

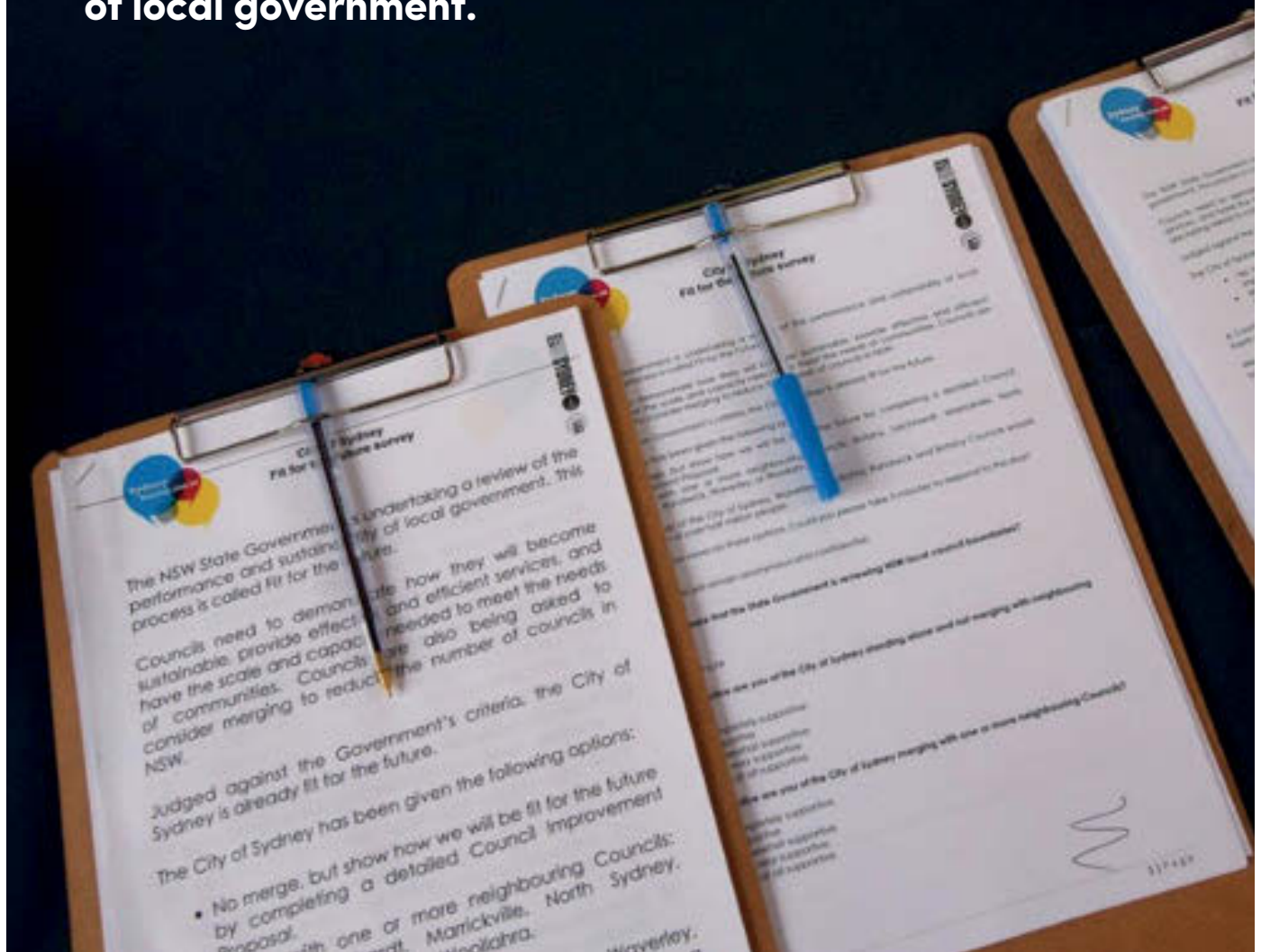


**PUBLIC CONSULTATION:  
FIT FOR THE FUTURE**

# **CITY OF SYDNEY COUNCIL FIT FOR THE FUTURE ATTACHMENTS**

# Executive Summary

**From March to May 2015 the City of Sydney conducted an extensive program of consultation to understand the views of the community in relation to the Fit for the Future review of local government.**



1. Letterbox drop of 110,000 residents and businesses
2. Mailout with the rates reminder notice of 43,000
3. 12 information stalls held across the City of Sydney
4. An online survey and information available on [sydneyyoursay.com.au](http://sydneyyoursay.com.au)
5. E-newsletter to 3,000 [sydneyyoursay.com.au](http://sydneyyoursay.com.au) subscribers
6. Information through Sydney Your Say and COS twitter accounts
7. A telephone poll of a random sample of 1000 residents and 500 businesses

The questionnaire used for the telephone poll and the online and face-to-face engagement were identical apart from the order of some demographic questions needed to screen for required samples. This enabled comparisons between the samples.

It was felt that a separate telephone survey of City-based businesses was warranted because of the size and significance of the business community in the City of Sydney.

The telephone survey (CATI) was conducted between 11 March – 1 April 2015 in line with Australian Market and Social Research Society Code of Professional Conduct.

The online survey was run through SurveyGizmo and administered by an independent social research company – Cred Community Planning. Data was analysed by Cred and a report provided to the City of Sydney. 1,238 valid online and intercept surveys were collected between 11 March and 12 May 2015.

The online survey asked respondents to identify whether they were a resident, worker, business owner in the City or a combination of these, or visitor to the City. Results are reported for residents, for business owners and workers, and overall.

Sample sizes gave a high degree of confidence 95% with the following margins of error –

- Residents telephone survey: 3.1%
- Businesses telephone survey: 4.4%
- Residents online / intercept survey: 3.1%

The samples were broadly representative of the City of Sydney community and spread across all suburbs of the local government area. In both samples (online / intercept and telephone) respondents were on average older than the City's demographic profile, with residents in the age group 18 – 34 more difficult to engage. The telephone survey results have been weighted to accommodate the age bias.

The survey tested the level of support for standing alone and for merging with one or more neighbouring councils. Participants were asked their preference between standing alone or merging. There was a high degree of consistency in the results across all samples.

The results consistently demonstrated strong support from the community – residents, rate payers and businesses, for the City of Sydney to remain the same and not merge.

- Telephone residents: 82% prefer the City stand alone
- Telephone businesses: 72% prefer the City stand alone
- Online/intercept overall: 79% prefer the City stand alone
- Online/intercept residents: 82% prefer the City stand alone
- Online/intercept businesses and workers: 75% prefer the City stand alone

There was no clear preference for which councils the City should merge with among those supporting a merge.

In all samples, there was strong opposition to forced amalgamations.

- Telephone resident: 78% opposed
- Telephone business: 75% opposed
- Online/intercept: 80% opposed

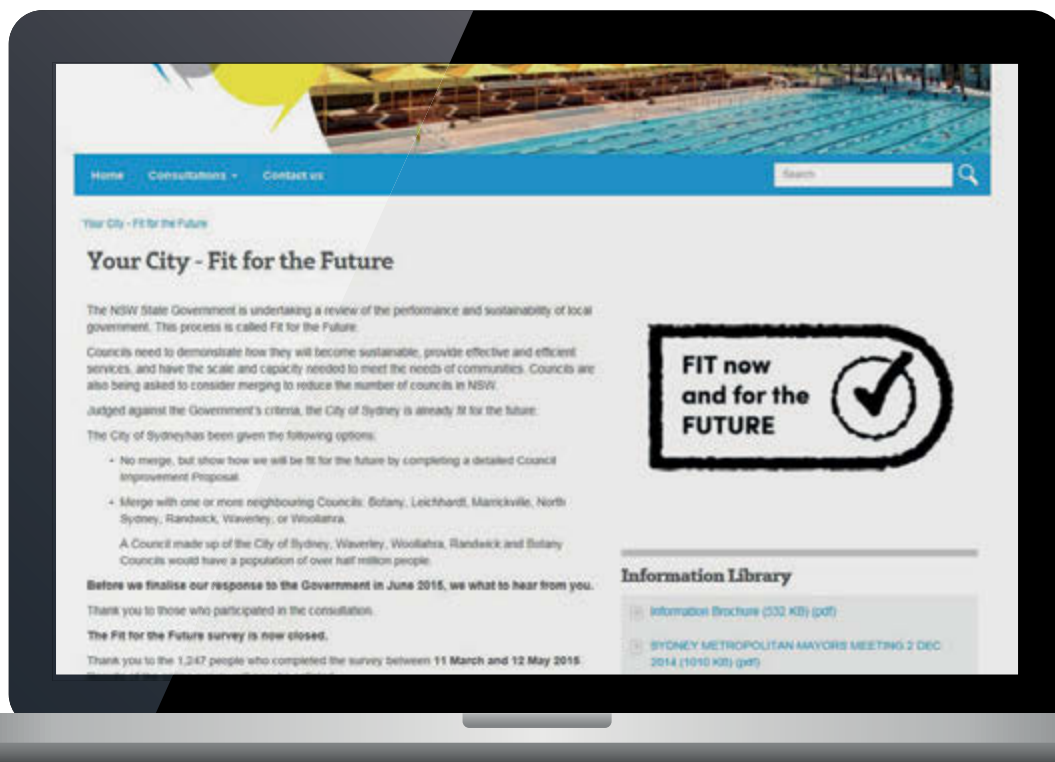
# Sydney Your Say

The City of Sydney promoted participation in the survey through our online consultation hub – [sydneyyoursay.com.au](http://sydneyyoursay.com.au).

The page included:

- A short introduction
- A link to the survey
- Details of community information stalls
- Council resolutions on Fit for the Future
- Links to the NSW Government website

It has now been updated to include a summary of the results of consultation.



# Community information stalls

12 pop-up information stalls were hosted at locations throughout the City. These coincided with markets or the City's Good Neighbourhood BBQs ensuring a good cross-section of the community participated.

The stalls were run by staff from the Strategic Community Consultation Unit and Customer Service. Staff actively approached people to undertake the survey or to encourage them to go to [sydneyoursay.com.au](https://sydneyoursay.com.au), find out more and complete the survey online.

Copies of the survey and flyer were also available through community centres and libraries.



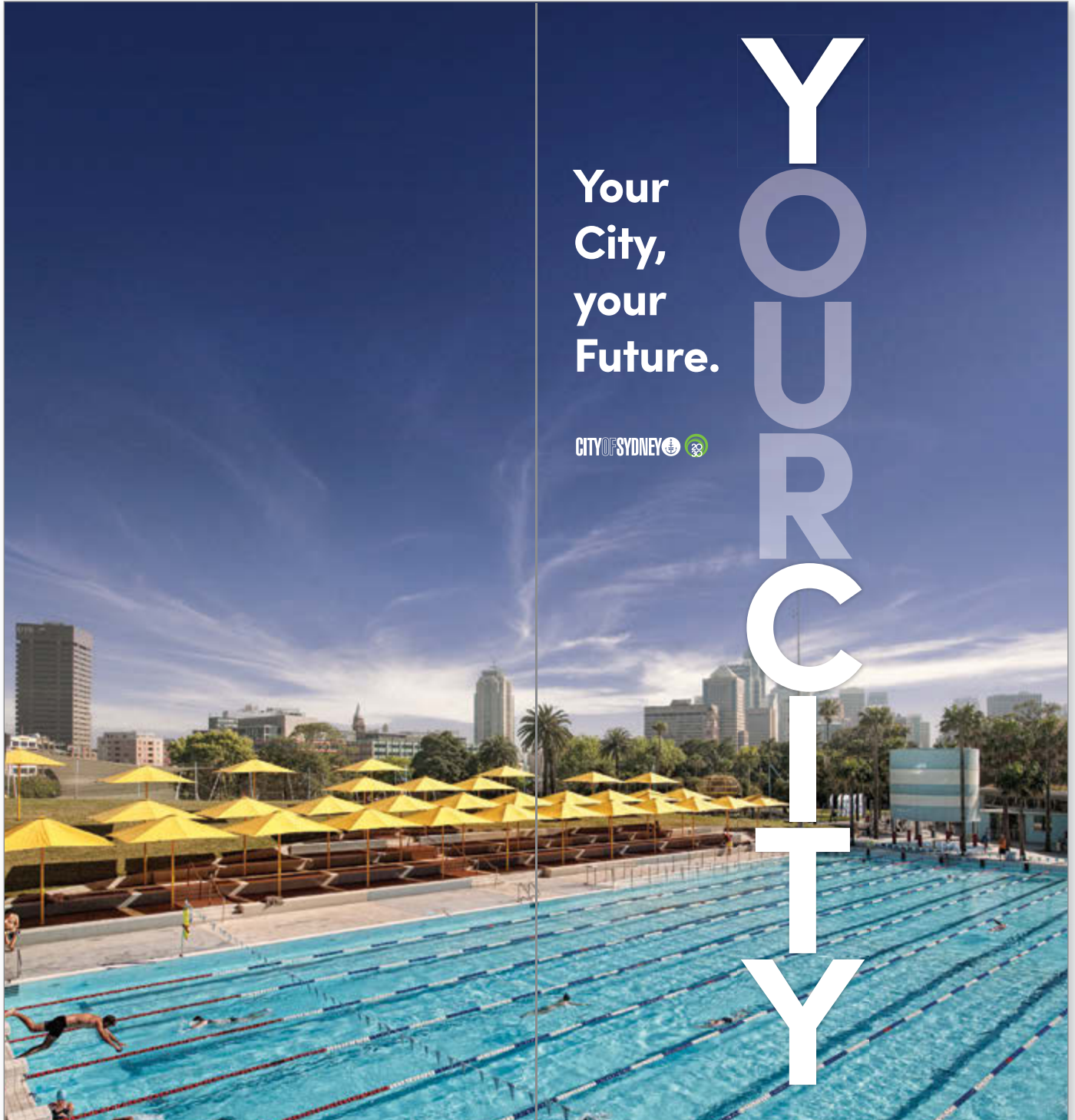
## Information stalls – program and results

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION	TIME	PEOPLE ENGAGED	HOURS
11/03/2015	<b>Pymont Good Neighbourhood BBQ</b>	Pirrama Park, Pymont	5pm – 8pm	80	3
14/03/2015	<b>Fitzroy Gardens Markets</b>	Kings Cross, Fitzroy Gardens, Macleay Street, Kings Cross	8am – 2pm	215	5
15/03/2015	<b>Paddington Good Neighbourhood BBQ</b>	Selwyn St Reserve, Selwyn St, Paddington	11am – 2pm	40	3
18/03/15	<b>Zetland Good Neighbourhood BBQ</b>	Mary O'Brien Reserve, Tilford Road, Zetland	5pm – 8pm	90	3
21/03/2015	<b>Sydney Park Pop-up</b>	Sydney Park, Sydney Park Road, St Peters	9:30am – 1pm	72	3.5
22/03/2015	<b>Glebe Good Neighbourhood BBQ</b>	St James Park, Woolley Street, Glebe	11am – 2pm	85	3
24/03/2015	<b>Chippendale Pop-up</b>	Central Park	4pm – 6pm	23	2.5
25/03/2015	<b>Elizabeth Bay Good Neighbourhood BBQ</b>	Arthur McElhone Reserve, Elizabeth Bay – Cnr Billyard and Onslow Avenues	5pm – 8pm	70	3
27/03/2015	<b>Chinatown Night Market</b>	Dixon Street, Chinatown (Haymarket)	4pm – 10pm	65	6
28/03/2015	<b>Paddington Markets</b>	Oxford Street, Paddington	10am – 4pm	78	6
29/03/2015	<b>Ultimo Good Neighbourhood BBQ</b>	Quarry Green, Quarry Street, Ultimo	11am – 2pm	49	3
1/04/2015	<b>Rosebery Good Neighbourhood BBQ</b>	Turruwul Park, Harcourt Parade, Rosebery	5pm – 8pm	63	3
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>930</b>	<b>44</b>





# Fit for the Future Flyer



## The NSW Government is reviewing the performance and sustainability of local government. The process is called Fit for the Future.

Local governments need to show how they will be sustainable, provide effective and efficient services, and be able to meet the needs of their communities. They are also being asked to consider merging.



**The City of Sydney is already Fit for the Future. We are financially viable and we have no debt. Our average residential rates are among the lowest in Sydney, with free rates for pensioners.**

In 2013, NSW Treasury Corporation rated the City's financial sustainability as "strong" with a "positive outlook" – the only NSW council to receive this rating.

We plan for your future. We have a 10-year \$1.94 billion program to provide new infrastructure and facilities for our community. We are contributing \$220 million for the construction of light rail, and \$440 million for great new parks and a pool, library and town centre and other essential services in Green Square.

Forcing the City of Sydney to merge with more local governments would put this work at risk, and slow down our action on climate change, better transport, more affordable housing and high-quality urban design.

The City was merged with South Sydney Council and parts of Leichhardt Council in 2004 and is now home to nearly 200,000 residents. We also provide services for more than 1 million people who visit the City each day.

**Merging the City with Waverley, Woollahra, Randwick and Botany would create a local government with more than half a million residents and tens of thousands of businesses.**

Have your say. By the end of June, the City of Sydney must make a submission to the NSW Government choosing one of the following options:

- Not merge, but show how we will be Fit for the Future.
- Merge with one or more neighbouring councils.

Before the City makes a submission, we want to know what you think. Please fill in the short survey at [sydneyyoursay.com.au](http://sydneyyoursay.com.au)

**Want to know more? Go to [sydneyyoursay.com.au](http://sydneyyoursay.com.au)**

*Clover Moore.*

Lord Mayor  
Clover Moore



# Telephone Survey Results



## City of Sydney

Fit for the Future

Prepared by: Micromex Research  
Date: April 2015



# Background



# Methodology & Sample

## Data collection

Micromex Research, together with City of Sydney Council, developed the questionnaire.

