

Gunnedah Shire Council



Community Research

Prepared by: Micromex Research
Date: August 2024

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Research Objectives

Gunnedah Shire Council commissioned Micromex Research to conduct a random telephone survey with residents living in the local government area (LGA).

Objectives (Why?)

- Understand and identify community priorities for the LGA
- Identify the community's overall level of satisfaction with Council performance and the communication from Council
- Explore residents' attitudes toward the Special Rate Variation and support for paying more for higher service levels

Sample (How?)

- Telephone survey (landline N = 5 and mobile N = 295) to N = 300 residents
- We use a 5 point scale (e.g. 1 = not at all satisfied, 5 = very satisfied)
- Greatest margin of error +/- 5.7%

Timing (When?)

- Implementation 5th – 15th August 2024

Methodology and Sample



Sample selection and error

A total of 300 resident interviews were completed. Respondents were selected by means of a computer based random selection process using Australian marketing lists, Sample Pages, List Brokers and Lead Lists.

A sample size of 300 residents provides a maximum sampling error of plus or minus 5.7% at 95% confidence. This means that if the survey was replicated with a new universe of N=300 residents, 19 times out of 20 we would expect to see the same results, i.e. +/- 5.7%. For example, that an answer such as 'yes' (50%) to a question could vary from 44% to 56%.

Interviewing

Interviewing was conducted in accordance with The Research Society Code of Professional Behaviour.

Data analysis

The data within this report was analysed using Q Professional.

Within the report, **blue** and **red** font colours are used to identify statistically significant differences between groups, i.e., gender, age, etc.

Significance difference testing is a statistical test performed to evaluate the difference between two measurements. To identify the statistically significant differences between the groups of means, 'One-Way Anova tests' and 'Independent Samples T-tests' were used. 'Z Tests' were also used to determine statistically significant differences between column percentages.

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

Ratings questions

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

This scale allowed us to identify different levels of importance and satisfaction across respondents.

Top 2 (T2) Box: refers to the aggregate percentage (%) score of the top two scores for importance. (i.e. important & very important)

Note: Only respondents who rated services/facilities a 4 or 5 in importance were asked to rate their satisfaction with that service/facility.

Top 3 (T3) Box: refers to the aggregate percentage (%) score of the top three scores for satisfaction or support. (i.e. somewhat satisfied, satisfied & very satisfied)

We refer to T3 Box Satisfaction in order to express moderate to high levels of satisfaction in a non-discretionary category. We only report T2 Box Importance in order to provide differentiation and allow us to demonstrate the hierarchy of community priorities.

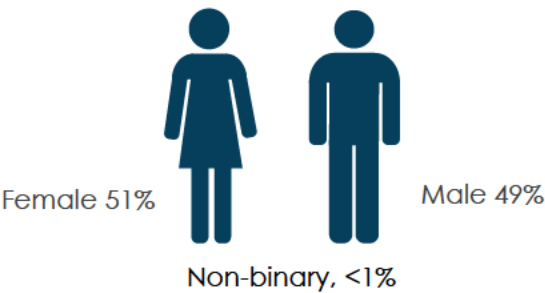
Micromex LGA Benchmark

Micromex has developed Community Satisfaction Benchmarks using normative data from over 80 unique councils, more than 200 surveys and over 100,000 interviews since 2012.

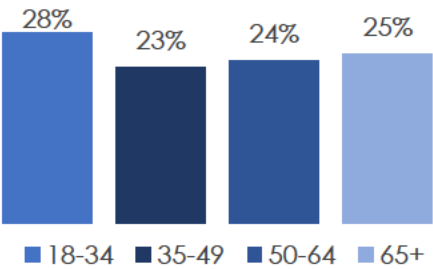
Sample Profile

The sample was weighted by age and gender to reflect the 2021 ABS Census data for the Gunnedah Shire Council LGA.

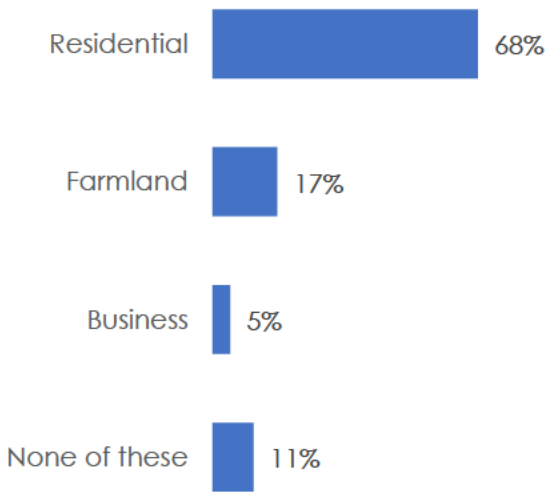
Gender



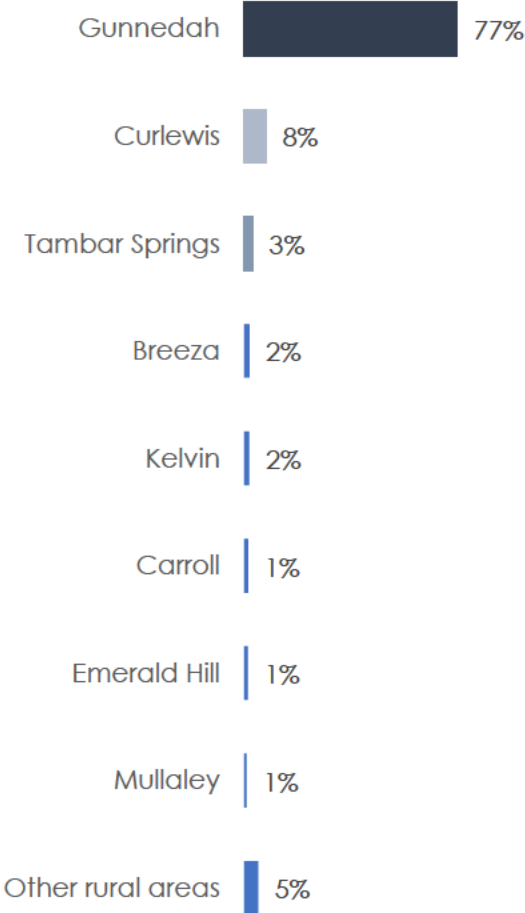
Age



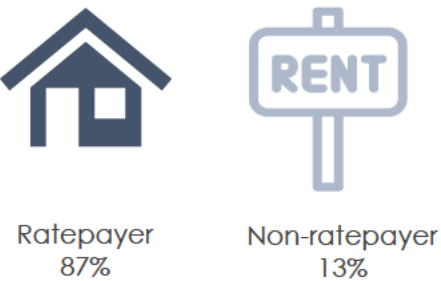
Type of rates (paid most)



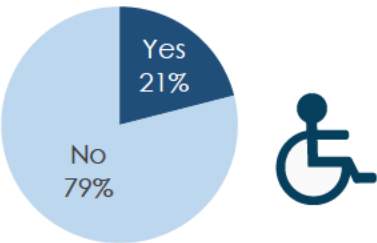
Location



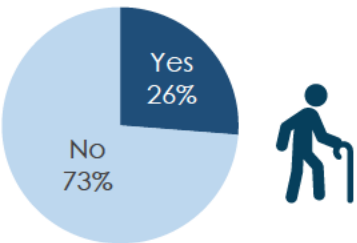
Ratepayer status



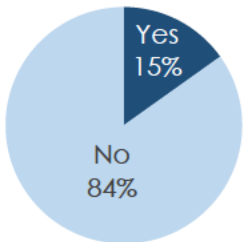
Does anyone live in your home live with disability?



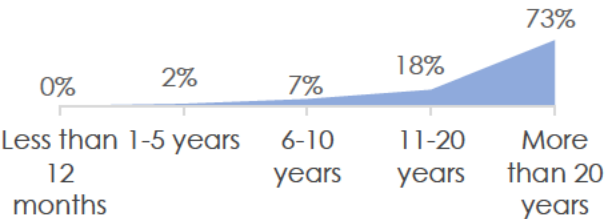
Does anyone living in your home receive Commonwealth Government Pensions?



Do you identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?



Time lived in the area



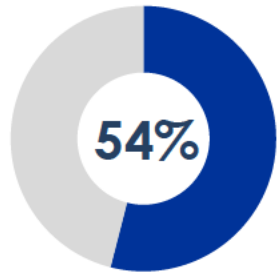
Prefer not to say, 1%

Prefer not to say, 1%



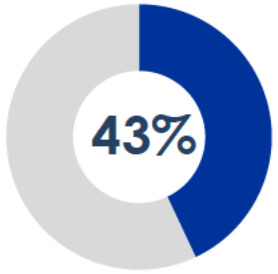
Summary Findings

Snapshot Summary



Overall Satisfaction

54% of Gunnedah Shire residents are at least somewhat satisfied with the performance of Council over the last 12 months



Communication

43% of Gunnedah Shire residents are at least somewhat satisfied the level of communication Council currently has with the community

Service Satisfaction

Libraries and sewerage management received high satisfaction ratings, while unsealed roads and opportunities for community participation in decision-making were rated with lower levels of satisfaction

Drivers of Satisfaction

Key areas influencing overall satisfaction included opportunities for community participation (10.3% influence) and economic development (8.6% influence). The expanded regression model highlighted the importance of communication, with this measure highlighted as a very strong driver of overall satisfaction with Council's performance.

Community Priorities - Unprompted

The top priorities identified by residents include:

1. Road maintenance/ upgrades (47%)
2. Parks/ playgrounds/ sporting facilities (17%)
3. Council communication/ transparency (15%)
4. Reducing rates/ better value for rates (15%)



Special Rate Variation Awareness and Support

- Almost three quarters of residents were aware of the proposed SRV
- 69% of residents are at least 'somewhat supportive' of the Rate Peg only option
- 39% of residents are at least 'somewhat supportive' of the proposed SRV option

Support for Additional Rate Increases

- 43% of residents were at least 'somewhat supportive' of paying over and above the proposed SRV to support increased service levels for roads
- 41% were also supportive of paying higher rates and charged to support increased service levels in terms of for parks and gardens
- Support for improvements to the Cultural Precinct was lower (31% at least 'somewhat supportive')

Moving Forward

Council's current consideration of the proposed SRV is no doubt influencing the community's views and opinions of Council and current service delivery (74% of residents aware of the proposed SRV).

The research has shown Council's level of communication with the community to be a very strong driver of overall satisfaction with Council's performance. In an unaided question regarding priority areas for Council, almost one quarter of residents believe focus areas should include improvements to communication, consultation, transparency and management.

With over one third of residents at least somewhat supportive of the SRV, there is a segment of the community that are aware that in order to fund existing services and maintain local infrastructure there is the need for a rate increase above the rate peg. The challenge for Council will be to continue to improve communication channels in an effort to improve transparency regarding any future changes to rates and service delivery.

Communication and Transparency

- Explore gaps in communication and identify areas for more targeted reach
- Focus on increasing transparency about financial management and decision-making processes
- Explore more effective methods for community participation in Council decision-making
- Transparency around management of development and economic development

Build Trust and Demonstrate Value

- Implement measures to rebuild community trust, addressing concerns about Council's financial management and service delivery



Core Service Delivery

- Prioritise road maintenance/ upgrades and communicate strategies in this area
- Targeted improvement plans for youth services
- Address community concerns around delivery, maintenance and improvements of essential services and infrastructure

SRV Approach

- Resident awareness of the proposed SRV is high (74% aware)
- Awareness has been driven by social media and word of mouth
- Council needs to be the authoritative voice on the proposed SRV. Council comms need greater cut through

Satisfaction Scorecard

14/32 services and facilities received a good performance score (at least somewhat satisfied of 80% or more).

There were 9 areas identified as areas for improvement with a satisfaction score of less than 60% (see red shaded cells).

	Good performance (T3B sat score ≥80%)
	Monitor (T3B sat score 60%-79%)
	Needs improvement (T3B sat score <60%)

Community Facilities	Infrastructure
Public parks	Unsealed roads
Swimming pools	Rural sealed roads
Sporting grounds	Urban streets
Libraries	Footpaths and cycleways
Public buildings and village halls	Street cleaning
The Civic Precinct (i.e. Town Hall/Movie Theatre/Art Gallery)	Gunnedah airport
Gunnedah showground	Drainage/flood management
Quality of town centres and public spaces	Water supply
	Sewerage management
	General garbage collection
	Landfills and waste transfer stations
	Recycling
Human Services	Corporate Services and Management
Youth services	Opportunities to participate in Council decision making
Aged care services (i.e. Go Co)	Management of development
Relationship with Indigenous residents	Tourism, importance
Support for volunteers	Economic development
Disability access	Environmental and sustainability initiatives
Emergency services (i.e. SES, RFS)	Heritage conservation/promotion



Overall Satisfaction and Future Priorities

This section examines residents' overall satisfaction with the performance of Council and Council's communication with the community. It also explores community priorities for the planning of the area.

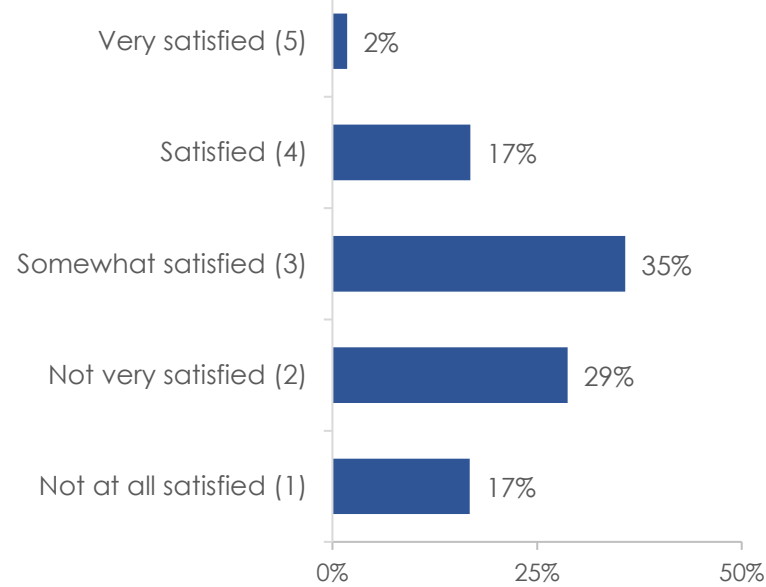
Section One

Overall Satisfaction with the Performance of Council

54% of residents are at least somewhat satisfied with the performance of Council in the last 12 months.

At the overall level, residents' satisfaction with the performance of Council is lower than the Regional Benchmark.

Further analysis has shown ratepayers and those aware of the Special Rate Variation to be significantly less satisfied with the performance of Council, indicating the impact of the rate increase on this key measure.



Q4. 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?

