



An Exploration of the Ku-ring-gai Environmental Levy

Prepared for Ku-ring-gai Council

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1. Executive Summary

1.1 Background

Ku-ring-gai Council is nearing the end of the current determination period for their current special rate variation – an Environmental Levy. Council would ideally like to continue on with this Levy, but requires community input into the decision making process. As part of a larger scope of work, Council engaged the services of Woolcott Research & Engagement to determine the views of their rate payers in three main areas;

- The potential continuation of the Environmental Levy;
- The potential permanent nature of the Levy; and
- Support for the program Areas (to feed into decision relating to budget allocation).

1.2 Research methodology

The overall research design involves several different components:

STEP 1: Recruitment of participants for the main community survey;

STEP 2: The delivery of an Environmental Levy information pack to registered participants;

STEP 3: Re-connecting with those previously recruited to undertake the main survey;

STEP 4: Recruiting participants for the community forum;

STEP 5: Undertaking the community forum.

In total, there were n=495 completed surveys, and there were 29 attendees at the forum (split over three tables, each with a table moderator from Woolcott Research & Engagement).

1.3 Research findings

1.3.1 Reactions to the current Levy

Almost all survey respondents (97%) indicated that they felt it was important for Council to continue to improve the natural environment.

Just over six in ten survey respondents (61%) indicated a level of (prior) awareness of the Levy. However, most of these were 'somewhat aware' (51%) as opposed to 'very aware' (10%).

More than eight in ten survey respondents indicated a level of satisfaction with the current funding program (84%), with almost three in ten being 'very satisfied' (29%).

1.3.2 Future Levy preferences

The large majority of survey respondents indicated a preference for the continuation of the Environmental Levy at the current rate (78%). In addition, 11% preferred that it was continued (but at a discounted rate), while 11% called for it to be discontinued.

The forum participants also indicated a preference for the continuation of the Levy at the current rate. Participants at the forum were happy with what Council was doing in this regard, and wanted it to continue. In overall terms they didn't feel that the average contribution (\$80) was much of a burden given the advantage they received from it.

In terms of a potential permanent Levy, there was a large preference for the permanent continuation of the Levy amongst those survey respondents who indicated a preference for the continuation of the Levy at the current rate (83%). Amongst the smaller number of respondents who had a preference for the continuation of the Levy – but at a reduced rate, the support pattern for the permanency of the Levy was somewhat different – with just over two fifths of these respondents indicated a preference for the Levy to be permanent (41%). The main reason given for not wanting a permanent Levy was that the 7 year submission period required Council to review the situation and make adjustments as necessary.

The forum participants also liked the idea of a review process (which was raised at each table). As a result, when it came time to vote on the issue most opted for the 7 year period option (56%, or 14 participants). However, when it was explained to them that Council would maintain a review process and seek community input a further vote was held, and most either selected for a permanent Levy to be in place (without the need for review), or for it to be in place with a program review every 3 years (65%, or 18 participants). At this vote 9 participants still preferred the formal IPART submission option.

1.3.3 Program area feedback

The survey respondents showed an extremely high level of support for both the Water & Catchment Management and Bushfire Risk Management Program Areas (82% of respondents rated these with an 8 or more out of 10, with a further 14% showing some support by giving a rating of 5 to 7 out of 10). More than three quarters of the survey respondents also showed a high level of support for the Biodiversity Management Program Area (76% 8+ ratings). More than two thirds of respondents also indicated a high level of support for the Energy Management & Climate Change and the Sustainable Transport & Community Recreation Program Areas (68% and 67% 8+ ratings respectively). In relative terms, there was less support expressed for the Community Engagement and the Business Engagement Program Areas (53% and 48% 8+ ratings respectively).

The forum participants were also given the opportunity to provide feedback on these program areas, and generally the feedback was positive. The participants were surprised at the breadth and depth of the different programs and initiatives that Council currently has in place, and is planning to continue with. However, upon learning the details of some projects, some of the participants were not sure that all projects should be funded by the Levy. They weren't questioning the value of the individual projects, but indicated that not all projects (e.g. transitioning the fleet to electric vehicles) fitted with their notion of what the Levy should be doing (directly enhancing the natural environment) which resulted in some suggestions that such initiatives should be funded through general expenditure.

The forum participants provided the highest levels of support to the Water & Catchment Management as well as the Biodiversity & Bushfire Management Program Areas (96% and 86% 8+ ratings respectively). In relative terms there was lower support (though still with 60% or more giving 8+ ratings) for the remaining three Program Areas (Energy Management, Community Programs & Environmental Education, as well as Sustainable Transport & Community Recreation).

1.4 Conclusions and recommendations

Overall there was a clear preference expressed for the continuation of the Environmental Levy. The aspect of having this Levy in place on a permanent basis was also supported in overall terms – however, there was evidence of the need for a clear and transparent review process – allowing the community to have input into the future direction of fund allocation.

In this regard, when the details of the projects within each program area were revealed, some of the forum participants were surprised that the initiatives were included within the Levy (as they did not necessarily fit with their perception of what the levy was to achieve). This suggests the need for further community education about what the Levy is, and what the environmental benefits of some projects are.

2. Background and Objectives

2.1 Background

Ku-ring-gai Council's Environmental Levy delivers a range of environmental programs and works across the key themes of biodiversity, energy, water, sustainable transport, community recreation and community engagement and environmental education.

In 2011, Council obtained approval from IPART for a Special Rate Variation to continue the Environmental Levy for eight years, at a rate of five per cent above the ordinary rate.

The current Environmental Levy is due to expire in June 2019 at which time if the Levy is not renewed the environmental programs and works reliant on Levy funding will cease.

As such, decisions were made to conduct extensive community consultation to determine community support for the ongoing Special Rate Variation for environmental and sustainability programs and initiatives.

2.2 Objectives

The key aims of this part of the overall program of works were then to:

- Determine community support for the continuation of the Environmental Levy at the current rate;
- Measure community support for the permanent implementation of this Environmental Levy;
- Obtain feedback in relation to community preferences for the Programs that the Environmental Levy should focus on.

3. Research Design

3.1 Research methodology

A multi-phased research approach was employed in order to ensure that the community were properly informed before obtaining their feedback.

The overall research design involved several different components:

- STEP 1: Recruitment of participants for the main community survey;
- STEP 2: The delivery of an Environmental Levy information pack to registered participants;
- STEP 3: Re-connecting with those previously recruited to undertake the main survey;
- STEP 4: Recruiting participants for the community forum;
- STEP 5: Undertaking the community forum.

3.1.1 Recruitment of ratepayers (Step 1)

Initial recruitment was undertaken via telephone using the latest edition of Australia on Disc (an electronic version of the White Pages). A copy of the recruitment questionnaire is included at Appendix C.

The following quotas were set (by Ward) in accordance with population estimates provided by Ku-ring-gai Council:

- Wahroonga (18.7%);
- St Ives (19.6%);
- Comenarra (21.2%);
- Gordon (20.5%);
- Roseville (20.1%).

It was not possible to set either age and gender quotas due to the fact that in order to satisfy IPART requirements, respondents to the survey needed to be Ku-ring-gai Council rate payers, and there were no available demographic details for this sub-set of the overall community.

However, in order to ensure that there was a broad mix of older and younger rate payers included, in addition to the recruitment via telephone a series of street intercept interviews were also carried out.

For the phone and online surveys, potential participants were required to provide an email address or a street address in order to allow for the delivery of an information pack that provided details in relation to the Environmental Levy and the Special Rate Variation application, and the reason for the study.

Initial recruitment was undertaken between 1st September and 6th September 2018 and n=553 rate payers were recruited at this stage.

A further set of n=68 rate payers were recruited on 2nd October - as the response rates to the main survey were insufficient to produce the target of n=400 completed interviews.

In addition, a series of n=78 street intercept interviews (which involved the respondent reading the information pack at the time of interview) were carried out after the above phone approach was complete which specifically targeted younger rate payers.

3.1.2 Information Packs (Step 2)

Rate payers recruited in Step 1 were informed of the need to provide them with further information about the Environmental Levy and the Special Rate Variation prior to undertaking the main survey.

The Ku-ring-gai Council project team devised an information pack (consisting of 4 pages of information with images and infographics) for delivery to the recruited rate payers (see Appendix E).

Woolcott Research & Engagement provided editing advice to ensure that the information was easily digestible in order to optimise participation.

The Ku-ring-gai rate payers recruited were offered two alternatives for the delivery of this information:

- A PDF copy of the information pack delivered via email (sent from Woolcott Research & Engagement);
- A hard copy of the information pack delivered via Post (sent from Ku-Ring-Gai Council).

Information pack recipients were allowed 3 to 4 days to read the information before being re-contacted to undertake the main survey. However, as has been indicated, those who were recruited via street intercept were provided with the information pack on the spot, and were given time to read this before completing the questionnaire.

3.1.3 Main Survey (Step 3)

As was the case in relation to the delivery of the information packs, there were three main methods for the capture of survey results. In total, n=495 completed interviews were achieved. A copy of the questionnaire is included at Appendix D.

As outlined in Step 1 above, the recruitment of respondents for the main survey was conducted with quotas (by ward) in accordance with the population estimates of Ku-ring-gai and to establish a demographic representation (by age and gender) of Ku-ring-gai rate payers. However, the end survey results had the potential to be demographically skewed, compared to the original demographic proportions obtained through the recruitment phase, as a result of some ratepayers not following through with their intention to complete the main survey. Therefore, to maintain the demographic proportions required in the final survey results, a standard practice of post-weighting the results (by age and gender only) was applied in accordance with the profile of the representative sample initially recruited. The demographic profile of the survey respondents (n=495) indicates the profile of respondents after the post-weighting has been applied.

Telephone (CATI) interviews

N=80 interviews were conducted via telephone:

- These were conducted between 17th September and 7th October 2018.

Online interviews

N=337 interviews were conducted online:

- These were conducted between 19th September and 4th October 2018.
- In addition to the original email invitation to the survey, two reminder emails were sent to each participant (who had not already completed the survey), in addition to a phone call reminder.

Street intercept interviews

N=78 interviews were conducted face-to face:

- These were conducted between 30th October and 5th November 2018.

3.1.4 Forum Recruitment (Step 4)

Respondents to the main telephone and online survey were informed that there was a follow-up forum planned, and were asked (as part of the survey) to indicate their interest in participating. In total n=168 survey respondents indicated that they were willing to be re-contacted in relation to the Forum.

Phone contact was initiated in order to provide further details about the Forum, and to then recruit forum participants.

In order to ensure that the broad views of the forum participants were not skewed, quotas were set for stated preferences in relation to both the continuation of the Environmental Levy, and the potential permanence of this Levy (i.e. forum participants were recruited in-line with the main survey results for these main questions).

3.1.5 Rate Payer Forum (Step 5)

In total, n=35 of the main survey respondents were recruited for the forum (of which n=29 attended).

The forum was held in the Council Chambers at Ku-ring-gai Council on Thursday 18 October 2018 between 6pm and 9pm. A copy of the forum agenda is included at Appendix F.

Forum participants were split into three groups and seated at one of three tables – with a table moderator from Woolcott Research & Engagement provided at each table. Woolcott Research & Engagement also provided the lead facilitator for the evening.

Participants were provided with an \$80 cash incentive at the end of the forum as a token of appreciation for their time, and to compensate them for any travel expenses incurred.

3.2 Interpreting the findings in this report

Percentages are rounded to whole numbers and as a result, for some closed-ended questions (where a total of 100 per cent may be expected), total percentages may not add to exactly 100 per cent due to rounding at each response level.

In addition, the open-ended (or free response) questions permit the respondent to provide as much detail as they like in explaining their response. As a result a single response often contains more than one idea, theme or concept, and where this occurs the single response will be coded into multiple categories (or response codes) to separate these out and represent each part of their response. Because results are reported on a respondent basis, it follows that the sum of the percentages for each open-ended question generally exceeds 100 per cent.

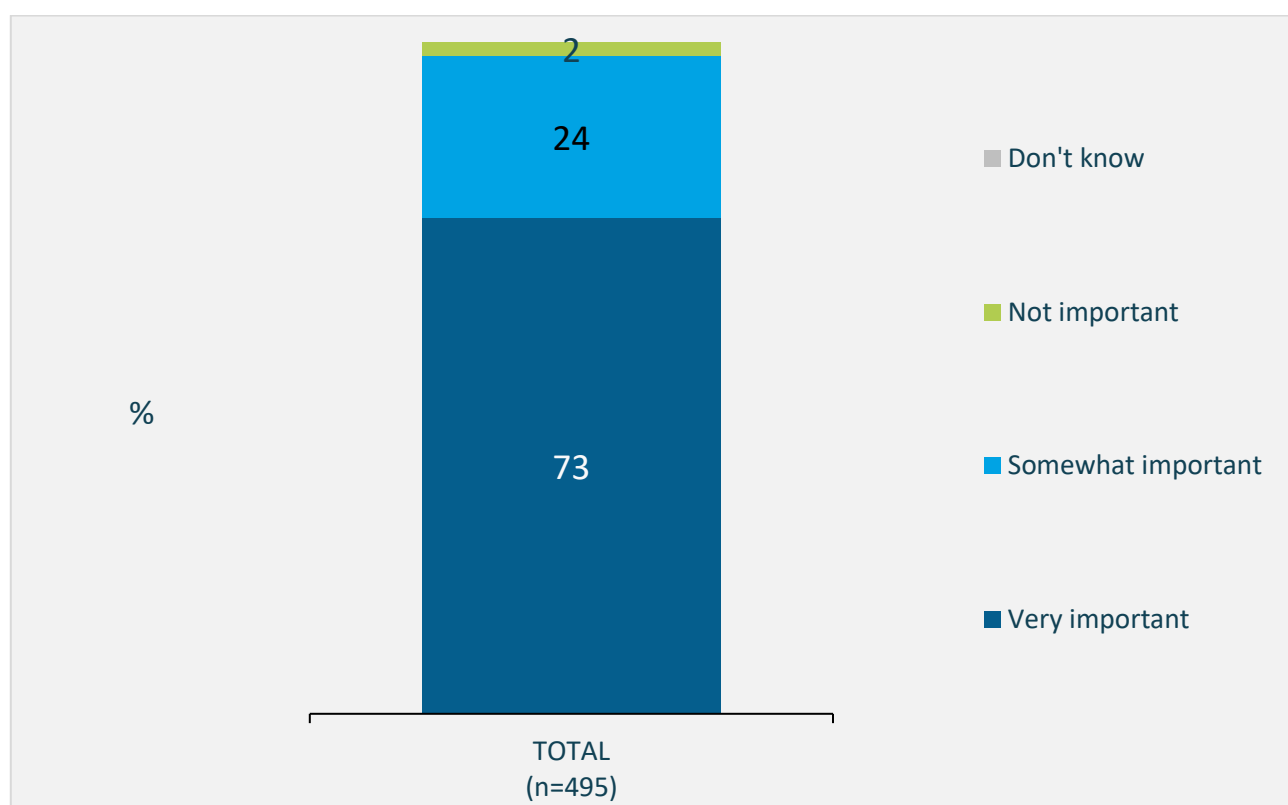
4. Reactions to the current Levy

4.1 Perceived importance of environmental works

The survey respondents were asked to indicate how important they felt it was for Council to continue to deliver programs and works that improve the Ku-ring-gai natural environment (see Figure 1).

Almost all respondents (97%) indicated they felt it was important for Council to continue to improve the natural environment. Just under three quarters of all respondents (73%) indicated that it was 'very important' for this to continue.

Figure 1: Perceived importance of environmental works



Q1. How important would you say it is for Council to continue to deliver programs and works that improve Ku-ring-gai natural environment?