## Data collection period

Telephone interviewing (CATI) was conducted during the period 13<sup>th</sup> March – 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015 for residents and from 11<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> March 2015.

## Sample

N=1,000 resident interviews and N=500 business interviews were conducted.

A sample size of 1,000 provides a maximum sampling error of plus or minus 3.1% at 95% confidence for the resident research, and a sample size of 500 provides a maximum sampling error of plus or minus 4.4% at 95% confidence for the business research.

This means that if the survey was replicated with a new universe of n=1,000 residents and 500 businesses, that 19 times out of 20 we would expect to see the same results, i.e. +/- 3.1% and 4.4%.

For the survey under discussion the greatest margin of error is 3.1% and 4.4% . This means, for example that the answer "yes" (53% residents and 53% businesses) to the awareness of the state government's review of council boundaries question could vary from 50% to 56% for residents and from 49% to 57% for businesses.

## Interviewing

Interviewing was conducted in accordance with the AMSRS Code of Professional Conduct. Where applicable, the issues in each question were systematically rearranged for each respondent.

## Data analysis

The data within this report was analysed using Q Professional.

## Percentages

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

## Word Frequency Tagging

Verbatim responses for open questions were collated and entered into analytical software. This analysis 'counts' the number of times a particular word or phrase appears and, based on the frequency of that word or phrase, a font size is generated. The larger the font, the more frequently the word or sentiment is mentioned.

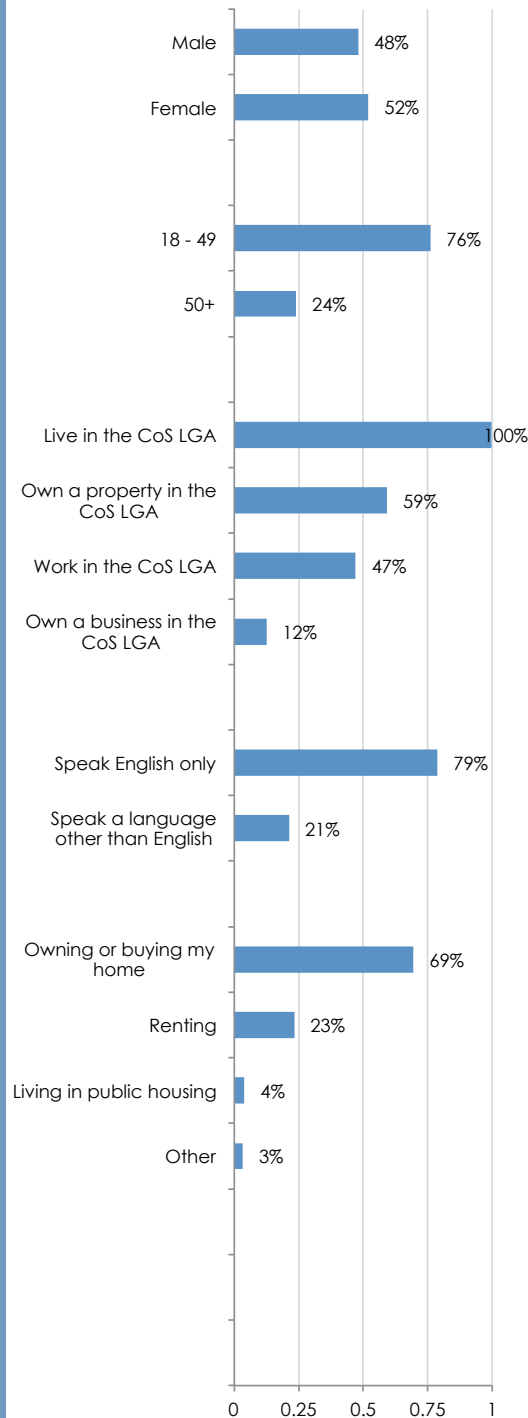


# Sample Profile



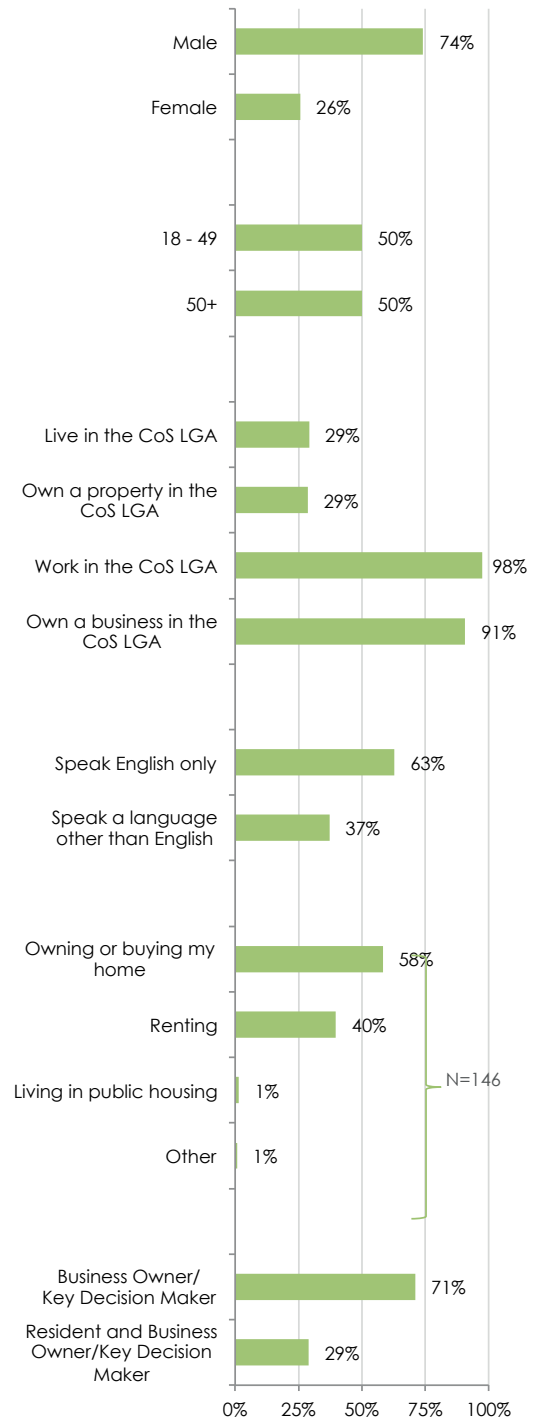
# Sample Profile

## Resident



Base: n = 1,000

## Business



Base: n = 500

The 'resident' sample was weighted by age and gender to reflect the 2011 ABS community profile of the City of Sydney Council

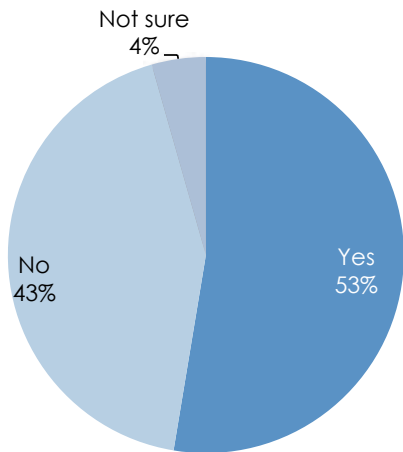
# Results



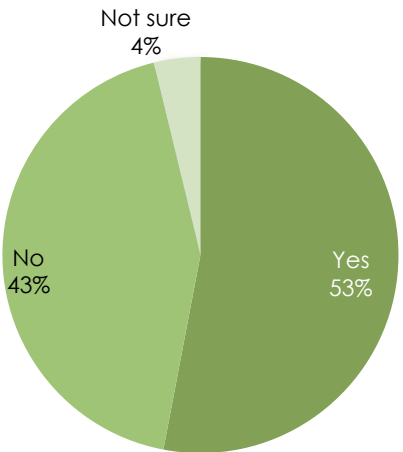
# Awareness of the State Government's Review of Local Council Boundaries

Q2. Are you aware that the State Government is reviewing NSW local council boundaries?

Resident



Business



	Over-all	Male	Fe-male	18-34	35-49	50-69	70+
Yes	53%	56%	49%	40%	52%	65%▲	65%▲
No	43%	40%	46%	58%▲	42%	32%	31%
Not sure	4%	4%	5%	2%	6%	3%	4%

Base: N=1,000  
▲ ▼ = A significantly higher/lower level than the overall

	Over all	Resident and Business Owner/Key Decision Maker	Business Owner/Key Decision Maker only
Yes	53%	47%	55%
No	43%	47%	42%
Not sure	4%	6%	3%

Base: N=500

The majority of both residents and businesses (each 53%) were aware that the State Government is reviewing the NSW local council boundaries

Residents aged 50+ were significantly more aware, whilst those aged 18-34 were significantly more likely to state they were not aware

## First Concept Statement

The NSW State Government is undertaking a review of the performance and sustainability of local government. This process is called Fit for the Future.

Councils need to demonstrate how they will become sustainable, provide effective and efficient services, and have the scale and capacity needed to meet the needs of communities. Councils are being asked to consider merging to reduce the number of councils in NSW.

Judged against the Government's criteria, the City of Sydney is already fit for the future.

The City of Sydney has been given the following options:

- No merge, but show how we will be fit for the future by completing a detailed Council Improvement Proposal
- Merge with one or more neighbouring Councils: Botany, Leichhardt, Marrickville, North Sydney, Randwick, Waverley, or Woollahra

A council made up of City of Sydney, Waverley, Woollahra, Randwick and Botany Councils would have a population of over half million people.

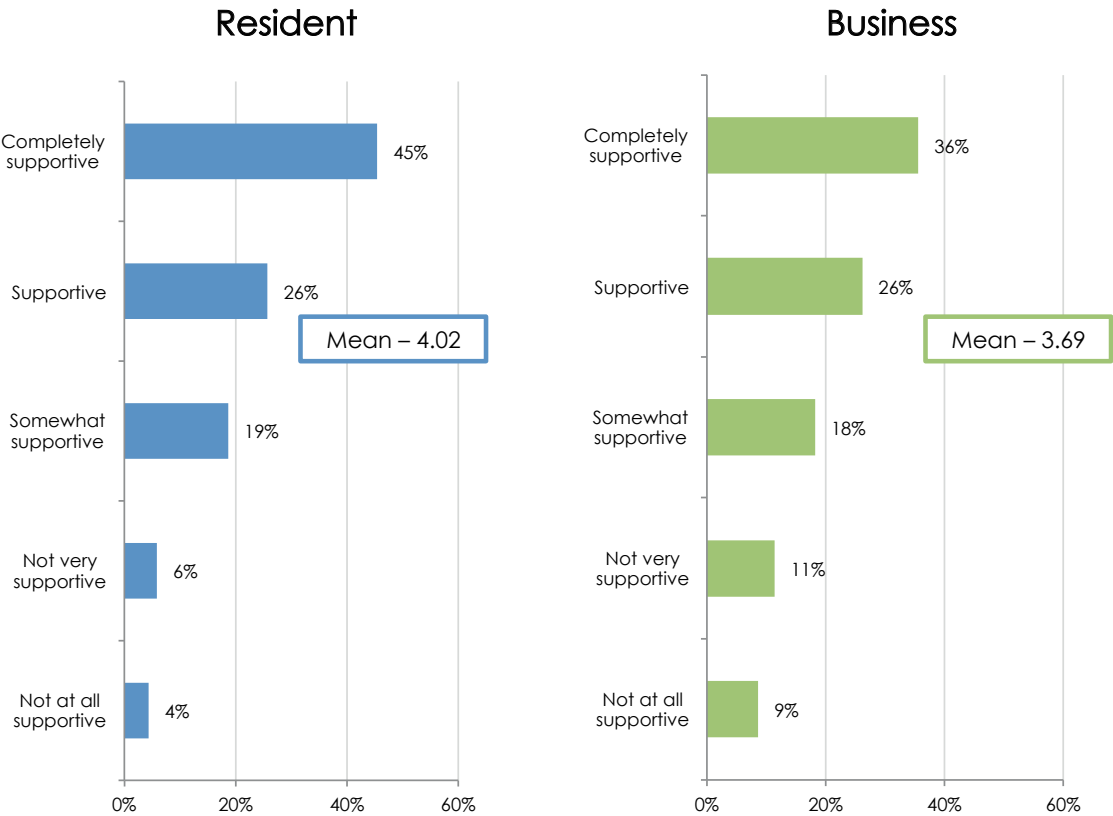
We are seeking your views on these options.



Residents and Business Owners/Key Decision Makers were read this concept statement before continuing

# Support for City of Sydney Standing Alone – No Merge

Q3a. How supportive are you of the City of Sydney standing alone and not merging with neighbouring councils?



	Over-all	Male	Fe-male	18-34	35-49	50-69	70+
Mean	4.02	3.89	4.14	3.89	4.08	3.93	4.10

	Over all	Resident and Business Owner/Key Decision Maker	Business Owner/Key Decision Maker only
Mean	3.69	3.72	3.68

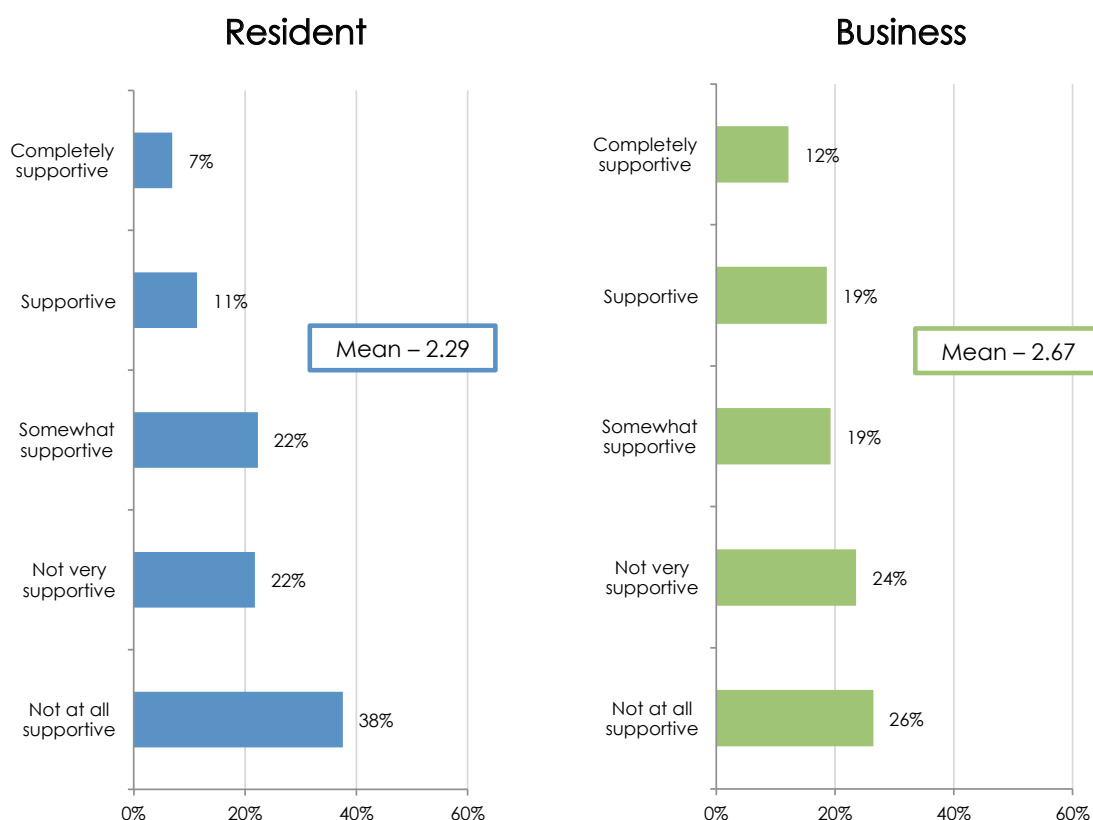
Base: N=1,000  
Scale: 1 = not at all supportive, 5 = completely supportive

Base: N=500

90% of residents and 80% business owners/key decision makers were at least somewhat supportive of the City of Sydney remaining a stand alone council

# Support for City of Sydney Merging with Neighbouring Councils

Q3b. How supportive are you of the City of Sydney merging with one or more neighbouring Councils?



	Over all	Male	Fem ale	18-3 4	35-4 9	50-6 9	70+
Mean	2.29	2.33	2.24	2.51	2.23	2.30	2.09

Base: N=1,000  
Scale: 1 = not at all supportive, 5 = completely supportive

▲ ▼ = Significantly higher/lower compared to the overall

	Over all	Resident and Business Owner/Key Decision Maker	Business Owner/Key Decision Maker only
Mean	2.67	2.77	2.62

Base: N=500



There was limited support for City of Sydney merging with neighbouring councils, with 60% of residents and 50% of businesses declaring they were not very or not at all supportive

## Second Concept Statement

The City of Sydney currently has a residential population of approximately 200,000 people with 22,000 business establishments. We service more than a million residents, workers, and visitors each day.