	Overall	Aware of Special Rate Variation	
		Yes	No
Top 3 Box %	54%	49%	69%
Mean rating	2.58	2.46	2.93
Base	300	221	79

	Gunnedah Shire Council	Micromex LGA Benchmark – Regional
Top 3 Box %	54%↓	82%
Mean rating	2.58↓	3.31
Base	300	53,020

↑↓ = A significantly higher/lower level of satisfaction (compared to the Benchmark)

	Gender		Age				Ratepayer Status	
	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer
Top 3 Box %	50%	59%	53%	52%	56%	56%	52%	71%
Mean rating	2.54	2.61	2.50	2.39	2.72	2.72	2.52	2.97
Base	146	153	84	69	72	75	261	39

	Time lived in area		Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander		Does anyone living in your home have a disability?		Does anyone living in your home receive Commonwealth Government Pensions?	
	Up to 20 years	More than 20 years	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Top 3 Box %	58%	53%	44%	57%	48%	56%	56%	54%
Mean rating	2.58	2.58	2.29	2.64	2.44	2.62	2.71	2.52
Base	82	218	45	252	64	236	79	219

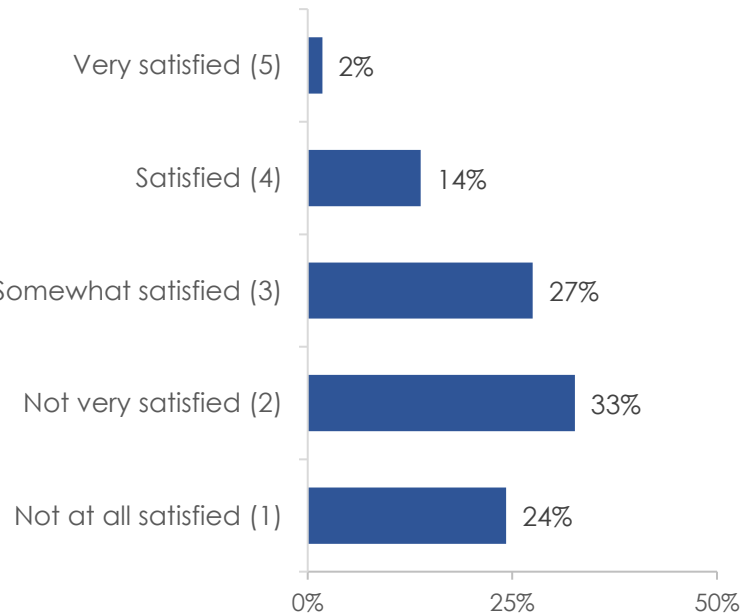
Scale: 1 = not at all satisfied, 5 = very satisfied
A significantly higher/lower level of satisfaction (by group)

Satisfaction with the Level of Communication

43% of residents are at least somewhat satisfied with the level of communication Council has with the community.

At the overall level, residents' satisfaction with the level of communication Council has with the community is lower than the Regional Benchmark.

Similar to overall satisfaction, ratepayers and those aware of the Special Rate Variation are significantly less likely to be satisfied.



Base: N = 300
Q3. How satisfied are you currently with the level of communication Council has with the community?

	Overall	Aware of Special Rate Variation	
		Yes	No
Top 3 Box %	43%	37%	61%
Mean rating	2.36	2.23	2.72
Base	300	221	79

	Gunnedah Shire Council	Micromex LGA Benchmark – Regional
Top 3 Box %	43%↓	79%
Mean rating	2.36↓	3.31
Base	300	17,943

↑↓ = A significantly higher/lower level of satisfaction (compared to the Benchmark)

	Gender		Age				Ratepayer Status	
	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer
Top 3 Box %	41%	45%	37%	35%	52%	49%	41%	57%
Mean rating	2.32	2.41	2.26	2.16	2.58	2.45	2.30	2.81
Base	146	153	84	69	72	75	261	39

	Time lived in area		Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander		Does anyone living in your home have a disability?		Does anyone living in your home receive Commonwealth Government Pensions?	
	Up to 20 years	More than 20 years	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Top 3 Box %	43%	43%	34%	45%	34%	46%	52%	39%
Mean rating	2.41	2.35	2.12	2.41	2.15	2.43	2.48	2.30
Base	82	218	45	252	64	236	79	219

Key Priorities

Nearly half of residents (47%) stated that road maintenance/upgrades is a key priority for Council to focus on.

Other suggested priorities include parks/ playground/ sporting facilities, Council's management and communication, and rate reduction.

Example Verbatims

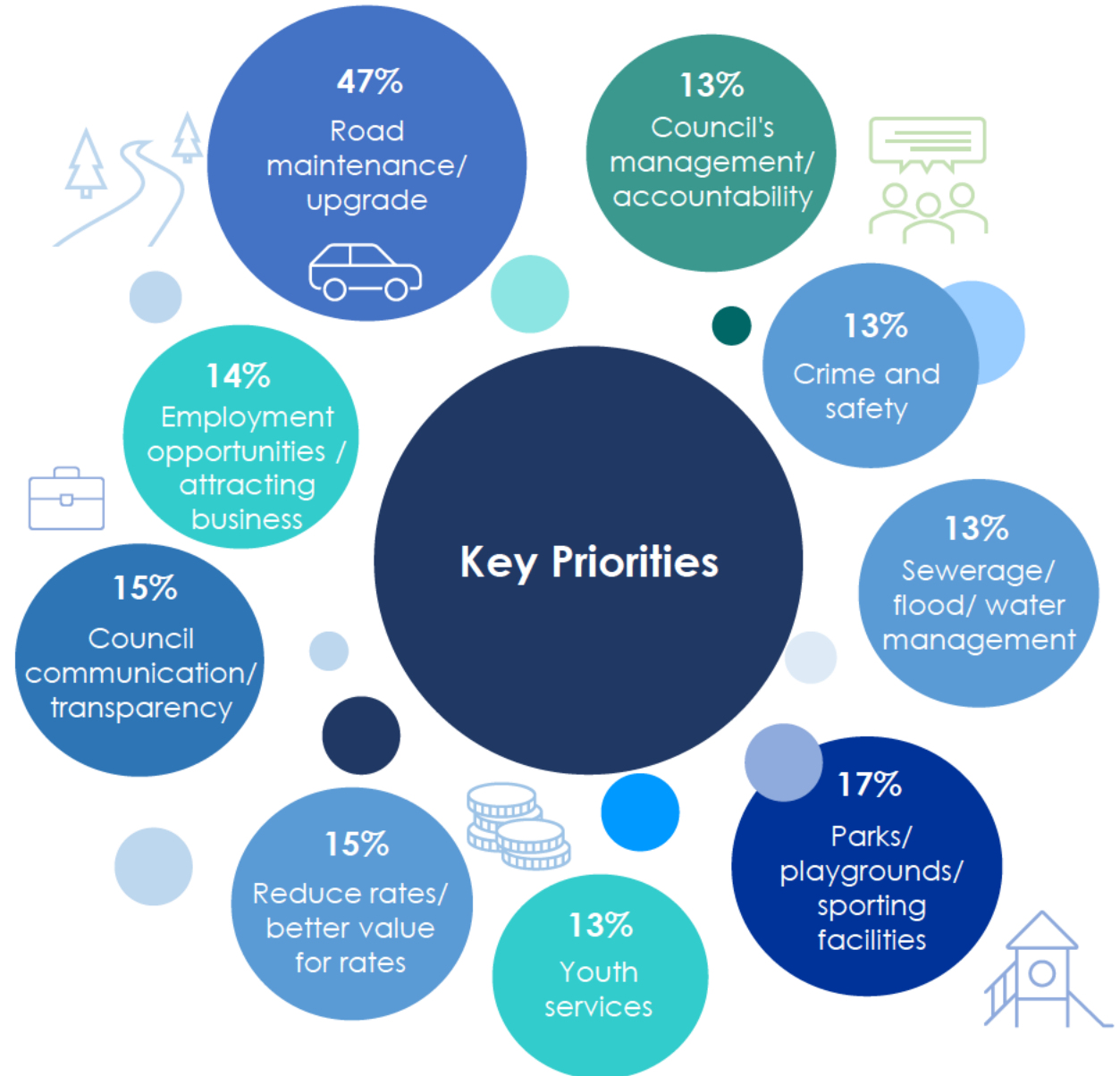
"Road maintenance and fixing the potholes"

"Need to be better with the sporting areas as the basketball hoop is broken and the tennis courts need fixing"

"More communication/ transparency with the community about decision-making"

"Finding ways to save and gain funds without increasing rates"

"Management of Council"





Summary of Council Services/Facilities

This section summarises the importance and satisfaction ratings for the 32 services and facilities. In this section we explore trends to past research and comparative norms.

Section Two

Summary: Services / Facilities

- Emergency services, water supply and general garbage collection were rated most important. Residents were most satisfied with libraries and sewerage management
- Performance gaps were greatest for roads (unsealed and rural), opportunities to participate in Council decision making and development (management of development and economic development)
- Opportunities to participate in Council decision making has the greatest influence on overall satisfaction (standard model), followed by economic development, swimming pools and urban streets
- A re-run of the regression analysis (expanded model) highlighted the influence of the level of communication the Council currently has with the community, contributing to 32% of overall satisfaction



Council Services and Facilities

A major component of the 2024 Community Survey was to assess perceived Importance of, and Satisfaction with 32 Council-provided services and facilities – the equivalent of 64 separate questions!

We have utilised the following techniques to summarise and analyse these 64 questions:

Highlights 2024 Results



Comparison with Micromex Benchmarks



Performance Gap Analysis



Quadrant Analysis



Regression Analysis (i.e.: determine the services/
facilities that drive overall satisfaction with Council)



Importance & Satisfaction – Highest/Lowest Rated Services/Facilities

The analysis below identifies the highest and lowest rated services/facilities in terms of importance and satisfaction.

Importance

The following services/facilities received the highest T2 box importance ratings:

Higher importance	T2 Box	Mean
Emergency services	94%	4.71
Water supply	91%	4.61
General garbage collection	90%	4.59
Economic development	88%	4.52
Drainage/flood management	87%	4.47
Urban streets	87%	4.37

The following services/facilities received the lowest T2 box importance ratings:

Lower importance	T2 Box	Mean
Gunnedah airport	31%	2.52
Libraries	42%	3.09
Public buildings and village halls	52%	3.49
Swimming pools	57%	3.63
Relationship with Indigenous residents	59%	3.69

T2B = important/very important
Scale: 1 = not at all important, 5 = very important

Satisfaction

The following services/facilities received the highest T3 box satisfaction ratings:

Higher satisfaction	T3 Box	Mean
Libraries	95%	4.17
Sewerage management	93%	4.07
The Civic Precinct	89%	3.76
Emergency services	86%	3.82
Water supply	86%	3.74
Public buildings and village halls	86%	3.50

The following services/facilities received the lowest T3 box satisfaction ratings:

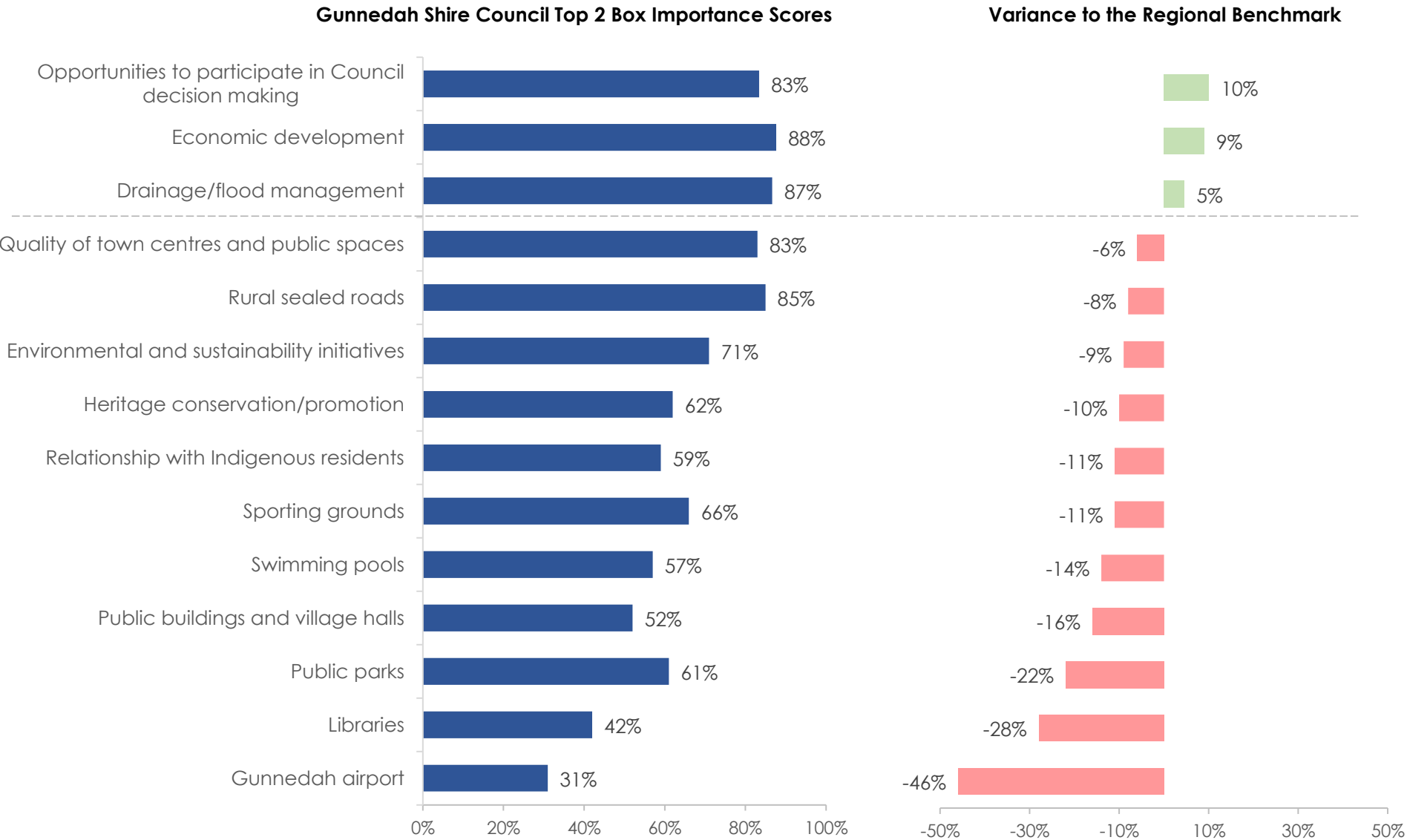
Lower satisfaction	T3 Box	Mean
Unsealed roads	19%	1.73
Opportunities to participate in Council decision making	33%	2.05
Rural sealed roads	34%	2.12
Management of development	44%	2.33
Youth services	53%	2.54

T3B = somewhat satisfied/satisfied/very satisfied
Scale: 1 = not at all satisfied, 5 = very satisfied

Summary Importance Comparison to the Micromex Benchmark

The chart to the right shows the variance between Gunnedah Shire Council top 2 box importance scores and the Micromex Regional Benchmark.

Services/facilities shown in the chart highlight larger positive and negative gaps.

