

Is Local Government Representative? Does it need to be?
Councillors perspective

LG has the capacity to be representative in terms of elected Councillors when.....	LG is not representative in terms of elected Councillors when....	LG is representative in terms of elected Councillors when....	LG could be more representative in terms of elected Councillors when....
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Legislative requirements (Local Government Act) are adhered to in particular S223 committees ▪ Convention supports representation eg Council plan with collaborative Councillor contribution representing diverse communities / backgrounds ▪ The community has an active interest in the election process and votes based on policy positions ▪ There is a mandate to work at a strategic/visionary level – NOT at an operational level ▪ It is accessible to all members of the community irrespective of ability or background ▪ Mandate to set policy direction rather than regulate decision-making (e.g. planning, health, local laws). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increasing regulatory requirements & compliance imposed by the state/Fed Governments do not support the approach – eg changing the way LG does business through the LG Act ▪ There are obvious party political tension and allegiances / or dysfunctional relationships ▪ Vocal minority have the ear of Councillors ▪ State Government influencing Local Government priorities through funding programs ▪ High level and changing expectations of the community for Councillors to have a 'one solution fixes all' ▪ Allowances paid to Councillors inhibit full time service to the community thus not attracting the best candidates to the position. Allowances paid – independently wealthy or retired. ▪ Paradox of being a service provider but also a community advocate – also the duty of upholding legislation even when it results in denying community aspirations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The community vies and aspirations are drawn upon to shape the strategic implementation of the Council Plan. ▪ Legislation is upheld and process are left to sort out disagreements (e.g. VCAT) ▪ Councillor's are accessible, upfront and honest about community expectations and aspirations – and actively seek out this information from hard to reach groups ▪ Councillor's are acting in the interests of the collective community – upholding equity and NOT for their own power or interests ▪ There is no caucus on decision making ▪ Councillors are elected democratically, there is no party politics and the Mayor is popularly elected ▪ CMT / CEO have strong leadership and can strategically direct Council. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase incentives / remuneration for councillors to attract more strategic Councillors and to enable them to focus more on their Councillor role ▪ Stronger regulative controls on what Councillors can deal with ▪ Senate model of election (ie. Quota) as opposed to first past post which is more representative of the community, and not reliant on party politics ▪ Multiple councillor in smaller wards may be more representative ▪ Councillor role being more clearly defined to that of a Board member, rather than being 'all things to all people'. ▪ Communicate the role of Council to the community better. ▪ Reduce councillors terms to no more than 2. ▪ Requirement for Councillors to have a certain level of experience or

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Role has morphed into a relay mechanism between the community and State Government ▪ There is voter indifference ▪ Assume to be the experts and not empower the community – interfere in decision making – need to have tighter penalties. Code of conduct and self regulation not enough ▪ Have own agendas and may be using the role as a stepping stone into State / Fed Politics with greater rewards ▪ “A democracy can not represent a minority” ▪ Time demands – Most Councillor’s have 3-4 nights per week in meetings. The assumption is that these meetings ARE community consultation – not sure that’s true or adequate. ▪ The nature of the machine! For example the process to the formulation of the Council’s first council Plan after election – when they are elected they have an initiation, then Christmas/holiday period, then February, write a Council Plan. But how long did it take you to learn even all the acronym’s we sprout, let alone have enough information to compose a Council Plan! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Skill levels of Councillors is representative of the local community 	<p>qualification in order to be elected.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ When setting policy direction than involvement in day to day decision-making when local minority influences the ability for true community representation.
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- Statistics released by LGV show that community engagement in decision making is lower (↓ 64%) in regional and outer metro areas. **What does this show us?** (geographical considerations / tools of engagement/representation differ between metro and outer metro / views on LG representation)
- High correlation between lack of community engagement with low % community satisfaction in advocacy and community representation. **Is that surprising?**

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LGPRO EMERGING LEADERS PROGRAM

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OVERVIEW

In March 2010, a group of diverse yet enthusiastic Local Government professionals came together wide eyed and optimistic about the year ahead.

