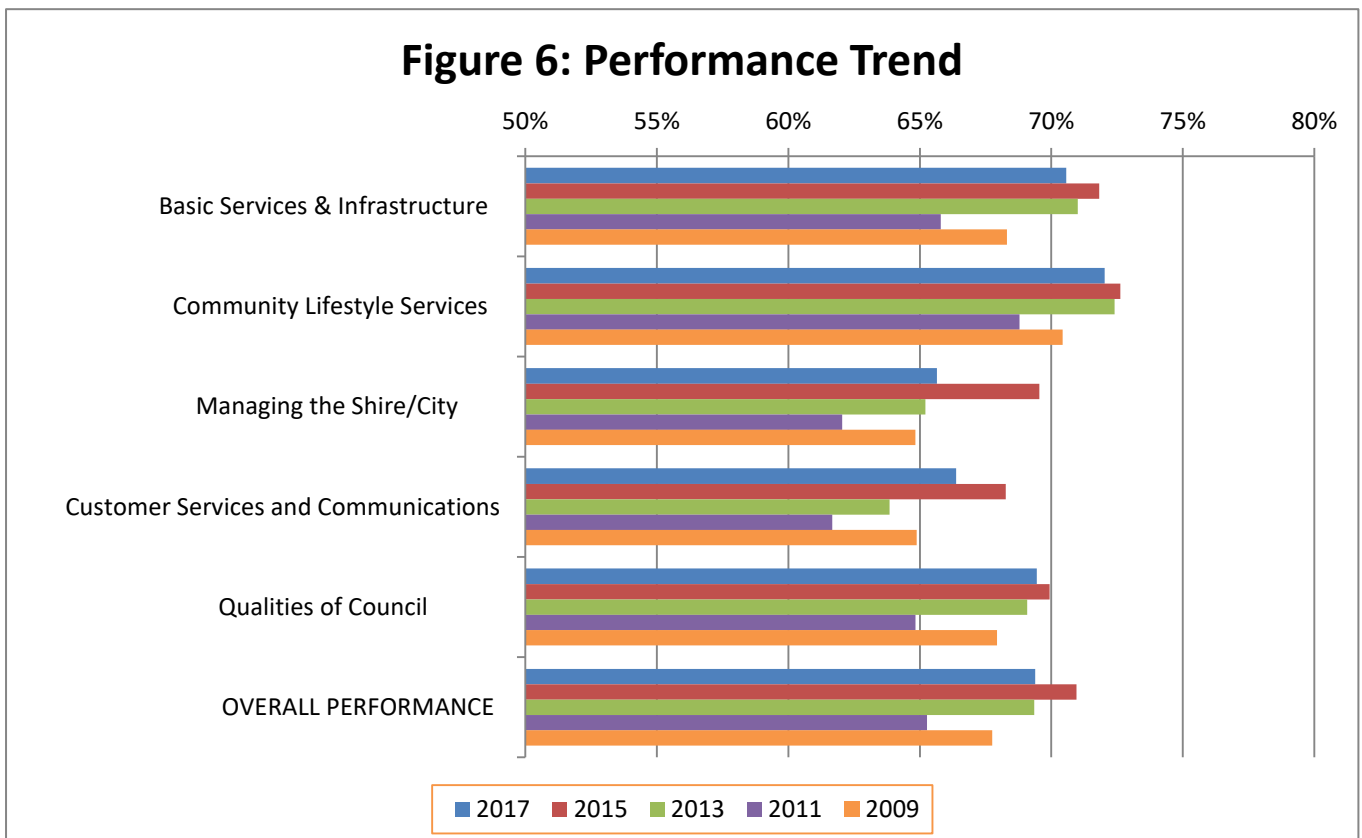
The highest performance rating of 72.02% was for the Community Lifestyle Theme, as previously (72.62% in 2015, 72.41% in 2013, 68.79% in 2011, 70.43% in 2009).