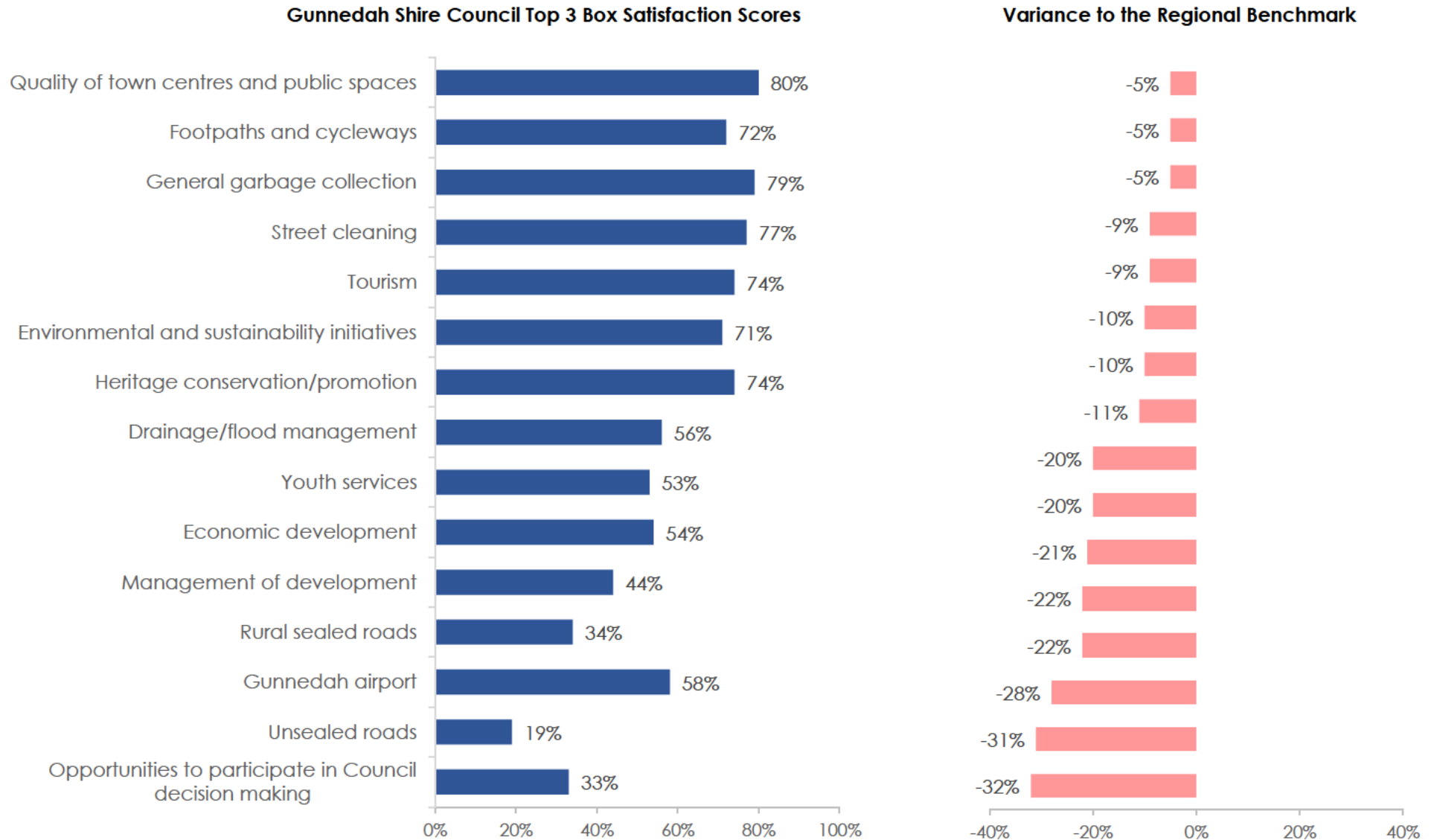


Note: Only services/facilities with a variance of +/- 5% to the Benchmark have been shown above. Please see Appendix 1 for detailed list
Top 2 box = important/very important

Summary Satisfaction Comparison to the Micromex Benchmark

The chart to the right shows the variance between Gunnedah Shire Council top 3 box satisfaction scores and the Micromex Regional Benchmark.

Services/facilities shown in the chart to the right highlight larger negative gaps.



Note: Only services/facilities with a variance of +/- 5% to the Benchmark have been shown above. Please see Appendix 1 for detailed list
Top 3 box = at least somewhat satisfied

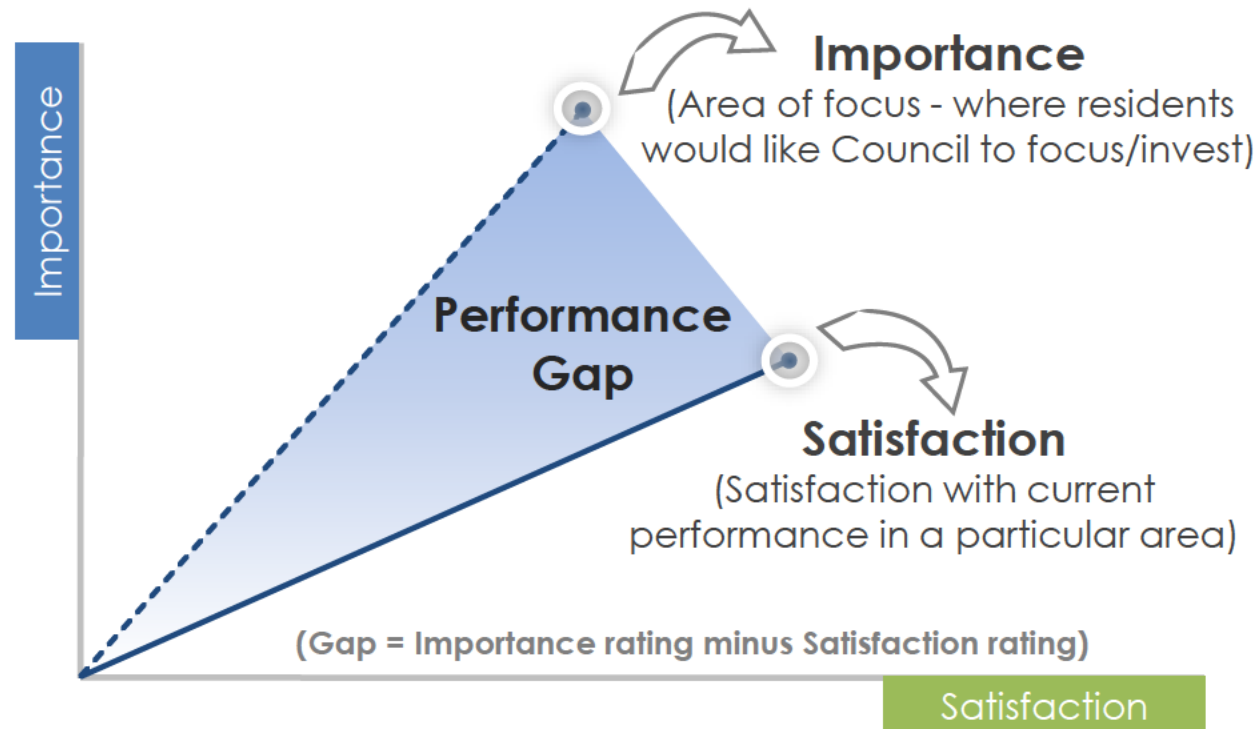
Performance Gap Analysis

PGA establishes the gap between importance and satisfaction. This is calculated by subtracting the top 3 satisfaction score from the top 2 importance score. In order to measure performance gaps, respondents are asked to rate the importance of, and their satisfaction with, each of a range of different services or facilities on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = low importance or satisfaction and 5 = high importance or satisfaction. These scores are aggregated at a total community level.

The higher the differential between importance and satisfaction, the greater the difference is between the provision of that service by Gunnedah Shire Council and the expectation of the community for that service/facility.

In the table on the following page, we can see the services and facilities with the largest performance gaps.

When analysing the performance gaps, it is expected that there will be some gaps in terms of resident satisfaction. Those services/facilities that have achieved a performance gap of greater than 20% may be indicative of areas requiring future optimisation.



Performance Gap Analysis

When we examine the largest performance gaps, we can identify that all of the services or facilities have been rated as high in importance, whilst residents' satisfaction for all of these areas is between 19% and 58%. Roads (unsealed and sealed) and opportunities to participate in Council decision making received the largest performance gaps.

Service Area	Service/Facility	Importance T2 Box	Satisfaction T3 Box	Performance Gap (Importance – Satisfaction)
Infrastructure	Unsealed roads	76%	19%	57%
Infrastructure	Rural sealed roads	85%	34%	51%
Corporate services and management	Opportunities to participate in Council decision making	83%	33%	50%
Corporate services and management	Management of development	78%	44%	34%
Corporate services and management	Economic development	88%	54%	34%
Infrastructure	Drainage/flood management	87%	56%	31%
Infrastructure	Urban streets	87%	58%	29%
Human services	Youth services	72%	53%	19%

Note: Performance gap is the first step in the process, we now need to identify comparative ratings across all services and facilities to get an understanding of relative importance and satisfaction at an LGA level. This is when we undertake step 2 of the analysis.

Quadrant Analysis

Quadrant analysis is often helpful in planning future directions based on stated outcomes. It combines the stated importance of the community and assesses satisfaction with delivery in relation to these needs.

This analysis is completed by plotting the variables on x and y axes, defined by stated importance and rated satisfaction. We aggregate the top 2 box importance scores and top 3 satisfaction scores for stated importance and rated satisfaction to identify where the facility or service should be plotted.

On average, Gunnedah Shire Council residents rated services/facilities less important than our Benchmark, and their satisfaction was also lower.

	Gunnedah Shire Council	Micromex Comparable Regional Benchmark
Average Importance	73%	80%
Average Satisfaction	71%	80%

Note: Micromex comparable benchmark only refers to like for like measures

Explaining the 4 quadrants (overleaf)

Attributes in the top right quadrant, **CELEBRATE**, such as 'emergency services', are Council's core strengths, and should be treated as such. Maintain, or even attempt to improve your position in these areas, as they are influential and address clear community needs.

Attributes in the top left quadrant, **IMPROVE**, such as 'rural sealed roads' are key concerns in the eyes of your residents. In the vast majority of cases you should aim to improve your performance in these areas to better meet the community's expectations.

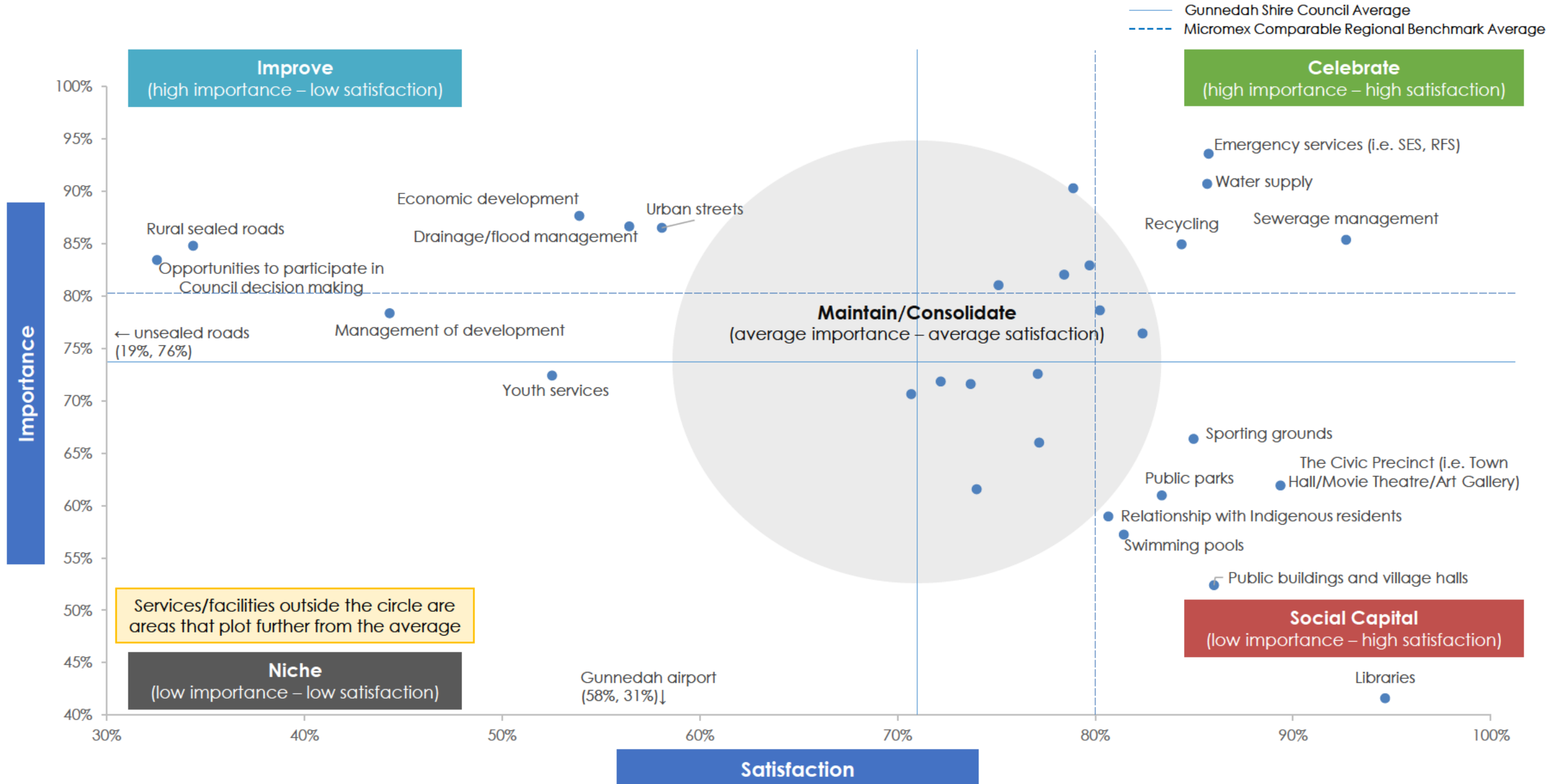
Attributes in the bottom left quadrant, **NICHE**, such as 'Gunnedah airport', are of a relatively lower priority (and the word 'relatively' should be stressed – they are still important). These areas tend to be important to a particular segment of the community.

Finally, attributes in the bottom right quadrant, **SOCIAL CAPITAL**, such as 'libraries', are core strengths, but in relative terms they are considered less overtly important than other directly obvious areas. However, the occupants of this quadrant tend to be the sort of services and facilities that deliver to community liveability, i.e. make it a good place to live.

Recommendations based only on stated importance and satisfaction have major limitations, as the actual questionnaire process essentially 'silos' facilities and services as if they are independent variables, when they are in fact all part of the broader community perception of council performance.