In what can only be described as a 'journey', this group of emerging leaders have not only travelled great distances physically, but also philosophically and have been confronted and challenged by the breadth and nature of the program, and in particular the question:

"Is Local Government representative? (And does it need to be?)"

This topic took the group to heady highs and disheartening lows, none of which could have been predicted when we were thrown together in the beautiful setting of Lancefield.

Here is a compiled summary of what we discovered about Local Government along the way..



Title page: (This is a child page off your 'About Council' webpage)

How to participate in Local Government

For your local government to represent you, education and participation is the key.

To gain a better understanding of your role in local government [click here](#) to visit the Department of Planning and Community Development's (DPCD) Guide to Local Government.

- [How to vote](#)
- [Government for everyone](#)
- [Who represents you](#)
- [Educational resources](#)
- [Other ways to get involved](#)

To find more information on the future direction of Local Government [click here](#).

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How to vote

Your vote will determine the future you live in.

Voting ensures that everyone's preference is accounted for and that our elected representatives genuinely are those preferred by the majority of the electorate. It is a vital aspect of participating in government. Ensure your local government represents you by understanding the voting process.

[Click here](#) to link to the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) for information on voting in your local government election. Your vote is your voice.

For the 'Local Council Election Information Series' [click here](#) to access. This is a series of booklets that provide background information on 2008 local government elections and may provide support leading up to the next local government election to be held November 2012.

More information on voting is available on the [Government for Everyone](#) page.

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Who represents you!

Role of your councillors

Do you know what your local councillor does? Do you know they are there for you to represent you and issues that matter to you, your neighbours and your community?

The Victorian Local Government Association (VLGA) has information for councillors and information of what voters can expect from their councillors. [Click here](#) to view the VLGA's Councillor Officer Resources

Accountability and responsibility of Councillors

Councils are area-based, representative governments with a legislative and electoral mandate to manage local issues and plan for the community's needs.

A Local Government Charter in the LG Act describes the purpose, objectives and functions of local government in Victoria:

'The purpose of local government is to provide a system under which councils perform the functions and exercise the powers conferred by or under this Act and any other Act for the peace, order and good government of their municipal districts.' LG Act, Part 1A.

[Click here](#) to download the Good Governance Resources from the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV)

Becoming a Councillor

Ever thought of becoming a councillor? You could be the representative of your community and help make sure your community is heard and able to become the best community for you and your neighbours.

If you are interested in standing for Council, [click here](#) to visit the [Stand for Council](#) website to develop your understanding of what is required.

The Municipal Association of Victoria has produced the [C2C document](#) – a guide for prospective councillors.

Local governments can insert councillor codes of conduct, position descriptions and other relevant information as links to this page.

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Government for Everyone

Do you, or the people you represent, understand the use of your vote in local government?

All people, regardless of age, gender, race, ability or residential status, shape local government when all people understand their vote and its promised outcomes.

When this happens, Local Government is representative.

The links below support the education of people who may have barriers to learning about or contributing in local government.

Women

- [Resources](#) (hyperlink to child page)

Aboriginal

- [Resources](#) (hyperlink to child page)

Non-English speaking

- [Participation amongst culturally and linguistically diverse \(CALD\) communities in Victoria](#) (hyperlink to website)

Disability

- [Voting is for everyone](#) (hyperlink to website)

Homeless

- [Homelessness doesn't mean voteless](#) (hyperlink to website)

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Educators Resources

There is an array of information to support the education of all people to understand local government.

Through education, local government can be representative.

Schools, through the Civic and Citizenship curriculum, will find these resources supportive of the education of young people. Organisations working with diverse communities can use these resources to support all people to understand the democracy of local, state and federal government

Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC)

- <http://www.vec.vic.gov.au/Education/default.html>
- <http://www.vec.vic.gov.au/Education/education-resources.html>
- <http://www.vec.vic.gov.au/education/education-programs-passport.html>

[Click here](#) for information on outreach programs for schools and community groups.