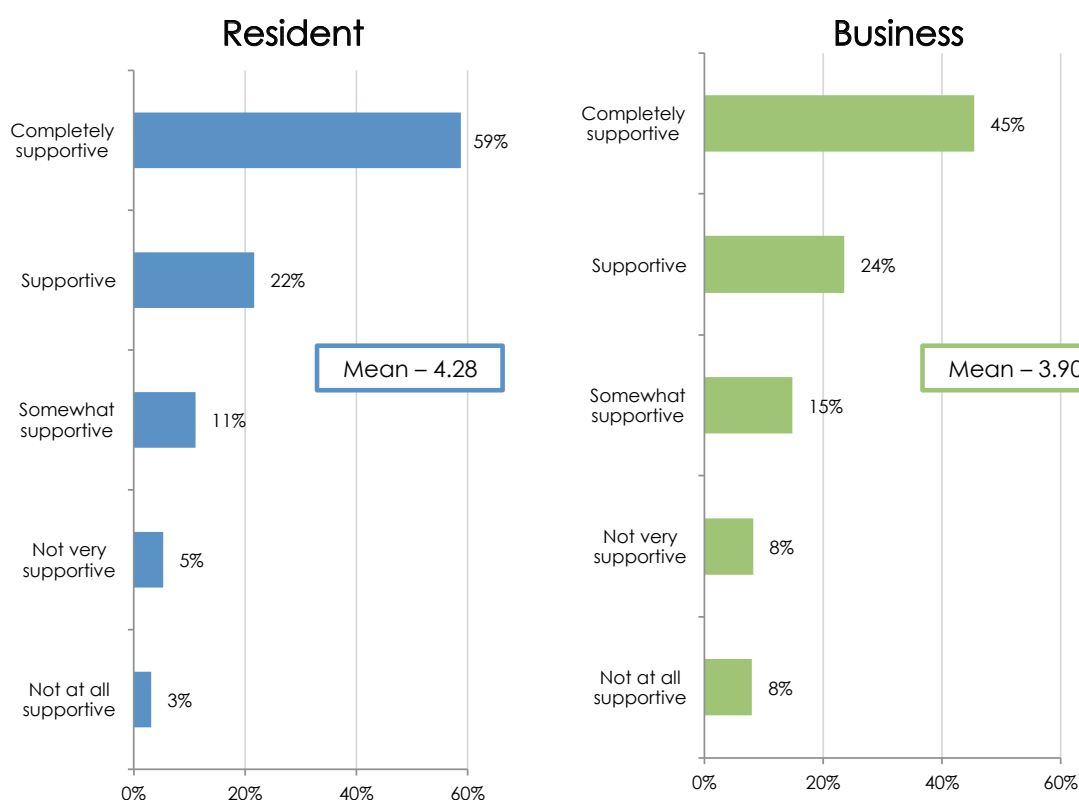
Currently the City of Sydney is strongly positioned to stand alone because we are financially viable, have no debt and provide high quality services and facilities for our community. In 2013 the NSW Treasury Corporation rated the City's financial sustainability as 'strong' with a positive outlook – the only NSW council to receive this rating. The City delivers debt free budgets, its average residential rates are amongst the lowest in Sydney and we provide free residential rates for pensioners.



# Support for City of Sydney Standing Alone

## After Being Informed of Council's Financial Position

Q4a. With this in mind, how supportive are you now of the City of Sydney standing alone and not merging with neighbouring councils?



	Over-all	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-69	70+
Mean	4.28	4.12 ▼	4.42 ▲	4.19	4.31	4.23	4.36

Base: N=1,000  
Scale: 1 = not at all supportive, 5 = completely supportive

▲ ▼ = Significantly higher/lower compared to the overall

	Over-all	Resident and Business Owner/Key Decision Maker	Business Owner/Key Decision Maker only
Mean	3.90	4.01	3.86

Base: N=500



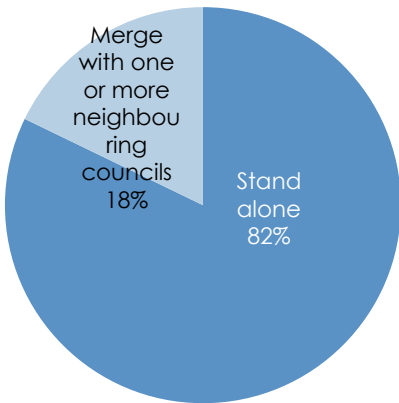
92% of residents and 84% of businesses were at least somewhat supportive of the City of Sydney standing alone and not merging with neighbouring councils.

Female residents were significantly more supportive of this option

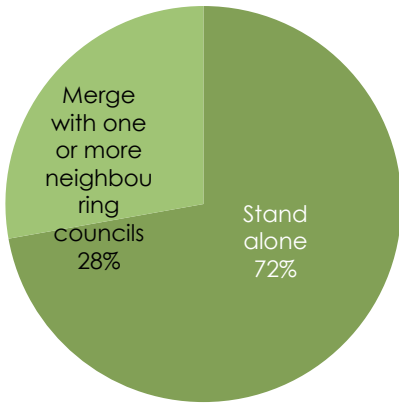
# Preferred Option After Awareness of Financial Position

Q4b. Now that you have been informed of the City's financial position, which option would be your preference?

Resident



Business



	Over all	Male	Fem ale	18-3 4	35-4 9	50-6 9	70+		Over all	Resident and Business Owner/Key Decision Maker	Business Owner/Key Decision Maker only
Stand alone	82%	77% ▼	87% ▲	79%	84%	80%	84%	Stand alone	72%	71%	73%
Merge	18%	23% ▲	13% ▼	21%	16%	20%	16%	Merge	28%	29%	27%

Base: N=1,0000

Base: N=500

▲ ▼ = A significantly higher/lower level than the overall

After being informed of the City's financial position, there was little support for merging with other councils, with 82% of residents and 72% of businesses preferring to stand alone

## Reasons for Supporting City of Sydney Standing Alone

Q4b. Now that you have been informed of the City's financial position, which option would be your preference?  
Q4d. Why do you say that?

Resident – Stand Alone



Base: N=822

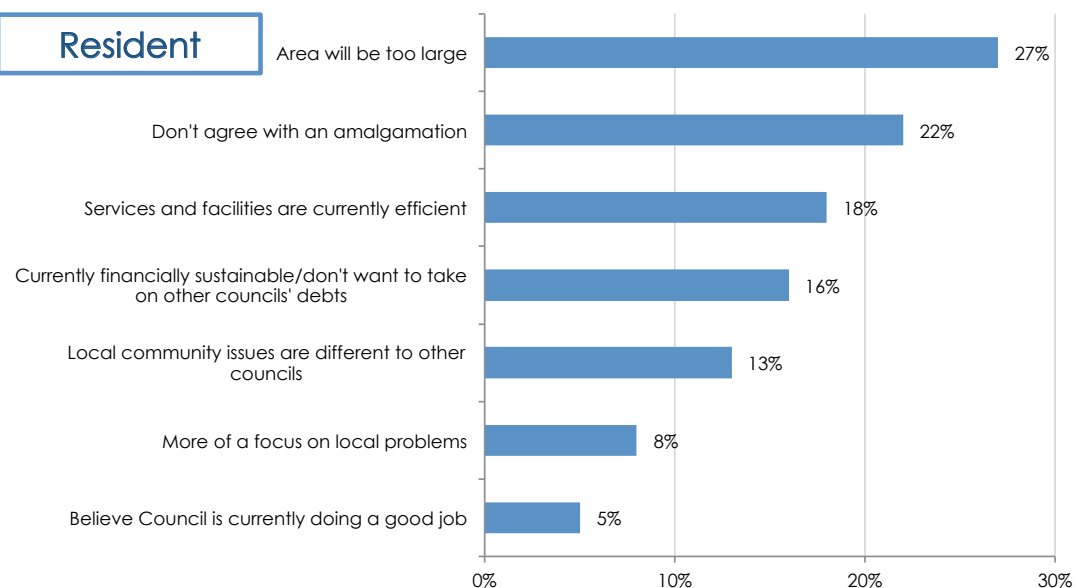


Residents' main reason for sanctioning the City of Sydney standing alone is that the area would become too large if it were to merge with other councils

## Reasons for Supporting City of Sydney Standing Alone

Q4b. Now that you have been informed of the City's financial position, which option would be your preference?  
Q4d. Why do you say that?

### Resident



### Verbatim responses

- "Council already caters for area-specific issues"
- "Amalgamation with other councils that have large populated areas could lead to lack of attention for City of Sydney residents"
- "City of Sydney Council is already large enough and doesn't require a merger"
- "City of Sydney is doing a superb job as it is, and merging would be detrimental to the area"
- "City of Sydney Council has different focuses to surrounding council areas"
- "A merge is not necessary, considering how financial stable the City of Sydney is"
- "City of Sydney Council is already large enough and merging might make them too large, which would make them less effective"
- "A merger will create too many problems, geographically and financial"
- "City of Sydney Council already runs an efficient program to respond to residents' needs"

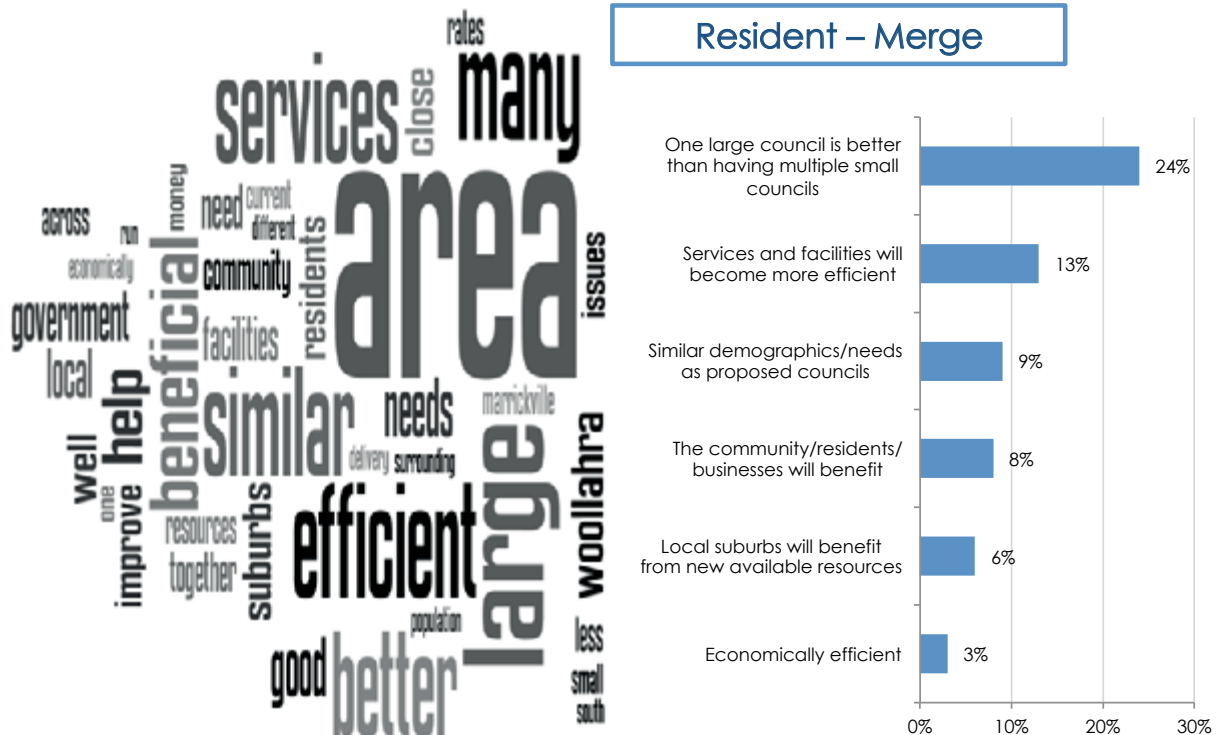
Base: N=822

Residents are concerned about the size of the area if it were to be merged with other councils, that Council is doing a great job now and in the merge they may lose the attention to detail, and that the Council's good financial situation could suffer in a merge

## Reasons for Merging with Other Councils

Q4b. Now that you have been informed of the City's financial position, which option would be your preference?

Q4d. Why do you say that?



- "Believe that merging would save residents' money in rates"
- "Better for future strategic planning in the area"
- "Bigger councils are just more efficient"
- "Combined area better for the greater community"
- "Council is operating well and would benefit the merged areas"
- "Council needs to improve, and merging with a new Council would benefit the community"
- "Councils merging together will get Council out of debt, which will allow residents to see improvements in the surrounding suburbs"
- "Despite what the Council says, residents feel they are being charged far too much in terms of rates, especially compared to other areas, so a merge might help lower those rates"
- "Improvements and changes are needed in the area, so merging councils would be a good way to see some improvements, like more facilities"
- "Increase the population density of the council area"
- "Larger council area will be able to share resources and be more economically efficient"

Base: N=178



Of the 18% of residents who support the merger, there is a general feel that 'bigger is better', not only for the City of Sydney, but for the surrounding areas as well

# Reasons for Supporting City of Sydney Standing Alone

Q4b. Now that you have been informed of the City's financial position, which option would be your preference?  
Q4d. Why do you say that?

Business – Stand Alone



Base: N=361

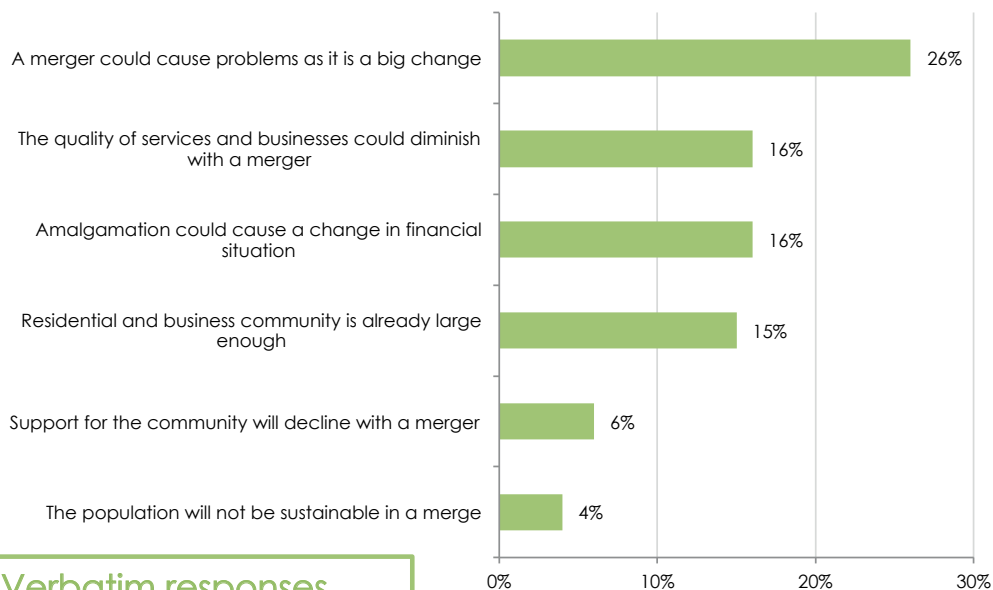


Businesses were mainly concerned about the problems a merger would cause

## Reasons for Supporting City of Sydney Standing Alone

Q4b. Now that you have been informed of the City's financial position, which option would be your preference?  
Q4d. Why do you say that?

### Business



### Verbatim responses

- "More beneficial for business owners to stay alone"
- "Better for business and everyone involved"
- "Better targeting of services to residents and business"
- "Bigger council will be less responsive to small business and residents"
- "Business and residential numbers are rising in the area so council size is already increasing"
- "City is more business oriented, not residential like surrounding areas"
- "City of Sydney Council is already sustainable and doesn't require a merger"
- "City of Sydney does well in looking after tourists and the needs of the community"
- "City of Sydney has a business culture and identity, other Councils have different lifestyles and needs"
- "City of Sydney has good finances so would not want to merge with council areas that are less financially stable"
- "City of Sydney is a very successful council and merging may change our status"
- "City of Sydney is financially sustainable, has no debts and provides high quality services and facilities"
- "Concerned that City of Sydney business owners will not have their views heard if there is an amalgamation"

Base: N=361

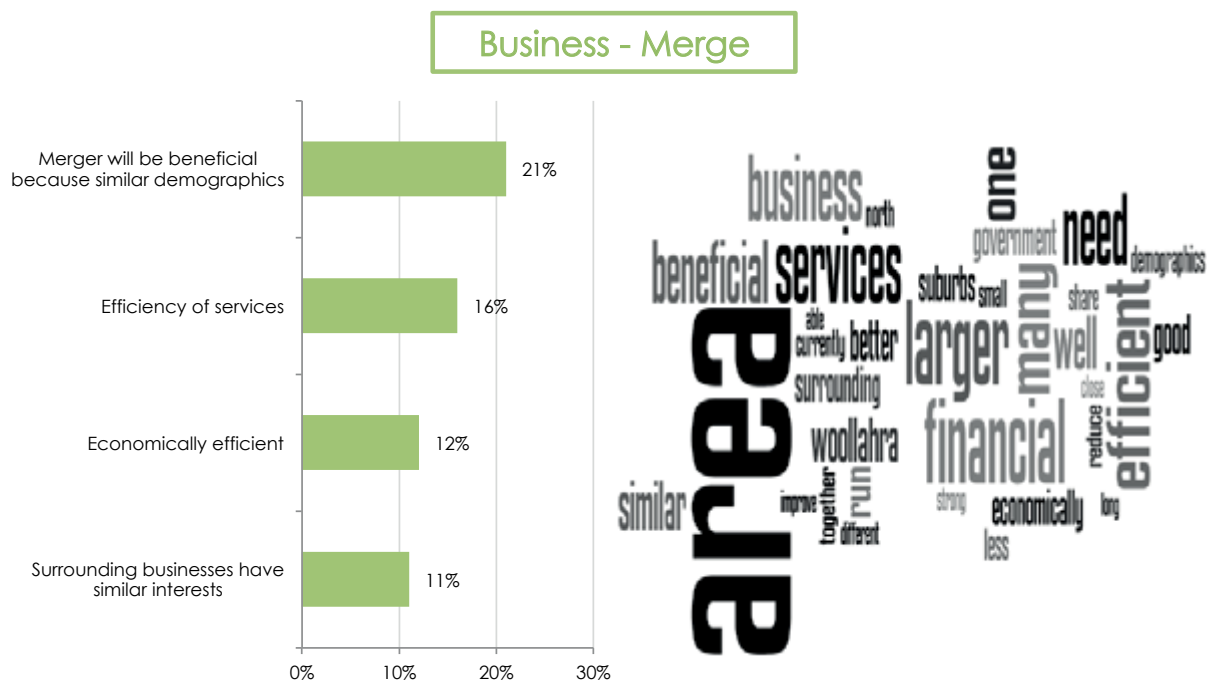


Businesses supporting the City standing alone are concerned with the changes that may occur, be they financial, quality of services, or support for the community

There is also concern over the size of the community after the amalgamation

## Reasons for Merging with Other Councils

Q4b. Now that you have been informed of the City's financial position, which option would be your preference?  
Q4d. Why do you say that?