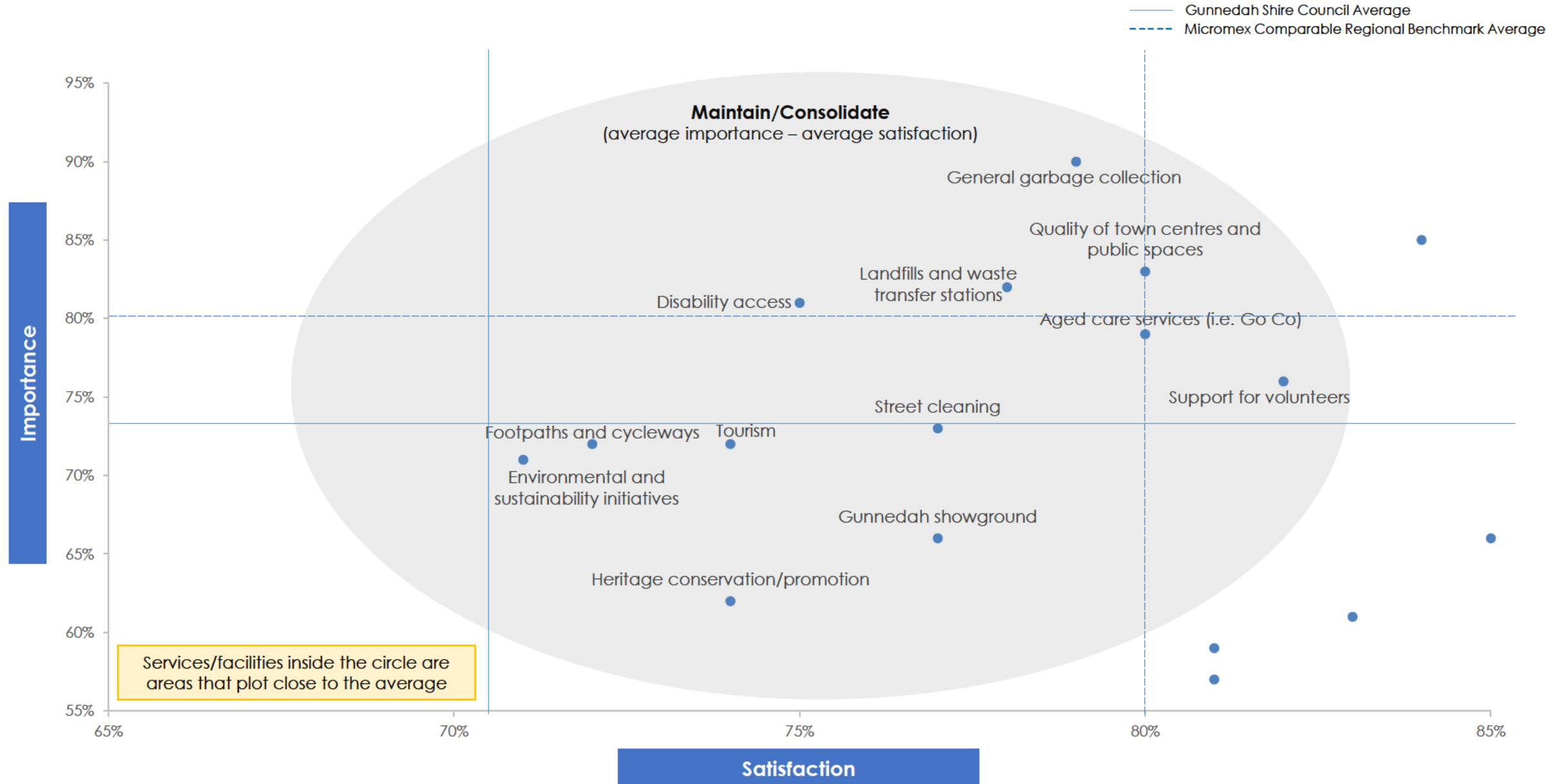
Quadrant Analysis – Mapping Priority Against Delivery

The chart below shows the satisfaction (T3B%) with service/facilities measures plotted against importance (T2B%).



Quadrant Analysis – Mapping Priority Against Delivery

Following on the previous Slide, the chart below shows the measures in the 'maintain/consolidate' area.



Regression Analysis

The outcomes identified in stated importance/satisfaction analysis often tend to be obvious and challenging. No matter how much focus a council dedicates to 'rural sealed roads', it will often be found in the **IMPROVE** quadrant. This is because, perceptually, the condition of local roads can always be better.

Furthermore, the outputs of stated importance and satisfaction analysis address the current dynamics of the community, they do not predict which focus areas are the most likely agents to change the community's perception of Council's overall performance. Therefore, in order to identify how Gunnedah Shire Council can actively drive overall community satisfaction, we conducted further analysis

Explanation of Analysis

Regression analysis is a statistical tool for investigating relationships between dependent variables and explanatory variables. Using a regression, a category model was developed. The outcomes demonstrated that increasing resident satisfaction by actioning the priorities they stated as being important would not necessarily positively impact on overall satisfaction.

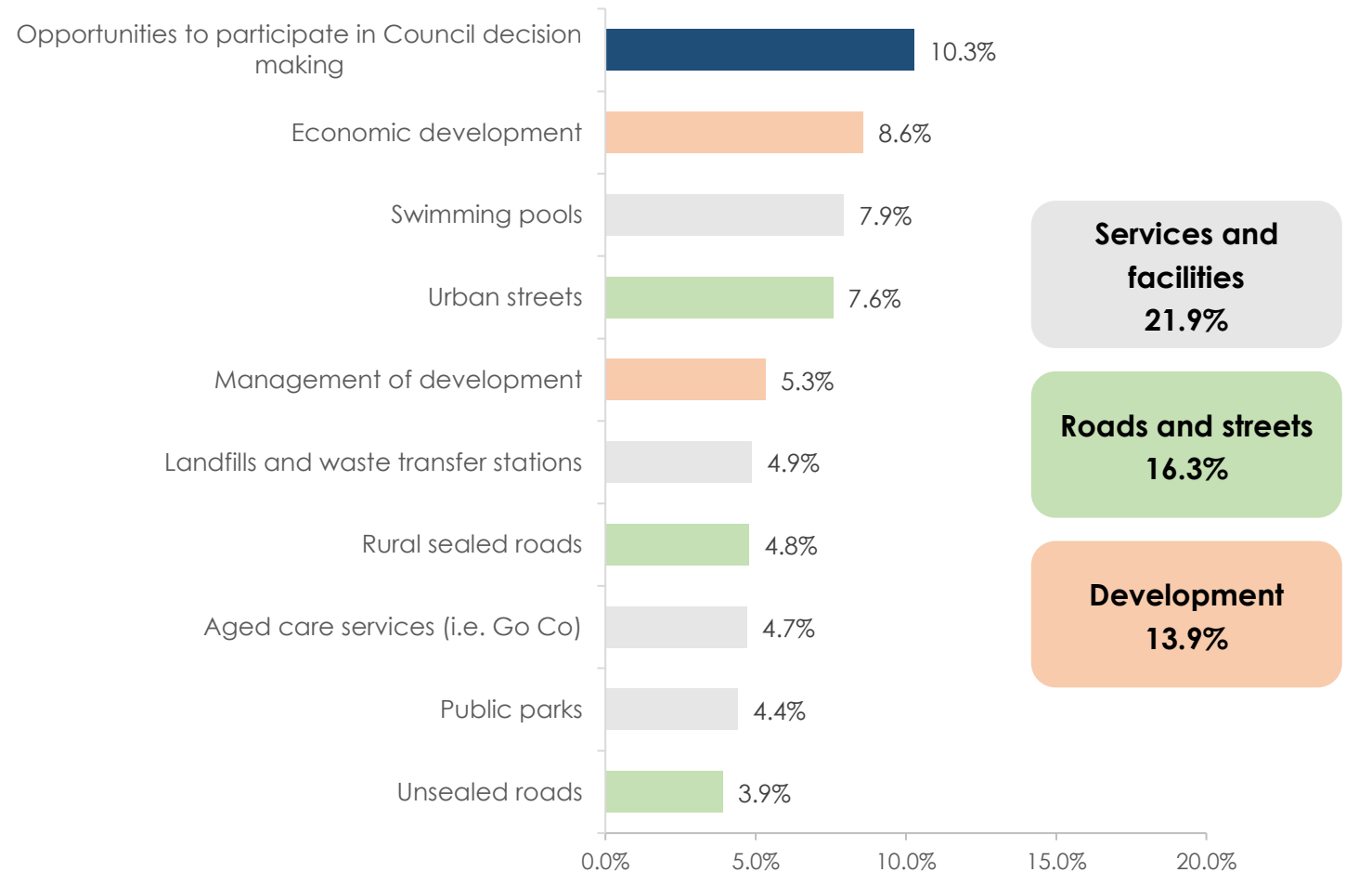
What Does This Mean?

The learning is that if we only rely on the stated community priorities, we will not be allocating the appropriate resources to the actual service attributes that will improve overall community satisfaction. Using regression analysis, we can identify the attributes that essentially build overall satisfaction. We call the outcomes 'derived importance'.



Key Drivers of Overall Satisfaction with Council

The score assigned to each area is not a measure of performance, rather, it indicates the percentage of influence each measure contributes to overall satisfaction with Council. All services/facilities are important – but if Council can increase satisfaction in these key driver areas, they will likely see an improvement in overall community satisfaction.



These top 10 services/facilities (so 31% of the 32 services/facilities) account for over 60% of the variation in overall satisfaction.

Investigating the measures separately, opportunities to participate in Council decision making is the most vital driver of overall satisfaction, followed by economic development and swimming pools.

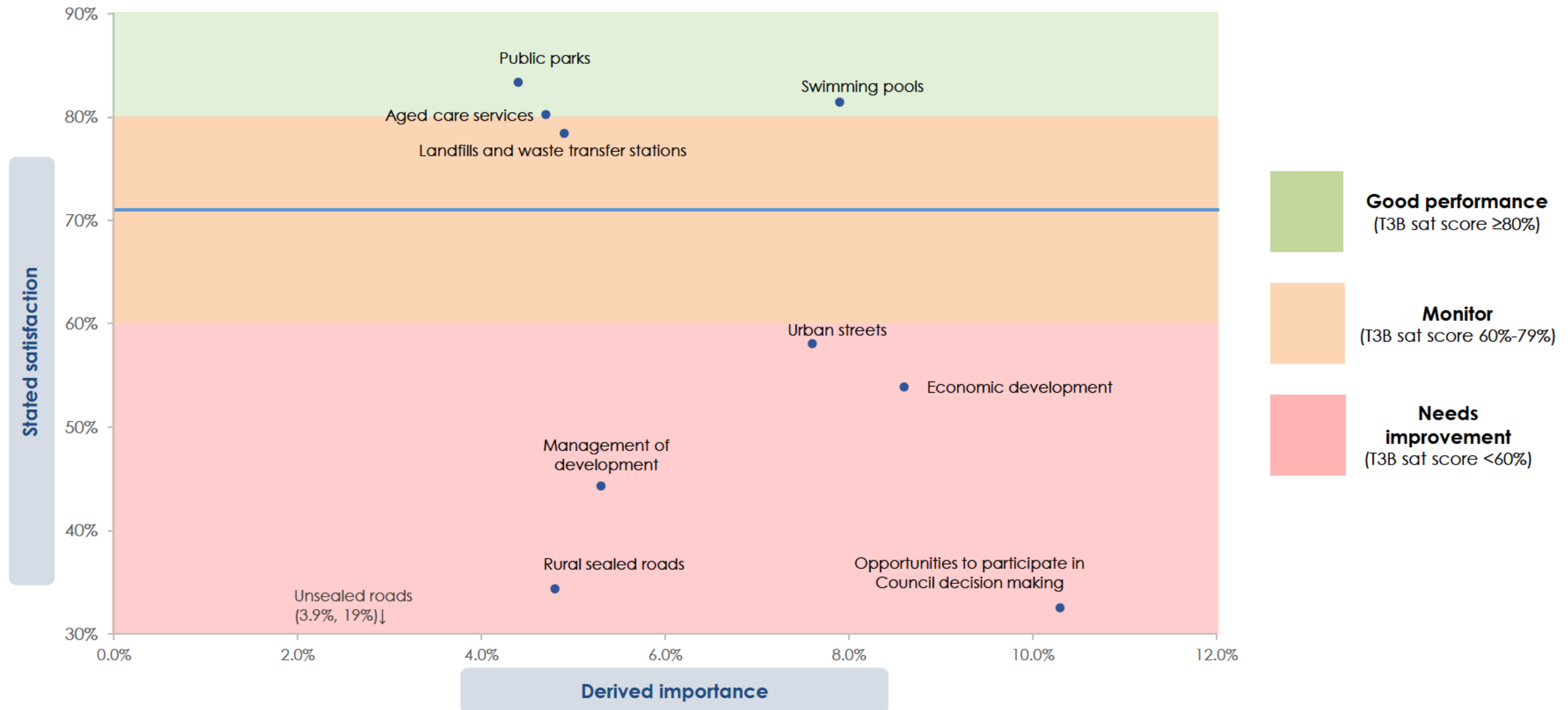
However, after summarising them into thematical groups, 'services and facilities' is the most important driver category.

$R^2 = 0.40$

Dependent Variable: Q4.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?

Mapping Stated Satisfaction and Derived Importance Identifies the Community Priority Areas

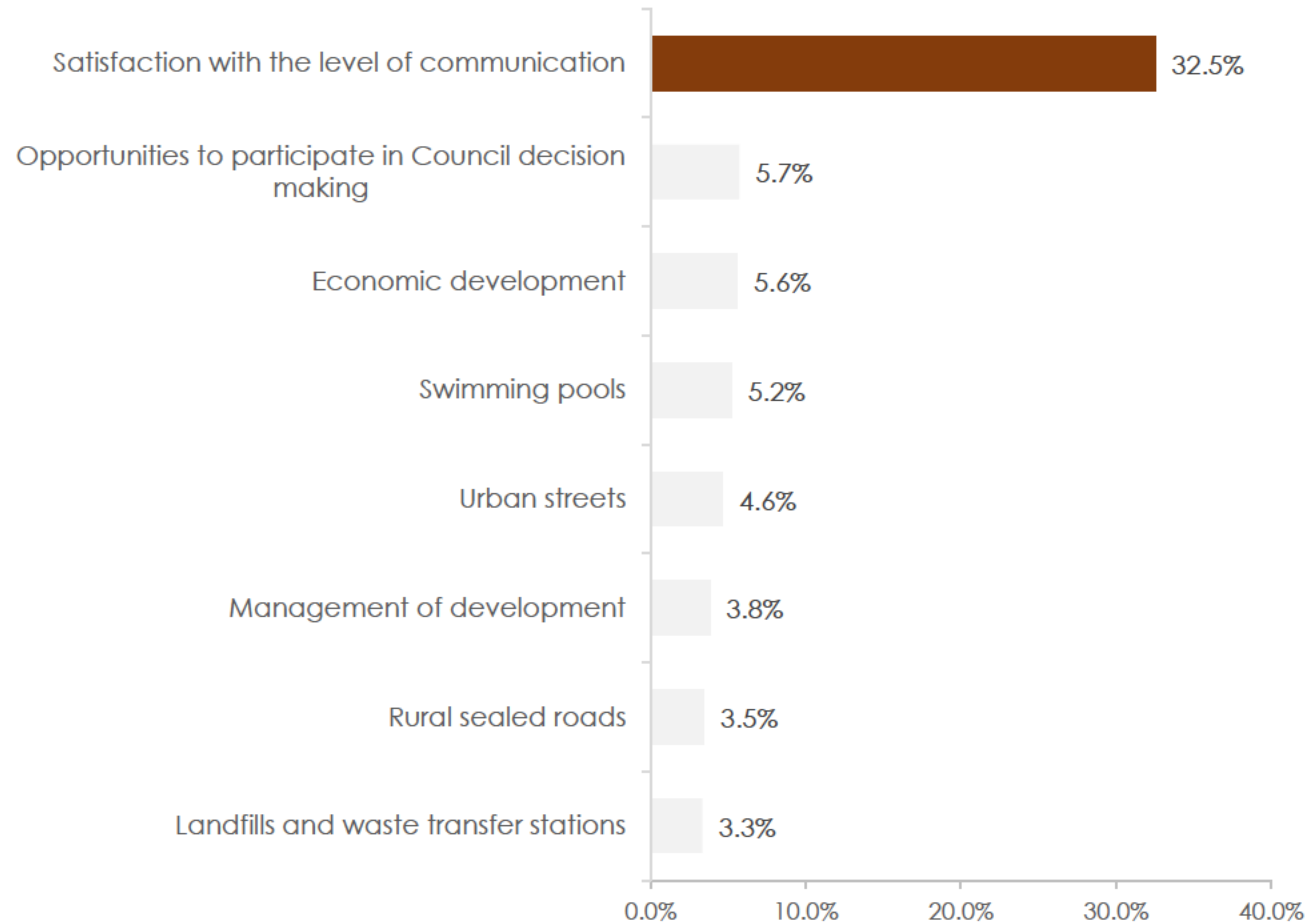
The below chart looks at the relationship between stated satisfaction (top 3 box) and derived importance (Regression result) to identify the level of contribution of each measure. Any services/facilities below the blue line could potentially be benchmarked to target in future research to elevate satisfaction levels in these areas.