Curriculum resources on the Victorian electoral system are designed for teachers of middle secondary school students. It has been written and designed for the Civics and Citizenship learning domain in the Physical, Personal and Social Learning Strand in the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS). [Click here](#) to access these resources.

The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC)

- <http://www.aec.gov.au/Education>
- <http://www.aec.gov.au/Education/services/index.htm>

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Other ways to get involved in your local council

"Citizen/community engagement is about involving the community in the decision making process and is critical in the successful development of acceptable policies and decisions in government, the private sector and the community."

Source: adapted from <http://www.lga.sa.gov.au/site/page.cfm?u=1324>

Local Government recognises the importance of consulting and engaging with the community and encourages community participation. Listed below are programs where you can participate as a voice in your community.

- [Insert your link here](#)
- [Insert your link here](#)
- [Insert your link here](#)

(Local Governments: Please feel free to link in your surveys, consultation papers and other community engagement opportunities or programs that you offer to your community.)

To find more information on how you can participate in your community by becoming an elected Councillor click [here](#).

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Child page

Aboriginal

Australian Electoral Commission

- [Ads that encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians to vote](#)

Victorian Electoral Commission

- [The Aboriginal engagement program](#)

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Child page

Women

2010 Year of Women in Local Government

- [The case for women in local government](#)

Municipal Association of Victoria

Women

- [Policies and resources about women in local government](#)

Australian Local Government Women's Association

- [The 50 50 vision - councils for gender equity](#)

The National Framework for Women in Local Government

- [The way forward](#)

Victorian Local Government Association

- [Information for councillors – what we can expect from our councillors](#)

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LG Pro - Councillor Survey

Age- Councillor		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
18-24	0.0%	0
25-34	0.0%	0
35-44	13.0%	3
45-54	30.4%	7
55-64	47.8%	11
65+	8.7%	2
<i>answered question</i>		23
<i>skipped question</i>		2

Age - Community		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
18-24	2.60%	7
25-34	25.80%	70
35-44	28.40%	77
45-54	28.40%	77
55-64	13.70%	37
65+	1.10%	3
<i>answered question</i>		271
<i>skipped question</i>		1

Analysis

Interesting point that all of respondents were over 35. Anecdotally there are some younger Councillors, in the industry, but it would appear that the majority are still middle aged (40+) this could impact on the education group - i.e getting the message to a younger generation

LG Pro - Councillor Survey

Gender - Councillor		
Answer Options	Councillor	Community
Female	47.8%	67.0%
Male	52.2%	33.0%

Analysis

In relation to Councillors, is not statistically valid. Female Councillors seem to be a much smaller majority in

Country of birth (Victorian top 10 listed) - Councillor

Answer Options	Councillor	Community
Australia	73.9%	92.30%
UK	8.7%	2.90%
Italy	0.0%	0.40%
New Zealand	0.0%	1.50%
Viet Nam	0.0%	0.00%
China	0.0%	0.00%
Greece	0.0%	0.00%
India	0.0%	0.40%
Sri Lanka	0.0%	0.40%
Malaysia	0.0%	0.00%
Other (please specify)	17.4%	2.20%