Base: All respondents (n=495)

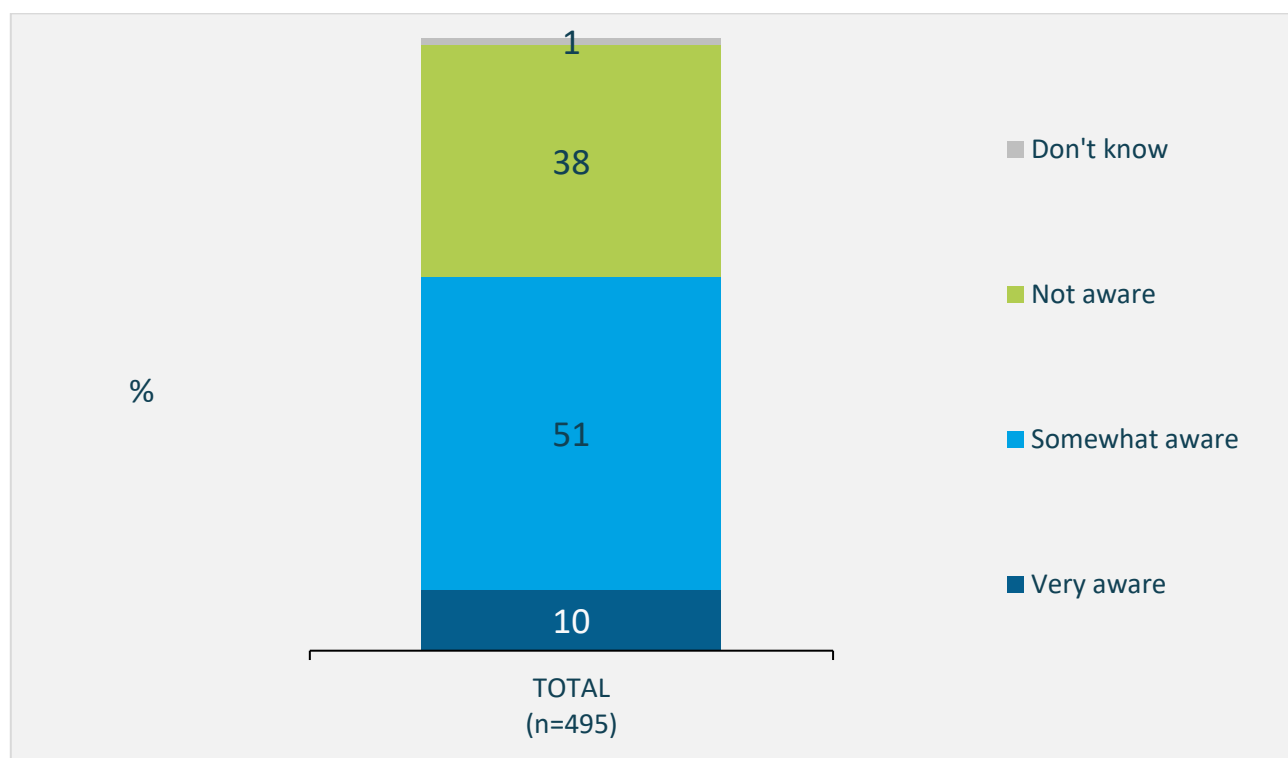
4.2 Awareness of the Environmental Levy

The survey respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which they were aware of the Environmental Levy prior to receiving the information pack from Ku-ring-gai Council (See Figure 2).

Just over six in ten of all respondents (61%) indicated a level of (prior) awareness of the Levy. However, most of these were 'somewhat aware' (51%) as opposed to 'very aware' (10%).

Almost two in five respondents indicated that they were not aware of the Environmental Levy before receiving the information pack (38%).

Figure 2: Prior awareness of the Levy



Q2. Before receiving the information pack, were you aware of the Environmental Levy and what it delivers?

Base: All respondents (n=495)

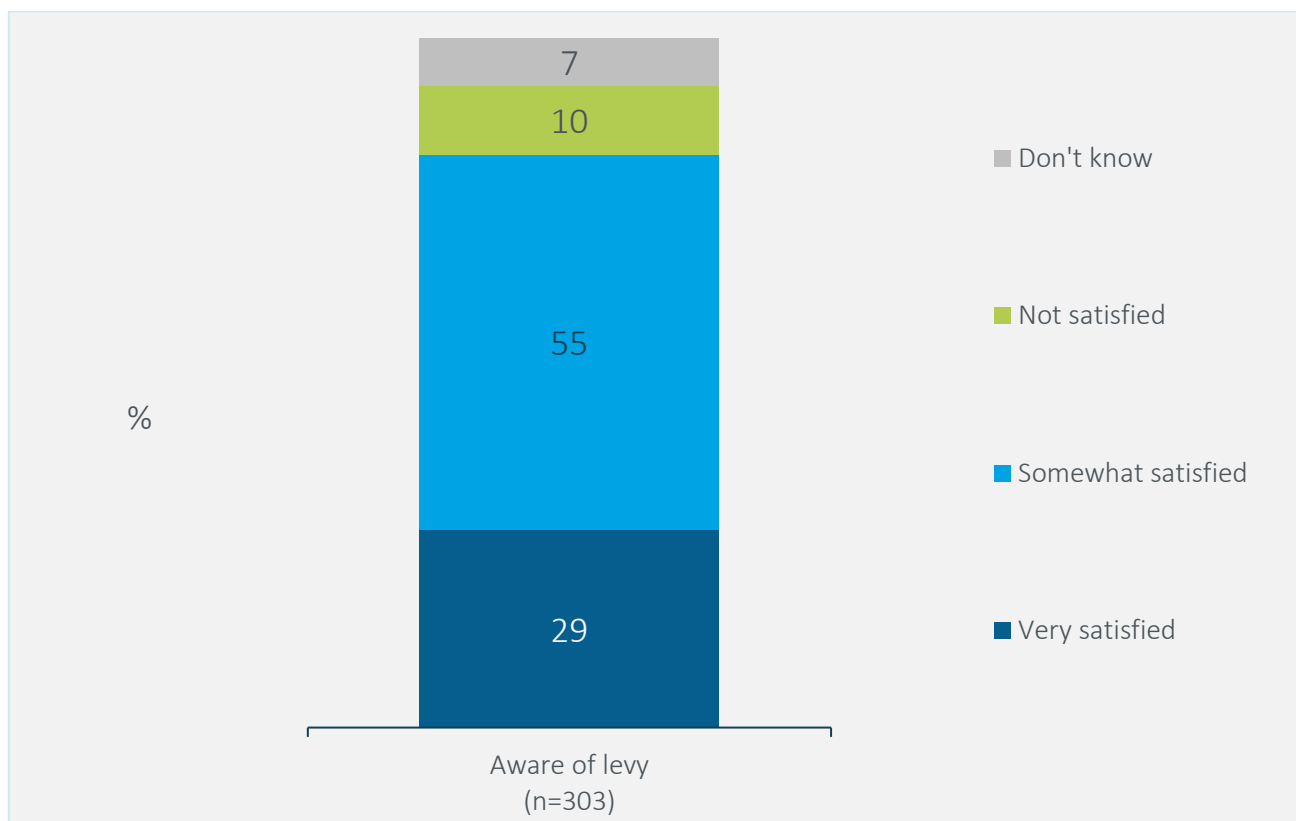
4.3 Satisfaction with the current program/works

The survey respondents with prior awareness of the Environmental Levy were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with the delivery of programs and works funded through the current Levy (see Figure 3).

More than eight in ten respondents indicated a level of satisfaction with the current funding program (84%), with almost three in ten being 'very satisfied' (29%).

One in ten indicated that they weren't satisfied with the delivery of programs and works (10%).

Figure 3: Satisfaction with works funded through the Levy



Q3. How satisfied are you with the delivery of programs and works funded through the current Environmental Levy?
Base: Respondents with prior awareness of the Levy (n=303)

5. Future Levy preferences

5.1 Preferences for the continuation of the Levy

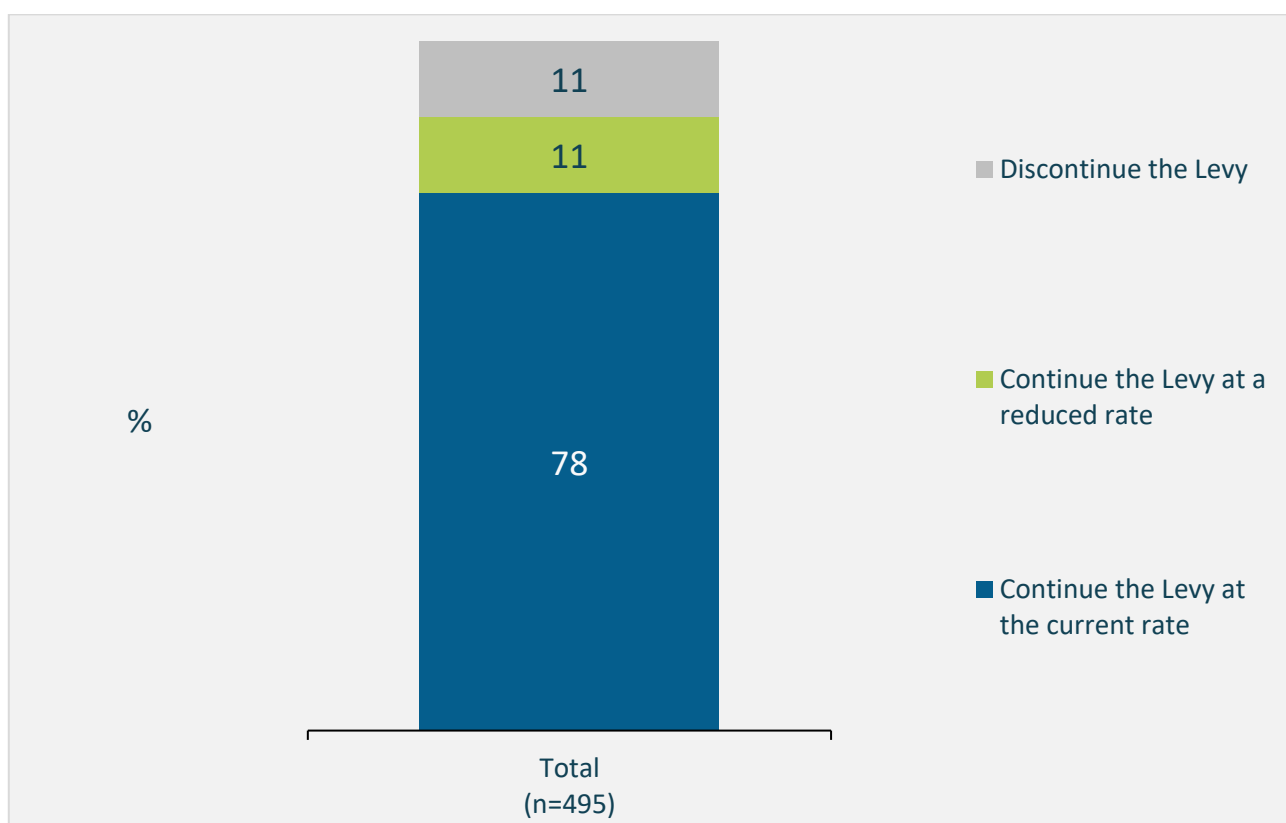
5.1.1 Quantitative findings

All survey respondents were asked to indicate their preference in relation to the proposed continuation of the Environmental Levy at the rate that it was at the time of the survey (See Figure 4).

The large majority of respondents indicated a preference for the continuation of the Environmental Levy at the current rate (78%).

Just over one in ten indicated a preference for the continuation of the Levy at a reduced rate, and the same proportion indicated a preference for the discontinuation of the Levy (11% for each).

Figure 4: Preferences for the continuation of the Environmental Levy



Q4. As mentioned in the information sent to you, the current Environmental Levy is due to expire on 30 June 2019. Under the current levy the average residential ratepayer pays around \$80 as part of their annual rates. Council is considering applying to the NSW Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) for the continuation of the Environmental Levy at the amount currently paid by Ku-ring-gai ratepayers. This would commence from 1 July 2019.

After reading the information, which of the following options do you prefer?

Base: All respondents (n=495)

Those who indicated a preference for the discontinuation of the Levy (n=56 respondents) were then asked to indicate why this was their preference (see Table 1).

The most common reason given for wanting to discontinue the current Environmental Levy was that 'the rates should be covering the Levy' (38%) i.e. that the environmental works should be covered under the general revenue collected through Council rates.

Some also felt that there was waste in the general expenditure of funds by indicating that "if they didn't spend money on stupid things they would have enough money without the levy" (17%). A similar proportion opted for the discontinuation because they hadn't seen evidence of what has been achieved to date (15%).

Relatively few were objecting for financial reasons (9% indicated that it was "too expensive").

Table 1: Reasons for preferring a discontinuation

Reasons given	(n=56) %
The rates should be covering the levy	38
If they didn't spend money on stupid things they would have enough money without the levy	17
I haven't seen any value in it/nothing being done/no evidence	15
There are more important things to spend the money on, e.g. facilities, fixing roads etc.	13
We have too many levies already	12
Too expensive	9
I don't trust them to do it/fairly/correctly	5
There is too much unfairness re charges, facilities	3
Other	7
Don't know	2

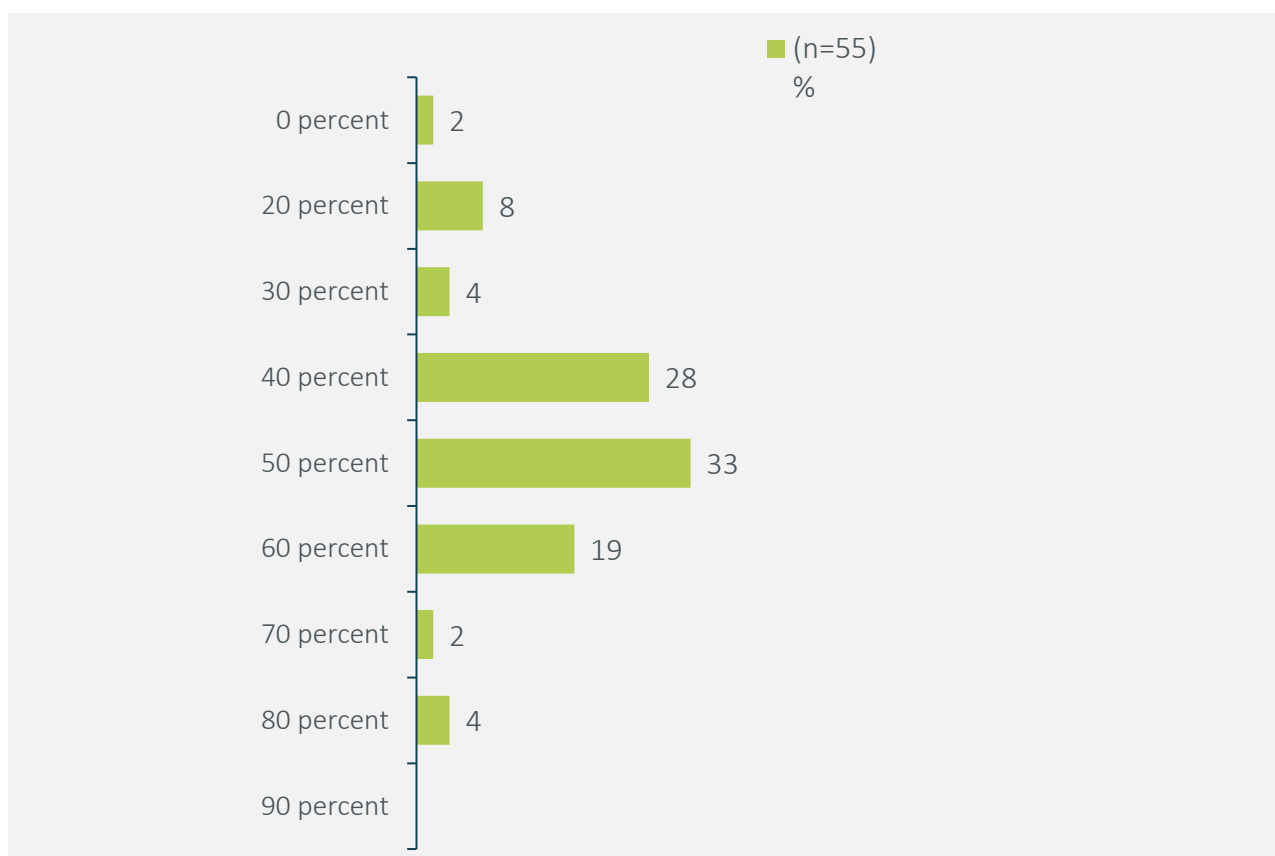
Q5. Can you please tell me why you don't support an environmental levy?

