



Attachment 6A : Micromex Telephone Survey Report & Results



Wollondilly Shire Council

Special Rate Variation

Prepared by: Micromex Research
Date: November 2014

Methodology & Sample

Data collection

Micromex Research, together with Wollondilly Shire Council, developed the questionnaire. The telephone (CATI) interviews were conducted during the period 25th to 30th October 2014.

Sample

N=407 interviews were conducted.

A sample size of 407 provides a maximum sampling error of plus or minus 4.9% at 95% confidence.

This means that if the survey was replicated with a new universe of n=407 residents, that 19 times out of 20 we would expect to see the same results, i.e. +/- 4.9%.

Therefore, the research findings documented in this report should be interpreted by Wollondilly Shire Council as not just the opinions of 407 residents, but as an accurate and robust measure of the entire community's attitudes.

Interviewing

Interviewing was conducted in accordance with IQCA (Interviewer Quality Control Australia) Standards and the Market Research Society Code of Professional Conduct. Where applicable, the issues in each question were systematically rearranged for each respondent.

Percentages

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



Scales

Ratings questions

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

This scale allowed for a mid range position for those who had a divided or neutral opinion.

Mean rating explanation

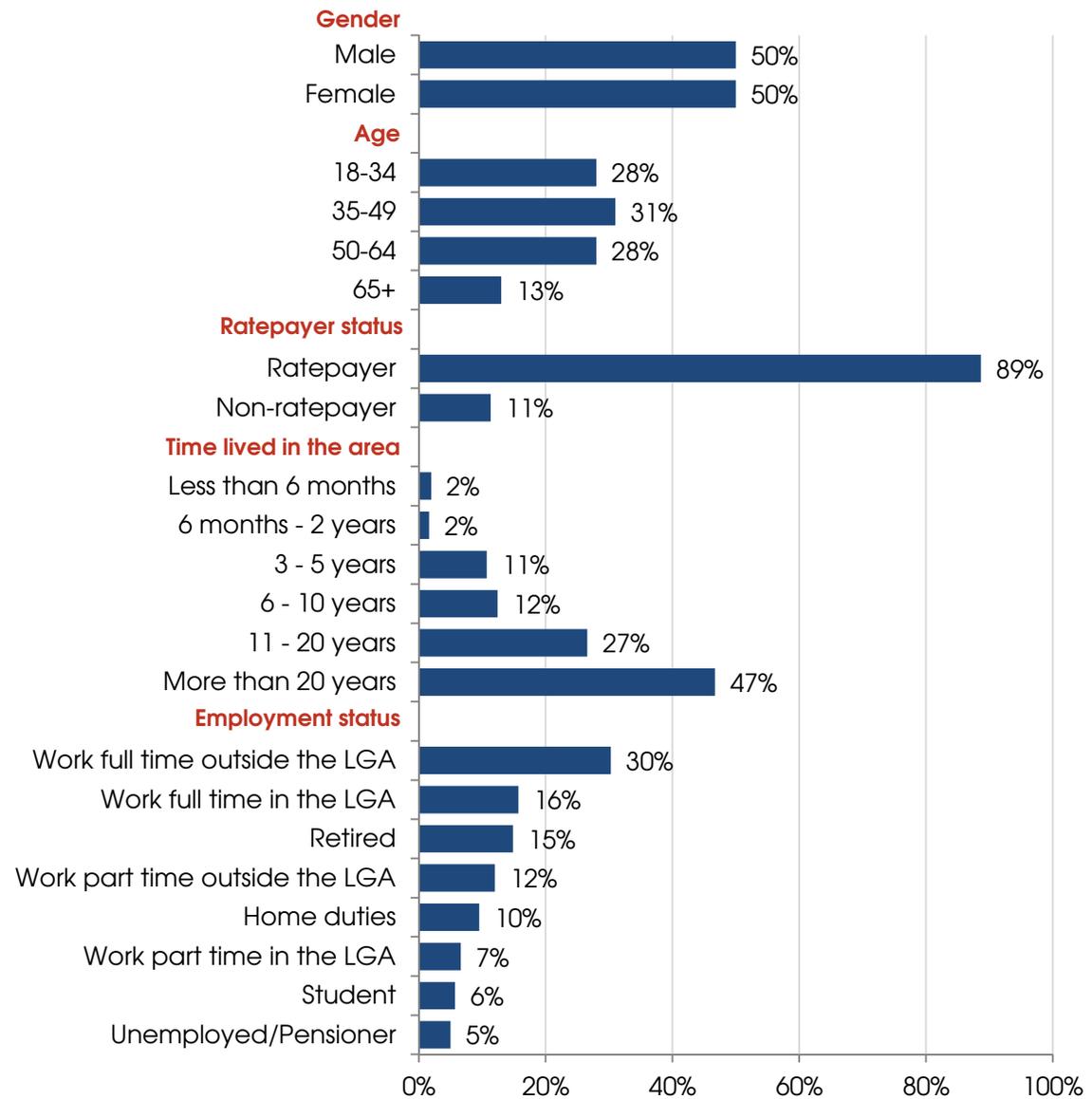
1.99 or less	'Very low' level of importance/satisfaction/support
2.00 – 2.49	'Low' level of importance/satisfaction/support
2.50 – 2.99	'Moderately low' level of importance/satisfaction/support
3.00 – 3.59	'Moderate' level of importance/satisfaction/support
3.60 – 3.89	'Moderately high' level of importance/satisfaction/support
3.90 – 4.19	'High' level of importance/satisfaction/support
4.20 – 4.49	'Very high' level of importance/satisfaction/support
4.50+	'Extremely high' level of importance/satisfaction/support