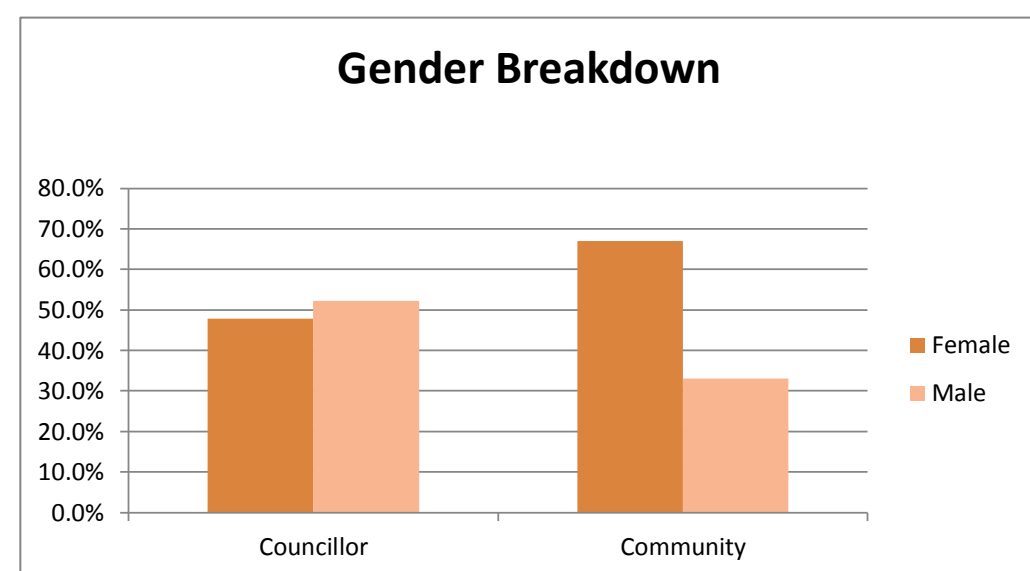
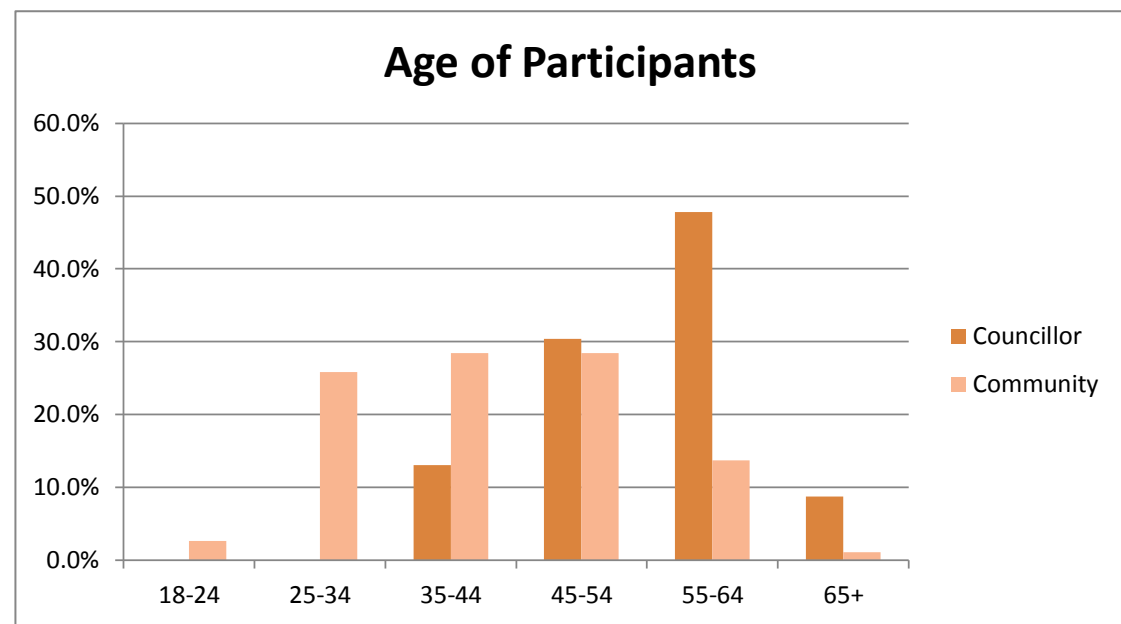
Analysis