Base: Respondents who gave preference to the discontinuation of the Environmental Levy (n=56)

Those who indicated a preference for the continuation of the Levy, but at a reduced rate (n=55 respondents) were asked to indicate what proportion of the current Levy they were willing to pay (see Figure 5).

Amongst the relatively small proportion who indicated a preference for a reduced levy, the most common response was to pay 50% of the current Levy (33% indicated this), while a slightly lower proportion indicated that they were willing to pay only 40% of the current Levy amount (28%).

Figure 5: Proportion of Levy willing to pay



6. The current environment levy costs around \$80 for the average residential ratepayer per year. What proportion of this levy would you be willing to pay? Please answer with a \$ amount.

Base: Respondents who gave preference to the continuation of the Environmental Levy at a reduced rate (n=55)

5.1.2 Forum feedback

Even though a measure of this had already been captured in the main survey, participants at the forum were asked to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each potential outcome so that we would have a better understanding of why rate payers had made the choices that they made within the main survey (i.e. to explore the reasoning further).

The advantages and disadvantages of continuing the Levy at the same rate

The main advantages of continuing with the Levy at the same rate tended to relate to the fact that most were very happy with what Council had been doing to date in relation to the environment. They felt that there were a range of valuable programs in place that should be continued. A few of the participants even went as far as suggesting that the Levy could potentially even be increased in order to expand the program of works possible through the Levy. In terms of the monetary value, most felt that \$80 was not a large sum of money, and the benefits that they would draw from the program of works would more than make up for the expense involved.

“\$80 over four instalments is not worth talking about”

Several participants went to the extent of stating that one of the main factors in their decision to live in the area was the natural environment within the LGA. They were strongly in favour of the natural setting of their place of residence being maintained and potentially enhanced.

Another line of discussion was that this was the only option that will give council the opportunity for certainty in what they are doing – and allow them to plan a full set of environmental programs. To this end it was felt to offer both Council and ratepayers some certainty.

“We complain when we see short term planning, and this would allow them certainty of funds to then plan ahead for”

In terms of potential disadvantages to continuing with the Environmental Levy at the current rate, some of the forum participants were sceptical of Council generally, and weren't sure that they could 'trust' that Council would spend all of the money on the environment, or that it would be efficiently managed.

A few participants suggested that while it wasn't of concern to them, the \$80 cost may be an issue to some rate payers in the area (though they assumed that not many would be impacted by this).

While not necessarily disadvantages, some questions were raised in this discussion session, such as why there was a need to maintain a separate Environmental Levy – as opposed to increasing the general Levy and providing assurances that the money would still be used for environmental programs. Some also wanted to know why businesses paid a lower amount than residents.

The advantages and disadvantages of continuing the Levy at a reduced rate

The forum participants found it more difficult to respond to the option of continuing with the Environmental Levy – but at a reduced rate. As one participant suggested:

“It’s really difficult to evaluate this, as I’m not sure what environmental services they would take away from what they are currently doing”

Overall the only advantage of this option was seen to be that rate payers would be paying less for their rates each year.

In terms of potential disadvantages of this option, the main concerns related to the idea of cutting back on the current set of services offered in this area. Some participants also raised specific implications such as the impact that this would have on the Council’s ability to attract matched funding grants from other levels of Government, or the direct implication on (for example) reducing the number of staff that they could employ to work in this area.

“I think she said that there were 13 staff employed now. What would the impact be on those staffing numbers, and if they were reduced what are the implications of not having the staff to cover all of their programs?”

A few participants were also concerned about how the decisions would be made as to which services to keep and which ones to do away with.

“Who is going to make that call? The community would need to have a say in relation to that too”

The advantages and disadvantages of discontinuing the Environmental Levy

Again, the participants struggled to see what advantages there would be under this option. The monetary saving was seen to be obvious, though not significant, and beyond that the forum participants were unable to provide any other potential advantages.

The disadvantages were seen to be more severe (than the option of continuing with the Levy but at a reduced rate) under this option. While they weren’t sure which Environmental services would be maintained, they also felt that other ‘basic’ Council services would be impacted if this option were to be selected.

“They can’t totally eliminate all of the environmental programs that they have now, so some of the money now being spent on other services would need to be re-directed to cover the programs that they maintain, and that could have implications for residents”

In terms of disadvantages, the main one mentioned was the potential loss of current services. Some thought that this was quite short-sighted, suggesting that the environment needed to be enhanced not degraded.

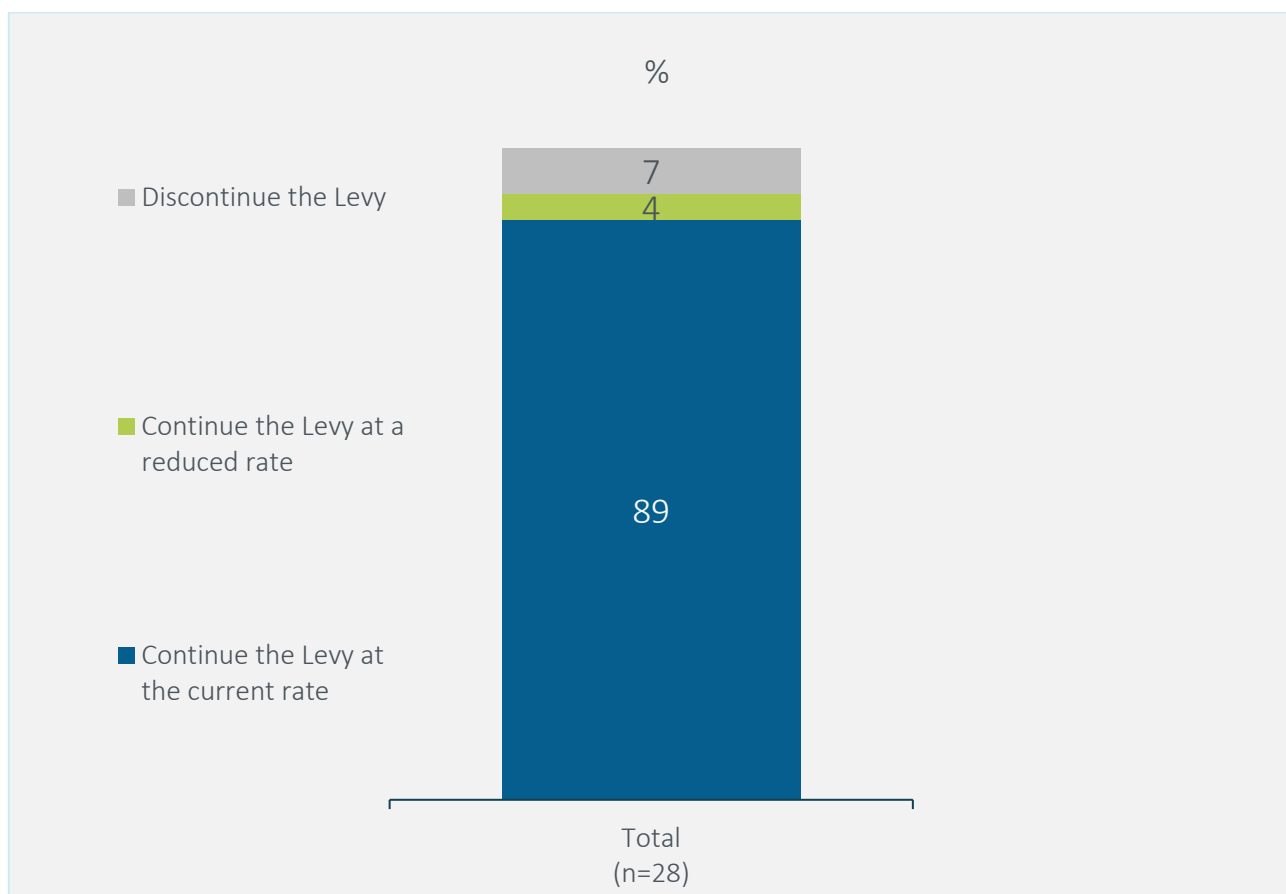
Forum preference voting

After the table discussion period, the forum participants were also asked to vote on their preference in relation to the potential continuation of the Environmental Levy (see Figure 6).

The majority of the forum participants indicated a preference for the continuation of the existing Environmental Levy at the same rate (89%).

Only 4% (or one participant) indicated a preference for the continuation of the Levy at a reduced rate, while 7% (or two participants) preferred that the Levy be discontinued.

Figure 6: Forum preferences for the continuation of the Levy



Base: Forum participants who provided a response (n=28)

5.2 The permanent continuation of the Levy

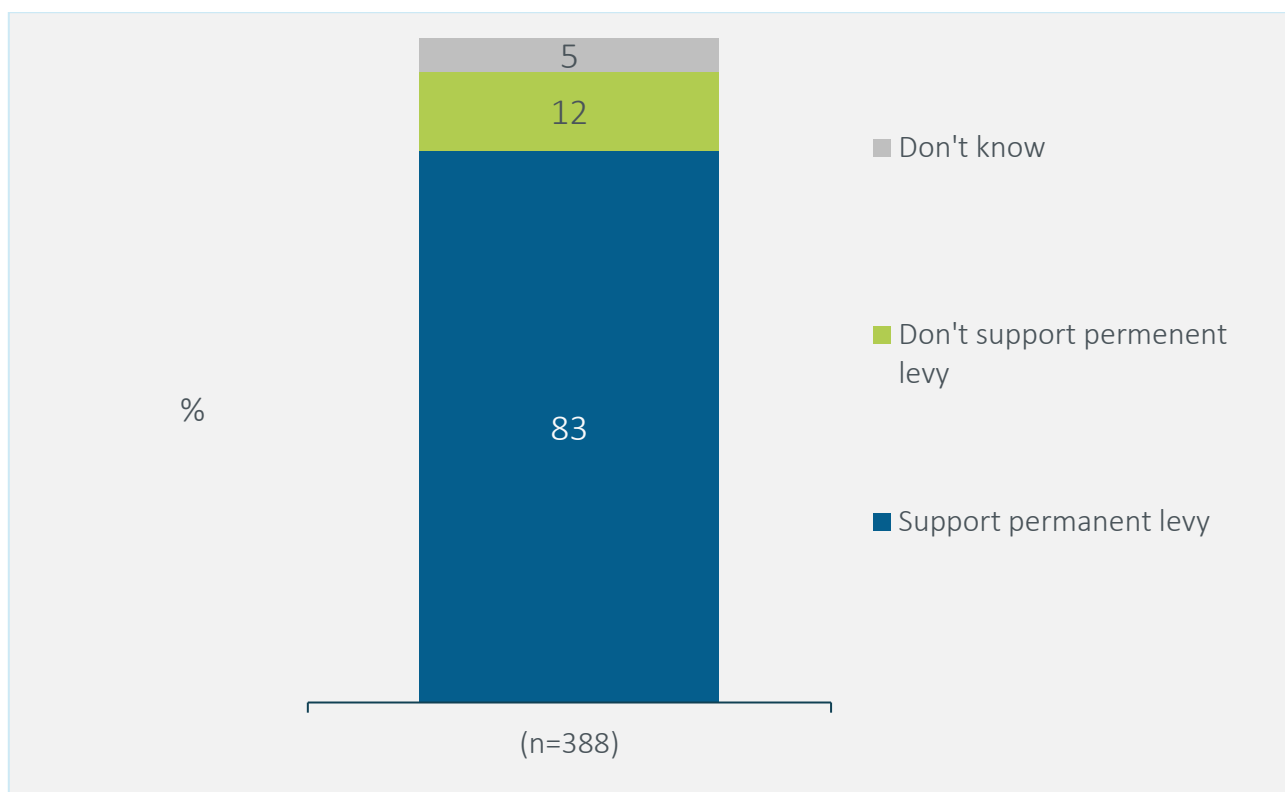
5.2.1 Quantitative findings

The survey respondents who were in favour of the continuation of the Environmental Levy were asked to indicate their preference in relation to the permanency of this Levy.

Amongst those who had earlier indicated a preference for the continuation of the Levy at the current rate, there was a large preference for the permanent continuation of the Levy (83%; see Figure 7).

However, amongst the smaller number of those who had a preference for the continuation of the Levy – but at a reduced rate, the support pattern for the permanency of the Levy was somewhat different (see Figure 8). While more than a two fifths of these respondents indicated a preference for the Levy to be permanent (41%), almost half did not support a permanent Levy (48%).

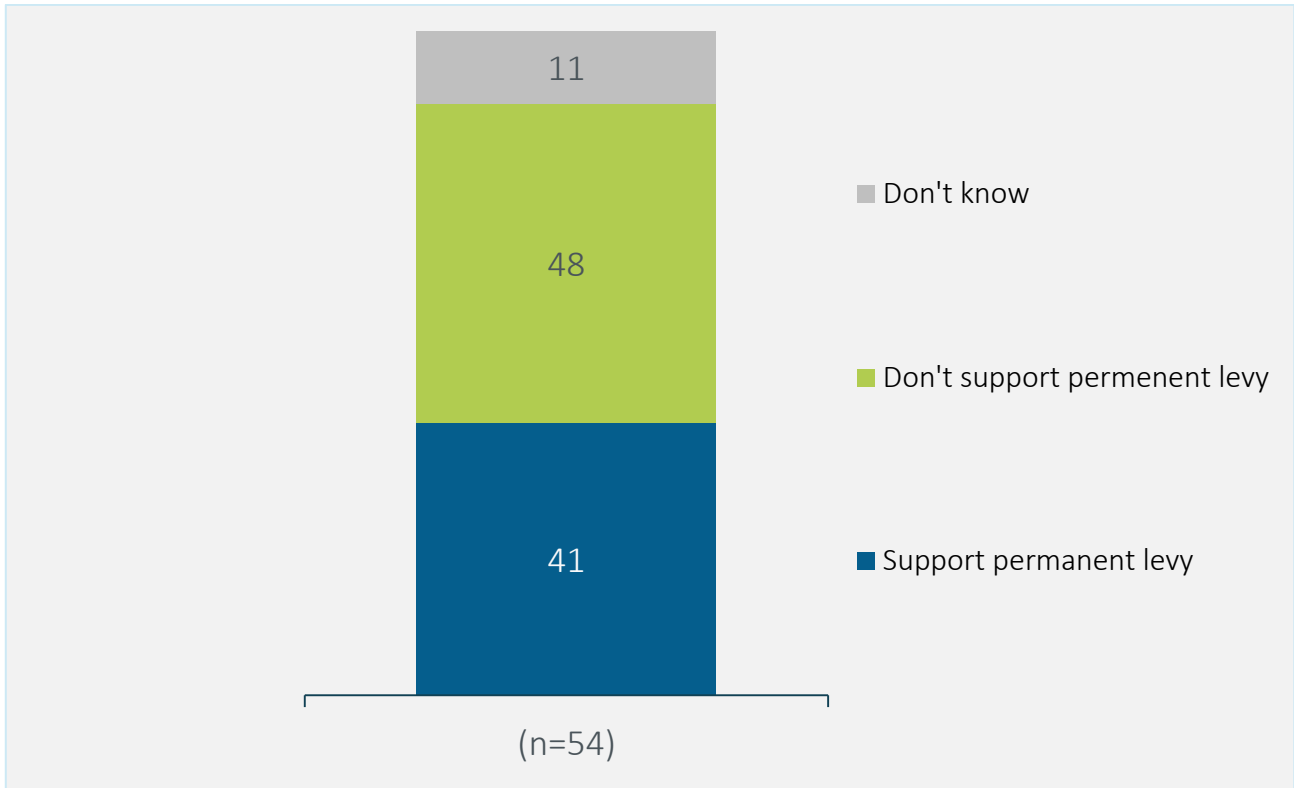
Figure 7: Support for the permanent continuation of the Levy (amongst those preferring the current option)



Do you support permanent continuation of the environmental levy?