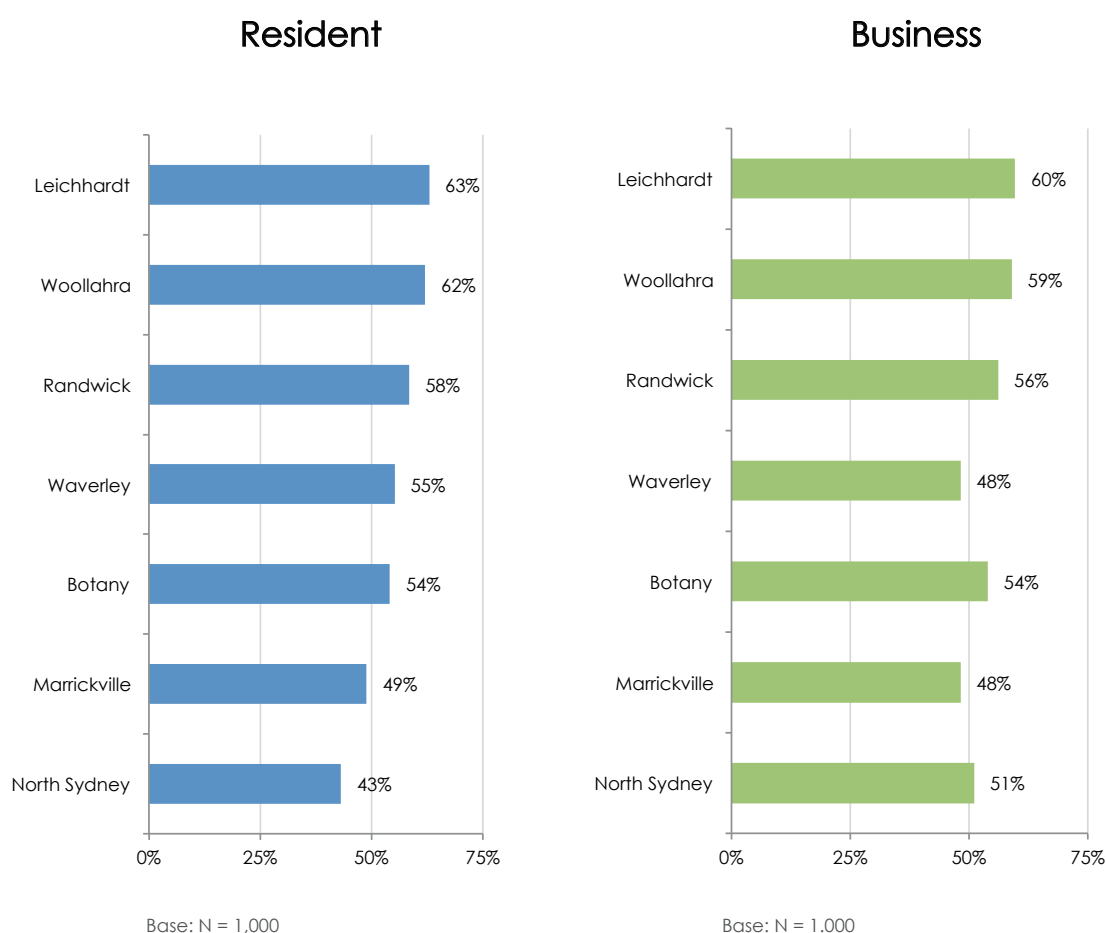
- "Bigger cities are more efficient from a planning point of view"
- "Bigger council could be more efficient delivering services and facilities"
- "City of Sydney Council does not always give helpful solutions, would hope that a larger council would be more supportive of small to medium sized businesses"
- "City of Sydney currently wastes too much money on PR projects and silly services"
- "Far too much government and bureaucracy in Australia"
- "Geographically sound areas to merge"
- "It makes sense economically to merge, therefor saving money on duplications in services"
- "Merger will save money and resources"
- "The entire City of Sydney and the surrounding areas should all be performing equally well, so the City should be able to bring the residential areas up to its financial standards"

Base: N=139

Of the 28% of businesses that support the merger, their main reasons focus on the similar demographics of neighbouring councils, and the economies of scale that could result in service provision and financial management

## Councils They Would Accept Being Merged With

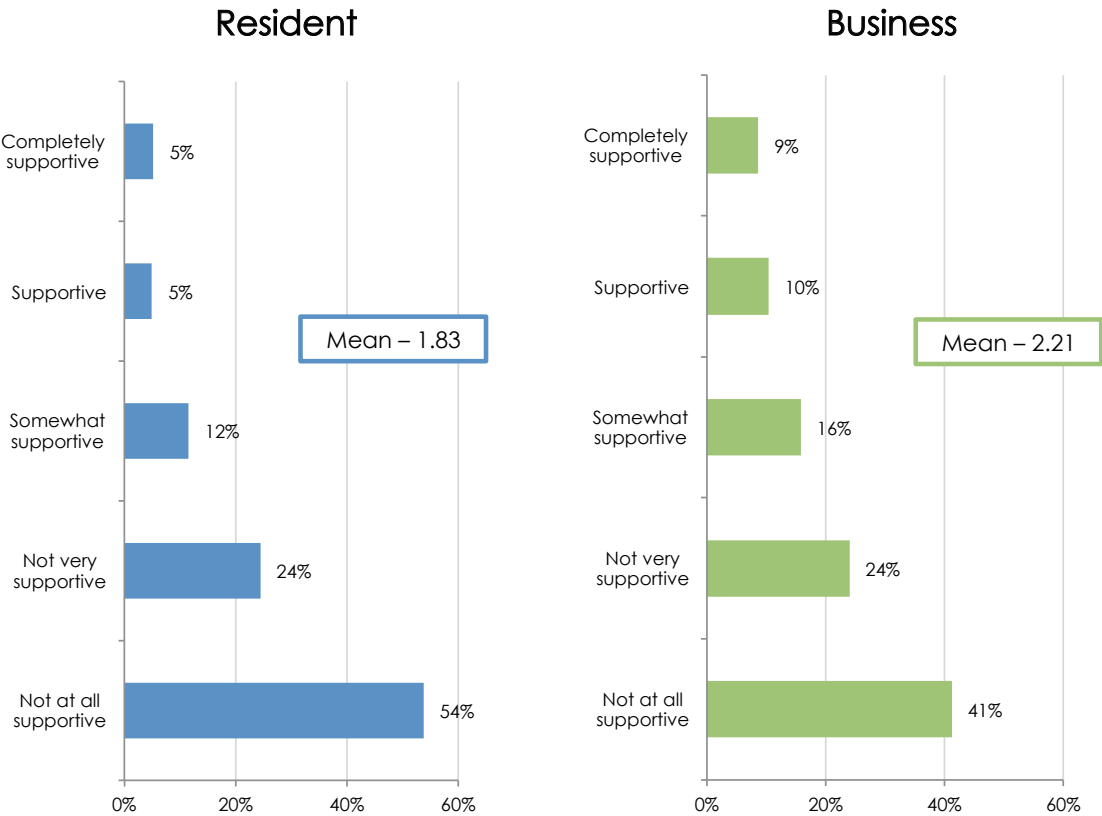
Q4c. Which councils would you support the City merging with?



Both residents and businesses showed the same proclivity for councils they feel would be acceptable should a merge be inevitable, with Leichhardt, Woollahra and Randwick being the top 3 choices

# Support for the Enforcement of Merging by State Government

Q5. How supportive would you be of the state government forcing the City of Sydney to merge with one or more other councils?



	Over-all	Male	Fe-male	18-34	35-49	50-69	70+
Mean	1.83	1.85	1.82	2.10	1.77	1.80	1.63

Base:N=1,000  
Scale: 1 = not at all supportive, 5 = completely supportive

	Overall	Resident and Business Owner/Key Decision Maker	Business Owner/Key Decision Maker only
Mean	2.21	2.14	2.24

Base: N=500

Residents and Business Owners/Key Decision Makers are unified in their lack of support for the State Government forcing the City of Sydney to merge with other councils. 78% of residents and 65% of businesses were unwilling to support this enforcement

# Conclusions



## Conclusions

Just over 50% of respondents were aware of the State Government's planned reform of Local Government.

Community support for the City of Sydney to stand alone was strong with 90% of residents and 80% of businesses being at least 'somewhat supportive' of Council's positioning. When a concept statement was read regarding the City of Sydney's financial viability, there was a small incremental increase in community support for Council to stand alone (92% for residents, 84% for businesses).

When pressed to make a head-to-head choice, 82% of residents and 72% of business indicated a preference for Council to stand alone rather than merge.

Main reasons for this preference for residents were that:

- The area would become too large with a merger
- The LGA is currently efficient in its service delivery
- The LGA is currently financially sustainable
- Merging would potentially lose the focus on local issues that may be different to those of other council areas

Key drivers amongst businesses for standing alone were:

- Avoidance of potential problems incurred in an amalgamation
- Retaining the quality of services and facilities
- Avoidance of financial challenges that could result from a merge
- A belief that the current residential and business community is large enough
- Fear of a loss of local support with a much larger population

There was strong community rejection of forced amalgamations (78% residents and 65% businesses opposed).



**There is very limited evidence that the State Government's reform process has the broad support of the City of Sydney community – For the most part the community desires a continuation of the current operating model for the City of Sydney**



Telephone: (02) 4352  
2388  
Fax: (02) 4352 2117  
Web:  
[www.micromex.com.au](http://www.micromex.com.au)  
Email:  
[stu@micromex.com.au](mailto:stu@micromex.com.au)

# Online Survey Results

## City of Sydney

### Fit for the Future Online Survey Outcomes Report

Prepared by Cred Community Planning

# Background

## Methodology and Sample

### Data collection

Cred Community Planning, together with the City of Sydney developed the questionnaire.

### Data collection period

This report represents the surveys completed between 13 March 2015 and 12 May 2015.

### Sample

A total of 1238 surveys were completed as at 12 May 2015. Surveys were completed by residents, ratepayers, business owners, workers, and visitors (80 responses were from shoppers or tourists). Survey responses have been shown as Residents/Ratepayers – sample size 1021 (this includes people who are residents of the City of Sydney LGA, or who own a property in the City but do not live here) or Business/Workers - sample size 536 (this includes people who own a business or work in the City of Sydney LGA. 81.5% of business/resident respondents also live in the City of Sydney LGA).

### Survey Collection

The survey link was available at [SydneyYourSay.com.au](http://SydneyYourSay.com.au), Your City – Fit for the Future. Council staff conducted community consultations/intercept surveys in areas across the City of Sydney.

### Data analysis

The data within this report was analysed using NVivo.

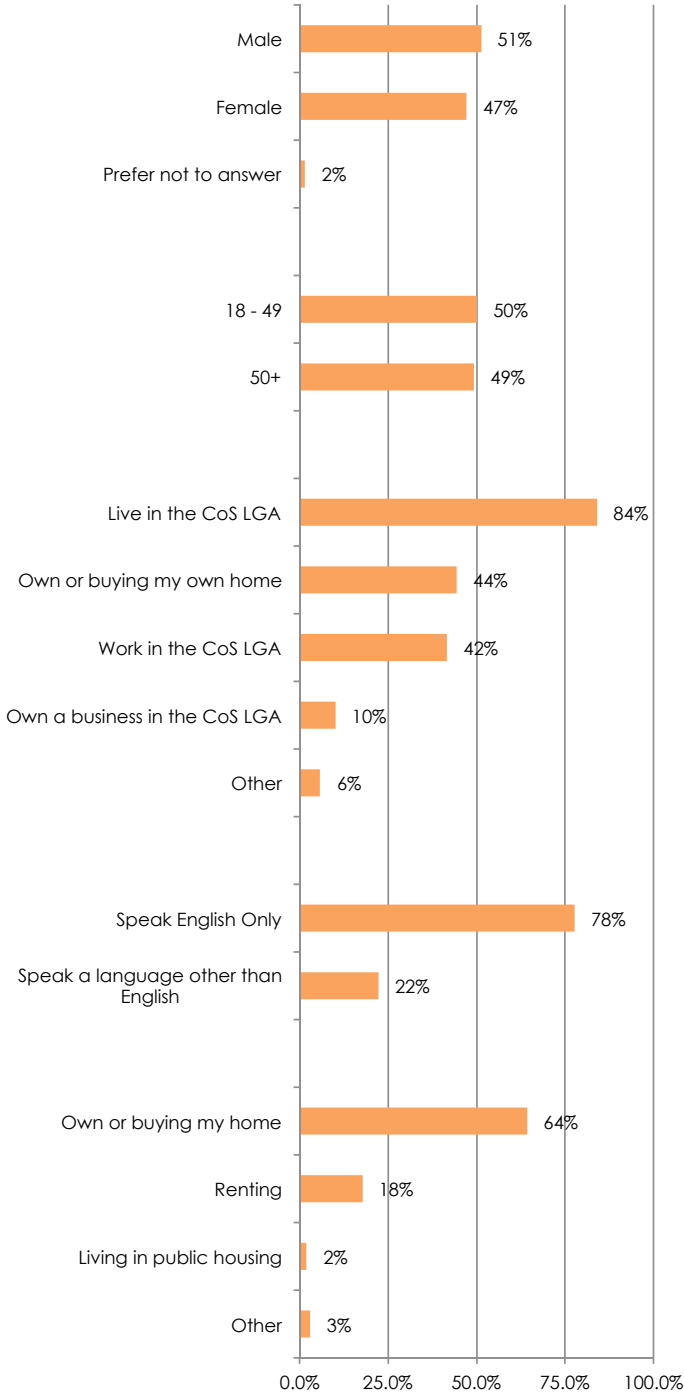
### Percentages

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

# Sample Profile

# Sample Profile

All Respondents



Base: n = 1238

Overall the survey had slightly more male than female respondents.

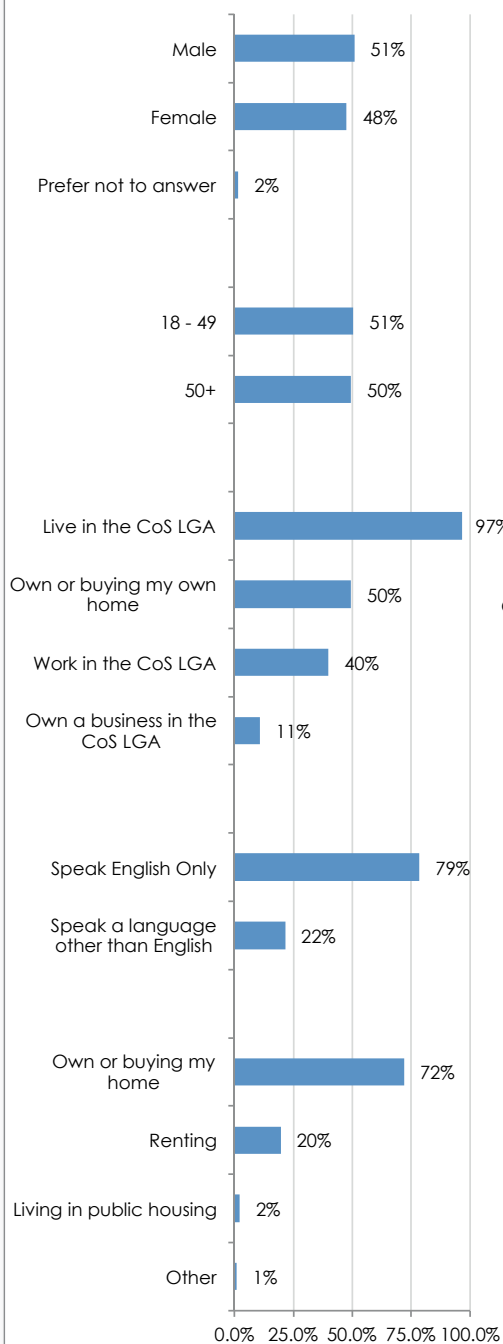
50% of respondents were aged 18 to 49, which is lower than the City's population of 71% (profile.id). 49% of respondents were aged 50+, which was higher than the City's population of 21% (profile.id).