Sample Profile

The sample has been weighted to reflect the 2011 ABS statistics for the LGA

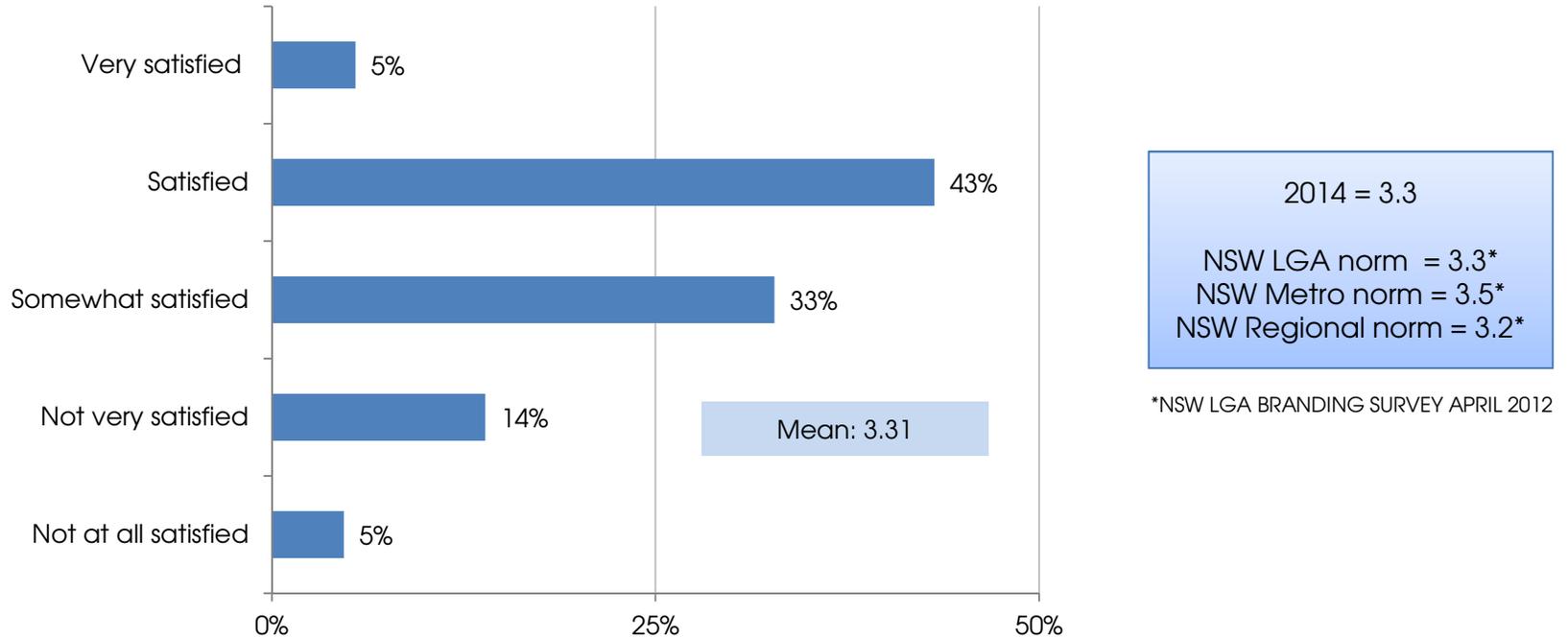


Base: n = 407

Detailed Findings



Overall Satisfaction with Council Performance



	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Male	Female	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer	Overall
Base	114	126	114	53	204	204	361	46	407
Satisfaction mean ratings	3.45	3.24	3.18	3.44	3.23	3.38	3.29	3.44	3.31

