

2017-18 ANNUAL COMMUNITY SURVEY SUMMARY REPORT

October 2018



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Introduction

This is the seventeenth year that Metropolis Research has conducted the *Community Survey* program for the City of Darebin. The *Community Survey* has been conducted quarterly since 2007 to provide a regular assessment of the community's perceptions throughout each year. Prior to 2007, the *Community Survey* was conducted annually.

The aim of the survey is to provide Council with a comprehensive picture of the community's perception of Council's performance across seventeen services and facilities, aspects of governance and leadership, aspects of planning and housing development, aspects of customer service, as well as Council's overall performance. In addition, each quarterly survey includes a more detailed investigation of one group of services/facilities.

This survey does not aim to replace satisfaction surveys of individual client based services. It does however provide a broad measure of the community's perception of performance for core services and allows for comparison of services across Council.

In addition to measuring community satisfaction with aspects of Council performance, the *Community Survey* measures community perception of safety in public areas of Darebin. The *Community Survey* also quantifies the issues of importance to the community and examines specific questions as required by Council each quarter.

The sample size and methodology employed in this survey is statistically robust and provides results with a level of statistical significance generally greater than that obtained by other individual service specific surveys. Within the margin of error (as detailed for individual services), the results published in this report are an accurate reflection of the community's perceptions. Readers are advised however to be mindful of the sample size for the quarterly results and treat the results appropriately.

Methodology, response rate and statistical strength

The *Community Survey* program is conducted as a face-to-face interview style survey of approximately fifteen to twenty minutes duration, conducted at the door of residential properties located within the City of Darebin. All surveys are conducted daylight hours at weekends to ensure the best opportunity for all residents to participate if invited. The sample is drawn in equal numbers from each of the eight precincts comprising the City of Darebin. The sample has been weighted to ensure that each precinct contributed the correct proportion to the overall results, based on the *2016 Census of Population & Housing*.

A total of approximately 6,022 households were approached to participate in the survey over the course of the four quarterly surveys. Of these households, 3,261 were unattended when approached, were therefore not invited to participate, and played no further part in the research. 1,765 refused to participate and one thousand completed the survey.



This provides a response rate of 36.2%, which is almost identical to the 34.6% recorded in 2016-17. This is consistent with the response rate achieved by *Governing Melbourne* across metropolitan Melbourne as well as other municipal *Annual Community Survey* programs conducted by Metropolis Research.

The 95% confidence interval (margin of error) of these results is plus or minus 3.1%, at the fifty percent level. In other words, if a yes / no question obtains a result of fifty percent yes, it is 95% certain that the true value of this result is within the range of 46.9% and 53.1%. This is based on a total sample size of one thousand respondents, and an underlying population of the City of Darebin of 158,553. The 95% confidence interval is approximately 6.2% for the precinct level results.

Governing Melbourne

Governing Melbourne is a service provided by Metropolis Research since 2010. *Governing Melbourne* is a survey of one thousand respondents drawn in equal numbers from every municipality in metropolitan Melbourne.

Governing Melbourne provides an objective, consistent and reliable basis on which to compare the results of this survey. It is not intended to provide a “league table” for local councils, rather to provide additional context with which to understand the results of this survey.

Glossary of terms

Precinct

The term precinct is used by Metropolis Research to describe the small areas utilised by Council in the *Community Profile*. Readers seeking to use precinct results should seek clarification of specific precinct boundaries if necessary.

Measurable and statistically significant

A measurable difference is one where the difference between or change in results is sufficiently large to ensure that they are in fact different results, i.e. the difference is statistically significant. This is due to the fact that survey results are subject to a margin of error or an area of uncertainty.

Significant result

Metropolis Research uses the term *significant result* to describe a change or difference between results that Metropolis Research believes to be of sufficient magnitude that they may impact on relevant aspects of policy development, service delivery and the evaluation of performance and are therefore identified and noted as significant or important.



Somewhat / notable / marginal

Metropolis Research will describe some results or changes in results as being marginally, somewhat, or notably higher or lower. These are not statistical terms rather they are interpretive. They are used to draw attention to results that may be of interest or relevant to policy development and service delivery. These terms are often used for results that may not be statistically significant due to sample size or other factors but may none-the-less provide some insight.

95% confidence interval

Average satisfaction results are presented in this report with a 95% confidence interval included. These figures reflect the range of values within which it is 95% certain that the true average satisfaction falls.

The 95% confidence interval based on a one-sample t-test is used for the mean scores presented in this report. The margin of error around the other results in this report at the municipal level is plus or minus 3.1%.

Satisfaction categories

Metropolis Research typically categorises satisfaction results to assist in the understanding and interpretative of the results. These categories have been developed over many years as a guide to the scores presented in the report and are designed to give a general context. These categories are designed to be indicative of the level of satisfaction. They are generally defined as follows:

<i>Excellent:</i>	Scores of 7.75 and above are categorised as excellent
<i>Very Good:</i>	Scores of 7.25 to less than 7.75 are categorised as very good
<i>Good:</i>	Scores of 6.5 to less than 7.25 are categorised as good
<i>Solid:</i>	Scores of 6 to less than 6.5 are categorised as solid
<i>Poor:</i>	Scores less than 6 are categorised as poor
<i>Very Poor:</i>	Scores less than 5.50 are categorised as very poor
<i>Extremely Poor:</i>	Scores less than 5 are categorised as extremely poor

Executive summary

Satisfaction with the performance of the Darebin City Council across all areas of responsibility (**overall performance**) increased 2.2% this year, up from 6.69 to 6.84 out of a potential ten. This level of satisfaction is categorised as “good”. Satisfaction with Darebin City Council’s overall performance remains marginally, but not measurably higher than the 2018 metropolitan Melbourne average as recorded in *Governing Melbourne*. *Governing Melbourne* is an independent survey of all thirty-one metropolitan Melbourne municipalities, and in 2018 had a total sample size of 1,060 respondents.



More than four-fifths (83.3%) of respondents were satisfied with Council's overall performance, whilst 8.6% (down from 8.8%) were dissatisfied.

There was some variation in satisfaction with Council's overall performance observed across the municipality, with respondents from Kingsbury-Bundoora rating satisfaction measurably and significantly higher than the municipal average, and respondents from Northcote rating it measurably lower than average.

There was also a significant degree of variation in satisfaction with Council's overall performance observed by respondent profile, with the following pattern evident:

- ⊗ **Higher than average satisfaction** - adolescents and young adults (aged 15 to 35 years), rental (both public and private) households, and newer residents of Darebin (less than five years) tended to be more satisfied than average.
- ⊗ **Lower than average satisfaction** – middle-aged and older adults (aged 46 to 75 years), home owners and mortgagees, and long-term residents of Darebin (ten years or more) tended to be less satisfied than average.

This pattern of satisfaction by age structure, housing situation and period of residence is not unique to the City of Darebin, and tends to be a strong theme across metropolitan Melbourne.

It is important to note that there was no meaningful variation in satisfaction with Council's overall performance observed by the respondents' gender, or language spoken at home. Consistent with their small numbers in the Darebin community, there was only fourteen respondents identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. These respondents tended to be on average very marginally but not measurably less satisfied with Council's performance than other respondents.

Consistent with the stable satisfaction with Council's overall performance, the average satisfaction with the six aspects of **governance and leadership** increased by 1.1% this year, up from 6.86 to 6.92, and remains categorised as "good".

Respondents rated as "very good" Council's performance meeting the needs of the multi-cultural community (7.43). This result strongly suggest that Council is effectively engaging with its diverse and multi-cultural community. This is further borne out by the fact that respondents from multi-lingual households reported similar levels of satisfaction with Council performance than respondents from English speaking households.

Respondents rated as "good" the core aspects of governance and leadership including; communicating its programs and services (7.07), community consultation and engagement (6.78), lobbying and making representations (6.72), and making decisions in the interests of the community (6.67).





Satisfaction with these aspects varied by demographic profile (age, gender, language spoken at home, period of residence, disability, and ATSI status) in a similar pattern to overall satisfaction with Council.

Respondents were again this year asked to rate their agreement with six statements about [Council as an organisation](#). The average agreement with the five positively worded statements all improved this year, whilst agreement that Council was bureaucratic and ineffective declined a little this year. There was strong agreement that Council provides important services (7.15), solid agreement that Council is trustworthy and reliable (6.94), is progressive and up-to-date (6.92), and has a sound direction for the future (6.67). There was mild agreement that Council offers value for rates (5.83), and respondents were neutral about whether Council was bureaucratic and ineffective (5.04).

[Customer service](#) remains a very positive area of Council performance, with the average satisfaction with the five included aspects of customer service recorded at 7.90, or “excellent”. Customer service is again this year the area of Council performance with the highest average satisfaction.

There were seventeen [Council services and facilities](#) included in the *Community Survey*, and the average satisfaction with these services and facilities was 7.41 this year, a “very good” level. This result is up on the 7.26 recorded for eighteen services and facilities included last year. It is important to note that this average satisfaction with services and facilities was measurably and significantly higher than satisfaction with Council’s overall performance. Of these seventeen services and facilities, only the performance of Council managing local traffic (6.49) reported a satisfaction score lower than overall satisfaction with Council.

[Traffic](#) remains the most significant issue in the City of Darebin this year, highlighted by a number of questions included in the survey program. Satisfaction with the volume and speed of traffic both on local streets and main roads remains very low. Satisfaction with the volume of traffic on local streets was rated as “poor”, and for main roads was rated as “very poor”. Satisfaction with the speed of traffic on main roads was rated as “solid” and residential streets was rated as “poor”. As discussed above, satisfaction with the performance of Council managing local traffic was rated as “solid”. In addition, as in previous years “traffic management” remains the most commonly identified issue to address in the City of Darebin in the coming twelve months, with 26.6% (up from 22.8%) identifying this issue this year. Respondents identifying “traffic management” as an issue for Council were on average 2.8% less satisfied with Council’s overall performance than the municipal average.

The second significant issue of concern in the City of Darebin was related to the nature, extent and impact of [planning and new housing development](#) occurring in the municipality. Issues with planning and housing development were a major theme developed throughout this report.



Most significantly average satisfaction with the six aspects of planning and housing development outcomes was 5.97 out of ten, a “poor” level of satisfaction, although this result is up 13.4% on the very low 5.23 recorded last year.

It is also noted that “building, housing, planning and development” related issues were the second most commonly identified issues for the City of Darebin this year, with 15.4% of respondents identifying these issues this year. Respondents that identified “building, planning, housing and development” issues were on average measurably and significantly (10.1%) less satisfied with Council’s overall performance than the municipal average (6.12 compared to 6.84). These results strongly suggest that these issues exert a significant negative influence on community satisfaction with Darebin City Council. Dissatisfaction with planning related issues are not unique to the City of Darebin, and Metropolis Research has consistently found dissatisfaction with planning outcomes growing across metropolitan Melbourne, and in particular inner and middle-ring municipalities.

Parking was also a significant issue, with 11.4% of respondents identifying this issue this year. Satisfaction with the availability of parking both on residential streets and around busy shopping strips and major commercial areas was rated as “solid”. Respondents identifying parking as an issue were on average 4.4% less satisfied with Council’s overall performance than the municipal average.

The perception of safety in the public areas of the City of Darebin both during the day (up 5.3%) and at night (6.1%) increased this year, and remain at quite high levels. The overwhelming majority (97.0%) of respondents felt safe in the public areas of the City of Darebin during the day, and almost four-fifths (80.7%) felt safe in the public areas of the municipality at night. It is noted however that female respondents felt measurably and significantly (11.3%) less safe in the public areas of Darebin at night than male respondents. Significantly it is noted that one-sixth (16.9% down from 25.2%) of female respondents felt unsafe at night in the public areas of Darebin at night.

Taken as a whole, the *Community Survey* this year found a “good” and improving level of satisfaction with the performance of Darebin City Council, with services and facilities and customer service in particular being very well received by the Darebin community.

The major issues community concern still relate to traffic congestion, car parking, and the nature and extent of new housing development occurring in Darebin. These issues all appear to exert at least a mildly negative influence on community satisfaction with the performance of Darebin City Council.

Metropolis Research is of the view that the measurable improvement in satisfaction with planning and housing development this year is likely to be a significant factor underpinning the increase in satisfaction with Council’s overall performance. This is despite the fact that these issues still exert a negative influence on overall satisfaction.



Key findings

The following are the key findings from the *Darebin City Council – 2017-18 Annual Community Survey*.

Overall performance

- ⊗ Satisfaction with Council’s overall performance remained increased 2.2% this year from 6.69 to 6.84, or a “good” level of satisfaction.
- ⊗ This result was 1.5% higher than the 2018 metropolitan Melbourne average of 6.74.
- ⊗ More than four-fifths (83.3% up from 79.1% of respondents were satisfied with Council’s overall performance, whilst 8.6% (down from 8.8%) were dissatisfied.
- ⊗ Respondents from Kingsbury-Bundoora were measurably more satisfied than the municipal average, whilst respondents from Northcote were measurably less satisfied.
- ⊗ Adolescents and young adults (aged 15 to 35 years) were measurably more satisfied with Council’s overall performance, whilst middle-aged adults (aged 46 to 60 years) were measurably less satisfied.
- ⊗ Rental household respondents (both public and private) were measurably more satisfied with Council’s overall performance, whilst home-owners were measurably less satisfied.
- ⊗ Satisfaction with Council’s overall performance tended to decline with the period of residence in the City of Darebin.
- ⊗ There was no meaningful variation in satisfaction with Council’s overall performance based on the respondents’ gender or language spoken at home.

Governance and leadership

- ⊗ The average satisfaction with the five included aspects of governance and leadership increased by 1.1% this year, up from 6.86 to 6.93, although it remains “good”.
- ⊗ Satisfaction with the five aspects of governance and leadership were as follows:
 - Meeting the needs of the multicultural community (7.43 dn from 7.48) “very good”
 - Communicating its programs and services (7.07 up from 6.76) “good”
 - Community consultation and engagement (6.78 up from 6.52) “good”
 - Lobbying and making representations on key issues (6.72 up from 6.61) “good”
 - Making decisions in the interests of the community (6.67 up from 6.50) “good”.

Council services and facilities

- ⊗ The average satisfaction with the seventeen included Council services and facilities increased by two percent this year, up from 7.26 to 7.41, although it remains “very good”.

⊗ Satisfaction with the seventeen services and facilities included in the 2017-18 quarterly surveys were as follows:

○ Weekly garbage collection	(8.43 up from 8.41)	“excellent”
○ Darebin Libraries	(8.36 – new)	“excellent”
○ Green waste collection service	(8.19 dn from 8.36)	“excellent”
○ Regular recycling	(8.02 dn from 8.24)	“excellent”
○ Council’s festivals and events	(7.97 up from 7.74)	“excellent”
○ Transfer station – tip in Reservoir	(7.57 up from 7.25)	“very good”
○ Maintenance and repair of parks, reserves, open space	(7.43 up from 7.40)	“very good”
○ Council’s overall environmental performance	(7.27 up from 7.20)	“very good”
○ Maintenance and cleaning of shopping strips	(7.22 dn from 7.23)	“good”
○ The level of street lighting	(7.11 up from 7.09)	“good”
○ Street sweeping	(7.07 up from 6.75)	“good”
○ Litter collection in public areas	(7.06 up from 6.85)	“good”
○ Condition of storm water drains	(7.01 up from 6.83)	“good”
○ Condition of sealed local roads	(6.99 dn from 7.04)	“good”
○ The level of dumped rubbish	(6.89 up from 6.53)	“good”
○ Footpath maintenance and repairs	(6.86 up from 6.75)	“good”
○ The performance of Council managing traffic	(6.49 up from 6.38)	“solid”.

Traffic and parking

⊗ Satisfaction with the six aspects of traffic and parking remains relatively low, and can best be summarised as follows:

○ Speed of traffic on main roads	(6.27 dn from 6.31)	“solid”
○ Volume of traffic on residential streets	(5.99 up from 5.76)	“poor”
○ Speed of traffic on residential streets	(5.97 dn from 6.11)	“poor”
○ The availability of parking in, around shopping strips	(5.81 - stable)	“poor”
○ The availability of parking on residential streets	(5.77 dn from 6.02)	“poor”
○ Volume of traffic on main roads	(5.49 up from 5.42)	“very poor”.

Planning and housing development

⊗ The average satisfaction with the six included aspects of planning and housing development increased measurably and significantly this year, up 13.4% to 5.93, and is now rated as “poor”, up on the previous “very poor”.

⊗ Satisfaction with the six aspects of planning and housing development remains relatively low, and can best be summarised as follows:

○ Opportunities to participate in planning consultations	(6.30 up from 5.59)	“solid”
○ The protection of local heritage	(6.21 up from 5.35)	“solid”
○ Planning decisions respecting local n’ghood character	(5.97 up from 4.98)	“poor”
○ The appearance and quality of new developments	(5.83 up from 5.16)	“poor”
○ The number of new developments	(5.66 up from 5.20)	“poor”
○ The size, height, set-back of buildings being developed	(5.61 up from 5.10)	“poor”,

Customer service

- ⊗ A little less than half of the respondents (40.6% down from 41.7%) had contact with Council in the last twelve months.
- ⊗ The most common forms of contacting Council remain telephone (63.3% up from 59.1%), visits in person (13.2% down from 19.5%), and email (10.7% up from 7.9%).
- ⊗ There was some variation to the list of included aspects of customer service this year, and direct comparison to last year is not advisable. Average satisfaction with the five included aspects of customer service was 7.90 or “excellent” this year, the same as in previous years.
- ⊗ Satisfaction with the five aspects of customer service can best be summarised as follows:
 - Staff understanding language needs (multi-lingual only) *(8.54 dn from 8.60) “excellent”*
 - Ease of understanding information *(8.09 - new) “excellent”*
 - Attitude of staff *(7.89 up from 7.82) “excellent”*
 - Satisfaction with the Darebin website (visitors only) *(7.76 dn from 8.12) “excellent”*
 - Helpfulness of the information provided *(7.22 dn from 7.28) “good”.*

Perception of safety in the public areas of the City of Darebin

- ⊗ The perception of safety during the day remains very high, and increased by 5.3% this year to 8.57 (up from 8.14). The 2016-17 result was unusually low compared to the results recorded over the last eight years.
- ⊗ The perception of safety at night increased measurably and significantly this year, up 6.1% to 6.99. The 2016-17 result was unusually low compared to the results recorded over the last eight years.

Council as an organisation

- ⊗ Respondents were asked to rate their agreement with six statements about the Darebin City Council as an organisation. The average agreement results all improved somewhat this year compared to last year.
- ⊗ Agreement with the statements was as follows:
 - Darebin City Council provides important services *(7.15 up from 7.09)*
 - Is trustworthy and reliable *(6.94 up from 6.55)*
 - Is progressive and up-to-date *(6.92 up from 6.58)*
 - Has a sound direction for the future *(6.67 up from 6.31)*
 - Offers value for rates *(5.83 up from 5.68)*
 - Is bureaucratic and ineffective *(5.04 dn from 5.33).*



Council advocacy campaigns

- ⊗ A total of 258 responses were received from 168 respondents identifying Council advocacy campaigns. Some of the campaigns most commonly identified by respondents related to the Australia Day #changethedate campaign (68 responses), Marriage Equality (46 responses) and refugee related campaigns (20 responses).

Improvements noticed in the local area in the last twelve months

- ⊗ A total of 402 (40.2% up from 37.8%) respondents identified 522 improvements they had noticed in the last twelve months.
- ⊗ The most commonly identified improvements were:
 - Parks, gardens and open space related *(10.9% dn from 14.8%)*
 - Road maintenance and repair related *(9.2% up from 7.8%)*
 - Street trees *(5.0% up from 2.2%)*.

Issues for Council to address in the coming twelve months

- ⊗ A total of 751 respondents (75.1% up from 73.4%) identified 1,541 individual issues for Council to address in the coming twelve months.
- ⊗ It is important to note that these issues are not all within the remit of local government, nor are they a list of complaints.
- ⊗ The top five issues to address in the City of Darebin this year are as follows:
 - Traffic management *(26.6% up from 22.8%)*
 - Building, housing, planning and development related *(15.4% up from 14.1%)*
 - Parking *(11.4% up from 10.1%)*
 - Parks, gardens and open spaces *(8.7% up from 8.6%)*
 - Road maintenance and repairs *(7.4% up from 5.1%)*.