Of the 1,238 completed surveys, 6% of respondents (or 80) neither live nor work in the LGA (they are visitors, shoppers, tourists)

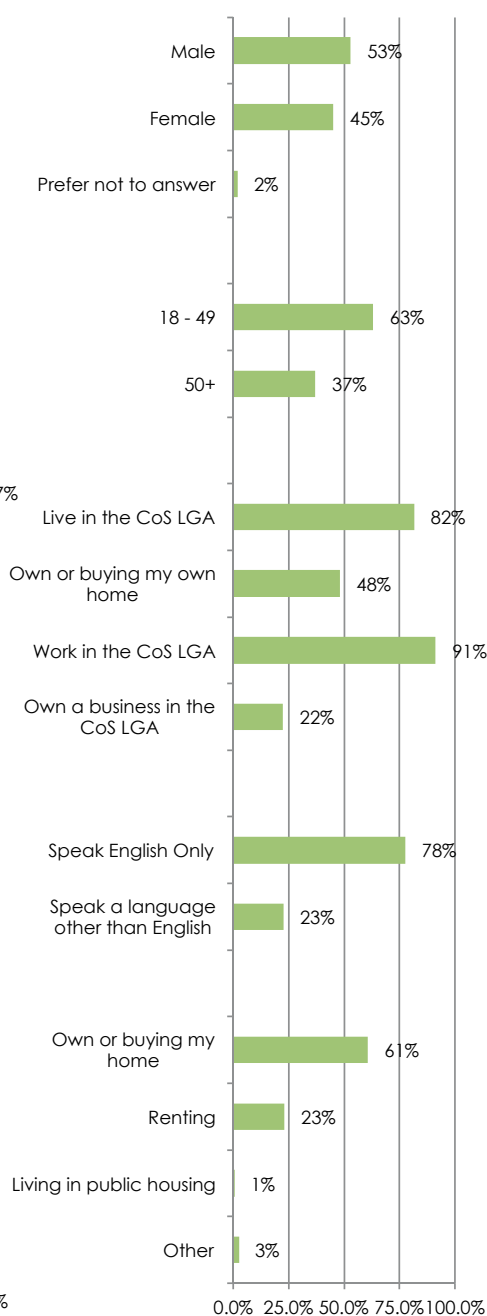
22% of survey respondents speak a language other than English at home, which is less than the City's population of 30% (2011 census, profile.id).

# Sample Profile

## Resident/Ratepayer



## Business/Worker



40% of resident respondents also worked in the LGA.

There were more male worker respondents than female.

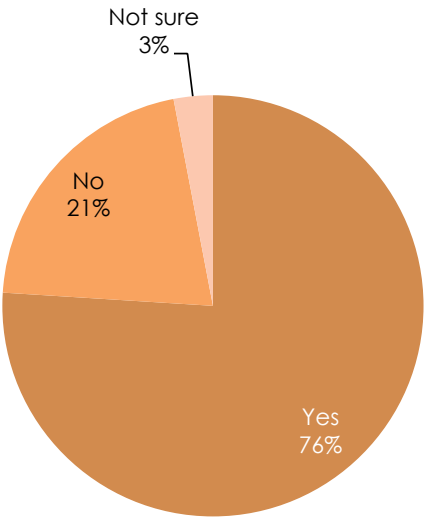
Among the residents, there was a more even gender split and more older respondents.

# Results

# Awareness of the State Government’s Review of Local Council Boundaries

Q2. Are you aware that the State Government is reviewing NSW local council boundaries?

All Respondents



	Overall	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-69	70+
Yes	76%	76%	76%	64%	69%	87%	87%
No	21%	20%	22%	33%	29%	11%	11%
Not sure	3%	3%	2%	4%	3%	2%	1%

Base: n = 1238

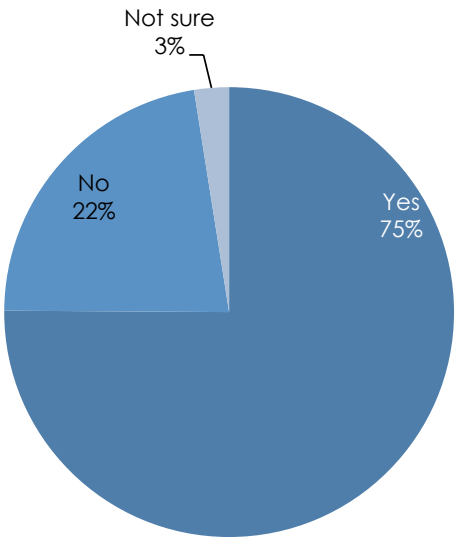
The majority of respondents (76%) were aware that the State Government is reviewing the NSW local council boundaries.

Residents aged 50+ were more aware (87%), whilst those aged 18-34 were more likely to state that they were not aware (33%).

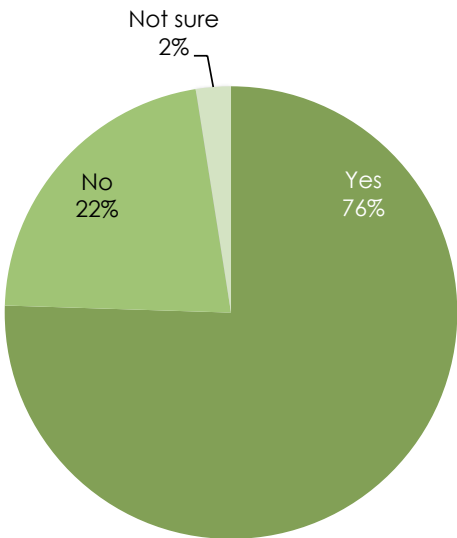
# Awareness of the State Government's Review of Local Council Boundaries

Q2. Are you aware that the State Government is reviewing NSW local council boundaries?

Resident/Ratepayer



Business/Worker



	Over-all	Male	Fe-male	18-34	35-49	50-69	70+
Yes	75%	77%	75%	63%	70%	86%	91%
No	22%	20%	23%	35%	27%	12%	8%
Not sure	3%	3%	2%	2%	3%	2%	1%

Base: n = 1021

	Over-all	Male	Fe-male	18-34	35-49	50-69	70+
Yes	75%	76%	77%	68%	73%	87%	93%
No	22%	21%	21%	28%	25%	11%	7%
Not sure	3%	3%	2%	3%	2%	2%	0%

Base: n = 536

## First Concept Statement

The NSW State Government is undertaking a review of the performance and sustainability of local government. This process is called Fit for the Future.

Councils need to demonstrate how they will become sustainable, provide effective and efficient services, and have the scale and capacity needed to meet the needs of communities. Councils are being asked to consider merging to reduce the number of councils in NSW.

Judged against the Government's criteria, the City of Sydney is already fit for the future.

The City of Sydney has been given the following options:

- No merge, but show how we will be fit for the future by completing a detailed Council Improvement Proposal
- Merge with one or more neighbouring Councils: Botany, Leichhardt, Marrickville, North Sydney, Randwick, Waverley, or Woollahra

A council made up of City of Sydney, Waverley, Woollahra, Randwick and Botany Councils would have a population of over half million people.

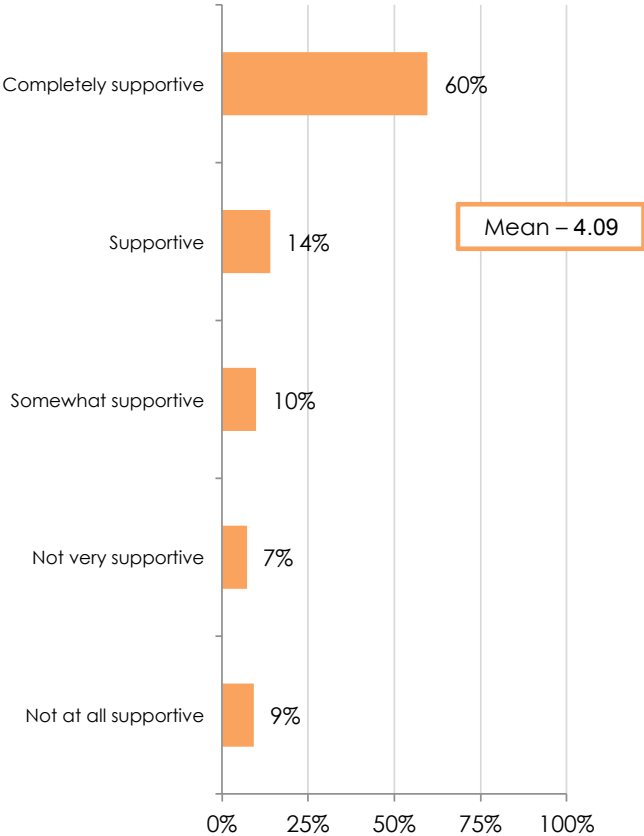
We are seeking your views on these options.

Respondents read this concept statement before  
continuing

# Support for City of Sydney Standing Alone – No Merge

Q3a. How supportive are you of the City of Sydney standing alone and not merging with neighbouring councils?

All Respondents



	Overall	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-69	70+
Mean	4.09	3.98	4.23	3.79	4.12	4.11	4.44

Scale: 1 = not at all supportive, 5 = completely supportive

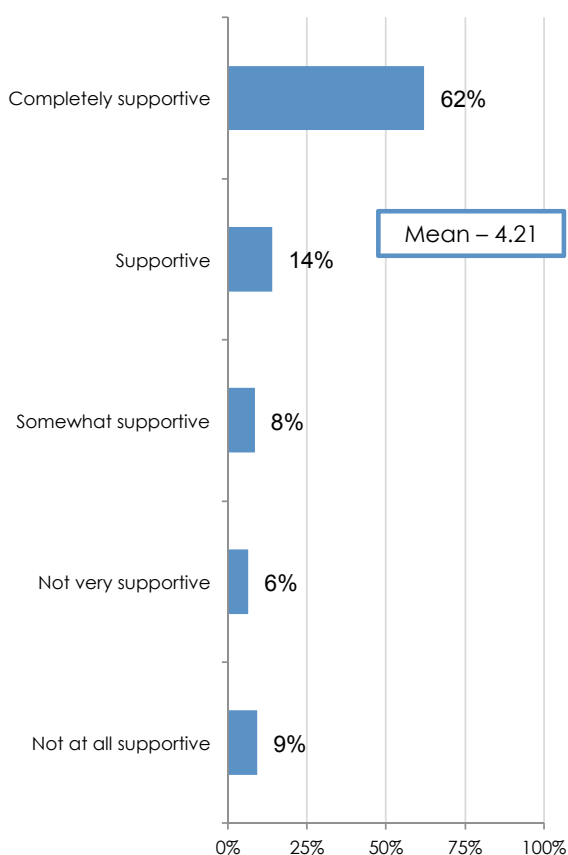
Base: n = 1238

84% of respondents were at least somewhat supportive of the City standing alone. Women and older people were more highly supportive than men and younger people.

## Support for City of Sydney Standing Alone – No Merge

Q3a. How supportive are you of the City of Sydney standing alone and not merging with neighbouring councils?

### Resident/Ratepayer

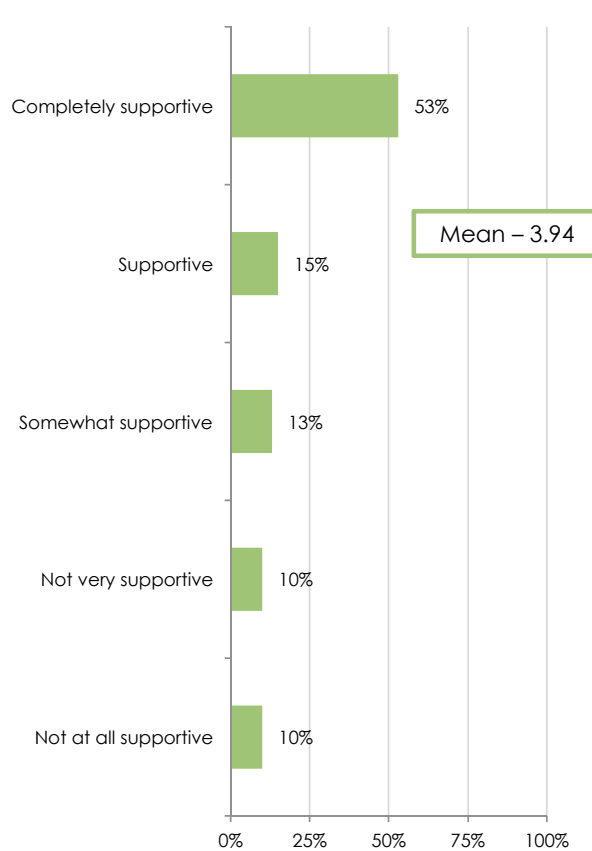


	Over-all	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-69	70+
Mean	4.21	4.05	4.28	3.93	4.17	4.17	4.53

Base: n = 1021

Scale: 1 = not at all supportive, 5 = completely supportive

### Business/Worker



	Over-all	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-69	70+
Mean	3.94	3.91	4.00	3.94	3.95	3.99	4.07

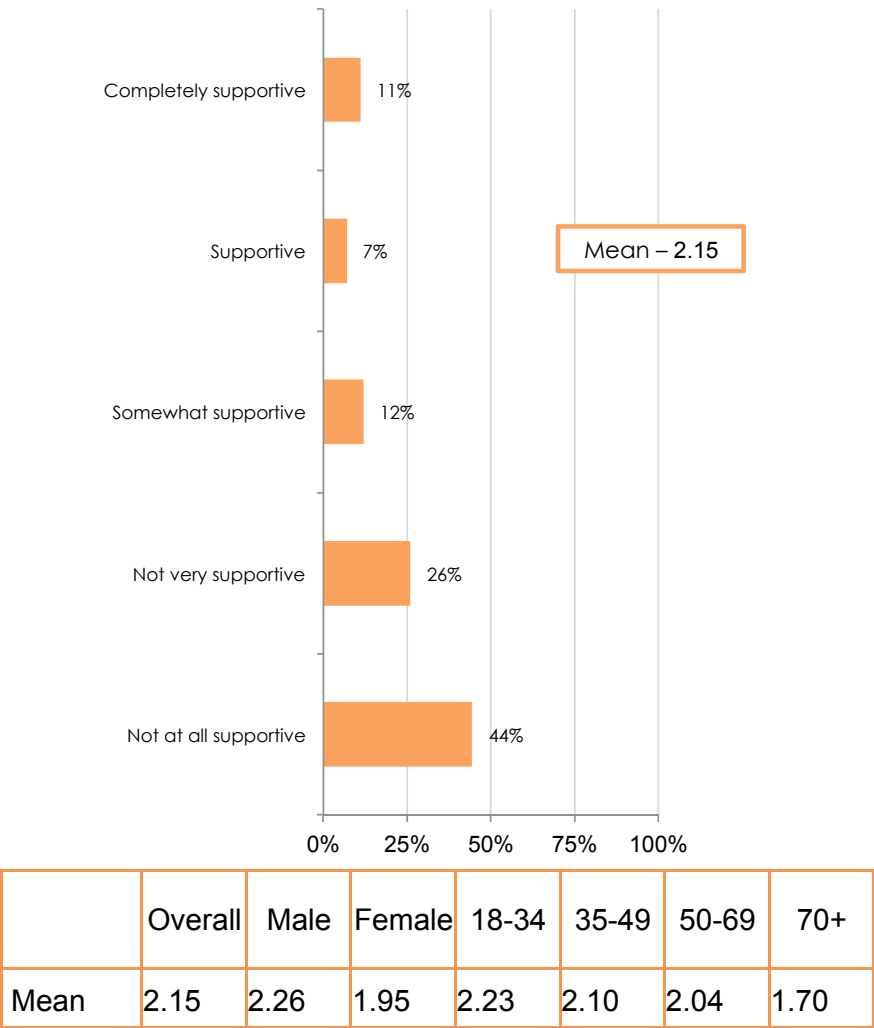
Base: n = 536

Overall, residents/ratepayers were more highly supportive than businesses/workers, of the City standing alone.

## Support for City of Sydney Merging with Neighbouring Councils

Q3b. How supportive are you of the City of Sydney merging with one or more neighbouring Councils?

All Respondents

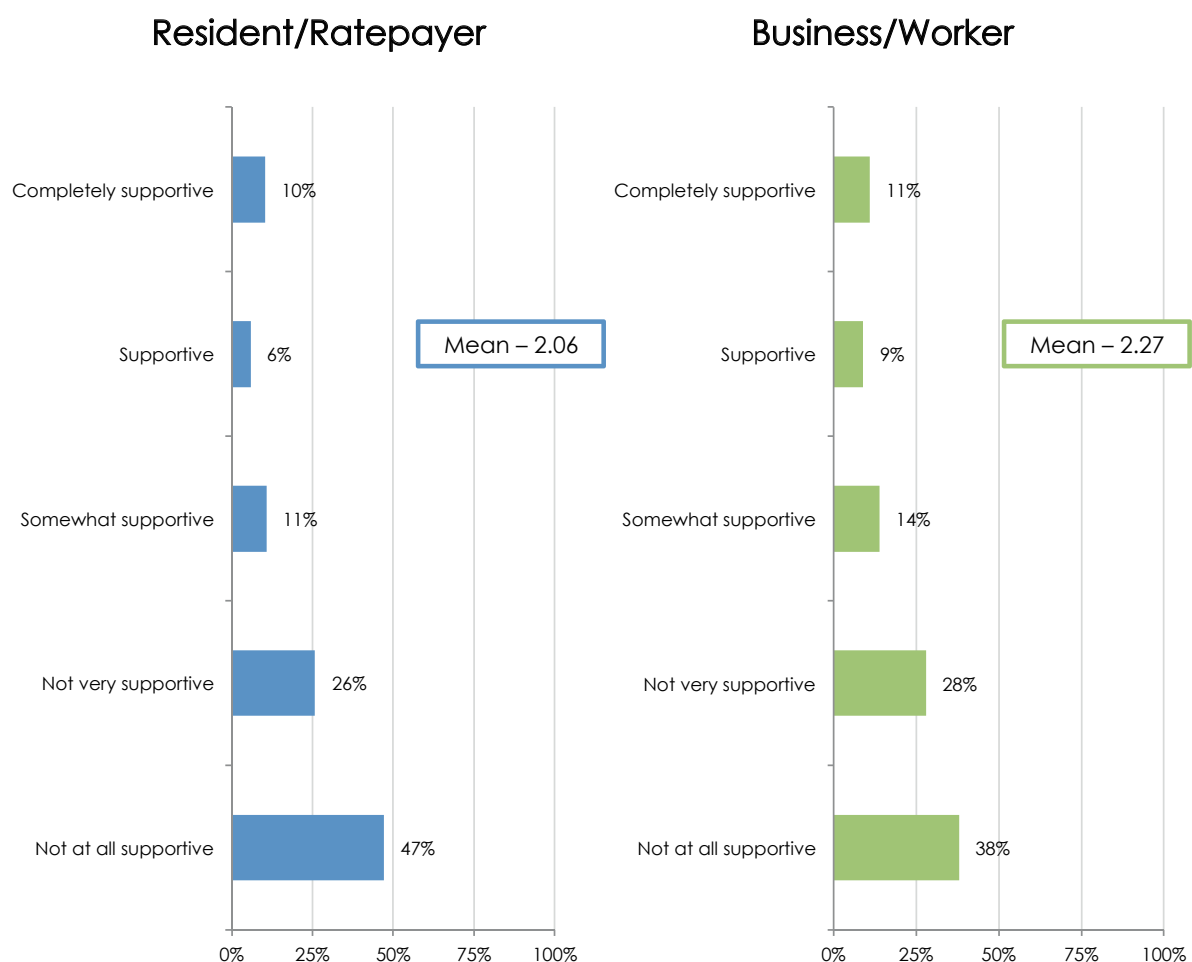


Scale: 1 = not at all supportive, 5 = completely supportive  
Base: n = 1238

There was very little support for merging with one or more neighbouring councils, with 70% of respondents not very or not at all supportive.