The lowest rating of 65.65% was for the Theme of Managing the Shire/City/Region (69.54% in 2015, 65.21% in 2013, 62.05% in 2011, and 64.83% in 2009).

The average weighted performance score across the surveys undertaken since 1997 is 70%. The 2017 result of 69.39% is only just below this average and an improvement on all scores since the 2008 amalgamations other than the 71% score in 2015.

In 2017, there were 7 elements with a ‘gap’ of 1.0 or more between the importance and performance scores. In the 2015 survey, no elements had a ‘gap’ greater than 1.0. However, in 2013 there were 16 elements with a ‘gap’ of 1.0 or more between the importance and performance scores.

The most significant ‘gaps’ were: Responding to the Community (1.31), Consulting the Community (1.27) and Financial Management (1.25).



6 Performance by Council Type

Data analysis was undertaken across nine separate variables, including demographic characteristics of respondents and households, to identify any significant variations within the aggregate results.

The most notable variations, however, were observed between the classification of the councils in which the respondent lived (Developed Metropolitan, Fringe Metropolitan, Provincial, Rural).

Because of amalgamations, the Provincial group now includes former councils that were included in the rural category, so that results prior to 2009 are not directly comparable with recent surveys for the provincial and rural categories.

Figure 7 provides an analysis of the overall performance of councils by category, for each of the Themes. In summary, the results show that:

- For all Themes other than Customer Services/Communications and Qualities of Council, the Developed Metropolitan category had the highest

performance rating. Overall, Developed Metropolitan received the highest rating at 70.4%.

- Rural councils received a significant increase in 2017 at 68.6%, up from 65.95% in 2015. Rural Councils received the highest rating for Customer Service/Communication (68.04%) in 2017.
- Provincial councils (69.2%) have maintained a relatively stable rating from 2013 to 2017 since a low of 60.7% in 2011.
- Fringe Metropolitan councils (69.2%) dropped significantly from a high 73.7% in 2015. In 2015, Fringe Metropolitan Councils received the highest ratings in all themes other than Customer Service/Communication.
- Overall, each council category received a score close to the average in 2017.

Figure 8 presents the trend in overall performance rating by council category from 2009 to 2017. This covers the period since council amalgamations.