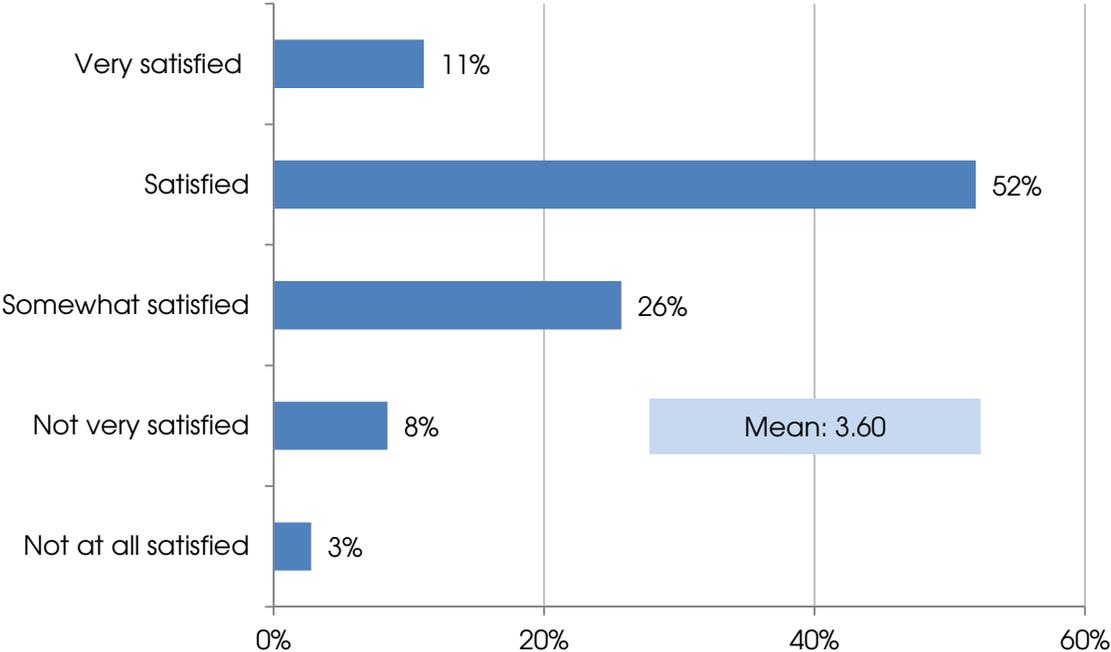
Q2a. Overall, for the last 12 months, how satisfied are you with the performance of Council, not just on one or two issues but across all responsibility areas?

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



Overall, 81% of residents were at least somewhat satisfied with the performance of Council – this is in line with the NSW LGA Benchmarks

Satisfaction with the Level of Service



	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Male	Female	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer	Overall
Base	114	126	114	53	204	204	361	46	407
Satisfaction mean ratings	3.80▲	3.55	3.34▼	3.87▲	3.60	3.60	3.58	3.75	3.60

Q3b. How satisfied are you with the level of service provided by Council in the local area?

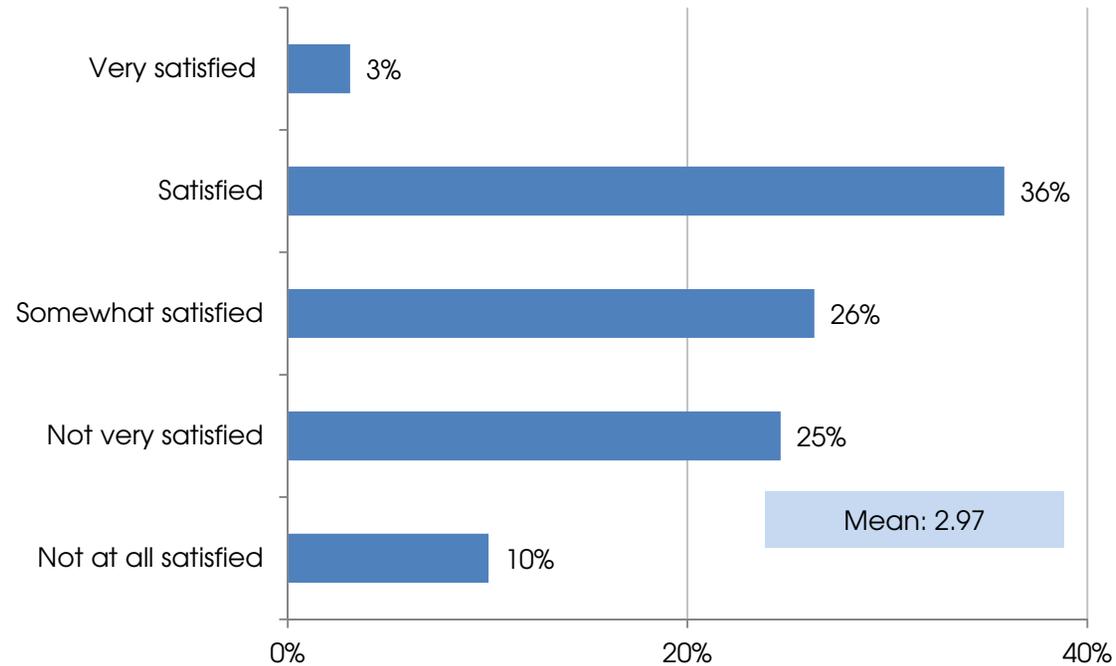
Scale: 1 = not at all satisfied, 5 = very satisfied

▲▼ = significantly higher/lower (by group)



89% of residents were at least somewhat satisfied with the level of service provided by Council in the local area

Satisfaction with the Quality of Infrastructure and Facilities



	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Male	Female	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer	Overall
Base	114	126	114	53	204	204	361	46	407
Satisfaction mean ratings	3.09	2.96	2.77	3.18	2.91	3.04	2.96	3.06	2.97