Note: Blue line represents the average top 3 box (at least somewhat satisfied) of all 32 measures

Key Drivers of Overall Satisfaction with Council – Expanded Model

The below chart shows the outcomes of additional analysis conducted within an expanded regression model, including the measure (Q3): satisfaction with the level of communication



We can see from the chart to the left, satisfaction with the level of communication from Council accounts for almost a third of the variation in overall satisfaction.

This indicates that communication is a very important driver of overall satisfaction with Council's performance.

$R^2 = 0.53$

Dependent Variable: Q4.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?



Special Rate Variation

This section explores awareness of, and level of support and preference for a SRV.

Section Three

Summary: Special Rate Variation



- 74% of residents had prior awareness of the SRV, awareness was predominantly through social media
- 69% are at least somewhat supportive of Option 1: Rate Peg and 39% are at least somewhat supportive of Council proceeding with Option 2: SRV
- 64% prefer the Rate Peg, with key reasons for this preference centring on a call for better management by Council, a lack of trust and affordability. 36% prefer the SRV as they want to see improvements in the LGA, understand it needs to be undertaken but have reservations about the high price and management from Council
- 43% are at least somewhat supportive of paying above the proposed SRV to see service levels improve for local roads
- 41% are at least somewhat supportive of paying above the proposed SRV to see service levels improve for parks and gardens
- 31% are at least somewhat supportive to pay above the proposed SRV to see service levels improve for the Cultural Precinct



Context

At present, Council's revenue is regulated by the NSW Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART). IPART limits the amount by which councils can increase rates from one year to the next. This is called the rate peg. Council's Long Term Financial Plan provides for a 5.0% rate peg increase for the 2025/2026 and 2026/2027 financial years and 2.50% for the remaining years of the Plan. However, the rate peg will not provide enough revenue to maintain service levels.

Over recent years, Council has implemented a range of productivity savings and reduced costs across our operations, but there are no easy solutions to addressing an increasing funding gap. If Council does not address this gap now, our community assets (such as our roads, drainage, swimming pools and public buildings) will deteriorate. To address this situation, councils are able to apply for rate increases above rate peg. This is called a Special Rate Variation or SRV.

Gunnedah Shire Council is considering applying for a permanent SRV. There are two options which I would like you to consider.

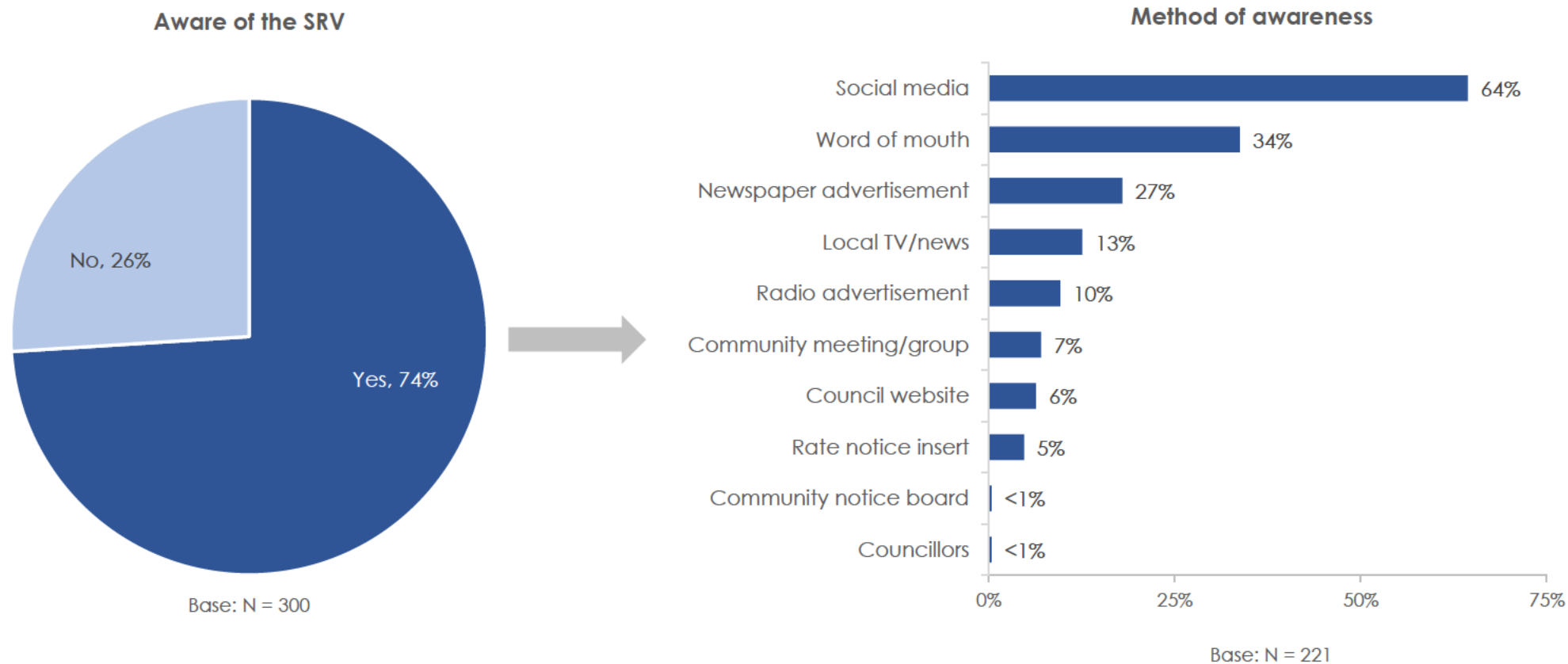
Let's look at the options in more detail:

- **Option 1 – Rate Peg Only.** Council will need to defer necessary capital works, as well as revise their range and levels of services to avoid a deteriorating cash position – which is not sustainable in the long term
- **Option 2 – Maintain.** The proposed SRV is anticipated to generate additional revenue of \$6.2 million over a two-year period from 2025-2026 to 2026-2027 and will be used to fund existing services and maintenance of local infrastructure

Council acknowledges that any rate increase may adversely impact some community members. Council has a Hardship Policy and alternative payment options to assist ratepayers should they have difficulty keeping up with their rate payments.

Awareness of the SRV

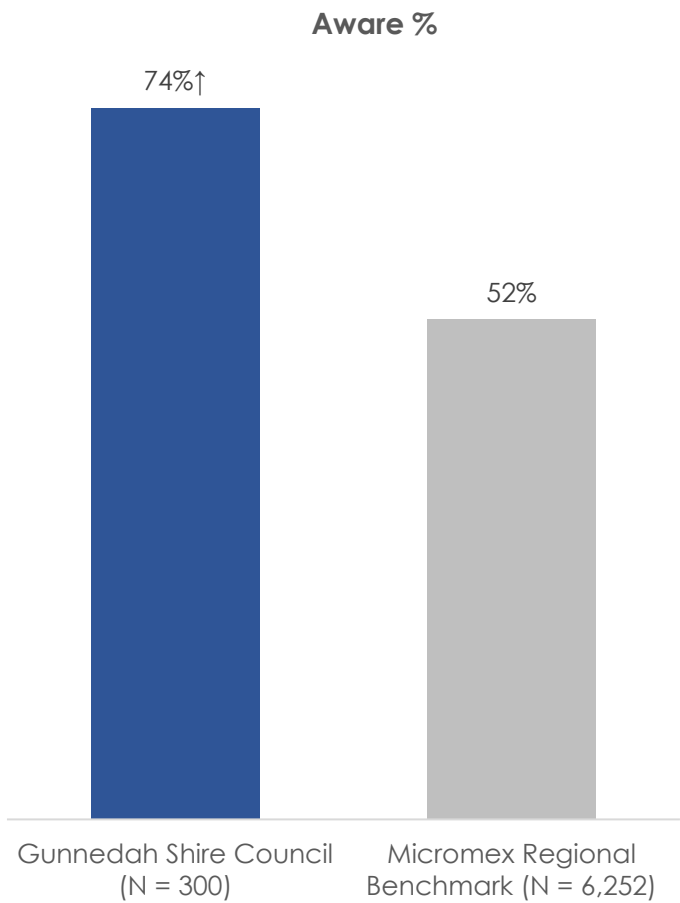
74% were aware of the SRV prior to the call, with social media and word of mouth being the most common methods of being informed.



Awareness of the SRV

Awareness is significantly higher than the Micromex Regional normative data (74% compared to 52%), suggesting a highly engaged community.

Awareness was higher for older residents, ratepayers and long-term residents of the LGA.



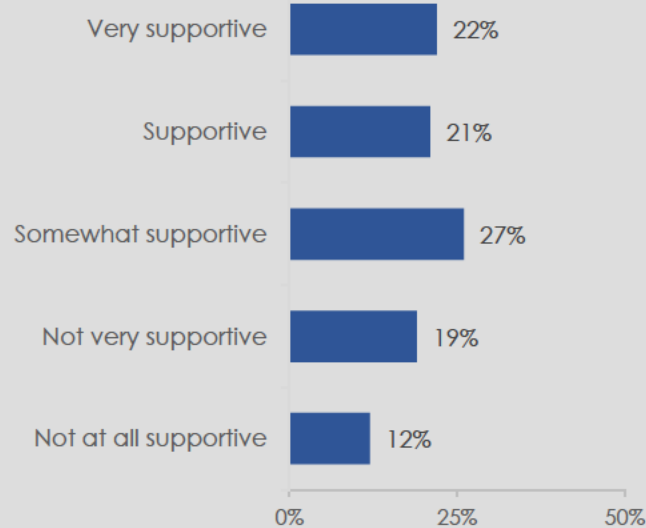
	Gender		Age				Ratepayer Status	
	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer
Yes, aware %	68%	79%	56%	81%	79%	81%	79%	38%
Base	146	153	84	69	72	75	261	39

	Time lived in area		Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander		Does anyone living in your home have a disability?		Does anyone living in your home receive Commonwealth Government Pensions?	
	Up to 20 years	More than 20 years	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Yes, aware %	62%	78%	65%	75%	73%	74%	73%	75%
Base	82	218	45	252	64	236	79	219

↑↓ = A significantly higher/lower awareness (compared to the Benchmark)

Option 1: Rate Peg Only

69% of residents are at least somewhat supportive of Council proceeding with Option 1 (rate peg only)



No special rate variation. This option would continue the status quo with rates only increasing by an estimated rate peg amount (assumed to be 5.0% this year).

Under this option over the next two financial years:

1. Residential – The average residential rates, which are currently \$1,106 per annum, will increase by approximately \$54 in Year 1 and \$58 in Year 2 – meaning the average residential rate will be \$1,218 in 2026/2027.
2. Business – The average Business rates, which are currently \$5,899 per annum, will increase by approximately \$286 in Year 1 and \$309 in Year 2 – meaning the average business rate will be \$6,494 in 2026/2027.
3. Farmland – The average Farmland rates, which are currently \$5,337 per annum, will increase by approximately \$258 in Year 1 and \$280 in Year 2 – meaning the average farmland rate will be \$5,875 in 2026/2027.

Under this option the impact would be:

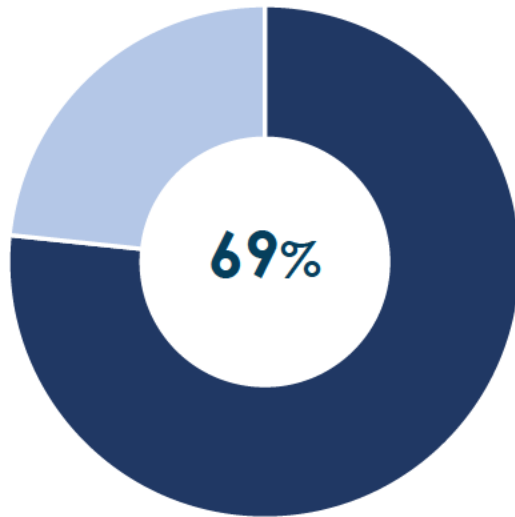
- Our sealed and gravel road networks would deteriorate.
- Council would not be able to maintain the range of facilities and services currently provided.
- Council would rely heavily on grant funding to renew existing assets.
- Community and recreational facilities such as pools and buildings will continue to deteriorate if grant funding is not successful, and potentially closed when the risk of operating becomes unacceptable.
- Council's backlog of roadworks would continue to increase and gravel roads would not be improved.

Option 1: Rate Peg Only

69% of residents are at least somewhat supportive of Council proceeding with Option 1 (rate peg only). Further analysis shows no significant differences by demographics. There was slightly higher preference amongst those not previously aware of the SRV and those aged 18-34.

	Overall	Aware of Special Rate Variation	
		Yes	No
Top 3 Box %	69%	67%	75%
Mean rating	3.21	3.22	3.16
Base	300	221	79

% at least somewhat supportive (T3B)

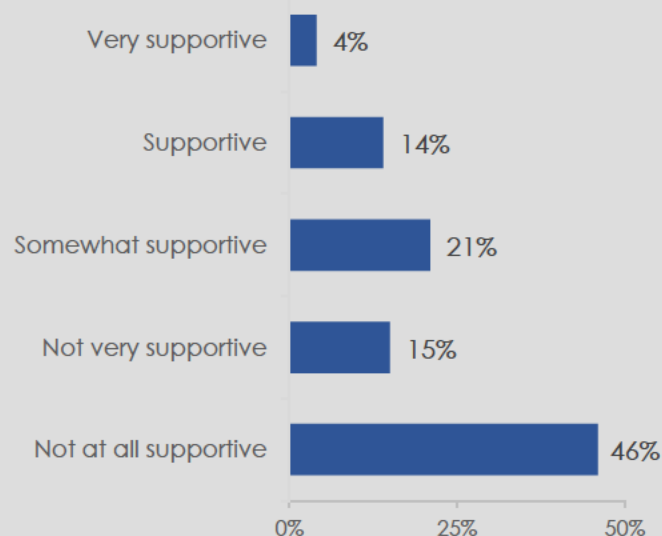


	Gender		Age				Ratepayer Status	
	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer
Top 3 Box %	72%	66%	77%	69%	63%	66%	69%	67%
Mean rating	3.22	3.21	3.23	3.32	3.02	3.26	3.26	2.86
Base	146	153	84	69	72	75	261	39

	Time lived in area		Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander		Does anyone living in your home have a disability?		Does anyone living in your home receive Commonwealth Government Pensions?	
	Up to 20 years	More than 20 years	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Top 3 Box %	74%	67%	69%	68%	75%	67%	64%	70%
Mean rating	3.28	3.18	3.13	3.22	3.40	3.15	3.09	3.25
Base	82	218	45	252	64	236	79	219

Option 2: Special Rate Variation

39% of residents are at least somewhat supportive of Council proceeding with Option 2 (SRV)



Under Option 2, Council would apply for an SRV of 38.88% including each year's rate peg, phased in over two years to maintain infrastructure and service and commence addressing the infrastructure backlog of works (i.e., works that have not been done). At the end of the period the Special Rate Variation increase would be built into the rate base.