Base: Respondents who supported the continuation of the Levy at the current rate (n=388)

Figure 8: Support for the permanent continuation of the Levy (amongst those preferring a reduced rate Levy option)

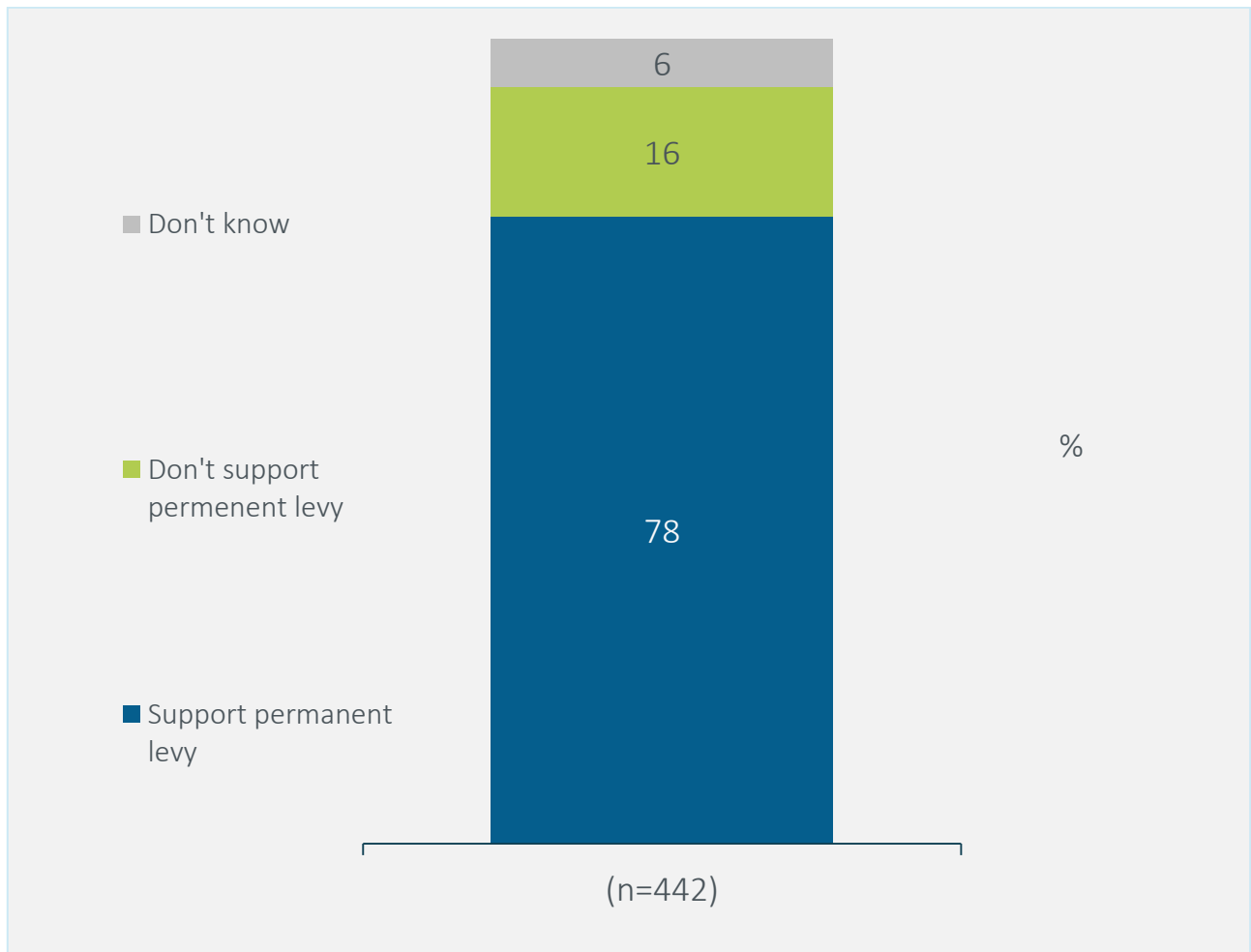


Do you support permanent continuation of the environmental levy?

Base: Respondents who supported the continuation of the Levy at a reduced rate (n=54)

Overall, of those who supported the continuation of the Levy at either the current rate or a reduced rate (89% of all respondents), 78% supported a permanent continuation (see Figure 9).

Figure 9: Support for the permanent continuation of the Levy (amongst those preferring a continuation of the Levy)



Do you support permanent continuation of the environmental levy?

Base: Respondents who supported the continuation of the Levy (n=442)

The survey respondents who were in favour of the continuation of the Environmental Levy at the current or a reduced rate but did not support the permanent aspect of the Levy were asked to indicate why they were not in support of the Levy being in place on a permanent basis (see Table 2).

While based on a relatively small number of respondents, the most common reason given for not supporting the permanency of the Levy was that they liked the idea of Council having a review process in place every 7 years (59%). Some also believed that permanent programs can 'slack-off' and become 'inefficient' (22%).

Table 2: Reasons for not supporting a permanent Levy

Reasons given	(n=68) %
7 year blocks will make them stop and review/allow review /adjustment if necessary	59
Permanent programs tend to slack off/become inefficient	22
It's hard to predict a situation too far into the future/e.g. the govt, opinions etc.	10
If it isn't reviewed/needed to be re applied for, it will just disappear into consolidated revenue	9
Other	18
Don't know	2

*Q10. Can you please tell me why you don't support the permanent continuation of the environmental levy?
Base: Respondents who preferred the continuation of the levy, but not permanently (n=68)*

5.2.2 Forum feedback

The participants at the forum were asked to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of having a permanent Levy in place.

In terms of advantages, some participants simply referred to the good work that Council had been doing to date, and felt that it made sense that this was continued into the future. More specifically, there was discussion around the advantages that having an assured budget would have to the formulation of their long term plans.

“We don’t want them to go down the short term planning track. Knowing that they have the budget will allow them to plan ahead”

A couple of participants also pointed to the fact that if the Levy was permanent there would be less ‘hassle’ for the Council, and they wouldn’t have to go through another community consultation phase in another 7 years (which they assumed was an expensive process).

There was also the suggestion that having a permanent Levy would show that the Council is committed to the environment.

“That would tell everyone that we really value the natural environment here”

However, at each of the tables, the idea of including a review in the process was raised, and this was ultimately seen to be important to most participants. While they had faith in Council based on their record to date (in this area), they didn’t necessarily feel as though the Levy should continue on without any form of accountability and community review or input. To this end most agreed that forums (such as the one they were participating in) were a good way for detailed information to be delivered – thereby allowing the community to give feedback and express preferences moving forward.

Many assumed that by selecting the option of the Levy being in place on a permanent basis they could be giving blank permission for Council to do whatever they wanted with the funds collected.

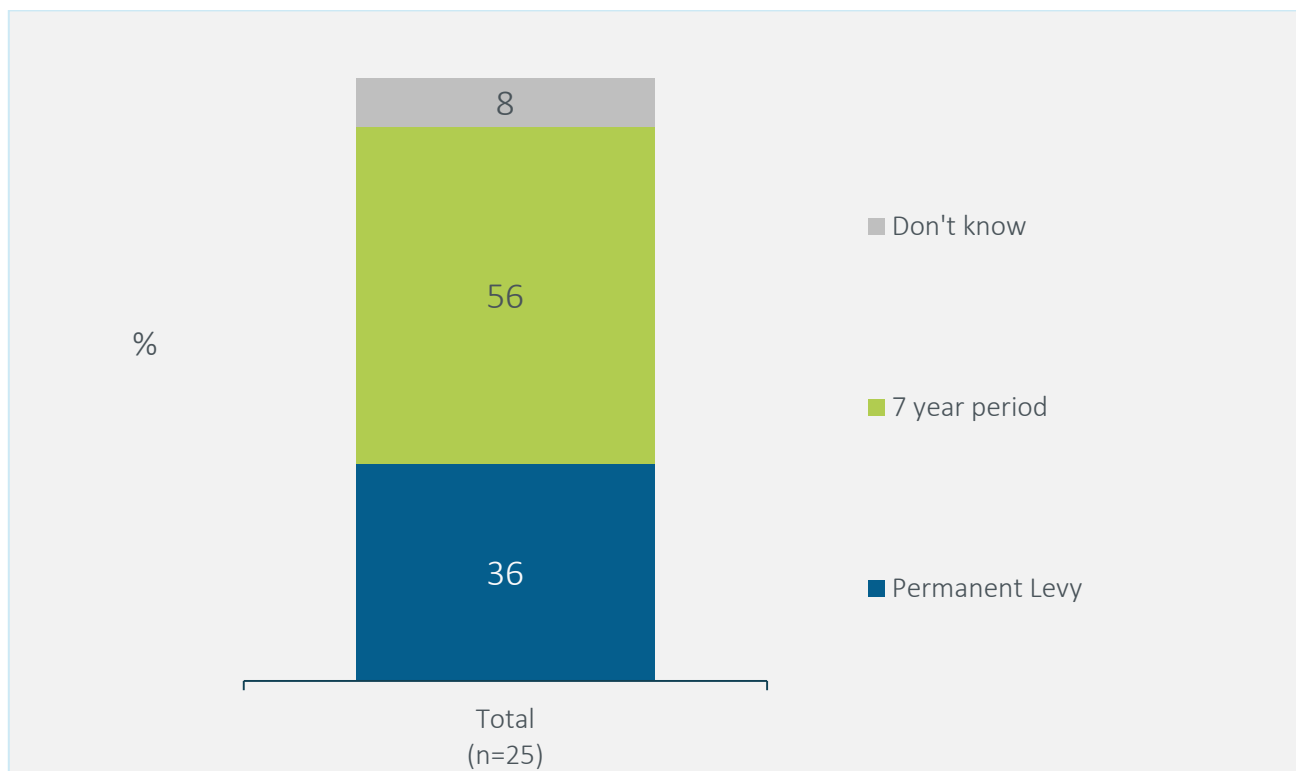
“I think what we’re doing here is useful and I can see the benefits that have happened in my area. My only concern with having this in place permanently would be that by making it permanent it would be hard to evaluate it. Where does the community engagement fit in if it becomes permanent?”

After the table discussion period, the forum participants were also to vote on their preference in relation to the potential continuation of the Environmental Levy on a permanent basis (see Figure 10).

The pattern of responses that emerged during the forum was somewhat different to that from the survey, with under two fifths indicating a preference for the Levy to be in place on a permanent basis (36%), while more than half (56%) indicated that they had a preference for the Levy to be in place for the next determination period (i.e. for 7 years).

The remaining 8% were unsure.

Figure 10: Forum preferences for the permanent continuation of the Levy



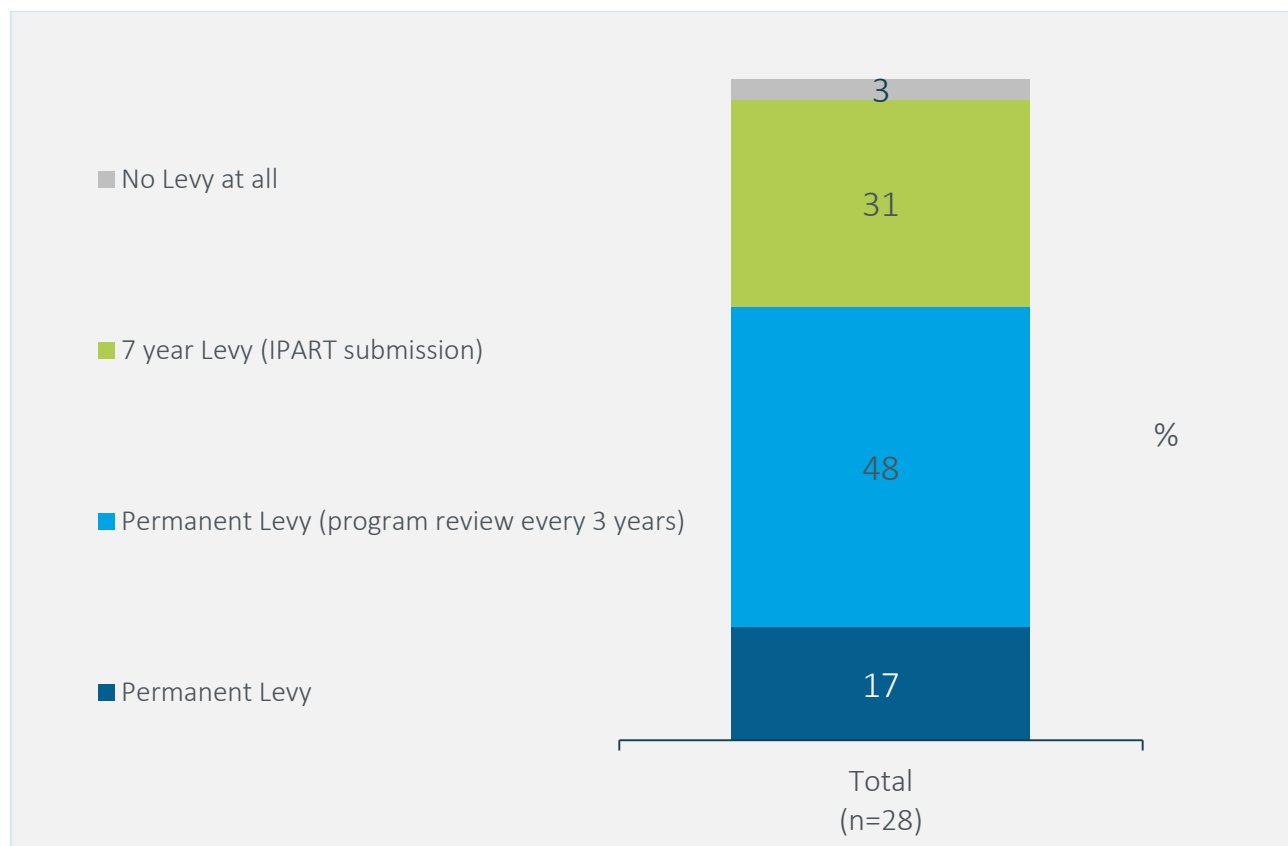
Base: Forum participants who supported the continuation of the Levy and provided a response (n=25)

Within the forum environment it was clear that the difference in voting behaviour (between the survey and the forum votes on the potential permanency of the Levy), was due primarily to the notion of a review process being raised during the table discussion sessions. As such, in order to provide further direction on this matter, a further vote was undertaken where the potential options for review were clarified (see Figure 11).

After the options had been fully explained, less than one fifth (17%) indicated a preference for the permanent continuation of the Levy (with no review required), while an additional 48% had a preference for the Council to undertake their own program review every three years (incorporating a community feedback process on their progress and preferences moving forward). Together these two segments represent almost two thirds of the forum participants (65%).

Just over one in three indicated a preference for an IPART submission to take place at the end of every determination period (31%), while one participant at this stage still opted for the discontinuation of the Levy (3%).

