

STAFF REPORT

TO: Council

FROM: Executive Officer – Strategic Development

REFERENCE: A503-04

DATE: 21 September 2009

SUBJECT: Results of the Communitrak Residents Survey

PURPOSE

To advise the Council of the results of the July/August 2009 Communitrak residents survey.

BACKGROUND

Since 1996 Council has commissioned a survey of residents' views on a range of services delivered by the Council every three years. This survey is now done annually, and is undertaken by the National Research Bureau (NRB).

A total of 401 residents were surveyed, giving a margin of error of 4.9%. The survey was undertaken by residents over 18 years of age, with interviews conducted spread across the five wards and across various age brackets to ensure a representative sample. The survey was conducted by telephone during the period 24 July to 2 August 2009.

The results were compared to the Peer Group (similar local authorities) and the national average of all local authorities.

The information contained in the survey will be useful for Councillors when considering the levels of service (i.e. what the Council will provide) for the public through the Annual Plan.

DISCUSSION

Residents' survey

A copy of the report has been circulated to you under separate cover. The report will be put on the Council's website so that it can be accessed by the public.

Key findings of the residents' survey:

- Most indicators showed improved levels of satisfaction with Council services. While there are some exceptions, the general trend appears to confirm that the Council has moved in the right direction over the last 12 months. The improvement in overall approval ratings comes after a period of extensive consultation and considerable interaction with the various communities throughout the District. It tends to reflect anecdotal evidence that has indicated a high level of acceptance of the Council's Ten Year Plan.
- The Council services with the highest levels of residents satisfied were other recreation facilities (95% - not comparable with 2008 as this included swimming pools); parking in your local town (92% compared with 89% in 2008) and public libraries (84% compared with 82% in 2008).
- The Council services where 20% or more residents were not very satisfied with the level of service were in the areas of roads (27% as against 23% in 2008) and environmental planning and policy (20% as against 22% in 2008).
- Of the services surveyed the ones most frequently used by residents in the last year were other recreational facilities 83% (82% in 2008), kerbside recycling service 79% (75% in 2008) and public libraries 78% (same in 2008).
- The key actions or decisions approved of by the residents surveyed include:
 - Improved roading/traffic flow/road safety,
 - Beautification/town centre upgrade,
 - Do a good job/good financial management/good service,
 - Environmental issues,
 - Rubbish collection/recycling issues,
 - Good consultation/keep us informed/they listen.
- The key actions or decisions disapproved of include:
 - Rates increases/rates too high/rate issues,
 - Roothing,
 - Traffic issues/traffic lights,
 - Environmental issues,
 - Water supply issues,
 - Rubbish/recycling issues,
 - Amalgamation issue,
 - Money spent/overspending/money wasted.
- The vast majority of residents would contact the Council offices or staff if they had a matter to raise with the Council, with contact generally made by telephone or in person. 84% (83% in 2008) of those who contact the council in the last year were satisfied with the service they received.

- 55% (52% in 2008) of the residents surveyed receive most of their information about the Council through Newsline – The Mag, with 35% (38% in 2008) of residents getting most of their information from newspapers. Residents who have seen, read or heard information that Council publishes have done so through Newsline the Mag (94% compared with 93% in 2008), Council advertisements in newspapers (81% compared with 80% in 2008) and information sent with rate demands (64% compared with 67% in 2008).
- The majority of residents felt they received enough information from the Council.
- 97% (compared with 95% in 2008) of residents had read the recreational publications, with a high level of satisfaction.
- 86 % (compared with 84% in 2008) of residents have access to the internet (up 15% from 2005).
- 42% of residents think Tasman District is a better place to live than it was three years ago, compared with 36% last year, with only 4% saying it was worse.
- Only 2% of residents (3% last year) think Tasman District is not generally a safe place to live.
- 79% (compared with 75% last year) expressed satisfaction with the way the natural environment is being preserved and sustained for future generations.

Overall, the results from the residents' survey showed a slight improvement from the 2008 survey with the exception of roading, where dissatisfaction increased by 4%.

New questions asked in the 2009 survey

For the first time we asked a question on how satisfied residents are with the built or urban environment. 77% of residents expressed satisfaction with the built or urban environment in Tasman District. This question helps us monitor community views on how we are progressing towards Community Outcome 2 in the Ten Year Plan.

A new question was asked on how connected residents feel to their community (in terms of their sense of belonging or sense of place). 80% of residents said they felt well connected or very well connected, 16% neither well nor poorly connected, 3% felt poorly or very poorly connected and 1% did not know.

There were a few new questions on satisfaction with other Council services, including:

- Swimming pools were separated out from other recreational facilities, which 54% of residents expressing satisfaction with the pools (32% did not know).
- Multi-purpose public halls and community buildings were also separated out from other recreational facilities. 70% of residents expressed satisfaction with these facilities (24% did not know).

- 78% of residents expressed satisfaction with Council's cemeteries (20% did not know).
- 75% of residents expressed satisfaction with Council's environmental education activities (21% did not know).

RECOMMENDATIONS

THAT the Tasman District Council:

- 1 receives this report; and
- 2 notes the results of the Communitrak Residents' Survey.

Sandra Hartley
Executive Officer – Strategic Development