If implemented, the SRV will apply to your general rates only and will not apply to the waste management, water and sewerage charges on your rates notices. SRV funds would not be used on waste management, water and sewerage services, which are all funded through direct fees and charges.

Under this option over the next two financial years:

1. Residential – The average residential rates, which are currently \$1,106 per annum, will increase by approximately \$264 in Year 1 and \$164 in Year 2 – meaning the average residential rate will be \$1,534 in 2026/2027.
2. Business – The average Business rates, which are currently \$5,899 per annum, will increase by approximately \$1,405 in Year 1 and \$877 in Year 2 – meaning the average business rate will be \$8,181 in 2026/2027.
3. Farmland – The average Farmland rates, which are currently \$5,337 per annum, will increase by approximately \$1,271 in Year 1 and \$793 in Year 2 – meaning the average farmland rate will be \$7,401 in 2026/2027.

The proposed SRV is anticipated to generate an additional revenue of \$6.2 million over a two-year period from 2025-2026 to 2026-2027 and will be used to fund maintenance of local infrastructure, including:

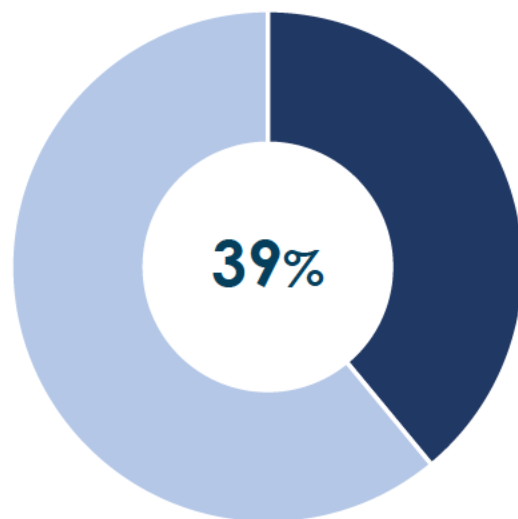
- Grading unsealed local roads to meet existing service levels;
- Additional maintenance of rural roads;
- Roadwork and renewal of urban streets;
- Increased funding to maintain existing services across Council operations
- Additional bitumen resealing and gravel re-sheeting to keep our roads at a good standard and prevent them from deteriorating;
- Culverts, causeways, drainage and footpath renewal; and
- Community assets renewal.

Option 2: Special Rate Variation

Lower support was recorded for Option 2, with 39% of residents at least somewhat supportive. Ratepayers and those with prior awareness of the SRV were significantly less supportive of this option.

	Overall	Aware of Special Rate Variation	
		Yes	No
Top 3 Box %	39%	32%	59%
Mean rating	2.16	1.95	2.73
Base	300	221	79

% at least somewhat supportive (T3B)



	Gender		Age				Ratepayer Status	
	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer
Top 3 Box %	36%	42%	47%	37%	37%	34%	34%	74%
Mean rating	2.14	2.18	2.24	2.12	2.11	2.14	2.01	3.16
Base	146	153	84	69	72	75	261	39

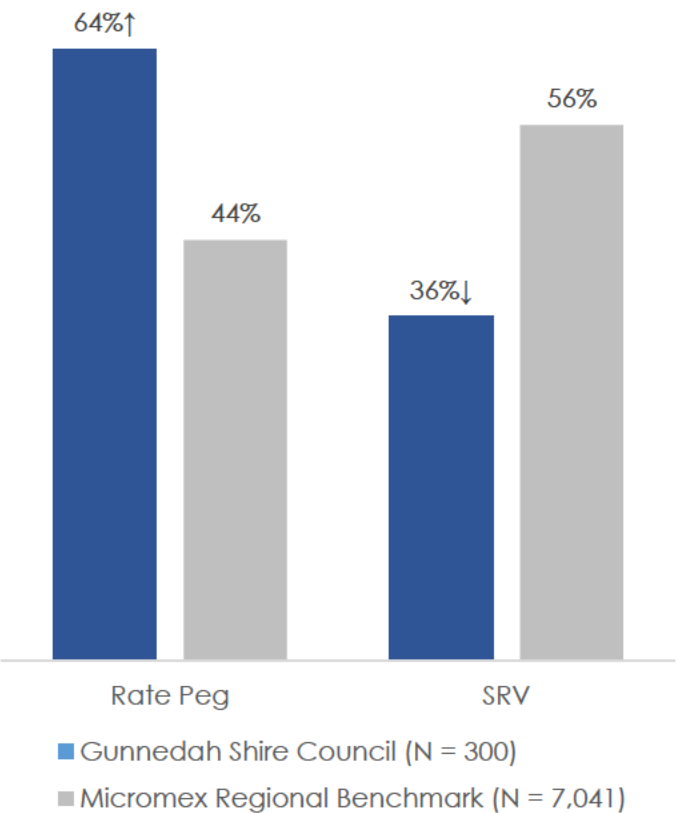
	Time lived in area		Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander		Does anyone living in your home have a disability?		Does anyone living in your home receive Commonwealth Government Pensions?	
	Up to 20 years	More than 20 years	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Top 3 Box %	39%	39%	37%	40%	34%	40%	45%	36%
Mean rating	2.12	2.17	2.05	2.18	2.05	2.19	2.30	2.08
Base	82	218	45	252	64	236	79	219

Scale: 1 = not at all supportive, 5 = very supportive
A significantly higher/lower level of support (by group)

Highest Preference: Rate Peg vs SRV

36% of residents are in preference of Council proceeding with the SRV and 64% in preference of the standard rate peg option. Those without prior awareness of the SRV, non-ratepayers and those with someone in their household receiving a Government pension are significantly more likely to prefer the SRV option.

Highest preference:



	Overall	Aware of Special Rate Variation	
		Yes	No
Rate Peg	64%	70%	47%
SRV	36%	30%	53%
Base	300	221	79

	Gender		Age				Ratepayer Status	
	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer
Rate Peg	68%	61%	60%	69%	65%	64%	68%	41%
SRV	32%	39%	40%	31%	35%	36%	32%	59%
Base	146	153	84	69	72	75	261	39

	Time lived in area		Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander		Does anyone living in your home have a disability?		Does anyone living in your home receive Commonwealth Government Pensions?	
	Up to 20 years	More than 20 years	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Rate Peg	68%	63%	62%	64%	70%	63%	54%	69%
SRV	32%	37%	38%	36%	30%	37%	46%	31%
Base	82	218	45	252	64	236	79	219

Reason for Preference

Main reasons for those in preference of Option 1 (Rate Peg) included a call for improved Council performance/financial management/communication, a lack of trust in Council and an inability to afford the SRV.

For those in preference of the SRV, key reasons centred on the need for improvements/maintenance within the area. Other comments also cited the need for the increase, but raised concerns regarding the increased costs associated and Council's performance/financial management/communication.

Option 1 – Rate Peg (64%)	N = 300
Need better Council performance/financial management/communication	41%
Don't trust Council/this is Council's fault	17%
Can't afford it/rates already too high	16%
Don't get quality services and facilities as it is/more needs to be done	15%
Cost of living/financial pressures	14%
The better option/need another option	7%
Airport was a waste of money	6%
Questioning the facts/numbers given in the survey	3%
Get money from elsewhere	2%
Other	4%
Option 2 – SRV (36%)	
To improve/maintain the town	24%
Can see it needs to be done but increase is too high/alternative payment options to assist	9%
Need better Council performance/financial management/communication	7%
All costs are going up	3%
Questioning the facts/numbers given in the survey	3%
Don't support either option/need another option	2%
Get money from elsewhere e.g. State Government, mining companies, etc.	1%
Not sure	1%
Other	2%

Reason for Preference: Example Verbatims (Top Codes)

Option 1: Rate Peg

Need better Council performance/financial management/communication (41%)	Don't trust Council/this is Council's fault (17%)	Can't afford it/rates already too high (16%)	Don't get quality services and facilities as it is/more needs to be done (15%)
"Communication has been missing, most people found out about this through Facebook" "Be more transparent with what they are doing with the money" "I don't see what Council is spending our rates on, they seem to do nothing even for our current rates" "Council waste money e.g. spent millions on the pool but it still leaks" "Council needs to budget and spend wisely" "Assets are already deteriorating but the council keeps spending money on things we don't need" "Council needs to stop contracting work out - buy the equipment and do it themselves, be independent"	"Promises haven't been kept in the past as it is so we can't trust it will done" "I don't believe Council will use the funds correctly, they wouldn't focus on what the community wants/needs" "I do not believe that council is being genuine with the options that are given" "Council are corrupt" "I believe there is a 3rd option that Council has not made public to community" "SRV funds will all go to council management" "This increase will not stop further increases"	"Farmers cannot afford to pay more rates living off the land" "As a pensioner, I cannot afford to pay anymore higher rates" "The rate increase is substantially less in Option 1, most people would not be able to afford the larger increase" "People can't afford rates already" "People living on a fixed income are the most at risk of loosing their homes" "Council have increased the rates already last year" "A 38% rate increase is too much because people are struggling as it is"	"Those that live in outlying areas that don't receive services, anyway, paying more rates for more of the same doesn't make sense" "No infrastructure or gravel road repairs have been done in the last 5-6 years anyway" "We are not getting the service we deserve" "Farmers only get the odd grading of rural roads" "I have complained to Council for 5 years about disability access, and nothing has been done" "Need to look after local residents" "I don't feel we're getting the services we are paying for as it is"

Reason for Preference: Example Verbatims (Top Codes)

Option 2: SRV

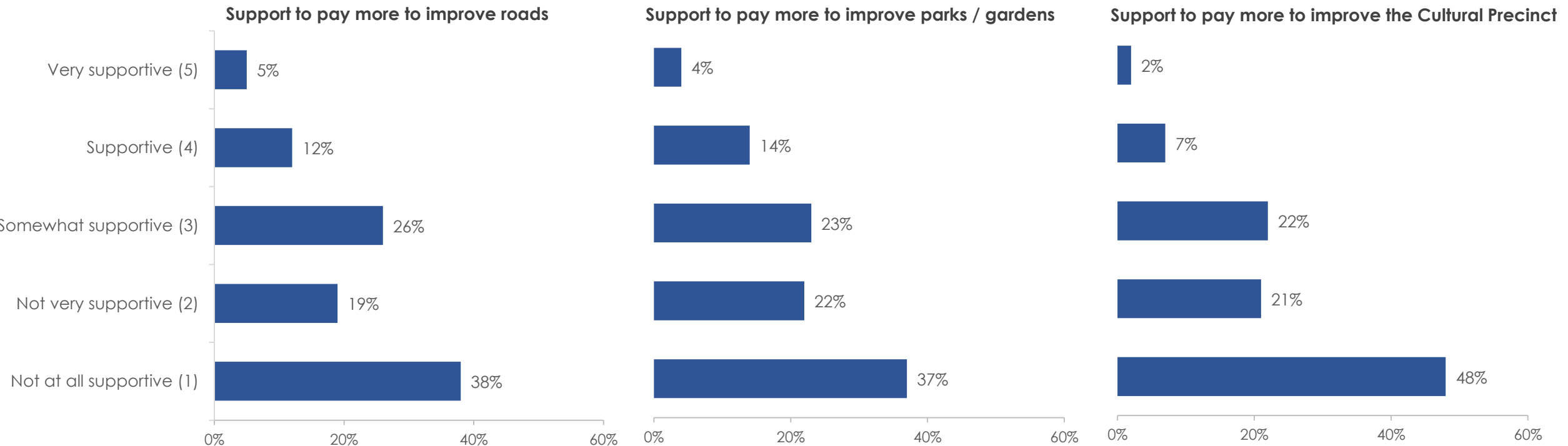
To improve/maintain the town (24%)	Can see it needs to be done but increase is too high/alternative payment options to assist (9%)	Need better Council performance/financial management/communication (7%)
"Roads are shocking and footpaths are dangerous, so they need to be maintained, there is no other option" "Potential of better services is a better life for my kids" "Paying extra will keep everything going, which we want and need" "Would like to see the town continue to improve" "Don't really have a choice. To keep everything maintained and upgraded it, has to be Option 2" "We live on a rural dirt road that is in disrepair and is dangerous" "As someone who works in emergency services, most of our services should be maintained and improved at the very least"	"Rates do need to go up to above CPI, but 38% is too high" "Rate increase too high for this option needs to be over 3 years and smaller %" "Between Option 1 and 2, I prefer Option 2, but would prefer a staged increase e.g. 10% or 15% for next 3 years" "Supportive, but don't know why it needs to be such a big jump from 5% to 38.88%" "Reluctantly support the SRV because it needs to be done, but is very frustrating that it hasn't been done sooner at a lower rate" "Will support Option 2 only if Council are actually going to stick to what they say they will do with the money"	"Transparency of where the money is being spent is required" "Council should be more responsible to live within their means and use the money they already have more wisely" "Expect rate rises provided the funds are spent on the community" "Lots more chiefs and not enough workers in Council" "All been done quickly, not thinking through and it's all happened so fast. It's a surprise" "All of us are tightening our purse strings and Council needs to too" "Inefficiency of Council has been a problem, especially when people are struggling financially"

Support for Paying More for Higher Service Levels

Residents recorded very low levels of support to pay more, over and above the proposed SRV, to improve service levels for roads, parks and gardens and the Cultural Precinct. Lowest support was for the Cultural Precinct (9% supportive/very supportive) and near identical support for roads and parks / gardens.

Ratepayers were significantly less supportive of paying more for all three areas.

	Improve roads	Improve Parks / Gardens	Improve the Cultural Precinct
T2B %	17%	18%	9%
T3B %	43%	41%	31%
Mean rating	2.27	2.26	1.94



- Q7a. How supportive would you be of paying more, over and above the proposed SRV, in rates and charges to improve service levels for our roads (e.g., improved drainage works, increased gravel re-sheeting, review ability to seal high priority unsealed roads).
- Q7b. How supportive would you be of paying more in rates and charges to improve service levels for our parks and gardens (e.g., expanded irrigation, improve Porcupine lookout, move skate park to tier one park, water saving measures, increased cleaning of public toilets, more proactive tree management)?
- Q7c. How supportive would you be of paying more in rates and charges to make improvements to the Cultural Precinct (e.g., new library, community meeting spaces, enhanced and uplifting performing arts venue and amenities).