## Support for City of Sydney Merging with Neighbouring Councils

Q3b. How supportive are you of the City of Sydney merging with one or more neighbouring Councils?



	Overall	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-69	70+
Mean	2.06	2.19	1.99	2.19	2.11	1.95	1.67

Scale: 1 = not at all supportive, 5 = completely supportive

Base: n = 1021

	Overall	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-69	70+
Mean	2.15	2.38	2.08	2.30	2.31	2.09	2.07

Base: n = 536

There was very little support for merging with one or more neighbouring councils with 73% of residents/ratepayers and 66% of business/workers not very or not at all supportive.

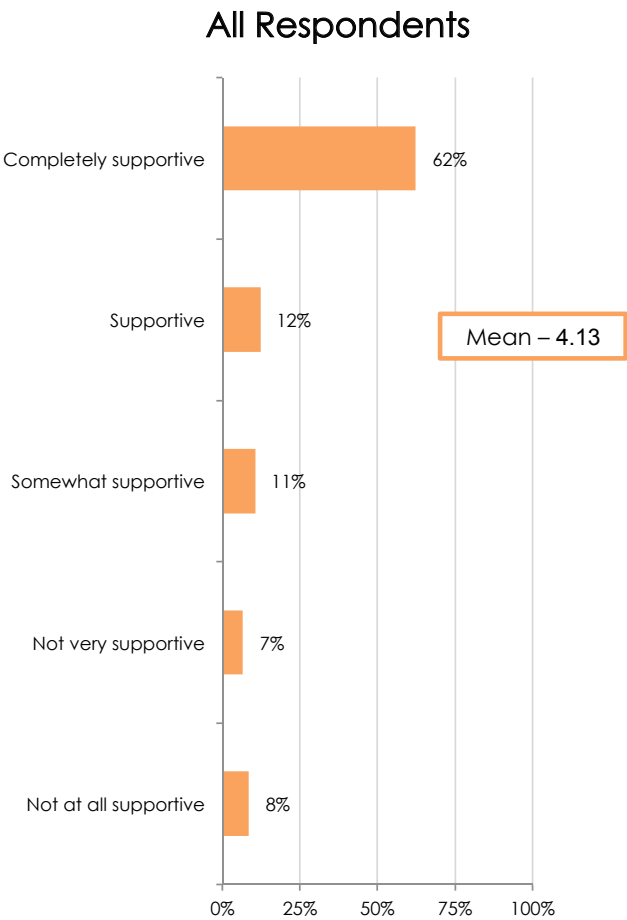
## Second Concept Statement

The City of Sydney currently has a residential population of approximately 200,000 people with 22,000 business establishments. We service more than a million residents, workers, and visitors each day.

Currently the City of Sydney is strongly positioned to stand alone because we are financially viable, have no debt and provide high quality services and facilities for our community. In 2013 the NSW Treasury Corporation rated the City's financial sustainability as 'strong' with a positive outlook – the only NSW council to receive this rating. The City delivers debt free budgets, its average residential rates are amongst the lowest in Sydney and we provide free residential rates for pensioners.

# Support for City of Sydney Standing Alone – After Being Informed of Council’s Financial Position

Q4a. With this in mind, how supportive are you now of the City of Sydney standing alone and not merging with neighbouring councils?



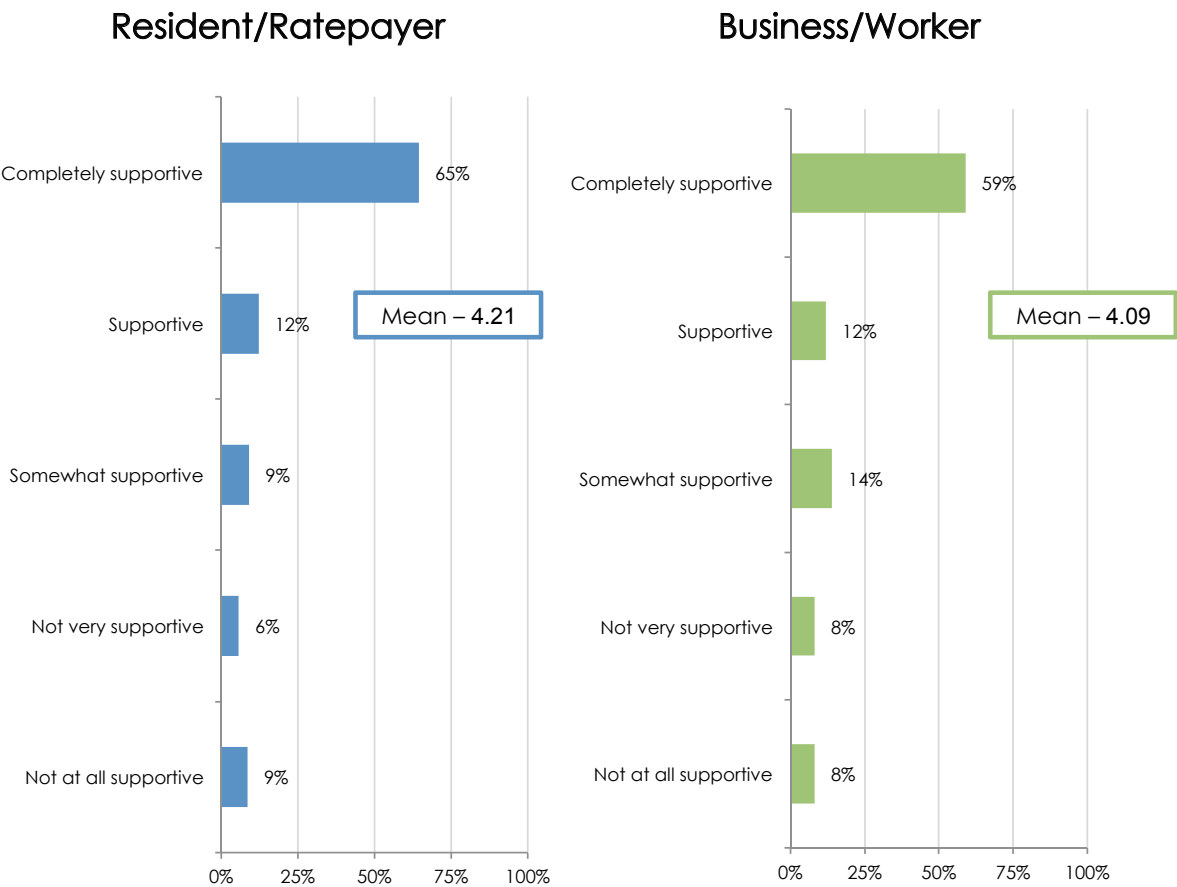
	Overall	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-69	70+
Mean	4.13	4.04	4.29	3.98	4.15	4.20	4.37

Scale: 1 = not at all supportive, 5 = completely supportive  
Base: n = 1238

After being informed of the City’s financial position, 85% of respondents were at least somewhat supportive of the City standing alone.

# Support for City of Sydney Standing Alone – After Being Informed of Council’s Financial Position

Q4a. With this in mind, how supportive are you now of the City of Sydney standing alone and not merging with neighbouring councils?



	Over-all	Male	Fe-male	18-34	35-49	50-69	70+
Mean	4.21	4.11	4.34	3.98	4.19	4.24	4.48

	Over-all	Male	Fe-male	18-34	35-49	50-69	70+
Mean	4.09	4.02	4.14	3.91	4.11	4.17	3.93

Scale: 1 = not at all supportive, 5 = completely supportive  
Base: n = 1021

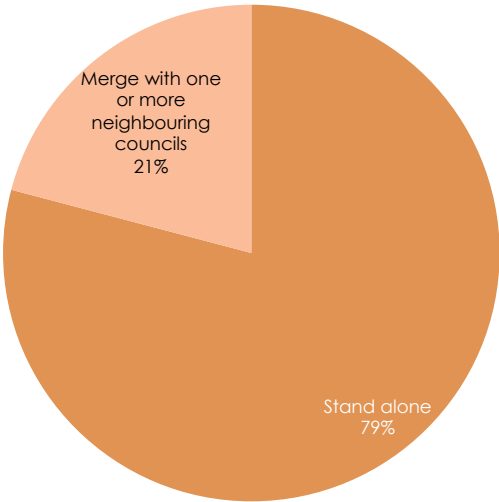
Base: n = 536

After being informed of the City’s financial position, 86% of residents/ratepayers and 85% of business/workers were at least somewhat supportive of the city standing alone.

# Preferred Option After Awareness of Financial Position

Q4b. Now that you have been informed of the City's financial position, which option would be your preference?

All Respondents



	Overall	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-69	70+
Stand Alone	79%	75%	85%	75%	79%	80%	88%
Merge	21%	25%	16%	25%	21%	20%	12%

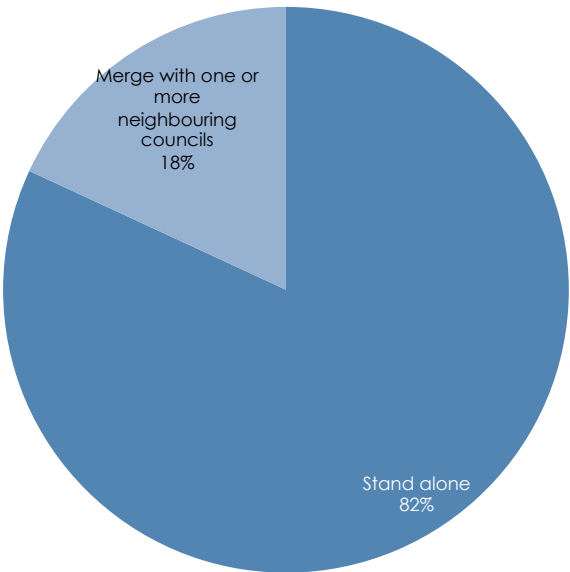
Base: n = 1238

When asked to make a choice, 79% of respondents preferred to stand alone. 88% of respondents aged 70+ preferred to stand alone, compared to 75% of 18-34 year olds. 85% of women preferred to stand alone, compared to 75% of men.

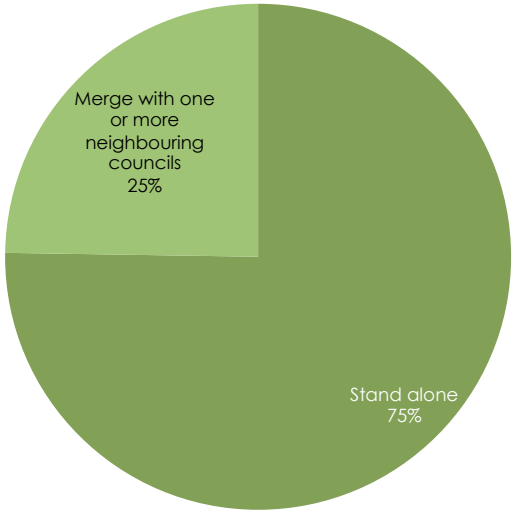
# Preferred Option After Awareness of Financial Position

Q4b. Now that you have been informed of the City's financial position, which option would be your preference?

Resident/Ratepayer



Business/Worker



	Over-all	Male	Fe-male	18-34	35-49	50-69	70+
Stand Alone	82%	79%	86%	77%	82%	83%	89%
Merge	18%	21%	14%	23%	18%	17%	11%

Base: n = 1021

	Over-all	Male	Fe-male	18-34	35-49	50-69	70+
Stand Alone	75%	72%	81%	72%	77%	80%	73%
Merge	25%	28%	19%	28%	23%	20%	27%

Base: n = 536

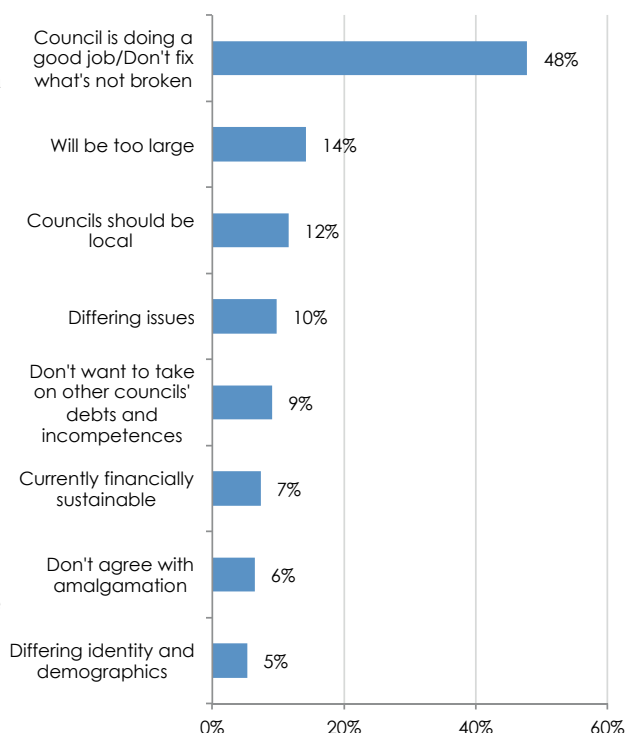
After being informed of the City's financial position, 82% of residents/ratepayers and 75% of workers/businesses preferred to stand alone.

## Reasons for Supporting City of Sydney Standing Alone – Resident/Ratepayers

Q4b. Now that you have been informed of the City's financial position, which option would be your preference?  
Q4d. Why do you say that?

### Verbatim responses

- “Decisions affecting local residents need to be made at the most local of levels.”
- “Sydney City Council is working very well, and I fear a merger would dilute their good work and disrupt their planning for the future.”
- “The population covered by the City of Sydney is large enough already!”
- “City of Sydney is big enough already and needs to focus on the CBD and immediate surrounding areas - having more inner suburb areas to consider would be a distraction.”
- “Concerned about the inefficiencies of large councils with very different needs. “
- “I do not see any reason to merge with other less well-managed councils at the expense of the City of Sydney.”
- “Difficult for elected councillors to keep up with all the issues if there is a large area to govern.”
- “Merging with other councils would drag us into debt.”
- “City of Sydney council is financially viable and sustainable. It provides excellent value for money and services for local residents...I don't want my council to be merged with other councils that may not be as financially viable or sustainable.”
- “The current council has an identity that accurately reflects its businesses and residents.”
- “We have had experience of 'super-councils' in SE Queensland and they were a disaster.”



Base: n = 450

Of the 82% of resident/ratepayers that prefer to stand alone, there is a feeling that the City is doing a good job which could be threatened by becoming too large or taking on other councils' debts, and that the City has higher density living, as well as the CBD, and so has different needs to the surrounding suburbs. Respondents also felt that councils should be local to ensure responsiveness, and that the City may lose its unique identity if a merger were to go ahead. Of the residents who do not agree with amalgamation, this was often because of previous experience of amalgamation, or suspiciousness of the State government's motives.

# Reasons for Merging with Other Councils - Resident/Ratepayers

Q4b. Now that you have been informed of the City's financial position, which option would be your preference?  
Q4d. Why do you say that?

## Verbatim responses

"Greater Sydney has far too many small local councils. This is inefficient and not the way to manage integrated modern first world cities."

"The sole reason that Sydney is financially viable is because of the "more than a million residents, workers, and visitors each day". In particular, because the commercial centre pays rates and yet these "workers and visitors" have no direct voice in how this money is spent."