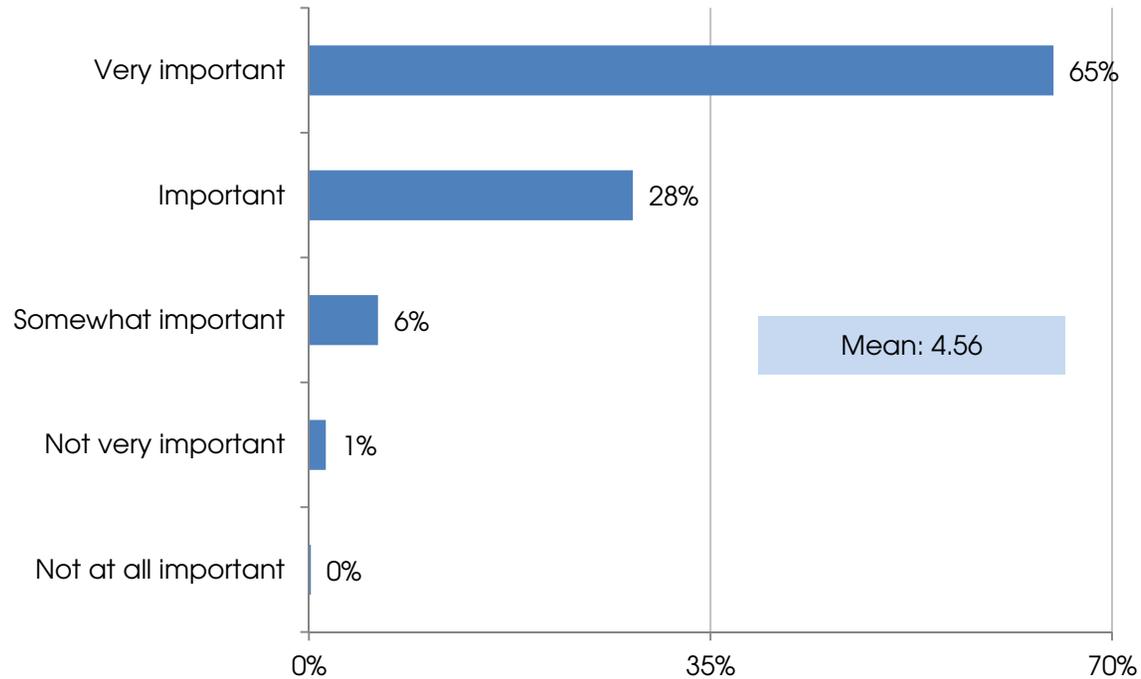
Q3a. How satisfied are you with the quality of infrastructure and facilities provided by Council in the local area?

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



While 65% of residents were at least somewhat satisfied with the quality of infrastructure and facilities, 35% of residents expressed they were 'not very satisfied' to 'not at all satisfied'

Importance of Council Services/Facilities



	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Male	Female	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer	Overall
Base	114	126	114	53	204	204	361	46	407
Importance mean ratings	4.50▼	4.51▼	4.74▲	4.43▼	4.45	4.68▲	4.56	4.56	4.56

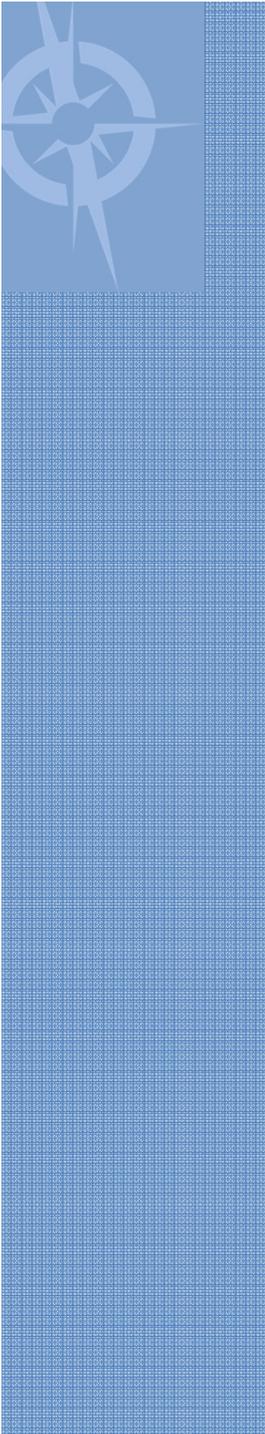
Q3e. How important is it for Council to provide better infrastructure and facilities?

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

▲ ▼ = significantly higher/lower (by group)



99% of residents considered Council service/facilities to be at least somewhat important – this supports the outcome of residents’ satisfaction with Council’s quality of infrastructure and facilities



Concept Statement

Residents were read the following concept statement:

Council is facing the challenge of balancing community expectations with future financial sustainability. Council is experiencing a growing gap between the cost of providing services and facilities and the available funding to meet those costs. This position is as a result of a long term 'cap' on Council's ability to increase rates, and costs rising more than CPI (especially in areas like maintenance).