Support for Paying More for Higher Service Levels

Support to pay more to improve roads

Q7a.	overall	Gender		Age				Ratepayer Status	
		Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer
Top 2 Box %	17%	21%	12%	21%	14%	13%	18%	15%	25%
Top 3 Box %	43%	47%	39%	47%	44%	40%	41%	39%	69%
Mean rating	2.27	2.44	2.11	2.35	2.21	2.25	2.25	2.19	2.79
Base	300	146	153	84	69	72	75	261	39

Support to pay more to improve the Cultural Precinct

Q7b.	overall	Gender		Age				Ratepayer Status	
		Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer
Top 2 Box %	18%	17%	19%	27%	18%	13%	14%	13%	54%
Top 3 Box %	41%	44%	37%	50%	42%	35%	34%	37%	67%
Mean rating	2.26	2.39	2.13	2.48	2.25	2.15	2.12	2.11	3.27
Base	300	146	153	84	69	72	75	261	39

Support to pay more to improve parks / gardens

Q7c.	overall	Gender		Age				Ratepayer Status	
		Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer
Top 2 Box %	9%	10%	9%	10%	13%	10%	4%	9%	14%
Top 3 Box %	31%	30%	32%	33%	31%	30%	30%	27%	59%
Mean rating	1.94	2.00	1.89	1.98	2.03	1.92	1.85	1.85	2.58
Base	300	146	153	84	69	72	75	261	39

Q7a. How supportive would you be of paying more, over and above the proposed SRV, in rates and charges to improve service levels for our roads?

Q7b. How supportive would you be of paying more in rates and charges to improve service levels for our parks and gardens?

Q7c. How supportive would you be of paying more in rates and charges to make improvements to the Cultural Precinct?

Scale: 1 = not at all supportive, 5 = very supportive
T2B% = Supportive/Very supportive, T3B% = at least somewhat supportive
A significantly higher/lower level of support (by group)

Support for Paying More for Higher Service Levels

Support to pay more to improve roads

Q7a.	Overall	Time lived in area		Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander		Does anyone living in your home have a disability?		Does anyone living in your home receive Commonwealth Government Pensions?	
		Up to 20 years	More than 20 years	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Top 2 Box %	17%	15%	17%	15%	17%	15%	17%	21%	15%
Top 3 Box %	43%	44%	43%	32%	45%	35%	46%	42%	43%
Mean rating	2.27	2.32	2.25	2.10	2.30	2.15	2.31	2.36	2.23
Base	300	82	218	45	252	64	236	79	219

Support to pay more to improve the Cultural Precinct

Q7b.	Overall	Time lived in area		Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander		Does anyone living in your home have a disability?		Does anyone living in your home receive Commonwealth Government Pensions?	
		Up to 20 years	More than 20 years	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Top 2 Box %	18%	15%	19%	16%	18%	11%	20%	17%	19%
Top 3 Box %	41%	40%	41%	39%	41%	32%	43%	41%	40%
Mean rating	2.26	2.21	2.28	2.25	2.26	2.02	2.33	2.33	2.23
Base	300	82	218	45	252	64	236	79	219

Support to pay more to improve parks / gardens

Q7c.	Overall	Time lived in area		Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander		Does anyone living in your home have a disability?		Does anyone living in your home receive Commonwealth Government Pensions?	
		Up to 20 years	More than 20 years	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Top 2 Box %	9%	8%	10%	12%	9%	12%	8%	11%	9%
Top 3 Box %	31%	29%	32%	34%	31%	28%	32%	36%	29%
Mean rating	1.94	1.99	1.93	1.99	1.94	1.88	1.96	2.03	1.90
Base	300	82	218	45	252	64	236	79	219

Q7a. How supportive would you be of paying more, over and above the proposed SRV, in rates and charges to improve service levels for our roads?

Q7b. How supportive would you be of paying more in rates and charges to improve service levels for our parks and gardens?

Q7c. How supportive would you be of paying more in rates and charges to make improvements to the Cultural Precinct?

Scale: 1 = not at all supportive, 5 = very supportive
T2B% = Supportive/Very supportive, T3B% = at least somewhat supportive 44



Additional Analyses

Appendix 1

Key Priorities

Key Priorities	N = 300	Key Priorities	N = 300
Road maintenance/upgrade	47%	Airport	3%
Parks/playgrounds/sporting facilities	17%	Building the community/support	3%
Council communication/transparency/consultation	15%	Disability services	3%
Reduce rates/better value for rates	15%	Housing availability and affordability	3%
Employment opportunities/attracting business	14%	More/upgrading infrastructure e.g. lighting, footpaths, etc.	3%
Council's management/accountability	13%	Tourism	3%
Crime and safety	13%	Education	2%
Sewerage/flood/water management	13%	Environment/sustainability	2%
Youth services	13%	More events/activities	2%
Waste management	10%	Public transport	2%
Better financial management	9%	Town planning/development	1%
Maintaining the local area	9%	Keeping heritage	1%
More/better/accessibility to services/facilities	9%	Cost of living	1%
Health services	7%	Extractive industries	<1%
Improve the DA process	6%	Other	2%
Aged care services	3%	No response	4%

Importance Compared to the Micromex Regional Benchmark

Service/Facility	Gunnedah Shire Council T2 box importance score	Micromex LGA Benchmark – Regional T2 box importance score	Variance
Opportunities to participate in Council decision making	83%▲	73%	10%
Economic development	88%	79%	9%
Drainage/flood management	87%	82%	5%
Sewerage management	85%	81%	4%
Water supply	91%	88%	3%
Emergency services (i.e. SES, RFS)	94%	91%	3%
Landfills and waste transfer stations	82%	80%	2%
Disability access	81%	82%	-1%
General garbage collection	90%	91%	-1%
Unsealed roads	76%	77%	-1%
Management of development	78%	80%	-2%
Support for volunteers	76%	79%	-3%
Tourism	72%	75%	-3%
Youth services	72%	75%	-3%

Note: Benchmark differences are based on assumed variants of +/- 10%, with variants beyond +/- 10% more likely to be significant
▲/▼ = positive/negative difference equal to/greater than 10% from Benchmark.

Note: T2 = important/very important 47

Importance Compared to the Micromex Regional Benchmark

Service/Facility	Gunnedah Shire Council T2 box importance score	Micromex LGA Benchmark – Regional T2 box importance score	Variance
Aged care services (i.e. Go Co)	79%	83%	-4%
Recycling	85%	89%	-4%
Footpaths and cycleways	72%	76%	-4%
Street cleaning	73%	77%	-4%
Quality of town centres and public spaces	83%	89%	-6%
Rural sealed roads	85%	93%	-8%
Environmental and sustainability initiatives	71%	80%	-9%
Heritage conservation/promotion	62%▼	72%	-10%
Relationship with Indigenous residents	59%▼	70%	-11%
Sporting grounds	66%▼	77%	-11%
Swimming pools	57%▼	71%	-14%
Public buildings and village halls	52%▼	68%	-16%
Public parks	61%▼	83%	-22%
Libraries	42%▼	70%	-28%
Gunnedah airport	31%▼	77%	-46%

Note: Benchmark differences are based on assumed variants of +/- 10%, with variants beyond +/- 10% more likely to be significant
▲/▼ = positive/negative difference equal to/greater than 10% from Benchmark.

Note: T2 = important/very important 48

Satisfaction Compared to the Micromex Regional Benchmark

Service/Facility	Gunnedah Shire Council T3 box satisfaction score	Micromex LGA Benchmark – Regional T3 box satisfaction score	Variance
Sewerage management	93%	90%	3%
Relationship with Indigenous residents	81%	80%	1%
Water supply	86%	85%	1%
Libraries	95%	94%	1%
Emergency services (i.e. SES, RFS)	86%	86%	0%
Landfills and waste transfer stations	78%	80%	-2%
Public buildings and village halls	86%	88%	-2%
Recycling	84%	86%	-2%
Public parks	83%	86%	-3%
Swimming pools	81%	85%	-4%
Support for volunteers	82%	86%	-4%
Aged care services (i.e. Go Co)	80%	85%	-5%
Disability access	75%	79%	-4%
Sporting grounds	85%	89%	-4%
Quality of town centres and public spaces	80%	85%	-5%

Note: Benchmark differences are based on assumed variants of +/- 10%, with variants beyond +/- 10% more likely to be significant
▲/▼ = positive/negative difference equal to/greater than 10% from Benchmark.

Note: T3 = at least somewhat satisfied 49

Satisfaction Compared to the Micromex Regional Benchmark

Service/Facility	Gunnedah Shire Council T3 box satisfaction score	Micromex LGA Benchmark – Regional T3 box satisfaction score	Variance
Footpaths and cycleways	72%	77%	-5%
Street cleaning	77%	86%	-9%
General garbage collection	79%	88%	-9%
Environmental and sustainability initiatives	71%▼	81%	-10%
Tourism	74%▼	84%	-10%
Heritage conservation/promotion	74%▼	85%	-11%
Drainage/flood management	56%▼	76%	-20%
Youth services	53%▼	73%	-20%
Economic development	54%▼	75%	-21%
Management of development	44%▼	66%	-22%
Rural sealed roads	34%▼	56%	-22%
Gunnedah airport	58%▼	86%	-28%
Unsealed roads	19%▼	50%	-31%
Opportunities to participate in Council decision making	33%▼	65%	-32%

Note: Benchmark differences are based on assumed variants of +/- 10%, with variants beyond +/- 10% more likely to be significant
▲/▼ = positive/negative difference equal to/greater than 10% from Benchmark.

Note: T3 = at least somewhat satisfied 50

Performance Gap Analysis

When analysing performance gap data, it is important to consider both stated satisfaction and the absolute size of the performance gap.

Performance Gap Ranking

Service/Facility		Importance T2 Box	Satisfaction T3 Box	Performance Gap (Importance – Satisfaction)
Infrastructure	Unsealed roads	76%	19%	57%
Infrastructure	Rural sealed roads	85%	34%	51%
Corporate services and management	Opportunities to participate in Council decision making	83%	33%	50%
Corporate services and management	Management of development	78%	44%	34%
Corporate services and management	Economic development	88%	54%	34%
Infrastructure	Drainage/flood management	87%	56%	31%
Infrastructure	Urban streets	87%	58%	29%
Human services	Youth services	72%	53%	19%
Infrastructure	General garbage collection	90%	79%	11%
Human services	Emergency services (i.e. SES, RFS)	94%	86%	8%
Human services	Disability access	81%	75%	6%
Infrastructure	Water supply	91%	86%	5%
Infrastructure	Landfills and waste transfer stations	82%	78%	4%
Community facilities	Quality of town centres and public spaces	83%	80%	3%
Infrastructure	Recycling	85%	84%	1%
Corporate services and management	Environmental and sustainability initiatives	71%	71%	0%

Note: T2 = important/very important
T3 = at least somewhat satisfied

Performance Gap Analysis

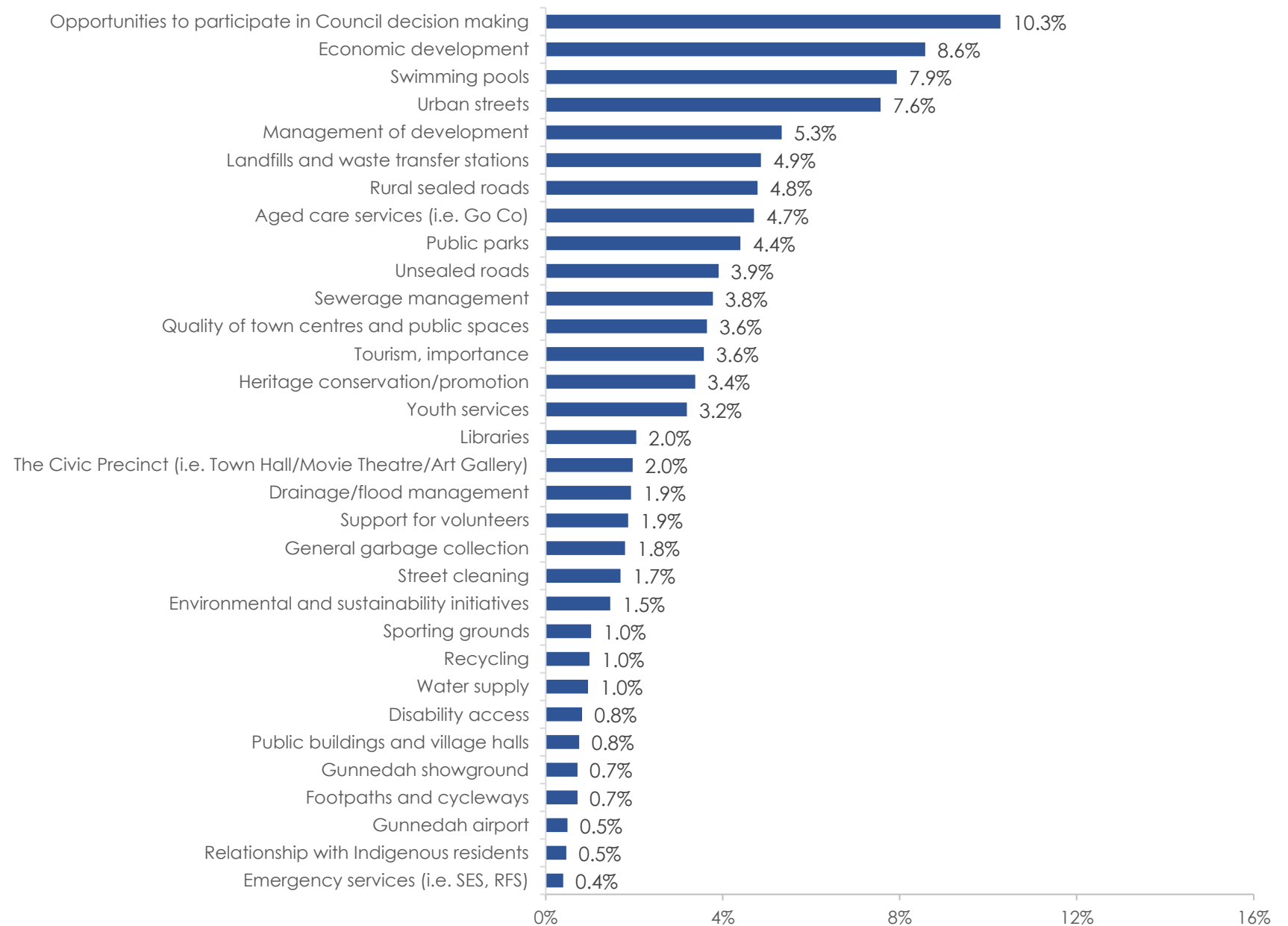
Performance Gap Ranking continue

Service/Facility		Importance T2 Box	Satisfaction T3 Box	Performance Gap (Importance – Satisfaction)
Infrastructure	Footpaths and cycleways	72%	72%	0%
Human services	Aged care services (i.e. Go Co)	79%	80%	-1%
Corporate services and management	Tourism, importance	72%	74%	-2%
Infrastructure	Street cleaning	73%	77%	-4%
Human services	Support for volunteers	76%	82%	-6%
Infrastructure	Sewerage management	85%	93%	-8%
Community facilities	Gunnedah showground	66%	77%	-11%
Corporate services and management	Heritage conservation/promotion	62%	74%	-12%
Community facilities	Sporting grounds	66%	85%	-19%
Human services	Relationship with Indigenous residents	59%	81%	-22%
Community facilities	Public parks	61%	83%	-22%
Community facilities	Swimming pools	57%	81%	-24%
Community facilities	The Civic Precinct (i.e. Town Hall/Movie Theatre/Art Gallery)	62%	89%	-27%
Infrastructure	Gunnedah airport	31%	58%	-27%
Community facilities	Public buildings and village halls	52%	86%	-34%
Community facilities	Libraries	42%	95%	-53%

Note: T2 = important/very important
T3 = at least somewhat satisfied

Regression Analysis – Influence on Overall Satisfaction

The chart to the right summarises the influence of the 32 facilities/ services on overall satisfaction with Council's performance, based on the Regression analysis.