"I feel it would stream line services and councils could better coordinate and bring stronger powers I feel the two councils have similar project goals and interests "

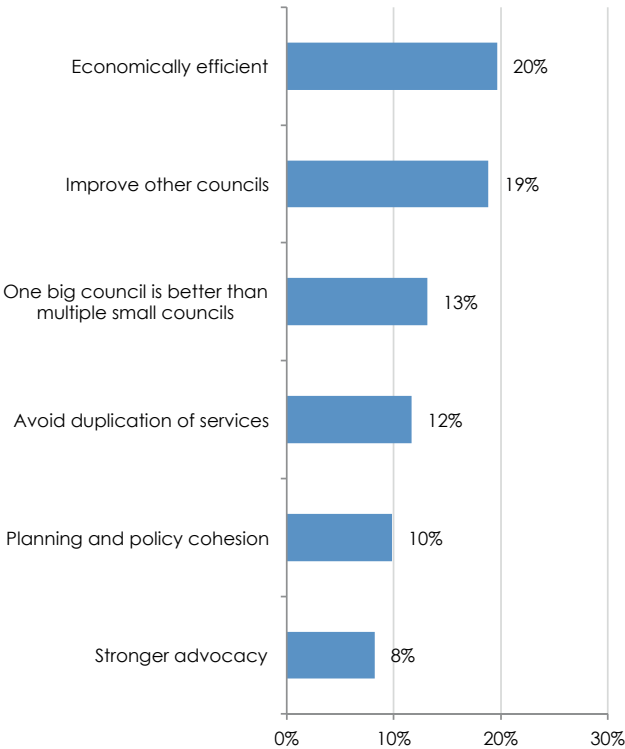
"Economies of scale, more consistency of regulations as you move across the local area, better coordination of campaigns across the tourist precincts of the city"

"lobby capacity to approach state govt"

"Larger Council's will have greater ability to complete and fund coordinated projects. "

"Larger Councils (like Brisbane) have more influence and are better equipped to provide the regions with services."

"To have a unified approach and single consent authority for Oxford st and Paddington."



Base: n = 122

Of the 18% of resident/ratepayers that support a merger, their main reasons focus on the economies of scale that could result in service provision and financial management, the potential for planning cohesion and stronger council advocacy for major projects, and the opportunity to improve other councils.

## Reasons for Supporting City of Sydney Standing Alone – Business/Workers

Q4b. Now that you have been informed of the City's financial position, which option would be your preference?  
Q4d. Why do you say that?

### Verbatim responses

"As a ratepayer living and working in the City of Sydney, I am very pleased with the quality, vision and fiscal strength of the council and do not want to see a diminution of this by being forced to merge with another less well-managed and fiscally sound council."

"Unlike most councils the scale of what they manage does not justify mergers to improve viability"

"Doing a great job and would not want that disturbed"

"I don't think that a larger area will allow a government to effectively govern on local issues."

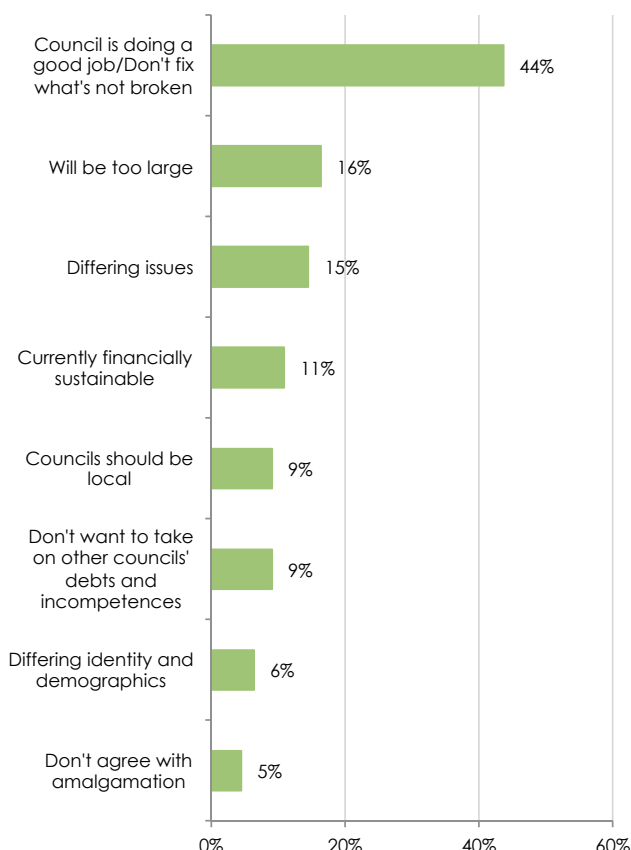
"I like the idea of localised knowledge."

"If Sydney is viable on its own, then let's keep it that way!"

"The Sydney CBD (mainly high-rise, high-density commercial and residential) has very little in common with Randwick or Marrickville (low-density residential)"

"My fear with merging is that the services provided by City of Sydney would be less effective and responsive"

"Why potentially ruin existing good financial standing by joining with Councils are not in such good shape financially (or otherwise)?"



Base: n = 220

Of the 75% of business/workers that prefer to stand alone, there is a feeling that the City is doing a good job which could be threatened by becoming too large or taking on other councils' debts, and that the City has higher density living and the CBD and so has different needs to the surrounding suburbs. Respondents also felt that councils should be local to ensure responsiveness.

# Reasons for Merging with Other Councils - Business/Workers

Q4b. Now that you have been informed of the City's financial position, which option would be your preference?  
Q4d. Why do you say that?

## Verbatim responses

“To achieve better planning for the City as a whole.”

“to support other councils with the knowledge and finances how to run a successful council”

“We should follow the UK model of each city having autonomous government with authority to make strategic plans for the whole of the city, not just small parts of it.”

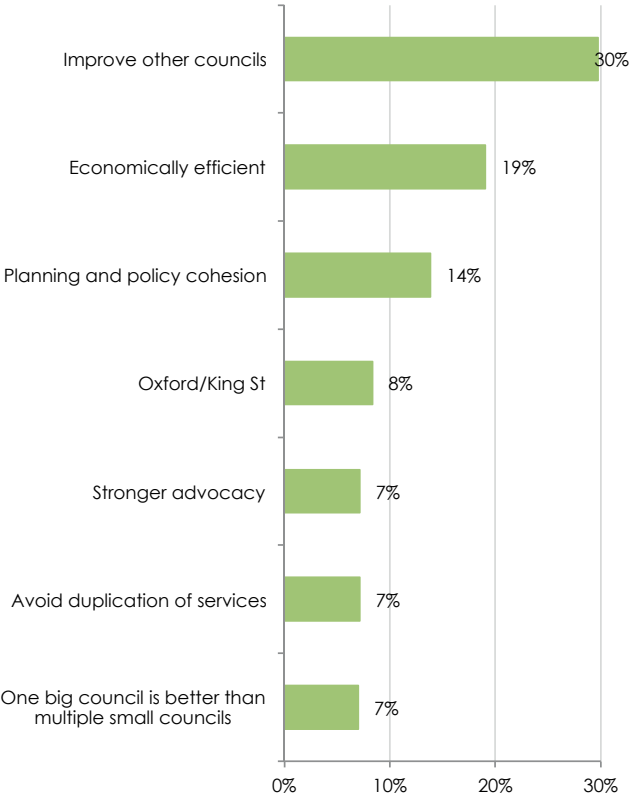
“One super Sydney council would be better for the City”

“Merging Councils will enable massive efficiency gains thus ensuring much better spending of ratepayers' money.”

“Ending bizarre situations where one side or end of major commercial streets like King St in Newtown or the length of Oxford St straddle multiple council areas.”

“There is too much duplication in admin costs by maintaining separate councils. A merger would also create policy consistency across Councils.”

“the council does a great job the other councils need the most assistance”



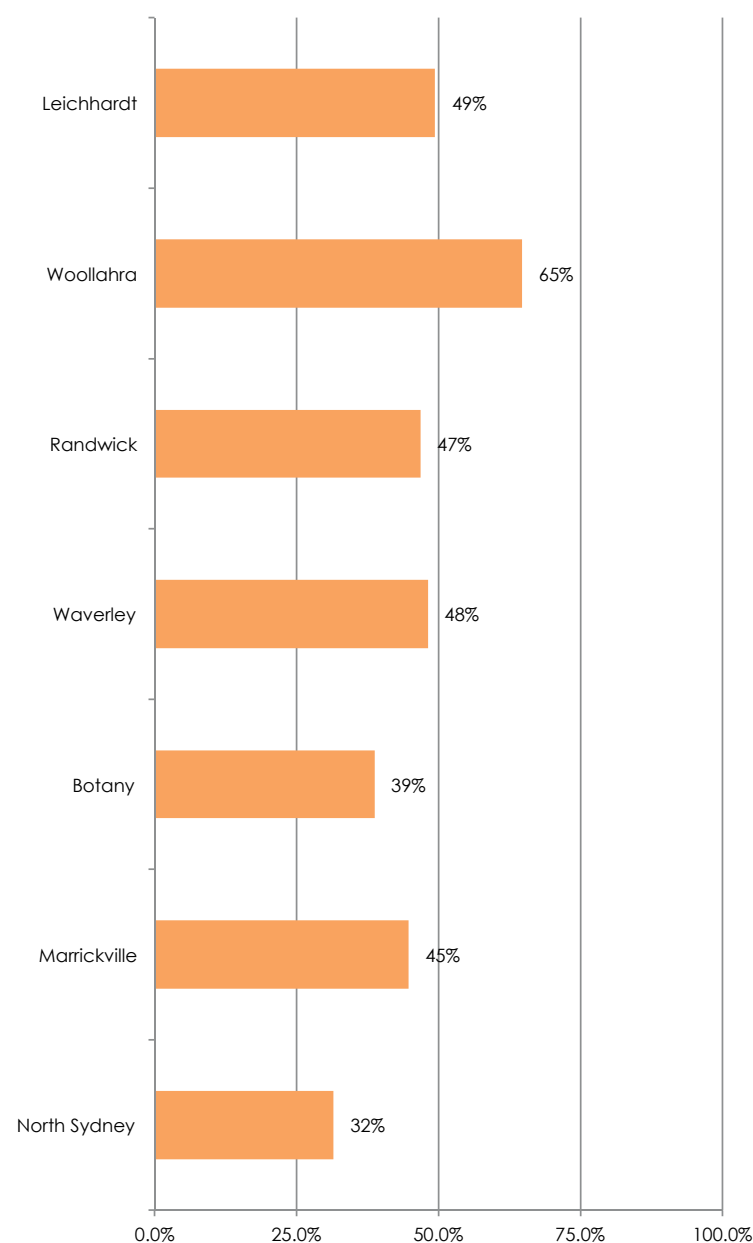
Base: n = 84

Of the 25% of business/workers that support a merger, their main reasons focus on the economies of scale that could result in better service provision and financial management, the potential for planning cohesion and stronger council advocacy for major projects, the opportunity to improve other councils, and connecting both sides of Oxford St and King St.

# Councils They Would Accept Being Merged With

Q4C. Which councils would you support the City merging with?

All Respondents



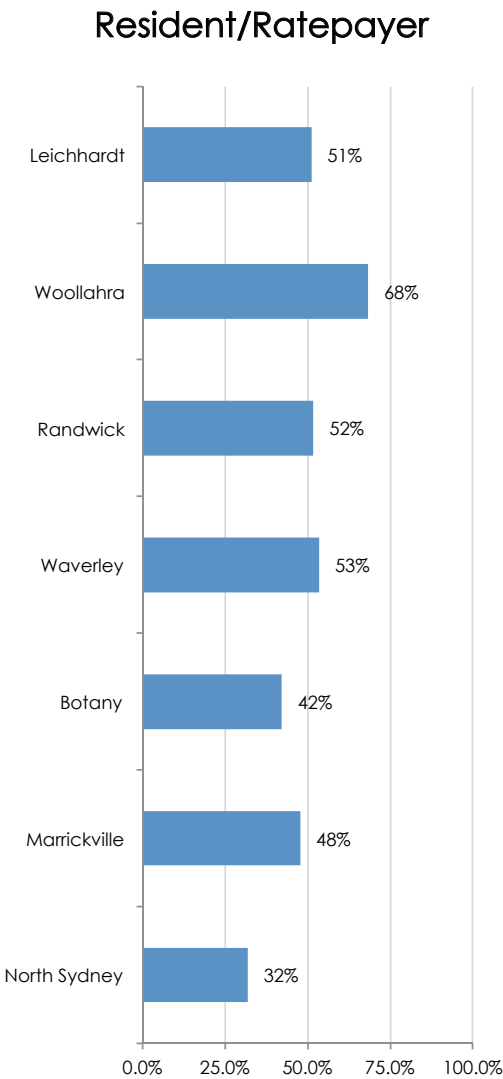
Base: n = 234

Respondents preferred a merger with Leichhardt and Woollahra councils.

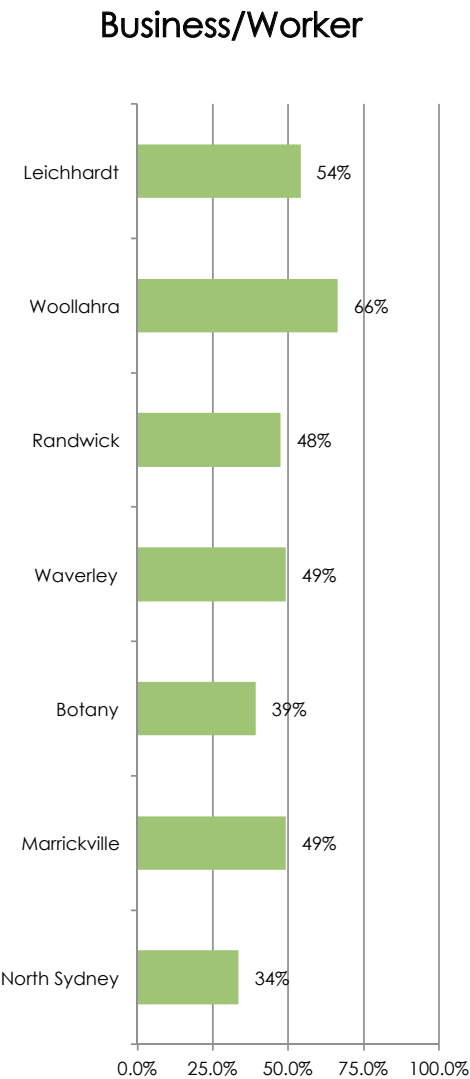
Reasons for choosing different councils included geographic closeness, existing shared services, connection to the airport, demographic similarity, similar Council goals, similar business profiles, and connecting both sides of Oxford and King St.

# Councils They Would Accept Being Merged With

Q4c. Which councils would you support the City merging with?



Base: n = 176

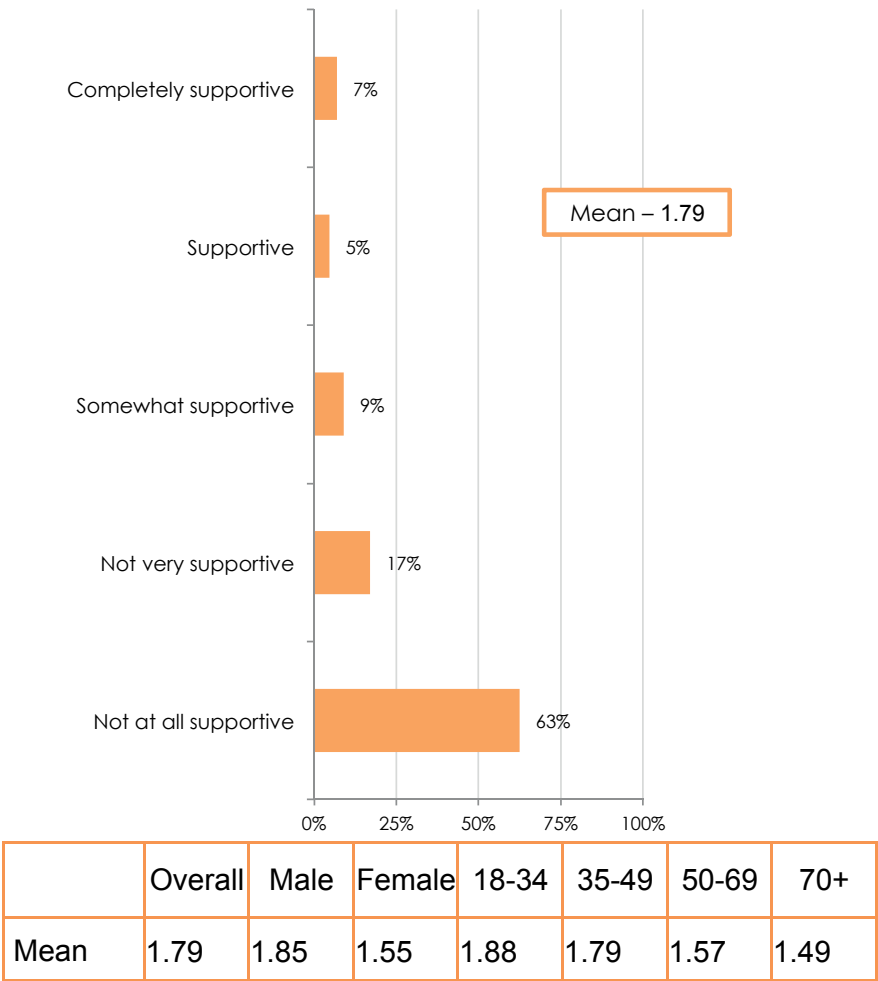


Base: n = 122

# Support for the Enforcement of Merging by State Government

Q5. How supportive would you be of the state government forcing the City of Sydney to merge with one or more other councils?

All Respondents

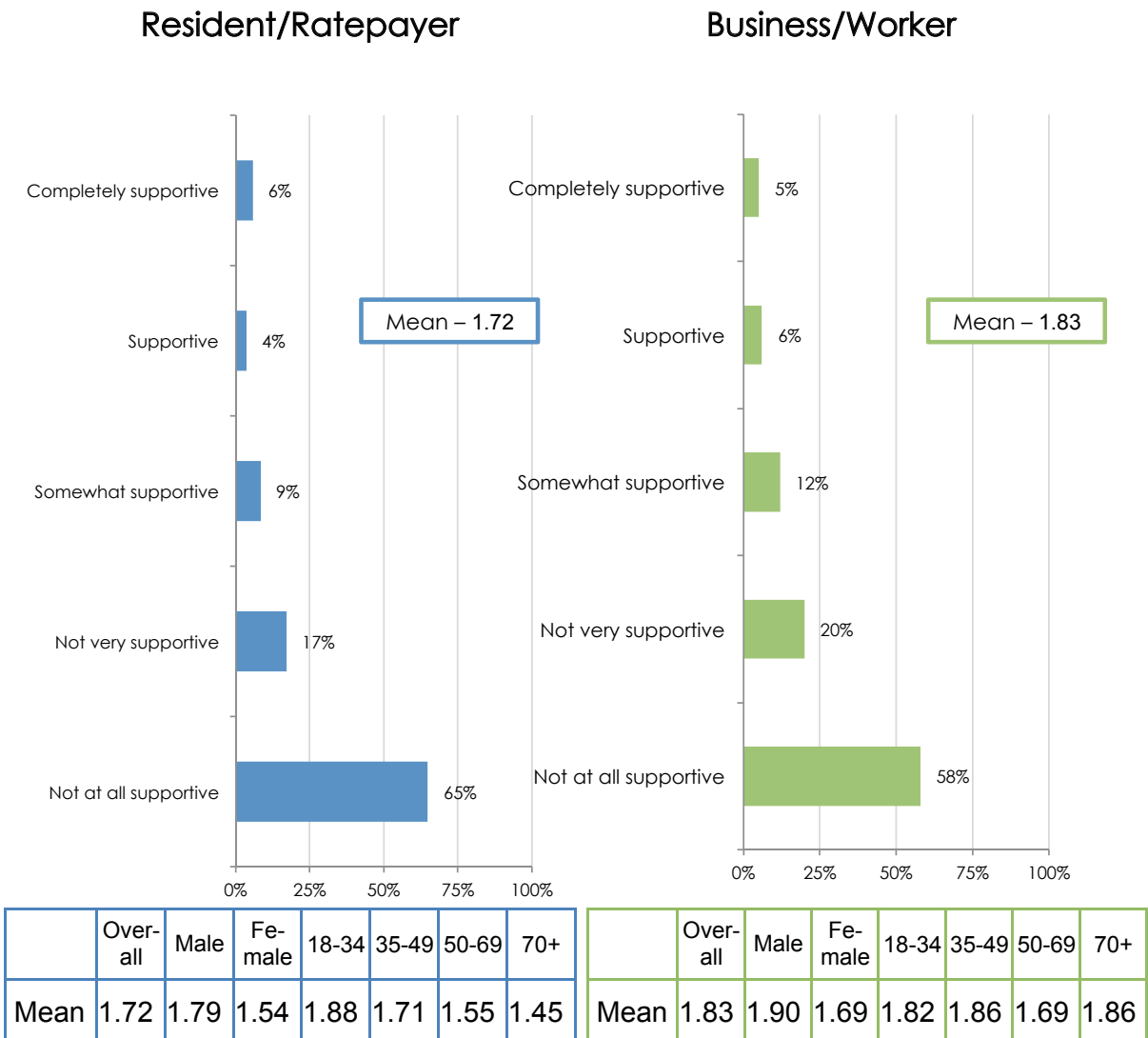


Scale: 1 = not at all supportive, 5 = completely supportive  
Base: n = 1238

Respondents did not support the State government forcing the City to merge with one or more neighbouring councils, with 80% of respondents not very or not at all supportive.

# Support for the Enforcement of Merging by State Government

Q5. How supportive would you be of the state government forcing the City of Sydney to merge with one or more other councils?



Scale: 1 = not at all supportive, 5 = completely supportive  
Base: n = 1021

Base: n = 536

80% of resident/ratepayers and 78% of business/workers were not very or not at all supportive of the State government forcing the City of Sydney to merge.

# Conclusions

# Conclusions

Just over 76% of respondents were aware of the State Government's planned reform of Local Government.

Community support for the City to stand alone was strong with 84% of respondents being at least 'somewhat supportive' of Council's positioning. Women and older people were more supportive than men and young people.

When pressed to make a head-to-head choice, 82% of resident/ratepayers and 75% of business/workers indicated a preference for Council to stand alone rather than merge.

Main reasons for this preference were that:

- Council is doing a good job that may be threatened by a merger (If it's not broken, don't fix it).
- The area may be too large to manage if a merger goes ahead.
- Councils need to be local to ensure responsiveness to constituents.
- Merging would potentially lose the focus on local issues that may be different to those of other council areas
- Respondents do not want to take on underperforming councils.

Key drivers to merge were:

- The opportunity to improve other councils.
- Economies of scale and more efficient service provision
- Planning and policy cohesion and the opportunity for stronger advocacy on major projects.
- Connecting both sides of Oxford St and King St under one council.

There was strong community rejection of forced amalgamations (80% opposed).

**There is very limited evidence that the State Government's reform process has the broad support of the City's community – For the most part the community desires a continuation of the current operating model.**



# Intercept Survey



## City of Sydney Fit for the Future survey



The NSW State Government is undertaking a review of the performance and sustainability of local government. This process is called Fit for the Future.

Councils need to demonstrate how they will become sustainable, provide effective and efficient services, and have the scale and capacity needed to meet the needs of communities. Councils are also being asked to consider merging to reduce the number of councils in NSW.

Judged against the Government's criteria, the City of Sydney is already fit for the future.

The City of Sydney has been given the following options:

- No merge, but show how we will be fit for the future by completing a detailed Council Improvement Proposal.
- Merge with one or more neighbouring Councils: Botany, Leichhardt, Marrickville, North Sydney, Randwick, Waverley, or Woollahra.

A Council made up of the City of Sydney, Waverley, Woollahra, Randwick and Botany Councils would have a population of over half million people.

We are seeking your views on these options. Could you please take 5 minutes to respond to this short survey.

All survey responses will remain anonymous and confidential.

**Q1. Are you aware that the State Government is reviewing NSW local council boundaries?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

**Q2. How supportive are you of the City of Sydney standing alone and not merging with neighbouring councils?**

- ☐ Completely supportive
- ☐ Supportive
- ☐ Somewhat supportive
- ☐ Not very supportive
- ☐ Not at all supportive

**Q3. How supportive are you of the City of Sydney merging with one or more neighbouring Councils?**

- ☐ Completely supportive
- ☐ Supportive
- ☐ Somewhat supportive
- ☐ Not very supportive
- ☐ Not at all supportive



## City of Sydney Fit for the Future survey



The City of Sydney currently has a residential population of approximately 200,000 people with 22,000 business establishments. We service more than a million residents, workers, and visitors each day.

Currently the City of Sydney is strongly positioned to stand alone because we are financially viable, have no debt and provide high quality services and facilities for our community. In 2013 the NSW Treasury Corporation rated the City's financial sustainability as 'Strong' with a positive outlook –the only NSW council to receive this rating. The City delivers debt free budgets, its average residential rates are amongst the lowest in Sydney and we provide free residential rates for pensioners.

**Q4 With this in mind, how supportive are you now of the City of Sydney standing alone and not merging with neighbouring Councils?**

- ☐ Completely supportive
- ☐ Supportive
- ☐ Somewhat supportive
- ☐ Not very supportive
- ☐ Not at all supportive

**Q5 Now that you have been informed of the City's financial position, which option would be your preference?**

- ☐ Stand alone
- ☐ Merge with one or more neighbouring councils

**Q5a Why do you say that?**

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**Q6 If you answered 'merge with one or more neighbouring councils,' who would you support the City merging with? (You can select multiple answers)**

- |                                    |                                 |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Botany       | <input type="radio"/> Randwick  |
| <input type="radio"/> Leichhardt   | <input type="radio"/> Waverley  |
| <input type="radio"/> Marrickville | <input type="radio"/> Woollahra |
| <input type="radio"/> North Sydney |                                 |

**Q6a Why do you say that?**

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**Q7 How supportive would you be of the State Government forcing the City of Sydney to merge with one of more other councils?**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Completely supportive | <input type="radio"/> Not very supportive   |
| <input type="radio"/> Supportive            | <input type="radio"/> Not at all supportive |
| <input type="radio"/> Somewhat supportive   |   |



## City of Sydney Fit for the Future survey



### ABOUT YOU

**Q8. What is your relationship with the City? (You can selection multiple answers)**

- ☐ Live in the City of Sydney - how long? \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Work in the City of Sydney - how long? \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Own a business in the City of Sydney - how long? \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Own a property in the City of Sydney - how long? \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ None of the above (other specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**Q8a If you are a resident of the City Of Sydney, which describes you?**

- ☐ Owning or buying my home
- ☐ Renting my home
- ☐ Living in public housing
- ☐ Living in student accommodation
- ☐ Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**Q9 If you live in the City of Sydney, which suburb is your home located in?**

- |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> I don't live in the City of Sydney | <input type="radio"/> Paddington      |
| <input type="radio"/> Alexandria                         | <input type="radio"/> Potts Point     |
| <input type="radio"/> Beaconsfield                       | <input type="radio"/> Pyrmont         |
| <input type="radio"/> Camperdown                         | <input type="radio"/> Redfern         |
| <input type="radio"/> Centennial Park                    | <input type="radio"/> Rosebery        |
| <input type="radio"/> Moore Park                         | <input type="radio"/> Rushcutters Bay |
| <input type="radio"/> Chippendale                        | <input type="radio"/> Surry Hills     |
| <input type="radio"/> Darlinghurst                       | <input type="radio"/> Sydney          |
| <input type="radio"/> Darlington                         | <input type="radio"/> The Rocks       |
| <input type="radio"/> Elizabeth Bay                      | <input type="radio"/> Millers Point   |
| <input type="radio"/> Erskineville                       | <input type="radio"/> Dawes Point     |
| <input type="radio"/> Glebe                              | <input type="radio"/> Ultimo          |
| <input type="radio"/> Forest Lodge                       | <input type="radio"/> Waterloo        |
| <input type="radio"/> Haymarket                          | <input type="radio"/> Woolloomooloo   |
| <input type="radio"/> Kings Cross                        | <input type="radio"/> Zetland         |
| <input type="radio"/> Newtown                            |                                       |

**Q10 If you own a business in the City of Sydney, which suburb is your business located in?**

- |                                       |                                       |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Alexandria      | <input type="radio"/> Paddington      |
| <input type="radio"/> Beaconsfield    | <input type="radio"/> Potts Point     |
| <input type="radio"/> Camperdown      | <input type="radio"/> Pyrmont         |
| <input type="radio"/> Centennial Park | <input type="radio"/> Redfern         |
| <input type="radio"/> Moore Park      | <input type="radio"/> Rosebery        |
| <input type="radio"/> Chippendale     | <input type="radio"/> Rushcutters Bay |
| <input type="radio"/> Darlinghurst    | <input type="radio"/> Surry Hills     |
| <input type="radio"/> Darlington      | <input type="radio"/> Sydney          |
| <input type="radio"/> Elizabeth Bay   | <input type="radio"/> The Rocks       |
| <input type="radio"/> Erskineville    | <input type="radio"/> Millers Point   |
| <input type="radio"/> Glebe           | <input type="radio"/> Dawes Point     |
| <input type="radio"/> Forest Lodge    | <input type="radio"/> Ultimo          |
| <input type="radio"/> Haymarket       | <input type="radio"/> Waterloo        |
| <input type="radio"/> Kings Cross     | <input type="radio"/> Woolloomooloo   |
| <input type="radio"/> Newtown         | <input type="radio"/> Zetlan          |



## City of Sydney Fit for the Future survey



**Q11** Which of these age groups do you fit into?

- ☐ 18 – 34
- ☐ 35 – 49
- ☐ 50 – 69
- ☐ 70+

**Q12.** Do you speak a language other than English at home?

- ☐ Yes **go to Q12a** ☐ No **go to Q13**

**Q12a** (If yes), which language/s?

- ☐ Mandarin
- ☐ Cantonese
- ☐ Thai
- ☐ Indonesian
- ☐ Korean
- ☐ Spanish
- ☐ Greek
- ☐ Vietnamese
- ☐ Russian
- ☐ French
- ☐ Other (please specify).....

**Q13.** What is your gender?

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Male                         | <input type="radio"/> Female               |
| <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify) _____ | <input type="radio"/> Prefer not to answer |

That completes our interview. Thank you very much for your time.

# Lord Mayor Minutes

## Resolution of Council



**27 APRIL 2015**

### **ITEM 3.4 FIT FOR THE FUTURE SURVEY**

**FILE NO: S051491**

#### **MINUTE BY THE LORD MAYOR**

##### To Council:

On 8 December 2015, Council unanimously affirmed that the City of Sydney, on its current boundaries, is "Fit for Future" and that this would form the basis of the City's response to the State Government's "Fit for the Future" proposals. Council also unanimously resolved to engage with our communities as part of the preparation of our response.

An engagement strategy is currently being implemented which includes:

- a telephone survey conducted in March/April 2015 to inform the City's submission;
- the same survey provided online via Sydney Your Say during March 2015 with supporting information about Fit for the Future and the City's position;
- pop-up events in March 2015 where community members were able to complete the survey and find out more; and
- a promotional campaign informing the community about the issue and ways they can have their say.

The telephone survey was conducted in conjunction with Micromex Research, a 100 per cent owned Australian company with almost 20 years' experience in social, community and commercial market research.

The results of this survey strongly support Council's position that the City should stand alone and not be amalgamated with other councils.

*city of villages*

## 2

Telephone interviewing for the survey was conducted between 13 March and 1 April 2015 in accordance with the Australian Market & Social Research Society (AMSRS) Code of Professional Conduct. Interviews were conducted with 1,000 City of Sydney residents and 500 owners of businesses within the City of Sydney. A sample size of 1,000 provides a maximum sampling error of plus or minus 3.1 per cent, while a sample size of 500 provides a maximum sampling error of plus or minus 4.4 per cent. The survey results are attached to this Minute.

The survey found:

- 71 per cent of residents were “supportive” or “completely supportive” of the City standing alone and not amalgamating with other councils;
- a further 19 per cent of residents were “somewhat supportive” of this position, bringing total support for the City standing alone to 90 per cent;
- support by business owners for the City standing alone was almost as high, with 62 per cent “supportive” or “completely supportive”; and
- this increases to 80 per cent when business owners who are “somewhat supportive” are included.

Resident and business support for the City’s position is overwhelming, even with the sampling error taken into account.

Support for the City standing alone increased when interviewees were provided with the following information:

“The City of Sydney currently has a residential population of approximately 200,000 people with 22,000 business establishments. We service more than a million residents, workers, and visitors each day.

“Currently the City of Sydney is strongly positioned to stand alone because we are financially viable, have no debt and provide high quality services and facilities for our community. In 2013 the NSW Treasury Corporation rated the City’s financial sustainability as ‘strong’ with a positive outlook – the only NSW council to receive this rating. The City delivers debt free budgets, its average residential rates are amongst the lowest in Sydney and we provide free residential rates for pensioners.”

The survey found:

- a further 10 per cent of residents were “supportive” or “completely supportive” when provided with this information, bringing the total to 82 per cent;
- when those who were “somewhat supportive” are included the total is 92 per cent;
- “supportive” or “completely supportive” business owners increased by seven per cent to 69 per cent; and
- a further 15 per cent were “somewhat supportive” of the City standing alone, bringing the total to 84 per cent.

The survey also sought respondents' views about the State Government forcing council amalgamations and found:

- 54 per cent of residents were not at all supportive;
- a further 24 per cent were not very supportive, bringing the total for lack of support to 78 per cent;
- 41 per cent of business owners were not at all supportive; and
- a further 24 per cent were not very supportive, bringing the total for lack of support to 65 per cent.

Many other councils have also surveyed their residents and found that they oppose amalgamations, particularly forced amalgamations.

Residents and business owners were asked why they supported the City standing alone and not amalgamating with other councils.

The four major reasons residents gave were:

- area will be too large (27 per cent);
- don't agree with an amalgamation (22 per cent);
- services and facilities are currently efficient (18 per cent); and
- currently financially sustainable/don't want to take on other councils' debts (16 per cent).

The four major reasons business owners gave were:

- a merger could cause problems as it is a big change (26 per cent);
- the quality of services and businesses could diminish with a merger (16 per cent);
- amalgamation could cause a change in financial situation (16 per cent); and
- residential and business community is already large enough (15 per cent).

These responses of the City's residents and business owners is not surprising, and align with Council's affirmation on 8 December last year, that it is "Fit for Future" on its current boundaries.

During the recent state election, NSW Premier Mike Baird did not explicitly reconfirm the government's longstanding policy of no forced amalgamations, but told The Sydney Morning Herald that forced mergers were "not part of our plan". The Minister for Local Government, Paul Toole, stated he wants to "work with councils" through the Fit for the Future process.

Forcing councils to amalgamate would be a major reversal of the Coalition's longstanding policy, and a reversal that was not disclosed before the recent NSW election. Taking this step would be a significant breach of trust with the NSW community.

4

RECOMMENDATION

It is resolved that Council note the findings of the City of Sydney Fit for the Future telephone survey.

COUNCILLOR CLOVER MOORE  
Lord Mayor

Moved by the Chair (the Lord Mayor), seconded by Councillor Doutney –

That the Minute by the Lord Mayor be endorsed and adopted.

Motion carried.