Council has commenced the consultation process with the community and have identified 3 potential options to respond to this growing funding gap. Just to remind you that Wollondilly Shire Council is committed to assisting residents that are facing difficulties in meeting their rates payments and have in place a hardship policy and pensioner rebate system to support our community.

Those three options are:

Option 1 – Deteriorate

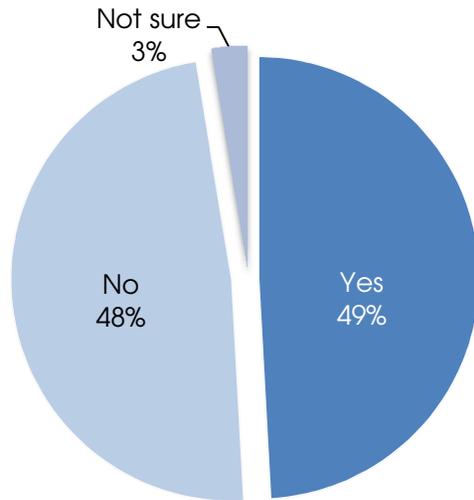
Option 2 – Stabilise

Option 3 – Improve

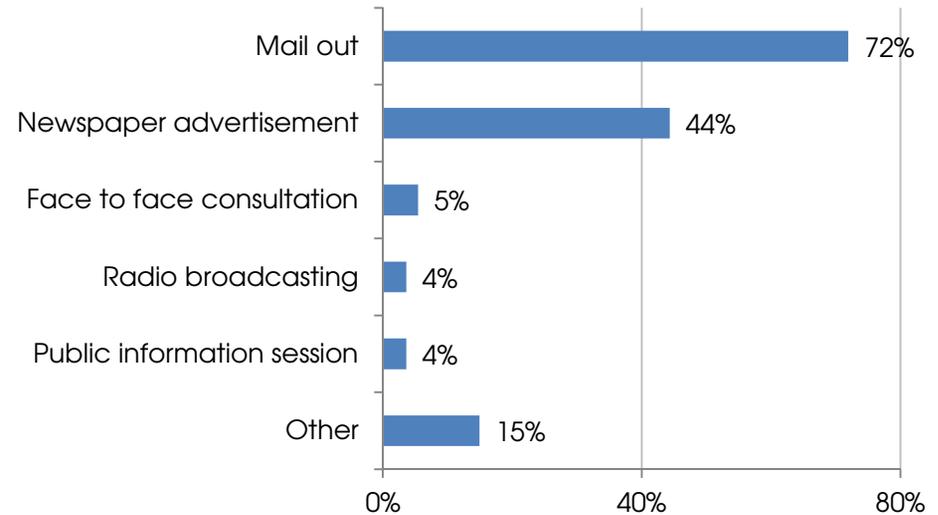
Let's look at the options in more detail:

Prior Knowledge of the SRV

Q6a. Prior to this call were you aware that Council was exploring community sentiment towards a Special Rate Variation?



Q6b. How were you informed of the Special Rate Variation?



Base: n = 221

	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Male	Female	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer	Overall
Base	114	126	114	53	204	204	361	46	407
Yes	30% ▼	47%	64% ▲	64% ▲	50%	48%	54% ▲	9%	49%
No	66%	52%	34%	33%	48%	49%	44%	83%	48%
Not sure	4%	2%	2%	3%	2%	3%	2%	9% ▲	3%

▲ ▼ = significantly higher/lower (by group)

49% of residents indicated they had prior awareness that Council was exploring community sentiment towards a SRV, with 72% stating they were informed through a 'mail out'

Concept Statement

Option 1: Deteriorate

No rate increase above the state restricted level of around 3%, which in effect would lead to a reduction in services and/or infrastructure. Based on an expected annual increase of around 3%, residential ratepayers who are paying around \$1200 per year, would pay, on average, around \$38 more each year. After 4 years, this would amount to an annual charge of \$1,351 by 2018/2019. (or a quarterly charge of \$338)

Under this option the impact would be:

- Reduced services such as a reduction in opening hours of facilities including pools, libraries, etc
- Reduced maintenance of sporting facilities, parks and gardens
- Reduced maintenance of roads, footpaths, shared pathways, drains and other infrastructure
- Reduced environmental programs (e.g. weed removal and native vegetation programs)
- Longer processing times for customer requests, applications and permits.
- Fewer community events
- Less funds for community sponsorship and economic development
- Increases in user fees and charges

Option 2: Stabilise

Increase rates by 8.5% for 4 years in order to maintain our services and renew our current infrastructure. This increase includes the 3% rate peg. Residential ratepayers who are paying around \$1200 per year would pay, on average, around \$116 more each year over this 4 year period. This would mean that by 2018/2019 the average annual rate charge would be \$1,663 (or a quarterly charge of \$416).