Council's Used to Create the Micromex Regional Benchmark

The Regional Benchmark was composed from the Council areas listed below:

Albury City Council	Hawkesbury City Council	Narrandera Shire Council
Ballina Shire Council	Kempsey Shire Council	Parkes Shire Council
Bathurst Regional Council	Lachlan Shire Council	Port Macquarie-Hastings Council
Bland Shire Council	Lake Macquarie City Council	Richmond Valley Council
Blue Mountains City Council	Leeton Shire Council	Singleton Shire Council
Byron Shire Council	Lismore City Council	Tamworth Regional Council
Cabonne Shire Council	Lithgow City Council	Tenterfield Shire Council
Central Coast Council	Liverpool Plains Shire Council	Tweed Shire Council
Cessnock City Council	Maitland City Council	Upper Hunter Shire Council
City of Newcastle	MidCoast Council	Wagga Wagga City Council
Coffs Harbour City Council	Mid-Western Regional Council	Walgett Shire Council
Devonport City Council	Moree Plains Shire Council	Weddin Shire Council
Dungog Shire Council	Murray River Council	Wingecarribee Shire Council
Eurobodalla Shire Council	Murrumbidgee Council	Wollondilly Shire Council
Forbes Shire Council	Muswellbrook Shire Council	Yass Valley Council
Glen Innes Severn Shire Council	Narrabri Shire Council	



Questionnaire

Appendix 2

Gunnedah Shire Council
Community Survey
July 2024

Good morning/afternoon/evening, my name is _____ from Micromex Research and we are conducting a survey on behalf of Gunnedah Shire Council. The survey will take about 15 minutes.

It is a random sample survey and accordingly I would like to speak to the person who has the next birthday in your household and is over the age of 18 years, would you be able to assist us please?

Thank you for agreeing to assist us with this survey.

QA. Before we start, I would like to check whether you work for Gunnedah Shire Council? (SR)

Position	Answers	Notes
1	Yes	Terminate
2	No	

QB. Please stop me when I read out your age bracket: Prompt (SR)

Position	Answers	Notes
1	18-34	
2	35-49	
3	50-64	
4	65+	

QC. In which area of the shire do you live? (SR)

Position	Answers	Notes
1	Gunnedah	
2	Curlewis	
3	Carroll	
4	Tambar Springs	
5	Breeza	
6	Emerald Hill	
7	Kelvin	
8	Mullaley	
9	Other rural areas	

QDa. Does your household pay Council rates to Gunnedah Shire Council, if so, which type(s) do you pay? Prompt (MR)

Position	Answers	Notes
1	Residential (1)	
2	Business (2)	
3	Farmland (3)	
4	None of these	Default to residential script <exclusive/>

QDb. Which type of rates do you pay the most for? (SR)

Position	Answers	Notes
1	Residential (1)	Show if selected in QDa
2	Business (2)	Show if selected in QDa
3	Farmland (3)	Show if selected in QDa

Part A

Q1. In the first part could you please indicate which best describes your opinion of the importance of the following services/facilities to you, and in the second part, the level of satisfaction with the performance of that service. The scale is from 1 to 5 where 1 is low importance and low satisfaction, and 5 is high importance and high satisfaction. Prompt ONLY ASK SAT IF IMP 4 OR 5 SCALE

Community facilities

Position	Answers	Importance					Satisfaction					NA
		Low				High	Low				High	
		1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
1	Public parks											
2	Swimming pools											
3	Sporting grounds											
4	Libraries											
5	Public buildings and village halls											
6	The Civic Precinct (i.e. Town Hall/Movie Theatre/Art Gallery)											
7	Gunnedah showground											
8	Quality of town centres and public spaces											

Infrastructure

Position	Answers	Importance					Satisfaction					NA
		Low				High	Low				High	
1	Unsealed roads	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
2	Rural sealed roads											
3	Urban streets											
4	Footpaths and cycleways											
5	Street cleaning											
6	Gunnedah airport											
7	Drainage/flood management											
8	Water supply											
9	Sewerage management											
10	General garbage collection											
11	Landfills and waste transfer stations											
12	Recycling											

Human services

Position	Answers	Importance					Satisfaction					NA
		Low				High	Low				High	
1	Youth services											
2	Aged care services (i.e. Go Co)											
3	Relationship with Indigenous residents											
4	Support for volunteers											
5	Disability access											
6	Emergency services (i.e. SES, RFS)											

Corporate services and management

Position	Answers	Importance					Satisfaction					NA
		Low				High	Low				High	
1	Opportunities to participate in Council decision making											
2	Management of development											
3	Tourism											
4	Economic development											
5	Environmental and sustainability initiatives											
6	Heritage conservation/promotion											

Definitions to be read out for Part A – 'Corporate services and management'

- Economic development is attracting and assisting new businesses and creating jobs
- Management of development is policing building construction and what types of development can be located in which areas

Q2. What do you think are the key priorities for Council in the local area? (TEXT)

Position	Answers	Notes
1		5 Lines

Part B

Q3. How satisfied are you currently with the level of communication Council has with the community? Prompt (SR)

Value	Answers	Notes
5	Very satisfied	
4	Satisfied	
3	Somewhat satisfied	
2	Not very satisfied	
1	Not at all satisfied	

Q4. 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? Prompt (SR)

Value	Answers	Notes
5	Very satisfied	
4	Satisfied	
3	Somewhat satisfied	
2	Not very satisfied	
1	Not at all satisfied	

As we have just discussed Gunnedah Shire Council delivers a broad range of services and has the responsibility to maintain the facilities and infrastructure across the shire.

At present, Council's revenue is regulated by the NSW Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART). IPART limits the amount by which councils can increase rates from one year to the next. This is called the rate peg. Council's Long Term Financial Plan provides for a 5.0% rate peg increase for the 2025/2026 and 2026/2027 financial years and 2.50% for the remaining years of the Plan. However, the rate peg will not provide enough revenue to maintain service levels.

Over recent years, Council has implemented a range of productivity savings and reduced costs across our operations, but there are no easy solutions to addressing an increasing funding gap. If Council does not address this gap now, our community assets (such as our roads, drainage, swimming pools and public buildings) will deteriorate. To address this situation, councils are able to apply for rate increases above rate peg. This is called a Special Rate Variation or SRV.

Gunnedah Shire Council is considering applying for a permanent SRV. There are two options which I would like you to consider.

Let's look at the options in more detail:

- Option 1 – Rate Peg Only. Council will need to defer necessary capital works, as well as revise their range and levels of services to avoid a deteriorating cash position – which is not sustainable in the long term
- Option 2 – Maintain. The proposed SRV is anticipated to generate additional revenue of \$6.2 million over a two-year period from 2025-2026 to 2026-2027 and will be used to fund existing services and maintenance of local infrastructure

Council acknowledges that any rate increase may adversely impact some community members. Council has a Hardship Policy and alternative payment options to assist ratepayers should they have difficulty keeping up with their rate payments.

Programmer note: Rotate Order

Option 1: Rate peg only

No special rate variation. This option would continue the status quo with rates only increasing by an estimated rate peg amount (assumed to be 5.0% this year).

Under this option over the next two financial years: (READ OUT/SHOW APPROPRIATE SCRIPT BASED ON ANSWERS AT QE, but only 1)

1. Residential – The average residential rates, which are currently \$1,106 per annum, will increase by approximately \$54 in Year 1 and \$58 in Year 2 – meaning the average residential rate will be \$1,218 in 2026/2027.
2. Business – The average Business rates, which are currently \$5,899 per annum, will increase by approximately \$286 in Year 1 and \$309 in Year 2 – meaning the average business rate will be \$6,494 in 2026/2027.
3. Farmland – The average Farmland rates, which are currently \$5,337 per annum, will increase by approximately \$258 in Year 1 and \$280 in Year 2 – meaning the average farmland rate will be \$5,875 in 2026/2027.

Under this option the impact would be:

- Our sealed and gravel road networks would deteriorate.
- Council would not be able to maintain the range of facilities and services currently provided.
- Council would rely heavily on grant funding to renew existing assets.
- Community and recreational facilities such as pools and buildings will continue to deteriorate if grant funding is not successful, and potentially closed when the risk of operating becomes unacceptable.
- Council's backlog of roadworks would continue to increase and gravel roads would not be improved.

Q5a. How supportive are you of Council proceeding with Option 1? Prompt (SR)

Value	Answers	Notes
5	Very supportive	
4	Supportive	
3	Somewhat supportive	
2	Not very supportive	
1	Not at all supportive	

Option 2: Special Rate Variation

Under Option 2, Council would apply for an SRV of 38.88% including each year's rate peg, phased in over two years to maintain infrastructure and service and commence addressing the infrastructure backlog of works (i.e., works that have not been done). At the end of the period the Special Rate Variation increase would be built into the rate base.

If implemented, the SRV will apply to your general rates only and will not apply to the waste management, water and sewerage charges on your rates notices. SRV funds would not be used on waste management, water and sewerage services, which are all funded through direct fees and charges.

Under this option over the next two financial years: (READ OUT/SHOW APPROPRIATE SCRIPT BASED ON ANSWERS AT QE, but only 1)

1. Residential – The average residential rates, which are currently \$1,106 per annum, will increase by approximately \$264 in Year 1 and \$164 in Year 2 – meaning the average residential rate will be \$1,534 in 2026/2027.
2. Business – The average Business rates, which are currently \$5,899 per annum, will increase by approximately \$1,405 in Year 1 and \$877 in Year 2 – meaning the average business rate will be \$8,181 in 2026/2027.
3. Farmland – The average Farmland rates, which are currently \$5,337 per annum, will increase by approximately \$1,271 in Year 1 and \$793 in Year 2 – meaning the average farmland rate will be \$7,401 in 2026/2027.

The proposed SRV is anticipated to generate an additional revenue of \$6.2 million over a two-year period from 2025-2026 to 2026-2027 and will be used to fund maintenance of local infrastructure, including:

- Grading unsealed local roads to meet existing service levels;
- Additional maintenance of rural roads;
- Roadwork and renewal of urban streets;
- Increased funding to maintain existing services across Council operations
- Additional bitumen resealing and gravel re-sheeting to keep our roads at a good standard and prevent them from deteriorating;
- Culverts, causeways, drainage and footpath renewal; and
- Community assets renewal.

Q5b. How supportive are you of Council proceeding with Option 2? Prompt (SR)

Value	Answers	Notes
5	Very supportive	
4	Supportive	
3	Somewhat supportive	
2	Not very supportive	
1	Not at all supportive	

Q5c. Which of the following 2 options do you most prefer? Programming note: Rotate Order

Position	Answers	Notes
1	Option 1 – Rate Peg Only (No SRV , noting this will lead to a further deterioration of our assets and reduction in services)	
2	Option 2 – Special Rate Variation (SRV to maintain our current targeted service levels)	

Q5d. What is your reason for choosing that option as your highest preference? (TEXT)

Position	Answers	Notes
1		5 Lines

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

Position	Answers	Notes
1	Yes	
2	No	Go to D1
3	Not sure	Go to D1

Q6b. How were you informed of the Special Rate Variation? Please answer yes or no as I read each one. Prompt (MR)

Position	Answers	Notes
1	Rate notice insert	
2	Council website	
3	Newspaper advertisement	
4	Radio advertisement	
5	Social media	
6	Other (Please specify)	Go to Q6bi

Q6bi. Other (Please specify). (TEXT)

Position	Answers	Notes
1		1 line

Having discussed the impact of the special rate variation, we are now interested in your thoughts regarding higher service levels than would be possible within the SRV.

Q7a. How supportive would you be of paying more, over and above the proposed SRV, in rates and charges to improve service levels for our roads (e.g., improved drainage works, increased gravel re-sheeting, review ability to seal high priority unsealed roads). (SR)

Value	Answers	Notes
5	Very supportive	
4	Supportive	
3	Somewhat supportive	
2	Not very supportive	
1	Not at all supportive	

Q7b. How supportive would you be of paying more in rates and charges to improve service levels for our parks and gardens (e.g., expanded irrigation, improve Porcupine lookout, move skate park to tier one park, water saving measures, increased cleaning of public toilets, more proactive tree management)? (SR)

Value	Answers	Notes
5	Very supportive	
4	Supportive	
3	Somewhat supportive	
2	Not very supportive	
1	Not at all supportive	

Q7c. How supportive would you be of paying more in rates and charges to make improvements to the Cultural Precinct (e.g., new library, community meeting spaces, enhanced and uplifting performing arts venue and amenities). (SR)

Value	Answers	Notes
5	Very supportive	
4	Supportive	
3	Somewhat supportive	
2	Not very supportive	
1	Not at all supportive	

Demographics

D1. Which of the following best describes the house where you are currently living? Prompt (SR)

Position	Answers	Notes
1	I/We own/are currently buying this property	
2	I/We currently rent this property	

D2. How long have you lived in Gunnedah Shire? (SR) Prompt

Position	Answers	Notes
1	Less than 12 months	
2	1-5 years	
3	6-10 years	
4	11-20 years	
5	More than 20 years	

D3. What is your gender? DO NOT PROMPT (SR)

Position	Answers	Notes
1	Male	
2	Female	
3	Non-binary	

D4. Do you identify as being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander? (SR)

Position	Answers	Notes
1	Yes	
2	No	
3	Prefer not to say	

D5. Does anyone living in your home have a disability? (SR)

Position	Answers	Notes
1	Yes	
2	No	
3	Prefer not to say	

D6. Does anyone living in your home receive a Commonwealth Government Pensions? (SR)

Position	Answers	Notes
1	Yes	
2	No	
3	Prefer not to say	

As a participant in this research, you may be invited to participate in further community consultation, such as focus groups, about specific issues.

At this stage we are developing a register of interest for future consultations.

R1. Would you be interested in registering your interest? (SR)

Position	Answers	Notes
1	Yes	
2	No	Go to end

R2. May I please confirm your contact details? (TEXT)

Position	Answers	Notes
1	First name	1 line
2	Surname	1 line
3	Email address	1 line
4	Phone number	1 line

Thank you for your time and assistance. This market research is carried out in compliance with the Privacy Act, and the information you provided will be used only for research purposes. The research has been conducted by Micromex Research on behalf of Gunnedah Shire Council.

If you have any further questions regarding this special rate variation, please contact Customer Service on 6740 2100 or visit the Gunnedah Shire Council website.

Thank you very much for your time. Enjoy the rest of your evening.

The information contained herein is believed to be reliable and accurate, however, no guarantee is given as to its accuracy and reliability, and no responsibility or liability for any information, opinions or commentary contained herein, or for any consequences of its use, will be accepted by Micromex Research, or by any person involved in the preparation of this report.



Telephone: (02) 4352 2388
Web: www.micromex.com.au
Email: