

Summary of Newsline questionnaire feedback.

The survey was delivered to all residents within the 17 September issue of Newsline (circulation 19,000).

Replies have been coming into the office ever since, with replies being received as late as last week.

Of the 432 survey responses 363 have been rated as positive/neutral with the remainder (69) being rated as negative.

Of the comments received the majority were positive as reflected by the numbers above. Many of the positive comments did include a number of suggestions as to how the publication could be further improved.

The predominant suggestion was the need to 'harden' the information as to the entertainment angle a number felt was overwhelming. Further investigation led to the conclusion that the entertainment angle was the inclusion of photos of the Mayor and elected members opening facilities or being involved in unrelated activities. These opportunities a number felt should be the purview of, if not covered already by, the local papers.

The perceived duplication of stories, those carried by local papers as well, was not appreciated. A number of the negative respondents believed this was further evidence of the lack of need for Newsline, i.e. should rely more on local newspapers.

The lack of knowledge of the first principles of the Newsline publication with regard to its frequency and cost structure was very evident. This 'story' will need to be made clear in the response article in future Newsline with a description of its link to RMA requirements and the ability to cross-subsidise its production costs.

This lack of knowledge, which is entirely the responsibility of the Council, also feeds the concerns/questions as to why the Council does not use the local papers not only for stories but also for distribution and the associated cost questions.

There is a need for a closer relationship with the local community association papers and this will be discussed with the soon to occur meetings with the various associations and Boards throughout the District.

As with all publications of this ilk Newsline was accused by a number of being a self-congratulatory tool for the Council with little room for debate or dissent. Whether or not a discussion/debate column would have a fruitful place should and will be investigated. If moderated such a column can provide insight into the community and provides a means to discuss the many complexities that exist in Council decision-making.

There was an overwhelming desire to keep Newsline as a printed publication as opposed to being made solely available online. A number of reasons were given for this response – lack of online capability, the ease of reading printed material as opposed to onscreen, the ability to share throughout the household and the recognition it has arrived. The retention of the printed version was supported by over 80% of those that answered the question.

The predominant takeout from the survey was one of evolution as opposed to revolution in the ongoing development of Newsline. The majority felt it had a place and more importantly many felt that it was where important Council information should be delivered through.