This option would enable:

- Maintaining current Council services. So opening hours and programs at pools, libraries, etc. would be maintained.
- Maintenance of sporting facilities, parks and gardens would remain as is, with no increase to mowing, planting or maintenance
- Maintenance of roads, footpaths, shared pathways, drains and other infrastructure.
- Environmental programs would be retained (e.g. weed removal and native vegetation programs)
- Processing times for customer requests, applications and permits would remain the same
- Community events would be maintained, but not expanded
- Funding of community sponsorship and Economic Development would be maintained

Concept Statement

Option 3: Improve

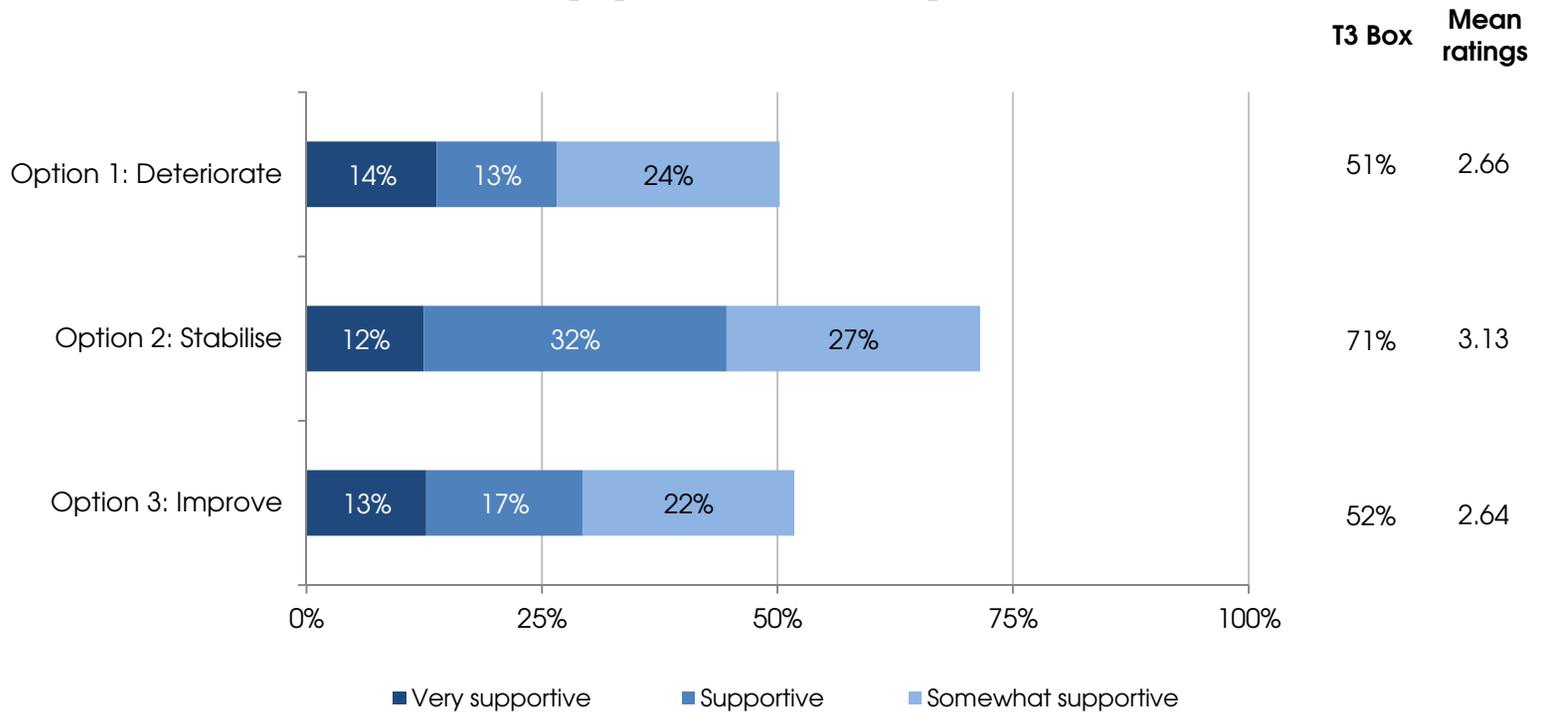
Under this Option rates would increase by 10.8% for 4 years, which would enable our services to be maintained, current infrastructure renewed and new services and/or infrastructure developed. This increase includes the 3% rate peg.

Residential ratepayers who are paying around \$1200 per year, would pay on average around \$152 more each year over this 4 year period. This would mean that by 2018/2019 the average annual rate charge would be \$1,809 (or a quarterly charge of \$452).

In addition to maintaining all current service levels this option would increase Council's capacity to provide the community with enhanced services and infrastructure that could include:

- Improved condition of existing assets such as roads, footpaths, shared pathways, drains, sporting facilities, parks and gardens in a shorter timeframe
- Delivery of a wide range of services in consultation with the community
- Increased capacity to build new infrastructure

Level of Support for Options



	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Male	Female	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer	Overall
Base	114	126	114	53	204	204	361	46	407
Option 1 – Deteriorate	2.59	2.67	2.60	2.92	2.72	2.60	2.68	2.54	2.66
Option 2 – Stabilise	3.36	3.04	3.03	3.06	2.98	3.28▲	3.12	3.16	3.13
Option 3 – Improve	3.10▲	2.45▼	2.55▼	2.35▼	2.56	2.73	2.57	3.25▲	2.64

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

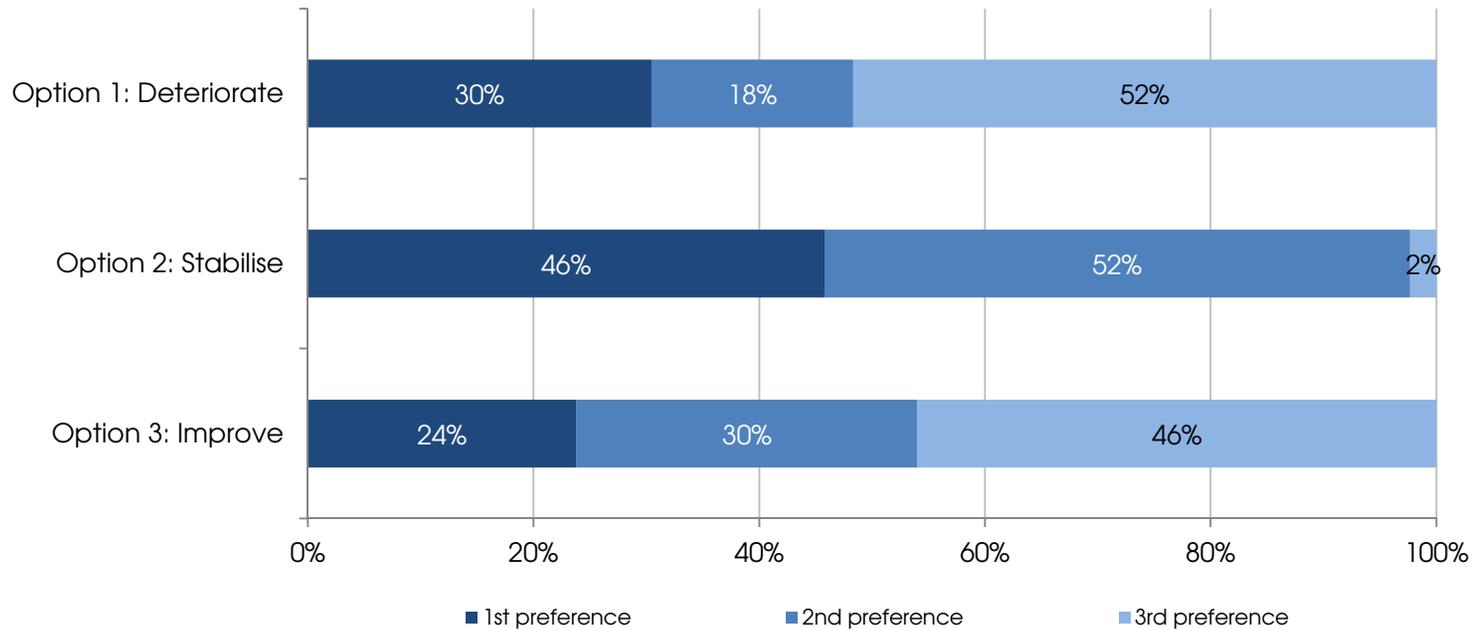
▲ ▼ = significantly higher/lower (by group)

Q4. How supportive are you with Council proceeding with this option?



The highest level of support was for Option 2, which includes the increase of rates by 8.5% for 4 years including the 3% rate peg. 71% of residents were at least somewhat supportive of this

Preferred Option



<u>1st Preference</u>	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Male	Female	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer	Overall
Base	114	126	114	53	204	204	361	46	407
Option 1 – Deteriorate	20%	31%	38%	37%	35%	26%	31%	25%	30%
Option 2 – Stabilise	53%▲	50%▲	34%▼	45%▲	41%	50%	47%	37%	46%
Option 3 – Improve	27%	19%	28%	18%	24%	23%	22%	38%	24%

Q5a. Please rank the 3 options in order of preference:

▲▼ = significantly higher/lower (by group)

46% of residents nominated Option 2 as their first preference and in total of 98% chose Option 2 as their first or second preference

Reason for Selecting Their Preferred Option

Option 1	N = 407
Council's financial management should improve to make such increases unnecessary	11%
Current services/facilities are poor enough that a rate increase is unacceptable	10%
Rate increase would not be affordable for some residents	8%
Option 2	
Supportive of small increase to maintain existing living standards	27%
Most affordable option when considering all residents	11%
Supportive of some increase despite belief that it should not be necessary	5%
Option 3	
Proposed improvements will benefit the local community	8%
Local road improvements would justify higher rate increase	7%
Standard of current services/facilities requires improvement	5%

Please see the Appendix for the detailed list

Q5a. Please rank the 3 options in order of preference:

Q5b. What is your reason for choosing that option as your highest preference?



Conclusion



Conclusion & Recommendations

Overall, satisfaction with the performance of Council was rated positively by residents, with 81% expressing they were at least 'somewhat satisfied'.

There was a universally positive outcome with the level of service provided by Council, with 89% of residents being 'somewhat satisfied' to 'very satisfied'.

65% of residents were 'somewhat satisfied' to 'very satisfied' with the quality of infrastructure and facilities provided by Wollondilly Council, and 99% of residents believe it is important for Council to provide better infrastructure and facilities for the community.

49% of residents had prior knowledge of Council exploring community sentiment towards an SRV, with the Council 'mail out' being the primary method of driving awareness.

1. Residents were most supportive of Option 2 – Stabilise
 - ⇒ **71% of residents were at least somewhat supportive of Wollondilly Shire Council proceeding with this plan**
2. Overall, residents preferred Option 2
 - ⇒ **46% of residents selected Option 2 as their most preferred option, in total 98% chose it as their first and second preference**
 - ⇒ **54% of residents chose Option 3 as their first and second preference**
 - ⇒ **30% nominated Option 1 as their first preference, in total 52% selected this as their least preferred option**



The community are generally aware and supportive of Council making an application to IPART in order to seek an SRV

Appendix



Reason for Selecting Their Preferred Option

Option 2

Supportive of small increase to maintain existing living standards	27%
Most affordable option when considering all residents	11%
Supportive of some increase despite belief that it should not be necessary	5%
Substandard level of current infrastructure/services makes improvements necessary	4%
Supportive of rate increase provided it is implemented as proposed	2%
Recognise need for maintenance, but unsure of affordability of increase	1%
Further improvements would not be cost-effective for all residents	1%
Further improvements have not been adequately communicated by Council	1%
Local infrastructure does not require improvement	1%

Q5a. Please rank the 4 options in order of preference.

Q5b. What is your reason for choosing that option as your highest preference?

Base: n = 407



Reason for Selecting Their Preferred Option

Option 1

Council's financial management should improve to make such increases unnecessary	11%
Current services/facilities are poor enough that a rate increase is unacceptable	10%
Rate increase would not be affordable for some residents	8%
Existing rates are appropriate/too high to justify a further increase	4%
Alternative funding sources should be used for these improvements	3%
Proposed rate increases are too great	1%
Current living standards are satisfactory and a rate increase unnecessary	1%
Lack of belief that proposed improvements would be implemented	1%
Unable to support proposals without better Council communication/explanation	1%
Council amalgamation would reduce financial burden without rate increases	1%
Growing population will naturally increase revenue without rate rises	1%
Proposed improvements would not be beneficial for all residents	1%

Q5a. Please rank the 3 options in order of preference:

Q5b. What is your reason for choosing that option as your highest preference?

Base: n = 407



Reason for Selecting Their Preferred Option

Option 3

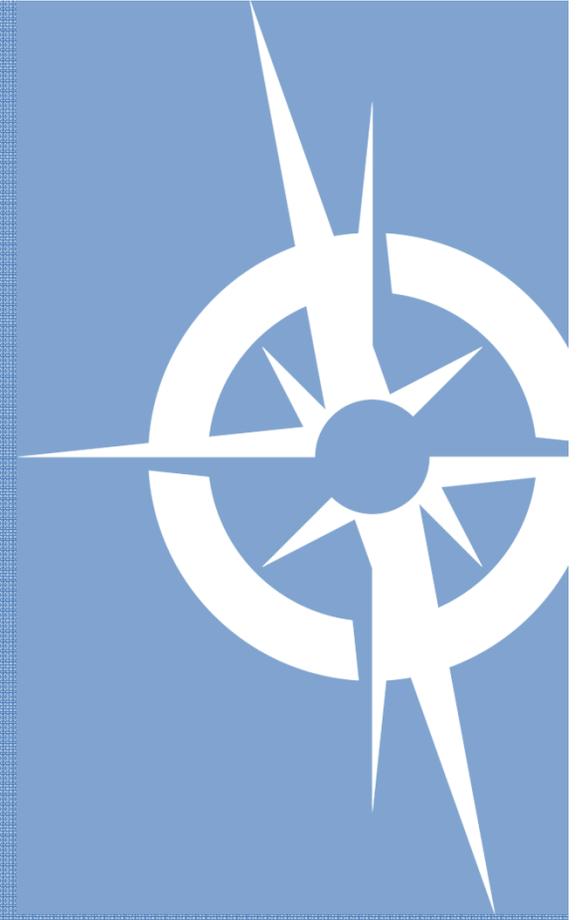
Proposed improvements will benefit the local community	8%
Local road improvements would justify higher rate increase	7%
Standard of current services/facilities requires improvement	5%
Community contribution is the only way to implement improvements in the area	2%
Rate increase is acceptable provided improvements are implemented effectively	2%
Local recreation facility improvements would justify higher rate increase	1%
Rate increase providing greater services is acceptable provided Council also improves its financial management	1%
Increase in rates would be affordable for most residents	1%

Q5a. Please rank the 4 options in order of preference.

Q5b. What is your reason for choosing that option as your highest preference?

Base: n = 407





micromex
research

Telephone: (02) 4352 2388

Fax: (02) 4352 2117

Web: www.micromex.com.au

Email: stu@micromex.com.au