Figure 7: Performance by Council Category 2017

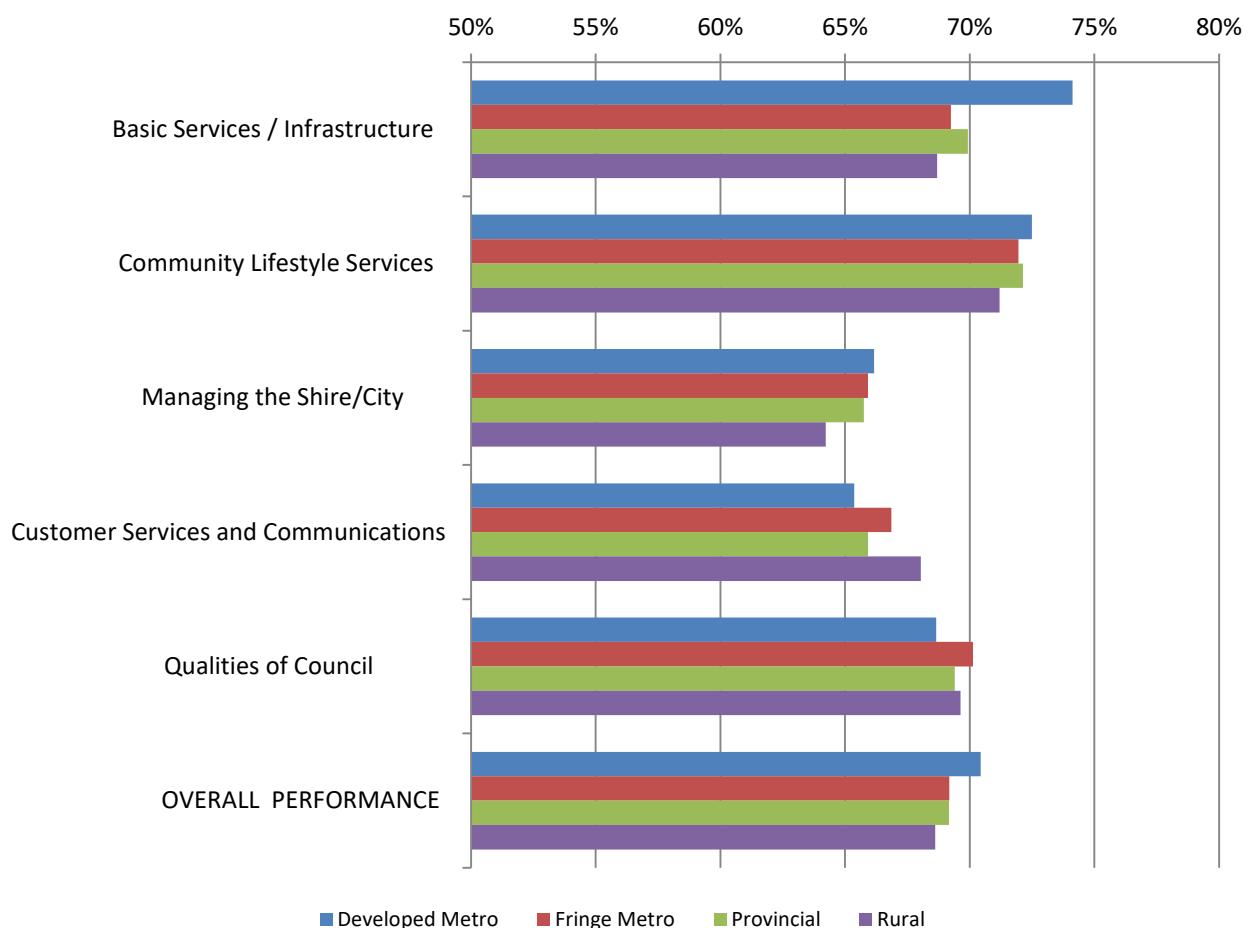
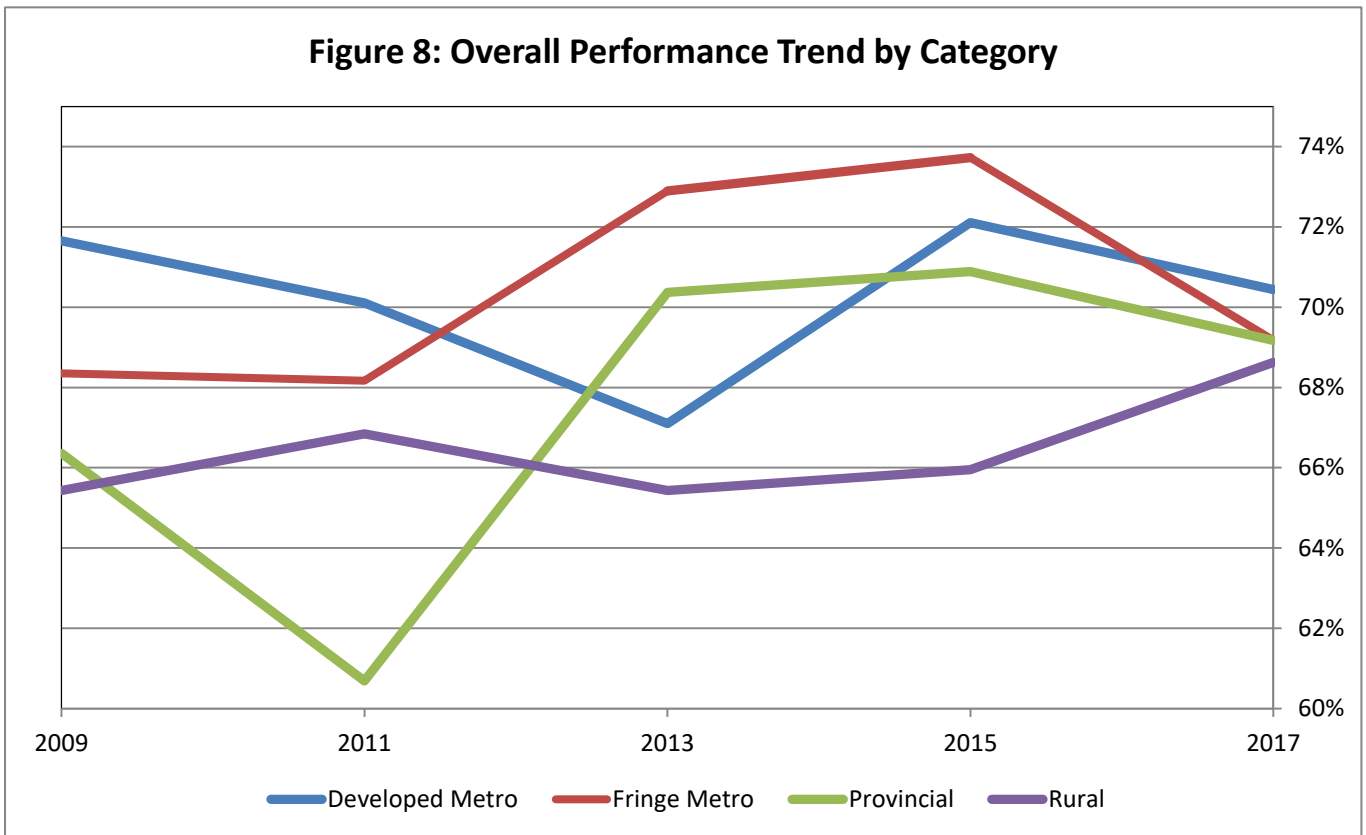


Figure 8: Overall Performance Trend by Category



The Fringe Metro category had the highest performance rating in 2013 and 2015, but has dropped to the average performance rating in 2017.

The Developed Metro category was the best performer in 2009, dropped significantly in 2013, but has recorded the highest performance score in 2017.

The Provincial category dropped significantly in 2011 (possibly due to amalgamations). This category has maintained a relatively stable performance score since then and in 2017 had a performance score around the average.

The Rural category has never achieved the highest overall performance rating. However, the 2017 score represents a sound increase, just below the average performance score for all councils.

7 Overall Performance Rating (Unweighted)

A question was again included seeking an overall evaluation of council delivery of services in terms of value-for-money.

In this 2017 survey, the unweighted rating score was 67.4% compared with 69.6% in 2015, 66.8% in 2013, 64.0% in 2011, and 66.4% in 2009. This compares with a Theme weighted rating of 69.39% for 2017.

8 Public Opinion Questions

Respondents were asked for a rating of the **performance of local government in terms of accountability and financial management compared with State or Federal governments**. Some 28.6% said “better” (23% in 2015, 24% in 2013, 22% in 2011 and 19% in 2009) while 10% said “worse” (4% in 2015, 13% in 2013, 18% in 2011 and 12% in 2009).

In comparison with state or federal parliamentarians, 28% of respondents felt that local government councillors were more dedicated to serving the community (21% in 2015, 26% in 2013, 18% in 2011 and 2009). Only 11% felt they were less dedicated (6% in 2015, 12% in 2013, 25% in 2011, 21% in 2009).

Respondents were asked to rate the **performance of each sphere of government**. Overall, 37.4% (38.9% in 2015) of respondents rated Local Government performance as ‘good’ to ‘very good’ compared to State (12.1%) and Federal (12.1%). Some 17.8% (7.1% in 2015) rated Local Government performance ‘poor’ to ‘very poor’ compared to State (37.5%) and Federal (42.4%).

Asked about whether their views on the performance of their council were more or less positive than two years ago, 21% indicated more positive while 9% indicated less positive.

Respondents were then asked to rate performance in **complaints handling** by councils. Some 32.1% (25.6% in 2015, 33.4% in 2013, 20.4% in 2011, 32.2% in 2009) rated this as “good” to “excellent” while 21% (10.2% in 2015, 18.1% in 2013, 22.9% in 2011, 16.2% in 2009) rated it as “poor” to “very poor”.

With a mean score of 3.08, just above ‘fair only’, this is similar to the 2015 and 2013 ratings but an improvement on the 2.92 rating in 2011.

Asked **who they would contact with a complaint or service request**, 73.7% nominated the council office or call centre (64.4% in 2015, 74% in 2013, 73% in 2011, 80.6% in 2009) while only 9.7% nominated councillors (11.6% in 2015, 13.7% in 2013, 11% in 2011, 9.1% in 2009).

When asked if they had made **contact with the Mayor or a Councillor** in the last twelve months, a high 88.6% of respondents had not (88% in 2015, 74.6% in 2013, 79% in 2011, 81% in 2009).

The next question asked for an assessment of the **public image of their Mayor and Councillors**. 48.1% said “good” or “excellent” (37% in 2015, 43.4% in 2013, 39% in 2011). Some 15% said “poor” or “very poor” (5% in 2015, 13% in 2013, 20% in 2011). The mean score of 3.33 was similar to 2015 and 2013 (3.18 in 2011) and is above the “fair” rating of 3.

When asked **how good a job the media** (television, radio, newspapers) **performs** in fairly portraying and informing residents on what their council is doing, 36.6% gave “good” ratings (37% in 2015, 39% in 2013, 38% in 2011). Some 15.9% gave “poor” ratings (18% in 2013, 20% in 2011). With a mean of 3.2 (3.31 in 2015, 3.22 in 2013, 3.15 in 2011), the media role was seen as just above “fair”.

Respondents were asked to identify from a list, the **three most important personal attributes for an elected local government councillor**. In terms of first preference, being ‘consultative’ was the most dominant (22.9%). In terms of three attributes nominated ‘strong leadership ability’ was first (63.2%), ‘consultative’ was next (56.7%) while ‘being a good communicator’ was third (54.3%).

Next, respondents were asked the **three most important performance measures for an elected council**. In terms of first preference, ‘delivering on promises’ was the most dominant (26.9%). For the three measures nominated ‘quality of basic services/infrastructure’ was first (54.3%), ‘delivering on promises’ was next (51.7%) while ‘minimising rate increases’ was third (42.4%).

Some 85.6% of respondents paid rates (67% in 2015, 67.8% in 2013, 73% in 2011, 66% in 2009). Of the 86% rate paying respondents, 69% considered that

the **rates and charges levied by their local council** were either excellent, good or fair value for money (mean 2.85 just below ‘fair value’, similar to 2.87 in 2015).

Respondents were then asked how strongly they would support their council cutting out some services or reducing service levels in others if this allowed some reduction in the level of rates and charges. Some 50.3% (61.4% in 2015, 45.7% in 2013) opposed or strongly opposed such an approach while only 7% (8.1% in 2015, 14.5% in 2013) showed support.

The next question looked at the **use and value of their Council’s internet site**. Overall 45.3% of respondents had accessed their Council’s internet site (42% in 2015, 49% in 2013, 43% in 2011, 55% in 2009). Some 57.1% of respondents who had accessed the Council’s website rated the quality of council online information services as either ‘very good’ or ‘good’ (51.5% in 2015, 56.8% in 2013, 59.4% in 2011). The mean score was 3.58, just over half way between ‘fair’ and ‘good’ (3.43 in 2015).

Respondents were asked if they **regularly used social media** such as Facebook, Whatsapp, Snapchat, LinkedIn, Instagram and Twitter. Some 41.3% indicated they did (33.4% in 2015, 54.8% in 2013). Some 20.1% (8.3% of the total sample) of those using social media indicated they did so to obtain information or interact with their council (21.4% in 2015, 25.5% in 2013).

Of the 8.3% of the total sample that did interact with their council using social media, 46.6% felt that some information could be inaccurate or “fake” news.

Only 9% (4.3% in 2015) of social media users (4% of the total sample) engaged with their Mayor or Councillors using social media.

When asked **which sources were trusted for information about their council’s performance**, 61.6% nominated the local newspaper (63% in 2015) while local word of mouth was nominated by 46.6% (42% in 2015) and council publications/website by 45.1% (22.2% in 2015).

When asked if they were **happy for mobile phone technology to capture personal information** if it gave them better access to services they need, 45.4% indicated they would be unhappy. Only 15.3% indicated they would be happy.

Respondents were then asked to rate their level of **trust of various organisations having access to personal information** captured by their mobile phone or WiFi use. Banks (16.7%) and Councils (13%) were the most trusted. However, for each of these organisations some 60% indicated a low level of trust.

The next question asked if respondents had **concerns about personal attacks on candidates** at the March 2016 local government election using unproven claims and misinformation. Only 8% of respondents had concerns.

Respondents were then asked if an **Independent Local Government Election Monitor should be established** to provide a fact check on claims by, or about, candidates along with independent analysis of policies. Some 55.9% of respondents were in favour.

Those that supported establishing such an organisation had a preference for this to be done by the Queensland Electoral Commission (55%).

Figure 9 depicts the summary of performance for a number of the public opinion questions.

The figure reveals that the ratings were similar across each of these elements for 2017, 2015 and 2013. As for the overall 2011 performance rating, 2011 ratings were lower for the public image of Mayor and Councillors and for complaints handling.

9 Overview of Performance Issues

As noted earlier, Queensland Local Government is generally perceived by the community as performing close to the 70% average of scores since this research series began in 1997. The lowest score of

65.3% occurred in 2011. The 2017 score of 69.4% is a drop from the 2015 high of 71% but similar to the 2013 score of 69.4%.

Specific points from the survey results include:-

- Infrastructure and essential services such as Roads, Drainage, Flood Mitigation, Water, Sewerage and Waste Collection continue to be seen by the community as extremely important.
- There has been a small increase in the importance rating of most elements in this survey relative to 2015. No element received an importance score lower than 3.74 which is just below the 'important' rating of 4.
- The large 'gaps' between importance and performance apparent in 2011 and 2013 were generally eliminated in 2015. In this 2017 survey, 7 elements had a 'gap' greater than 1.0, with the greatest 'gaps' relating to Consulting (1.27) and Responding (1.31) to the Community.
- The other five items with 'gaps' greater than 1.0 are Financial Management (1.25), Road Maintenance (1.23), Economic Development (1.22), Quality of Elected Council (1.09) and Quality of Councillors Dealt with (1.01).
- As in 2015, there is a perception that more can be done to enhance economic development and employment growth with this element receiving one of the lowest performance ratings (3.11).