Figure 11: Forum end vote preferences for the permanent continuation of the Levy



Base: All forum participants who provided a response (n=28)

6. Program area feedback

6.1 General program area feedback

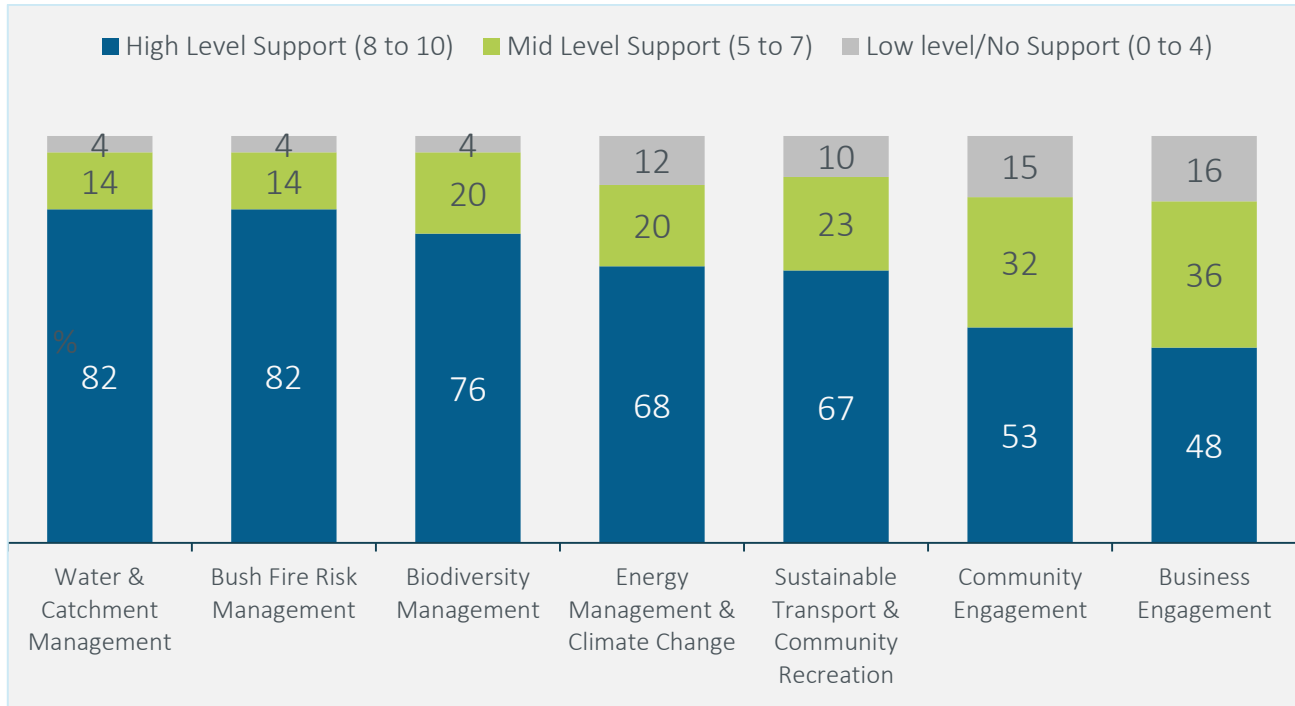
6.1.2 Quantitative findings

In addition to the information provided on each Environmental Levy program area within the information pack provided to each survey respondent, the questionnaire itself gave a brief outline of the type of projects and initiatives within each of the program areas. After viewing this information, survey respondents were asked to indicate their level of support for each program area (individually) by using a scale from 0 to 10 (where 10 was the highest level of support). As shown in Figure 12, there were relatively low levels of low/no support (those giving ratings of 0 to 4) across the board – suggesting a relatively high level of confidence in Council plans in this regard.

There was an extremely high level of support for both the Water and Catchment Management and Bushfire Risk Management program areas (82% of respondents rated these with an 8 or more out of 10, with a further 14% showing some support by giving a rating of 5 to 7 out of 10). More than three quarters of respondents also showed a high level of support for the Biodiversity Management program area (76% 8+ ratings).

More than two thirds of respondents also indicated a high level of support for the Energy Management & Climate Change and the Sustainable Transport & Community Recreation program areas (68% and 67% 8+ ratings respectively). In relative terms, there was less support expressed for the Community Engagement and the Business Engagement program areas (53% and 48% 8+ ratings respectively).

Figure 12: Support for the various program areas (amongst those preferring the continuation of the Levy)

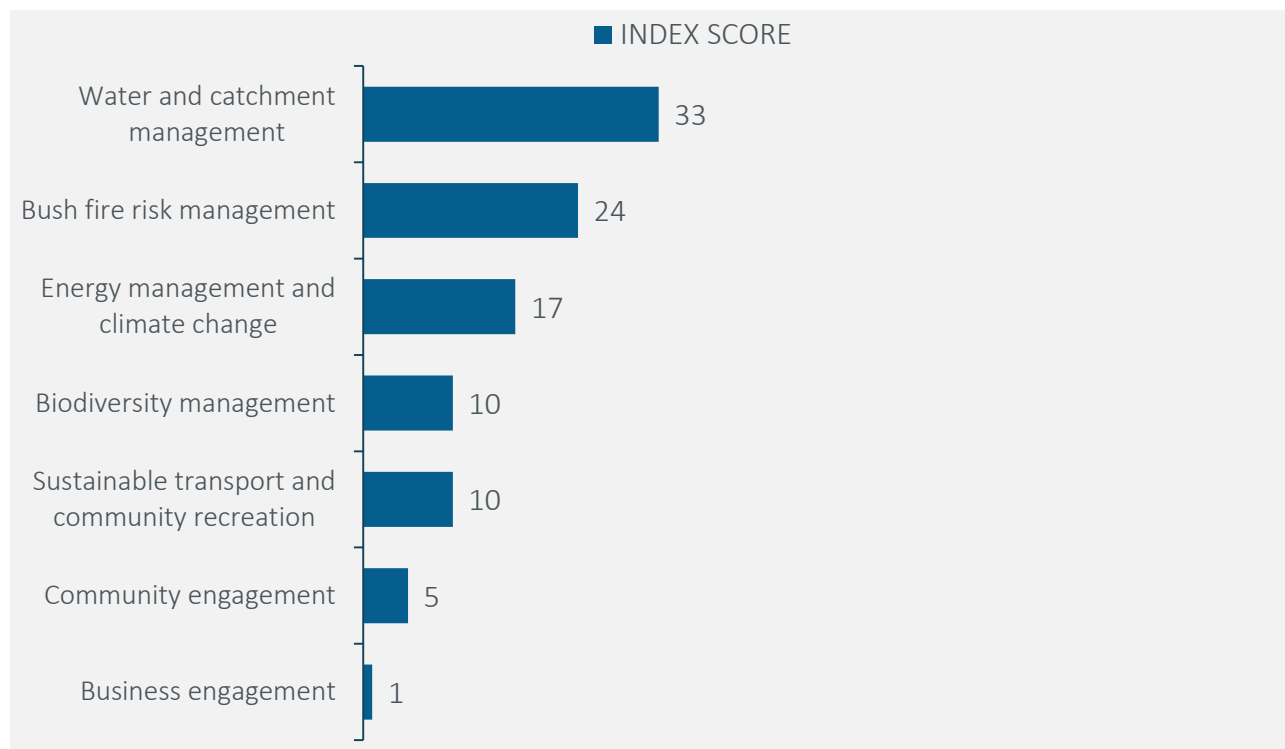


Please rate your level of support for funding each program on a scale of 0 (do not support at all) to 10 (very strong support).
Base: Respondents who supported the continuation of the Levy (n=442)

Given that rating questions can produce similar results for all aspects measured, respondents were also asked to indicate which three program areas they thought were the most important to fund (Figure 13). Responses from this question have been used to produce an index score by giving 3 points for the first choice selected, 2 points to the second choice, and one point to the third choice. The resultant sum was then divided by the sample size multiplied by 6 (the number of points allocated to each respondent).

The outcome of this index score exercise ultimately shows a very similar pattern to the outright rating exercise as depicted in Figure 11 – with the main difference being that there is some differentiation evident in the preferencing between the Water & Catchment Management and the Bushfire Risk Management program areas.

Figure 13: Support for the various program areas (amongst those preferring the continuation of the Levy)



*Please rate your level of support for funding each program on a scale of 0 (do not support at all) to 10 (very strong support).
Base: Respondents who supported the continuation of the Levy (n=442)*

6.1.2 Forum outcomes

The forum participants were provided with an overview of the program areas – the current budget allocation for the program areas, and the community survey results in relation to the perceived importance of each program area. They were then asked to discuss this presentation.

In overall terms the forum participants were very positive in their feedback. They felt that Council was tackling a wide range of environmental issues – to the extent that some were surprised at the variety of programs that Council was currently undertaking.

However, potentially because they had little prior knowledge of the individual Council initiatives, the discussion session tended to result in questions being raised – not due to alarm, but genuine curiosity. Typical questions raised at this stage included:

- Will Council adjust their focus based on the community feedback?
- Why is the administration component so large?
- Have businesses provided their feedback on this?
- Why do businesses pay less in their contribution to the Levy?

Participants were also shown the outcomes of the community survey on this aspect – which depicted the various levels of support for each program area. There was a general sentiment that the levels of support shown in the survey ‘made sense’ but participants struggled to comment much further beyond this. When asked why they thought the budget distribution was different to the pattern of support shown in the community survey results, some simply suggested that this could be due to some activities costing more than others.

Forum feedback in relation to energy management

The forum participants were provided with a presentation that detailed the type of projects undertaken within the energy management program area, and were asked to provide feedback on this.

Overall there was reasonably positive feedback in relation to the set of projects included in this area. However, some of the aspects included in this program area were not what the participants would have expected the Levy to be covering. Upon further investigation it became clear that some participants had made the assumption that the funds from the Levy would be primarily used to enhance the natural environment around them (with projects that may enhance the biodiversity of the area or eradicate pest species for example), so they were somewhat surprised to see that within this program area there was money spent on initiatives such as data management systems and electric vehicles.

Some felt that these type of initiatives should be standard for a Council like Ku-ring-gai, and as such the money for these initiatives should come out of the general expenditure budget.

“These all sound great. You can’t fault any of them. However, they don’t all fit under what I would have thought Council would be using the Levy funds for”

“They would have to purchase new vehicles regardless. It makes sense that they consider electric vehicles when they need a new car, but I can’t see how that relates to the Levy”

“Some of these just seem like ‘best practice’ approaches for any business”

Even so, most participants expressed support in relation to the overall plan of works outlined to them.

Forum feedback in relation to biodiversity and bushfire management

The forum participants were provided with a presentation that detailed the type of projects undertaken within the biodiversity and bushfire management program area, and were asked to provide feedback on this.

The type of projects outlined in this program area seemed to be much more in keeping with the prior expectations that participants had in relation to Levy fund expenditure. They described them as projects that would enhance and maintain the natural environment – which fitted better with what they had been thinking of in relation to the Levy.

It follows that overall there appeared to be a great deal of support for this program of works, and most agreed that these were high priority initiatives.

“This is the sort of stuff they should be doing. I support all of this. I give it a 10 out of 10”

However, at two of the three tables there were calls for Council to do more about the rabbit situation in the area. It was felt that this would fit into this program area, and on the tables where this was discussed it was agreed that activity to this end should be enhanced and prioritised.

“I’d like to see more on specific species management like the rabbit issue. Maybe put more money towards this at times when they are particularly bad”

Forum feedback in relation to water and catchment management

The forum participants were provided with a presentation that detailed the types of projects undertaken within the water and catchment management program area, and were asked to provide feedback on this.

Again there was positive feedback obtained at each table in relation to this program area – particularly the projects related to waterway health. The issue of flooding was also a common point of discussion. Some participants were simply curious to find out where the flood risk areas were within Ku-ring-gai, while others stated that flooding is likely to become more prevalent with climate change, and that this area of work will become increasingly important.

“If the scientists are correct the flooding will be more and more severe, so this will be good”

The reference to stormwater also raised comment, as many felt that stormwater was a resource that was currently underutilised.

“I don’t know why it’s taken so long for Government to realise that we’ve been letting this valuable water run down our drains when it could be collected and used on sporting fields and other things”

A few participants also indicated that more could be done to clear stormwater pits and drains in order to prevent localised flooding when there were significant downpours.

Forum feedback in relation to sustainable transport and community recreation

The forum participants were provided with a presentation that detailed the type of projects undertaken within the sustainable transport and community recreation program area, and were asked to provide feedback on this.

While the initiatives listed in this program area were also seen as being important, there was again some discussion as to whether they should be funded through the Environmental Levy. For example, cycle-ways did not necessarily fit with what participants had initially understood the levy to cover – but were still seen to be important in outright terms.

“Our cycle ways are appalling and I fully support more being done in that area, but I can’t for the life of me see how this related to the Environmental Levy”

“I would love it if they would look into putting a cycle way between Gordon Station and Macquarie University”

“We want dedicated and separated cycle paths, not cycle ways that are still very dangerous”

There was also support for more to be done with walking tracks – with the separation of these from cycle ways.

“The cyclists end up using the footpaths even though they know its illegal because the roads and cycle ways are too dangerous, but that makes the footpaths dangerous too”

In terms of other suggestions, there was a call by a few participants for Council to look into ride sharing transport options, and transport on demand services.

The budget proportion attributed to this area was also a point of discussion at two of the three tables. Despite the reservations by some about these initiatives being funded by the Levy, they still felt that the projects were worthwhile, and wondered if more should be spent in this area.

“It doesn’t seem like a high enough proportion of the budget to result in significant infrastructure for more cycle ways and walking tracks”

Forum feedback in relation to community engagement and environmental education

The forum participants were provided with a presentation that detailed the type of projects undertaken within the community engagement and environmental education program area, and were asked to provide feedback on this.

The aspect of education resonated with most participants. They felt that it was important for the 'average resident' to be aware of the impact of their actions, and their ability to live more sustainably. Interestingly, however, the discussion at each table turned to education of the youth – with questions and suggestions that a schools program was required.

"I'm not sure if they do this but they should really be going to schools. A program like that would give people the skills to maintain as they grow up, and they could probably take ideas home as well if their parents aren't doing what they can"

In addition, the aspect of awareness was raised at each table. While participants felt that most of the projects that had been outlined to them in the presentation sounded good – they didn't necessarily know that the Council was undertaking these projects, and therefore wondered who else would know about them.

"They need to promote these more. I knew they ran workshops, but I haven't heard of any of these other thing. I love the sound of the audits but didn't know they did them"

In addition, a few of the participants were interested in finding out more about what some of these projects achieve. While they understood the logic behind educating people to potentially adjust their behaviour, they weren't sure any work had been done to measure the success of these projects.

"I can see that they could spend a lot of money in this area, but how do they measure success? Does anyone know if these things actually make a difference?"

There was also a question as to whether Council would be in effect duplicating the messages of other organisations – for example providing electricity saving advice, it was stated, should come from the electricity retailer.

"Some of these things are done by others so should be paid for by them, not from our Levy"

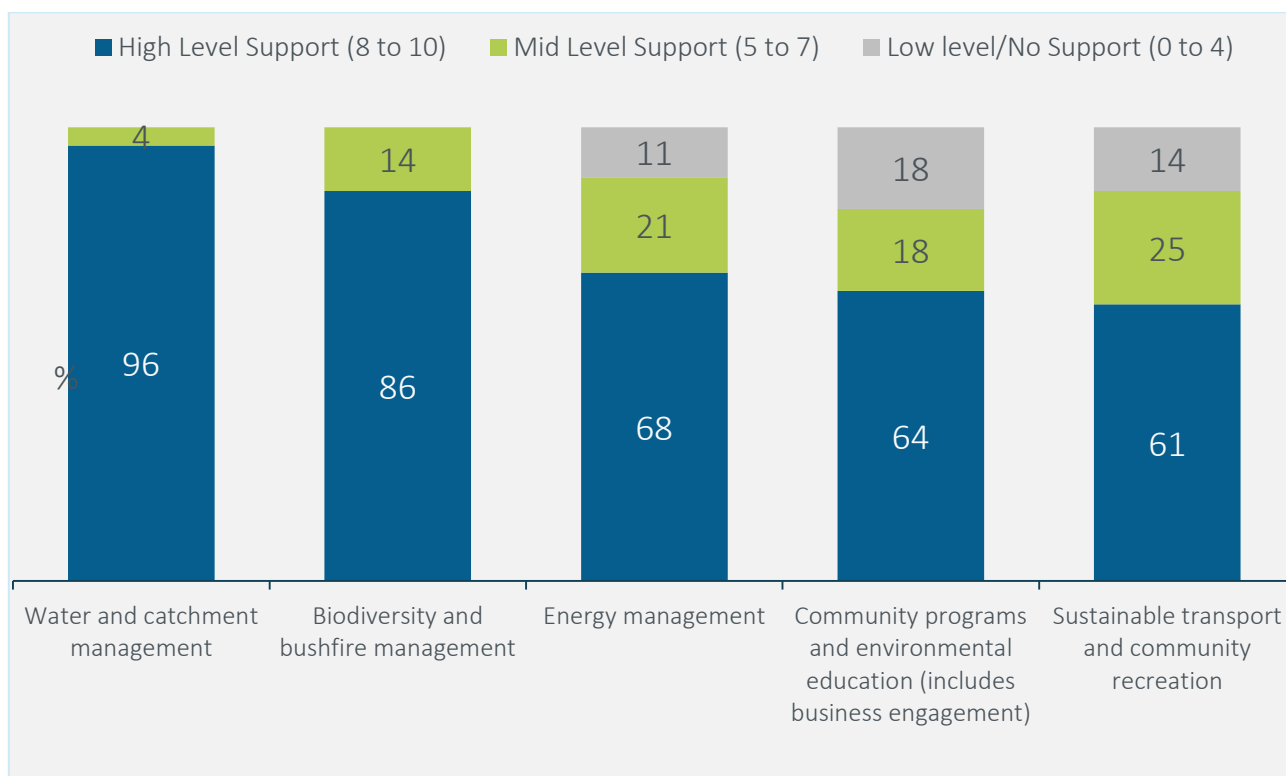
6.1.3 Forum voting on program area support

The forum participants were asked to indicate their level of support for each program area discussed (after the table discussion was undertaken for that particular program area). The results are depicted in Figure 14 below.

Similar to the outcome of the main survey, the highest levels of support were obtained in relation to the Water & Catchment Management as well as the Biodiversity & Bushfire Management program areas (96% and 86% 8+ ratings respectively). None of the forum participants provided a low rating (of 0 to 4) for either of these areas.

In relative terms there was lower support for the remaining three program areas (Energy Management, Community Programs & Environmental Education, as well as Sustainable Transport & Community Recreation).

Figure 14: Forum vote on support for the Program Areas



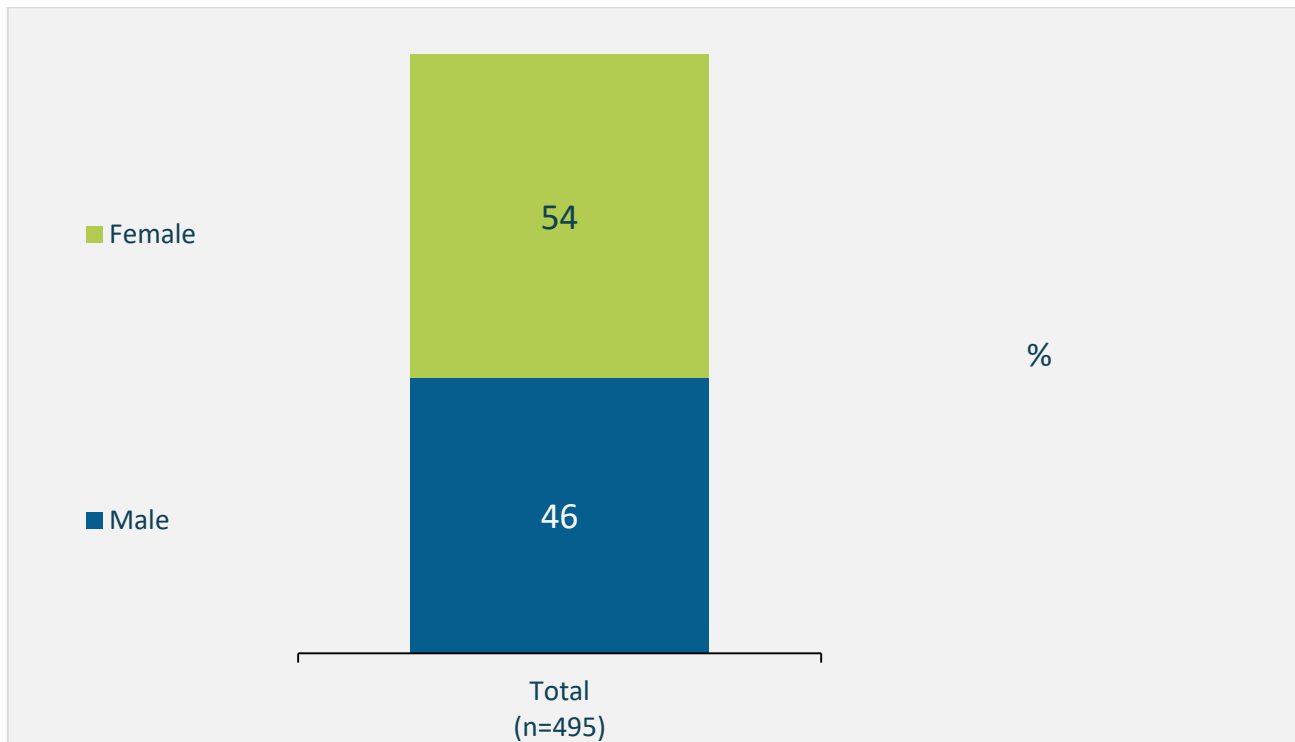
Base: All forum participants who provided a response (n=28)

APPENDIX A: Profile of survey respondents

For a survey of this nature a relatively good gender balance was achieved. Overall it can be seen that just over half of all survey respondents were female (54%).

It follows that just under half of all survey respondents were male (46%).

Figure 15: Gender of survey respondents

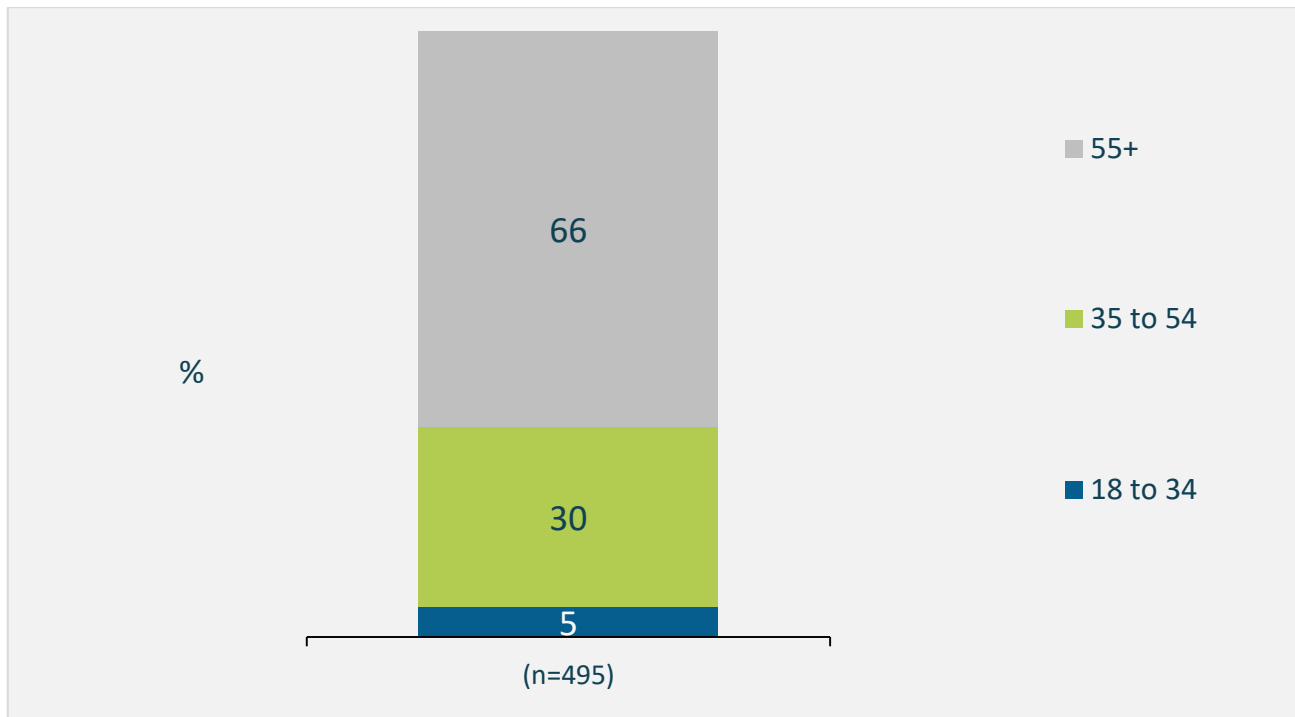


RECORD GENDER
Base: All respondents (n=495)

The survey respondents were skewed to the older age category. However, in order to qualify for the survey, respondents had to be rate payers (i.e. home owners) within the Ku-ring-gai Council area.

Overall, two thirds of all survey respondents were aged 55+ (66%). Three in ten were aged 35 to 54 (30%), while the remaining respondents were rate payers under the age of 35 (5%).

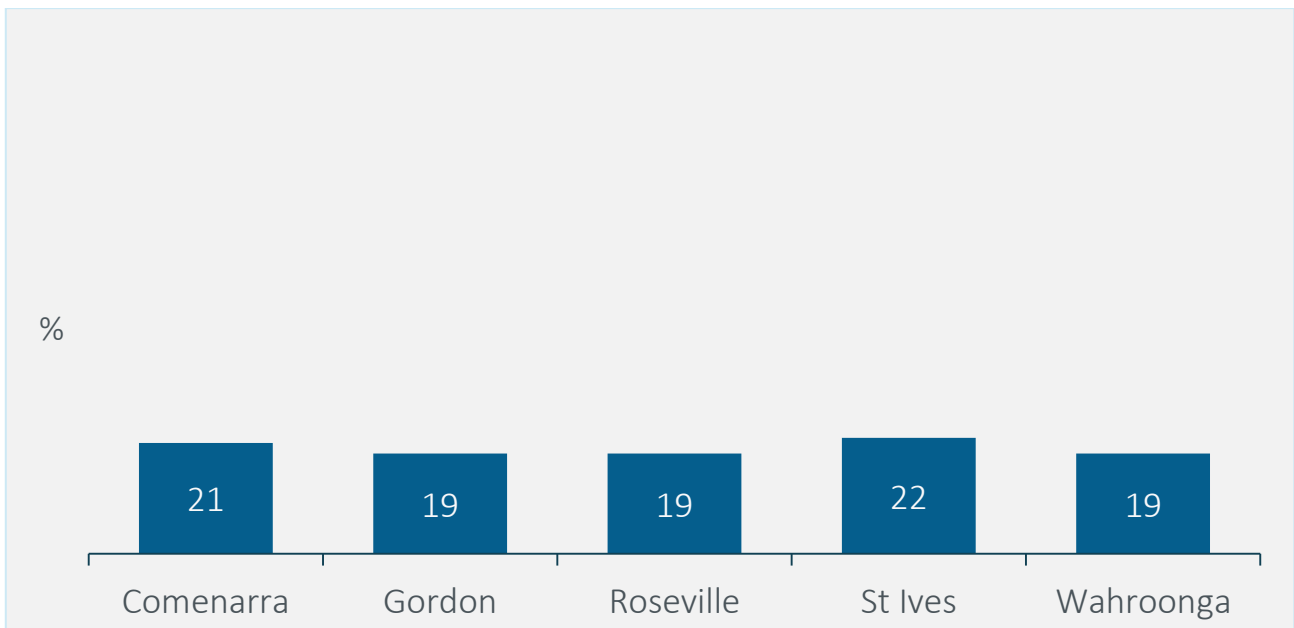
Figure 16: Age range of survey respondents



Q. Which of the following age ranges do you fall into?
Base: All respondents (n=495)

The survey respondents were relatively evenly distributed by Council Ward with the highest proportion recorded for the St Ives Ward (22%), and the lowest for Gordon, Roseville and Wahroonga (19% for each).

Figure 17: Council Ward of survey respondents



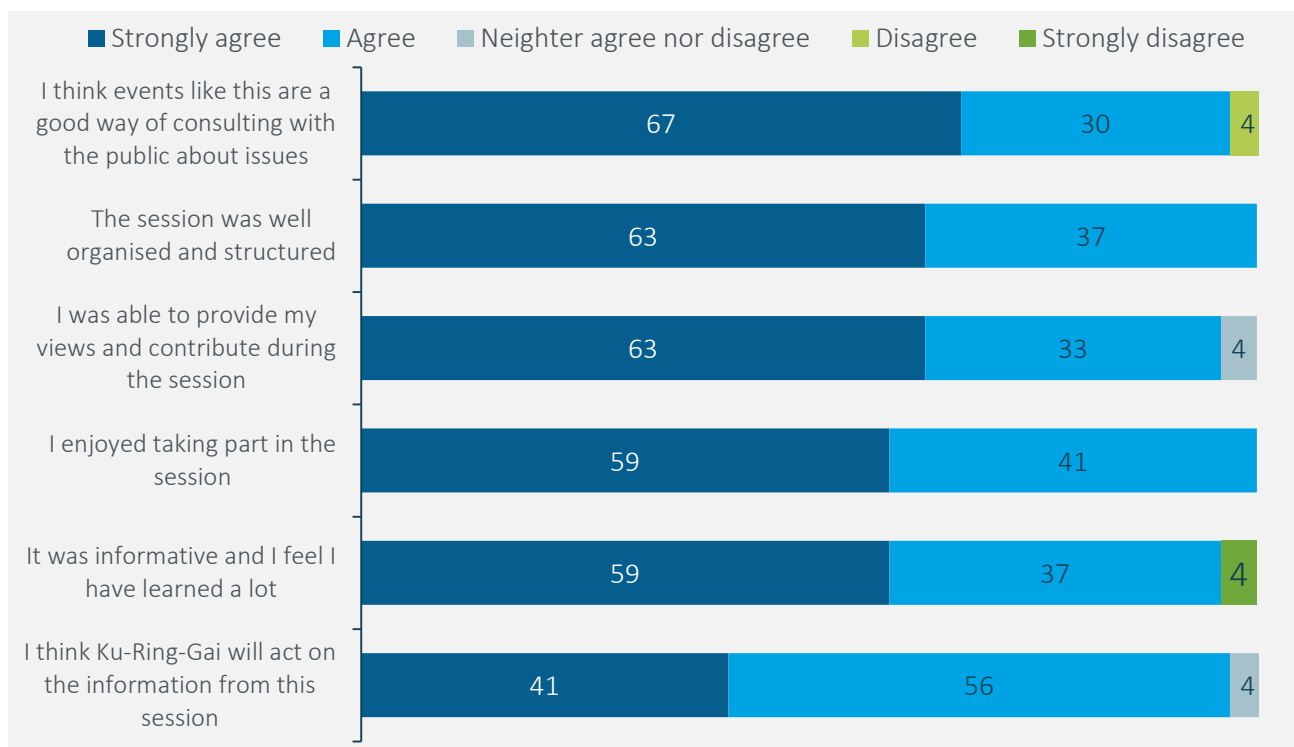
RECORD WARD
Base: All respondents (n=495)

APPENDIX B: End of session forum feedback

Participants at the forum were provided with an end of session questionnaire at the conclusion of the evening to allow them to provide feedback on the running of the event. The results to the closed-ended questions are provided below in Figure 18.

While the large majority of participants agreed with each statement (combining the 'strongly agree' and 'agree' responses), the strongest level of agreement was found in relation to "I think events like this are a good way of consulting with the public about issues" (67% strong agreement), while the lowest was for "I think Ku-ring-gai Council will act on the information from this session (41% strong agreement).

Figure 18: End of session questionnaire feedback from forum participants



Base: Forum participants who provided a response (n=27)

Participants were also given the opportunity to outline what they saw as the strengths of the session, as well as how it could be improved.

Strengths included (verbatim responses):

- Well organised and timing
- Marnie was very professional and informative
- Kept moving and provided opportunity to comment - food was good too
- Good leaderships and opportunities to discuss
- I learnt a lot about where the council is trying to do - much more knowledge for me. They should be proud of their record
- Good cross section of participants, and the information showed by council officers
- Open discussion. Good information representation of council + Woolcott facilitators
- Small group discussion format
- Open forum / no walls / any question is available
- Informative, yet open to further questioning + debate. Seeing staff of the council - very impressed
- Very well run, kept to time, ensured everyone got a chance to share their opinions

Suggestions for improvement included (verbatim responses):

- A couple of sessions explained the topic in more detail after the survey of that topic. It would have been helpful to have that before the survey
- A bit more flexible - other funding ideas - more time.
- We were just a bit pushed for time but grateful you gave us the opportunity to ask questions
- Aircon a bit cold
- Pie charts need to be labeled on segment; legends are useless; for more than four or five segments for charts are more useful for comparing counts / proportions
- Slide readability

APPENDIX C: Recruitment screening questionnaire

Ku-Ring-Gai Environmental Levy: Recruitment

Start Time: _____ Interviewer's Name: _____

Survey Introduction

Hello, my name is from Woolcott Research. We have been commissioned by Ku-Ring-Gai Council to conduct a survey with ratepayers in the Council area about the continuation of an existing Council Environmental levy. We are not conducting the survey now. We are registering the willingness of Ku-ring-gai ratepayers to take part, and will send you some information about the Levey before you complete the survey.

IF IT IS NOT CONVENIENT TO SPEAK WITH RESPONDENT: Is there a better time at which I would be able to call you back for an interview.

RECORD TIME/DAY OF CALL BACK: _____/_____

PHONE NUMBER: (0) _____

Firstly, can I just check that you are a ratepayer in the Ku-Ring-Gai Council area (or share the paying of rates)?

1. Yes – CONTINUE
2. No – THANKS AND TERMINATE
3. Don't know – THANK AND TERMINATE

You may recall that Ku-Ring-Gai Council recently provided information to you in their rates notice about their need to apply to IPART to gain approval for the continuation of an Environment Levy?

Our role in this is to ensure that we have input from a representative cross section of the community in relation to the Environmental Levy. But because not everyone knows what is currently in place, and what the Council is proposing for the future, we need to provide you with an information pack before you can complete the short 5 minute survey that will capture resident's opinions on this application.

If you agree to take part we will send you a fact sheet about the Environmental Levy to read before you have to answer the questions to provide you with background information.. We will then call you back or email you a link to an online survey (whichever you prefer) within a couple of days to complete the short 5 minute telephone or online survey at a time that is convenient to you.

1. Would you be interested in participating?

Yes – CONTINUE

No – THANK AND CLOSE

CLASSIFICATION

We just have a couple of questions to make sure that we speak to a good cross section of people in the Ku-Ring-Gai area when conducting the survey.

2. Which of the following age groups do you fall into?

18-34 years 1

35-54 years 2

55 plus 3

3. RECORD GENDER:

Male 1

Female 2

4. In which area is your property in within the Ku-Ring-Gai LGA?

Gordon 1

Killara 2

East Killara 3

Lindfield 4

East Lindfield 5

Pymble 6

West Pymble 7

Roseville 8

Roseville Chase 9

St Ives	10
St Ives Chase	11
Turramurra	12
North Turramurra	13
South Turramurra	14
Wahroonga	15
North Wahroonga	16
Warrawee	17

Thanks for that. As mentioned we will send you a fact sheet to read before we contact you to complete the survey.

5. Would you prefer to do the survey online? If so, I will need your email address, so that I can first email the fact sheet to you, and then I will email the survey invitation a few days later.

No, do not want to do the survey online 1 GO TO Q6

Yes, prefer online 2 CONTINUE, THEN GO TO FINAL SCREEN

Can you please provide the best email address to send the information to? REPEAT EMAIL ADDRESS
BACK TO CHECK ADDRESS

6. If you would prefer to do the survey over the phone, I will need to post the Fact Sheet to you, can I just check your postal address?

Are there days/times that are more convenient for us to call back to do the survey?

Are there days/times that we should avoid?

Can I also confirm your Phone No.: _____

Thank you agreeing to provide your feedback on the Environmental Levy. We will provide the Information Pack to you shortly, and we will be in contact again soon to seek your feedback in the short survey.

Thanks and goodbye.

Interviewer's Name: _____ Number: _____

I certify that this is a true, accurate and complete interview taken in accordance with my instructions and conducted in accordance with the IQCA standards and the AMSRS Code of Professional Behaviour (ICC/ESOMAR). I will not disclose to any other person the content of this questionnaire or any other information relating to this project.

Signature: _____ Finish Time: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX D: Main rate payer questionnaire

Ku-ring-gai Environmental Levy Residents Survey

Survey Introduction

Hello, my name is from Woolcott Research. You may remember that we telephoned you about a week ago to ask you to take part in a survey for Ku-ring-gai Council?

1. And recently you should have received a pack of information to read before completing the survey?

Yes – CONTINUE

No – I'm sorry to hear that. Do you have an email address so that I can email the information to you?

Email: _____

Ok, thanks. I will arrange to have the information emailed to you today/tomorrow. And can I arrange a time to call you back in a few days time, after you have had a chance to read the information I'm going to email you?

Call back day and time _____

Thanks very much. We'll call you back then. Goodbye.

2. And have you had a chance to read the information?

Yes – CONTINUE

No – Ok, can I arrange a time to call you back in a few days time, after you have had a chance to read the information?

Call back day and time _____

Thanks very much. We'll call you back then. Goodbye.

Great, ok I'm just going to ask you a few questions.

1. How important would you say it is for Council to continue to deliver programs and works that improve Ku-ring-gai natural environment?

Very important 1

Somewhat important 2

Not important 3

Don't know 4

2. Before receiving the information pack, were you aware of the Environmental Levy and what it delivers?

Very aware 1 GO TO Q3

Somewhat aware 2 GO TO Q3

Not aware 3 GO TO Q4

Don't know 4 GO TO Q4

3. How satisfied are you with the delivery of programs and works funded through the current Environmental Levy?

Very satisfied 1

Somewhat satisfied 2

Not satisfied 3

Don't know 4

4. As mentioned in the information sent to you, the current Environmental Levy is due to expire on 30 June 2019. Under the current levy the average residential ratepayer pays around \$80 as part of their annual rates. Council is considering applying to the NSW Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) for the continuation of the Environmental Levy at the amount currently paid by Ku-ring-gai ratepayers. This would commence from 1 July 2019.

After reading the information, which of the following options do you prefer?

Continue the Environmental Levy at the existing rate (around \$80 a year for the average residential ratepayer) 1 GO TO Q7

Continue the Environmental Levy at a reduced rate – and reduce the environmental services and programs offered 2 GO TO Q6

Discontinue the Environmental Levy – fund environmental programs and works from base rates and reduce other Council services 3 GO TO Q5

5. Can you please tell me why you don't support an environmental levy? (THEN GO TO CLOSING SCRIPT)

6. The current environment levy costs around \$80 for the average residential ratepayer per year. What proportion of this levy would you be willing to pay? Please answer with a \$ amount.

\$ _____

7. As outlined in the information, Ku-ring-gai Council proposes to fund a range of programs and works through the Environmental Levy. Please rate your level of support for funding each program area on a scale of 0 (do not support at all) to 10 (very strong support).

Program	Rating from 0-10
Water and catchment management to improve the condition of our waterways and creeks; to harvest and reuse water for the irrigation of our sports fields and ovals; and to improve the water efficiency of our buildings.	
Energy management and climate change renewable energy (such as solar) and energy efficiency projects to reduce our energy use and carbon footprint and programs to help our community prepare for bushfire, floods and storms and heatwaves.	
Biodiversity management bush restoration in high value reserves; burns to replicate the natural fire cycle and promote biodiversity; pest species management; native bee hives for residents; dumping prevention in bushland; and wildlife monitoring and management.	
Bush fire risk management fire trail construction and maintenance.	
Community engagement home sustainability rebates and advice services; events and workshops; environmental volunteering programs; educational signs; energy, water and waste audits; and community grants for environmental projects.	
Business engagement advisory services; energy, water and waste audits; and plastic reduction programs.	
Sustainable transport and community recreation the creation of cycle ways; maintenance of walking tracks; transition of fleet to electric vehicles; and provision of infrastructure for recreation in natural areas.)	

8. Please choose the three program areas you think are most important to fund from the above list.

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____

9. At the moment the levy lasts for 7 years and then has to be applied for again. A permanent Levy will:

- Secure the delivery of Council's environmental programs and works at service levels that will ensure the long term protection of our unique natural environment and continued support for our community to live more sustainably, at the same time as maintaining all the other Council services
- Allow Council to undertake coordinated, long term planning for environmental programs and works, ensuring we maximise environmental outcomes at the lowest cost;
- Guarantee funding for the ongoing maintenance of important environmental infrastructure delivered through the current Environmental Levy; and
- Make it easier for Council to secure grant funding to further support its environmental programs and works (often grants require matched funding).

Do you support permanent continuation of the environmental levy?

Yes 1 GO TO CLOSING SCRIPT

No 2 CONTINUE

Don't know 3

10. Can you please tell me why you don't support the permanent continuation of the environmental levy?

(CLOSING SCRIPT)

11. We will also be running a community workshop about the Environmental Levy on Thursday 18 October for two to three hours, and we offer \$80 as a token of appreciation for your time if you are able to attend. Are you happy for us to re-contact you in the next few weeks to see if you are available to participate in the workshop?

Yes 1

No 2

Final comments (if they wish to add anything)

Respondents Name:

Address:

Phone No.:

APPENDIX E: Information pack content



What is the Environmental Levy

The Environmental Levy funds the annual delivery of approximately \$2.8 million of environmental programs and works and is levied at 5% of Council's total rate revenue. The Levy commenced in 2005, was renewed in 2011 with strong community support, and is due to expire in June 2019.

The current levy equates to approximately \$80 per annum for the average residential ratepayer, demonstrated by the sample rates notice below. Your 2018/19 rates notice will provide you with the annual Levy amount for your household.

Property Location & Description			PROPERTY NO.
19 Residential Road TURRAMURRA NSW 2074 Lot 2 DP 1212121			333333
Rates and Charges	Rate / Charge	Rateable Value	Amount
Residential Rate	0.00068010	1130000	\$745.91
Environmental - Special Rate Variation	0.00007126	1130000	\$80.52
Infrastructure - Primary Rate	0.00030548	1130000	\$345.19
Infrastructure - Primary Rate Base Amt	Base Amount	1	\$272.00
Infrastructure - Special Rate Variation	0.00003726	1130000	\$42.10
Infrastructure - Special Rate Variation Base Amt	Base Amount	1	\$32.00
Stormwater Management Charge	per property	1	\$25.00
Residential Waste Charge 120L Full Service	per service	1	\$455.00

1st Instalment	2nd Instalment	3rd Instalment	4th Instalment	OVERDUE	TOTAL AMOUNT
\$500.72 31/08/2018	\$499.00 30/11/2018	\$499.00 28/02/2019	\$499.00 31/05/2019	\$0.00	\$1,997.72

J McKee
GENERAL MANAGER

2018/2019 RATE NOTICE



What does the Environmental Levy fund?

The Environmental programs and works funded through the Environmental Levy enable us to:

- reuse water for irrigation
- protect our bushland, waterways and wildlife
- reduce our energy and water use
- reduce and recycle our waste
- boost sustainable transport
- provide recreation activities in natural areas
- ensure best practice environmental management
- foster environmental research
- help our local businesses and community to be more sustainable

The Environmental Levy has leveraged an additional \$10 million in grants from other government agencies since 2005 through matched funding arrangements.



WHAT WE'VE ACHIEVED

Sustainable transport and recreation



9 kms of new cycle ways stretch across Ku-ring-gai from Roseville to St Ives
30 kms of walking tracks created and maintained

Water and catchments



86% of total water demand at our harvesting / reuse sites met by harvested / reused water in 2017/18
12,900 tonnes of rubbish diverted from our waterways since 2012

Bushland and wildlife



60 hectares restored within 38 bushland reserves to enhance biodiversity
7 kms of major fire trail upgrades since 2012
23 ecological burns completed covering 14 hectares since 2012

Community



28,000 participants in Council's Loving Living Ku-ring-gai program since 2012
Over 10,000 actions taken by residents to benefit the environment since 2012
Nearly 700 environmental volunteers dedicating 13,610 hours per year

Energy



Solar PV installed at **10** Council facilities, 13% reduction in annual electricity use in Council buildings





Future of the Environmental Levy

Council is considering applying to the NSW Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) in early 2019 for the permanent continuation of the Environmental Levy, under 508(2) of the Local Government Act 1993, at the amount currently paid by Ku-ring-gai ratepayers. This would commence from 1 July 2019. The application must demonstrate to IPART:

- the need for a continuation of the Environmental Levy
- the purpose of the Levy and what the Levy will fund
- the impact to ratepayers should the Levy continue
- the level of ratepayer support to continue the Levy

If the application is approved, the \$2.8 million will continue to be invested in environmental programs and works. If the application is not approved, rates will be reduced by approximately \$80 per annum for the average residential ratepayer.

Why is Council applying for an extension of the Environmental Levy?

Through our community satisfaction survey, residents have told us that the 'natural environment and open spaces' are a strength of the local area and rated a 'focus on protecting the environment' as one of the 6 highest priority issues within the Ku-ring-gai area in the next 10 years. Everyone benefits from the enhancements to the natural environment through the Levy; through improved amenity, lifestyle and wellbeing.

Should we no longer have an Environmental Levy, Council would need to significantly review and reduce its environmental programs and works as we would be unable to deliver these at current service levels. Without an Environmental Levy, funds in Council's ordinary budget would need to be diverted from other key Council services, activities and facilities that are important to our community, such as road maintenance footpaths, drainage, parks/ gardens, sporting facilities, libraries and community facilities, to enable us to deliver a condensed environmental program.

This would likely lead to a decline in (i) the quality of our waterways and bushland; (ii) the energy and water efficiency of our buildings; (iii) support for community programs; (iv) operational cost savings; and (v) the essential service functions provided by Levy funded staff.

Why a permanent Environmental Levy?

Council has extensive natural and built assets to manage, including over 1,100 hectares of bushland, over 170km of riparian land and numerous community buildings and facilities. The revenue Council receives from rates is not enough to cover the investment required to adequately manage these assets into the future. We need a permanent income source that funds an adequate level of environmental programs and works to secure the long term protection of our unique natural environment as our population grows and housing density increases; whilst continuing to support our community to live more sustainably.



- Secure the ongoing delivery and continuity of Council's environmental programs and works at service levels that will effectively manage our bushland and waterways and the sustainability performance of our buildings and facilities, at the same time as maintaining all the other Council services
- Allow Council to undertake coordinated, long term planning for environmental programs and works, ensuring we maximise environmental outcomes at the lowest cost;
- Guarantee funding for the ongoing maintenance of important environmental infrastructure delivered through the current Environmental Levy; and
- Make it easier for Council to secure grant funding to further support its environmental programs and works (often grants require matched funding).

Whilst there will be a need to be responsive and adaptive, the types of environmental programs and works Council intends to fund through the Environmental Levy are:

Energy management and climate change: solar panels; air conditioning upgrades; energy efficient lighting upgrades; solar hot water systems; energy efficient street lighting; energy management systems; the procurement of renewable energy; and programs to help the community prepare for bushfire, floods and storms and heatwaves.

Biodiversity management: bush restoration in high value reserves; burns to replicate the natural fire cycle and promote biodiversity; pest species management; environmental monitoring programs; native bee hives for residents; dumping prevention in bushland and fauna monitoring and management.

Bush fire management: fire trail construction and maintenance.

Community engagement: home sustainability rebates; events and workshops; environmental volunteering programs; EnviroTube Youtube channel; interpretive signs; advisory services; information campaigns; energy, water and waste audits; and community grants.

Business engagement: advisory services; energy, water and waste audits; and plastic reduction programs.

Sustainable transport and community recreation: the creation of cycle ways; maintenance of walking tracks; transition of fleet to electric vehicles; and provision of infrastructure for recreation in natural areas.



APPENDIX F: Forum agenda

Ku-Ring-Gai Council Environmental Levy Forum Agenda – FINAL – 17 10 2018

Time	Session details	Responsibility	Materials
6.05-6.08pm	Welcome and Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Woolcott Research Lead Facilitator to welcome and thank participants for coming and introduce opening speaker (Marnie Kikken) 	WR Lead Facilitator	
6.08-6.12pm	Brief introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welcome, acknowledgment of country and thanks to community for participating in consultation process. The Environmental Levy funds the annual delivery of approximately \$2.8 million of environmental programs and works and is levied at 5% of Council's total rate revenue. The Levy commenced in 2005, was renewed in 2011 with strong community support, and is due to expire in June 2019. Council is considering applying to the NSW Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) for the permanent continuation of the Environmental Levy at the amount currently paid by Ku-ring-gai ratepayers. Our community satisfaction survey has told us that the 'natural environment and open spaces' are strongly rated in the local area. Residents rated a 'focus on protecting the environment' as one of the 6 highest priority issues within the Ku-ring-gai area in the next 10 years. Before applying to IPART, Council is seeking the level of ratepayer support for the permanent continuation of the Environmental Levy and feedback on what the Levy should fund, if it continues. Should there be strong ratepayer support, Council will submit its application to IPART in February 2019, and if approved, the new Environmental Levy will commence on 1 July 2019. 	K-R-G representative (Marnie Kikken)	PP slides
6.12-6.15pm	How the session will run <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Woolcott Research Lead Facilitator to give overview of forum agenda and approach, the key sessions, guidelines and housekeeping. Location of toilets and evacuation in emergency. 	WR Lead Facilitator	PP slides
6.15-6.30pm	Presentation: The Environmental Levy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recap of details: 	K-R-G	PP slides

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What the Environmental Levy is ○ What it funds ○ Achievements to date ● The three options moving forward (and implications of each, including impact on ratepayers) ● The aspect of permanency 		
6.30-6.45pm	<p>Table discussion 1: Options Moving Forward</p> <p>Give out Handout 1a</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Facilitator to briefly recap on the three options. ● What do you think are the pros and cons for each option (go through each in turn)? <p>Give out Handout 1b (on reverse of 1a)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reaction to the idea of a permanent Levy – pros and cons <p>Give out voting sheet 1 and ask participants to fill in.</p> <p><i>Facilitator to get a sense of what the overall table response was. Get volunteer to take notes.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Detail what the table outcome was in terms of both the Continuation of the Levy and the Permanency aspect. ● Reasons why for each. <p><i>A nominated spokesperson at each table is chosen to feedback their table's views. These will probably relate to the pros and cons (of the chosen option) as discussed above. Let them know they only have a minutes to present so they should be brief.</i></p>	WR Table facilitators	<p>HANDOUT 1: Levy Options</p> <p>Voting sheets 1</p> <p>Flipcharts</p>
6.45-6.50pm	<p>Table Feedback Session</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Volunteer from each table to provide a quick summary of the tables's views on the three options and permanency of the levy. 	Table Volunteer	
6.50 - 7.10pm	<p>DINNER BREAK</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tally up table sheets and put in PowerPoint slide (to be presented in next session) 		
7.10-7.15pm	<p>Presentation: Community Survey Results</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Present the outcomes from community survey (three options and aspect of permanency (e.g. slides 13 and 16 in report). ● Present the results of the forum vote 	WR Lead Facilitator	PP slides
7.15-7.20pm	<p>Presentation: Program Areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Explain that the main part of this evening will be about the program areas and projects within each. 	K-R-G representative	PP slides

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Want to find out their level of support for the projects proposed for each program areas and if there is anything missing. Introduce program areas – pie chart and budgets Community Survey Results at program level – the importance ratings 		
7.20-7.30pm	<p>Table Discussion</p> <p>Give out handout 2 (program areas pie chart and survey results)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reactions to survey results? What do you think might be the reasons for any differences between Council budgets for program areas and priorities for ratepayers from the survey? 	Table facilitators	Handout 2
7.30-7.35pm	<p>Presentation topic 1: Energy management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brief outline of what projects are proposed to be funded within this Program Area. 	K-R-G representative	
7.35-7.45pm	<p>Table discussion topic 1: Energy management</p> <p>Give out Handout 3 (list of projects/areas to be funded in this Program Area)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How strongly do you support the package of projects is within this Program Area – strong, medium or little support? What are the strengths of this package of projects? What are the weaknesses of this package of projects? Are there any other projects that you think should be funded in this Program area? <p>Give out rating sheet and ask to fill in overall level of support for this Program Area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtain vote for this Program area 	WR Table Facilitators	HANDOUT 3 Voting sheet 2
7.45-7.50pm	<p>Presentation: topic 2: Biodiversity and bushfire management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brief outline of what projects are proposed to be funded within this Program Area. 	K-R-G representative	
7.50-8.00pm	<p>Table discussion topic 2: Biodiversity and bushfire management</p> <p>Give out Handout 4 (list of projects/areas to be funded in this Program Area)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How strongly do you support the package of projects is within this Program Area – strong, medium or little support? What are the strengths of this package of projects? What are the weaknesses of this package of projects? Are there any other projects that you think should be funded in this Program area? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtain vote for this Program area 	WR Table Facilitators	HANDOUT 4 Voting sheet 2

8.00-8.10pm	DESSERT – participants to bring back to tables		
8.10-8.15pm	Presentation topic 3: Water and catchment management <ul style="list-style-type: none">Brief outline of what projects are proposed to be funded within this Program Area.	K-R-G representative	
8.15-8.25pm	Table discussion topic 3: Water and catchment management Give out Handout 5 (list of projects/areas to be funded in this Program Area) <ul style="list-style-type: none">How strongly do you support the package of projects is within this Program Area – strong, medium or little support?What are the strengths of this package of projects?What are the weaknesses of this package of projects?Are there any other projects that you think should be funded in this Program area?Obtain vote for this Program area	WR Table Facilitators	HANDOUT 5 Voting sheet 2
8.25-8.27pm	Presentation topic 4: Sustainable transport and community recreation <ul style="list-style-type: none">Brief outline of what projects are proposed to be funded within this Program Area.	K-R-G representative	
8.27-8.35	Table discussion topic 4: Sustainable transport and community recreation Give out Handout 6 (list of projects/areas to be funded in this Program Area) <ul style="list-style-type: none">How strongly do you support the package of projects is within this Program Area – strong, medium or little support?What are the strengths of this package of projects?What are the weaknesses of this package of projects?Are there any other projects that you think should be funded in this Program area?Obtain vote for this Program area	WR Table Facilitators	HANDOUT 6 Voting sheet 2
8.35-8.40pm	Presentation topic 5: Community engagement and environmental education (includes business engagement) <ul style="list-style-type: none">Brief outline of what projects are proposed to be funded within this Program Area.	K-R-G representative	
8.40-8.50pm	Table discussion topic 5: Community engagement and environmental education (includes business engagement) Give out Handout 7 (list of projects/areas to be funded in this Program Area) <ul style="list-style-type: none">How strongly do you support the package of projects is within this Program Area – strong, medium or little support?What are the strengths of this package of projects?What are the weaknesses of this package of projects?Are there any other projects that you think should be funded in this Program area?	WR Table Facilitators	HANDOUT 7 Voting sheet 2

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtain vote for this program area 		
8.50-8.55pm	<p>Table discussion: Rating the support for the Program Areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Now you have discussed each of the program areas which program areas did you support the most? Why? Does this differ from the community survey results? Why? 	WR Table Facilitators	Voting sheet 2
8.55-9.00pm	<p>Summing up, thank you</p> <p>Any Ku-Ring-Gai Council closing remarks – what they will take from today and confirmation of next steps.</p>	K-R-G representative	
9.00pm	<p>CLOSE</p> <p>Woolcott Research Lead Facilitator – thanks and reminder to fill in end of session questionnaire on tables. Facilitators to collect feedback forms.</p>	WR All	End of session feedback, incentives and signing sheet

APPENDIX G: Forum handouts and voting sheets



HANDOUT 1A

Future of the Environmental Levy

Options	Impact
1. Continue the Environmental Levy at the existing rate (around \$80 a year for the average residential ratepayer and \$65 a year for the average business ratepayer)	Delivery of environmental programs and works continue at current service levels, equating to approximately \$3 million a year from 1 July 2019
2. Continue the Environmental Levy at a reduced rate	Council will need to significantly review its environmental programs and works compared with current service levels and reduce the environmental services and programs offered.
3. Discontinue the Environmental Levy	Rates will be reduced by approximately \$80 per annum for the average residential ratepayer and by approximately \$65 per annum for the average business ratepayer. Environmental programs and works will need to be funded from base rates and other Council services will therefore be reduced.



HANDOUT 1B

Why a permanent Environmental Levy?

Council has extensive natural and built assets to manage, including over 1,100 hectares of bushland, over 170km of riparian land and numerous community buildings and facilities. The revenue Council receives from rates is not enough to cover the investment required to adequately manage these assets into the future. We need a permanent income source that funds an adequate level of environmental programs and works to secure the long term protection of our unique natural environment as our population grows and housing density increases; whilst continuing to support our community to live more sustainably.

Much has already been achieved by the Environmental Levy to date. A permanent Levy will:

- Secure the ongoing delivery and continuity of Council's environmental programs and works at service levels that will effectively manage our bushland and waterways and the sustainability performance of our buildings and facilities, at the same time as maintaining all the other Council services
- Allow Council to undertake coordinated, long term planning for environmental programs and works, ensuring we maximise environmental outcomes at the lowest cost;
- Guarantee funding for the ongoing maintenance of important environmental infrastructure delivered through the current Environmental Levy; and
- Make it easier for Council to secure grant funding to further support its environmental programs and works (often grants require matched funding).



VOTING SHEET 1

Future of the Environmental Levy

Options	I vote for... (tick preference)	I vote for... (circle preference)
1. Continue the Environmental Levy at the existing rate (around \$80 a year for the average residential ratepayer and \$65 a year for the average business ratepayer)		Permanent / 7 years
2. Continue the Environmental Levy at a reduced rate		Permanent / 7 years
3. Discontinue the Environmental Levy – fund environmental programs and works from base rates and reduce other Council services		

IF OPTION 2 SELECTED:

What proportion of the current Levy amount do you feel should be applied in the future?

_____ %



VOTING SHEET 2

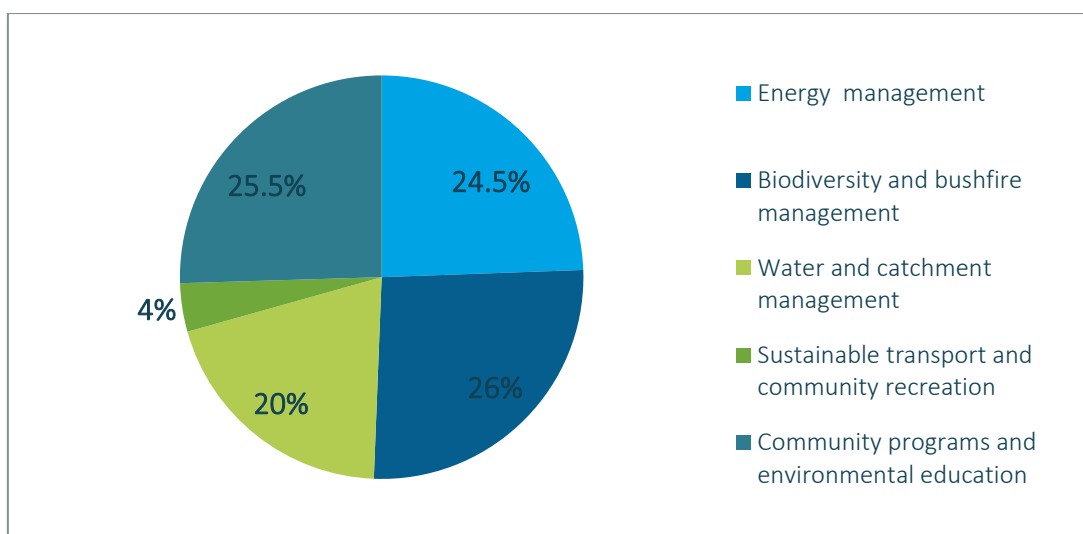
Support for proposed projects in program area

Program area	Support level (0 to 10, where 0 = do not support at all and 10 = very strong support)
Energy management	
Biodiversity and bushfire management	
Water and catchment management	
Sustainable transport and community recreation	
Community programs and environmental education (includes business engagement)	

HANDOUT 2

Proposed 10 year Environmental Levy program budget allocation *

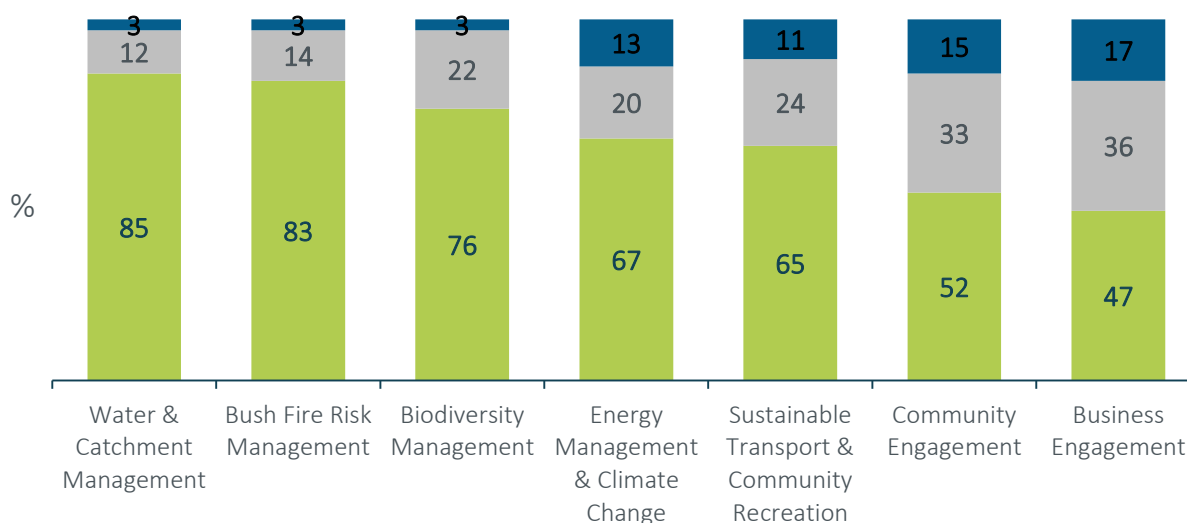
* excluding project management and administration



2019/20 – 2028/29

COMMUNITY SURVEY: support for program areas

High level support (8-10) Mid-level support (5-7) Low level / no support (0-4)





HANDOUT 3

Energy management

Key projects and activities

- Solar panel installations
- Air conditioning upgrades
- Energy efficient lighting upgrades
- Solar hot water systems
- Energy efficient street lighting
- Energy management systems
- Data management and reporting system
- Procurement of renewable energy
- Transition of fleet to electric vehicles



HANDOUT 4

Biodiversity and bushfire management

Key projects and activities

- Bush restoration in high value reserves
- Projects to enhance biodiversity corridors and urban forest
- Ecological burns to replicate the natural fire cycle and promote biodiversity
- Pest species management
- Environmental monitoring programs
- Native bee hives for residents
- Dumping prevention in bushland
- Fauna monitoring and management
- Fire trail construction and maintenance



HANDOUT 5

Water and catchment management

Key projects and activities

- Stormwater harvesting and reuse systems
- Works to improve the quality of our creeks and waterways (sediment basins; biofilter systems; gross pollutant traps and erosion control works)
- Creek restoration projects
- Flood mitigation measures
- Water efficiency in buildings
- Water monitoring in buildings
- Water quality monitoring of creeks and waterways



HANDOUT 6

Sustainable transport and community recreation

Key projects and activities

- Creation of cycle ways
- Maintenance and renewal of walking tracks
- Provision of infrastructure for recreation in natural areas



HANDOUT 7

Community programs and environmental education

Key projects and activities

- Home sustainability rebates
- Events and workshops
- Environmental volunteering programs
- Wild Things urban biodiversity program
- Smart suite of programs (Energy Smart, Water Smart, Smart Units and Smart Homes)
- Climate Wise Communities program
- EnviroTube channel
- Interpretive signs
- Sustainability advisory services (Greenstyle and Better Business Partnership)
- Information campaigns, eg, Plastic Free July
- Energy, water and waste audits