Figure 9: Performance on Selected Matters

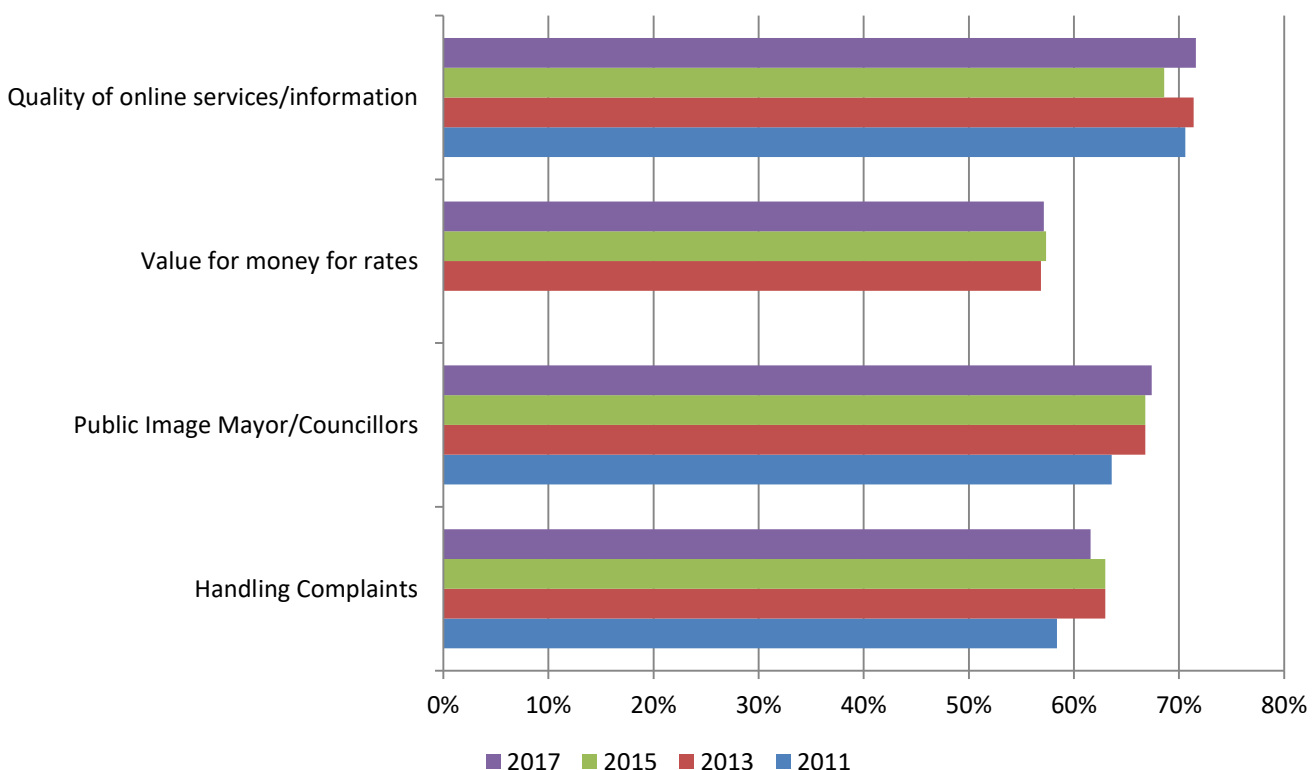
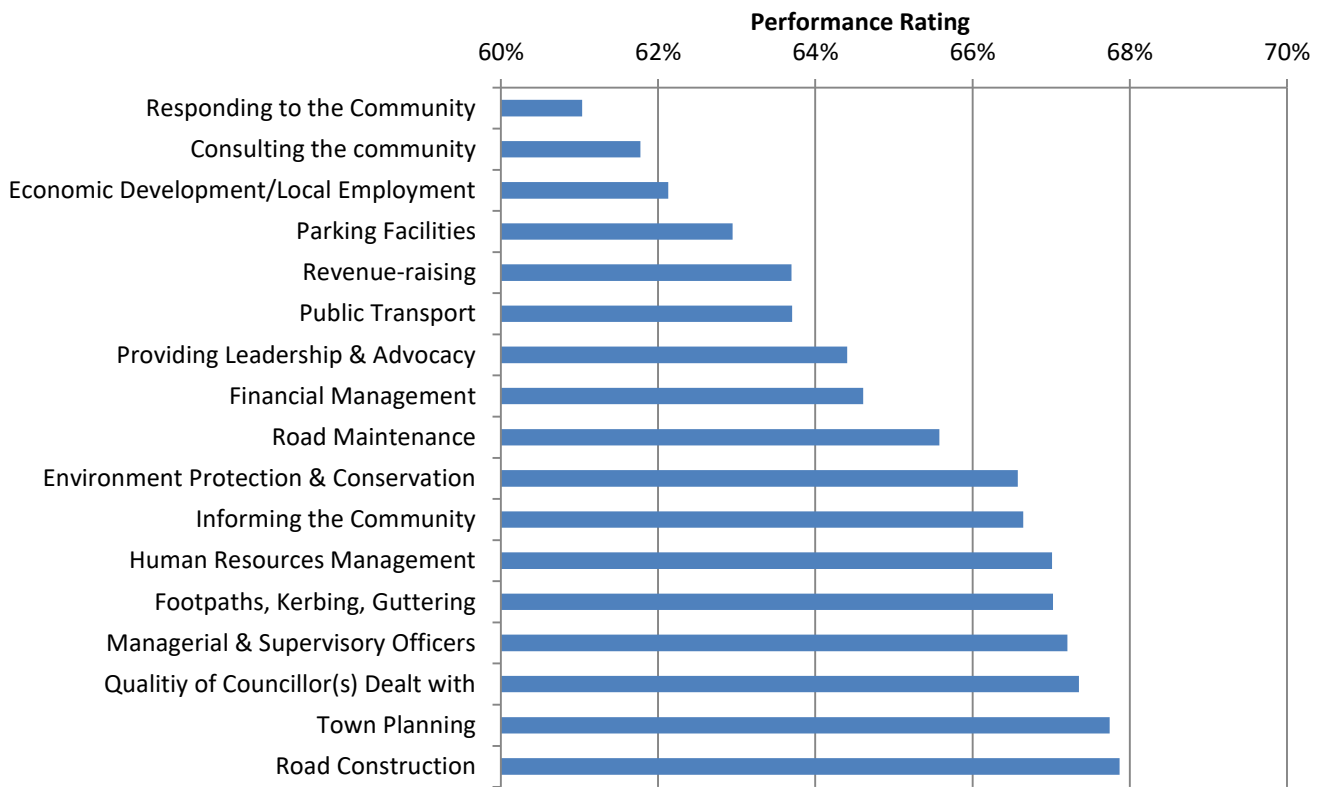


Figure 10: Performance Improvement Targets 2017

Items with high importance (≥ 4) where performance 1.5% below average of 69.4%



10 Performance Improvement Targets

Figure 10 illustrates a list of targets for improvement where elements have an importance score greater than 4 but with a performance score more than 1.5% below the survey average result of 69.4%.

These elements can be considered as priorities for enhancement of overall performance. There are other elements close to the cut-off not shown in this figure and these are noted in the detailed Research Report.

The improvement targets in Figure 10 have been ranked by their performance scores.

Most of the items where improvement could be focused were also identified in previous surveys.

The items shown in Figure 10 differ from those in 2015 in the following manner:

- Only one item from the 2015 list (Quality of Elected Council) does not appear in the above list.
- Items in Figure 10 not in the 2015 list are:
 - Parking Facilities
 - Informing the Community
 - Human Resources Management
 - Town Planning
 - Road Construction

While there are some variations in the order of these items between different classifications of councils, the majority of items will have relevance to all situations. Specific surveys for individual councils would result in refinement of such performance improvement targets.

11 Detailed Research Results

This Executive Summary is based on the comprehensive Research Report which also presents methodology details. Detailed tables are included in the Research Report.

Individual council corporate planning can be enhanced by quantification of community priorities for improvements to services, and this survey can assist to target initiatives.

Councils wishing to obtain more detailed information on performance at a local level could conduct similar research for their own area. The sample size for this survey does not allow results to be provided by individual council.

Want more information on this research project?
Contact:- Local Government Association of Qld Ltd
 PO Box 2230, Fortitude Valley BC Qld. 4006
 Ph (07) 3000 2222
 Fax (07) 3252 4473
www.lgaq.asn.au