This would indicate that migrants, particularly non-anglo are somewhat disconnected from the local Possible useful for Education group for targeting of 'ethnic' groups but I would think more research required

Language spoken at home (Victorian top 10 listed)

Answer Options	Councillor	Community
English	100.0%	98.90%
Italian	0.0%	0.40%
Greek	0.0%	0.00%
Vietnamese	0.0%	0.00%
Cantonese/Mandarin	0.0%	0.00%
Arabic	0.0%	0.00%
Macedonian	0.0%	0.00%
Turkish	0.0%	0.00%
Spanish	0.0%	0.00%
Croatian	0.0%	0.00%
Other (please specify)	0.0%	0.70%
<i>answered question</i>		23
<i>skipped question</i>		2

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Do you have dependants or caring responsibilities? Councillors		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	57.1%	12
No	42.9%	9
answered question		21
skipped question		4

Analysis

Slightly surprising given that 52% of respondents male, with most over 45. May need more

Highest Level of Education Obtained		
	Councillor	Community
Year 10 or 11	0.0%	0.70%
Year 12 or equivalent	13.6%	9.30%
Vocational	0.0%	10.70%
Diploma/Advanced diplomqa	4.5%	1.90%
Degree or higher	18.2%	24.10%
	63.6%	53.30%

Analysis

Not surprising given anecdotal knowledge. Indicates the higher level of education the higher

Possible link to education group - i.e what level of education awareness - possibly more to be

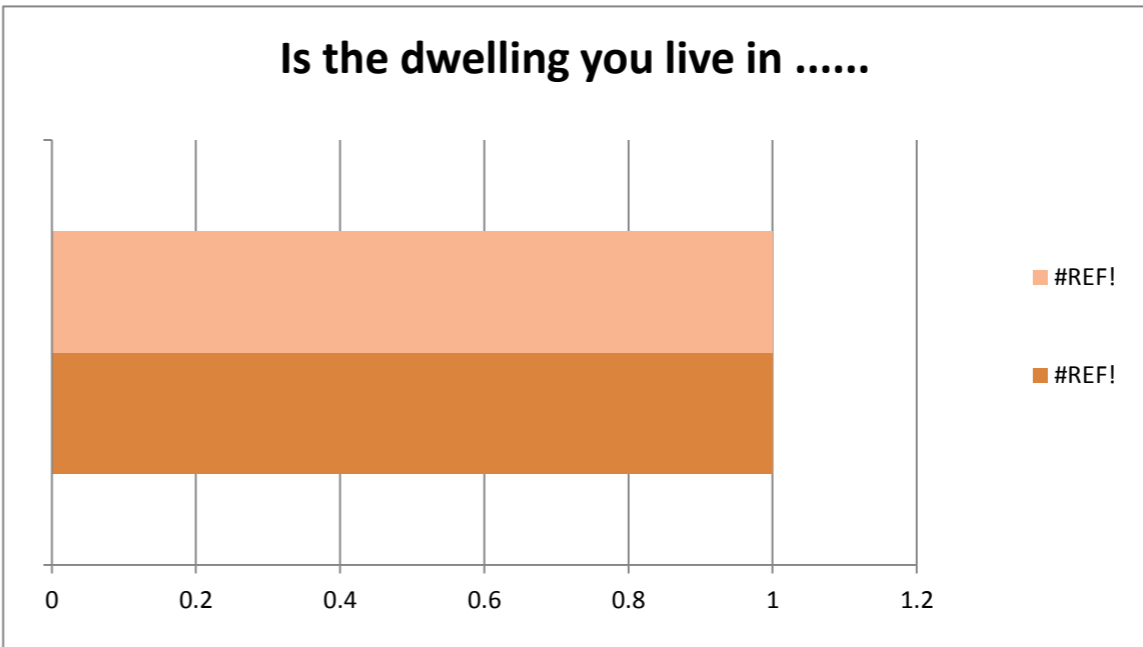
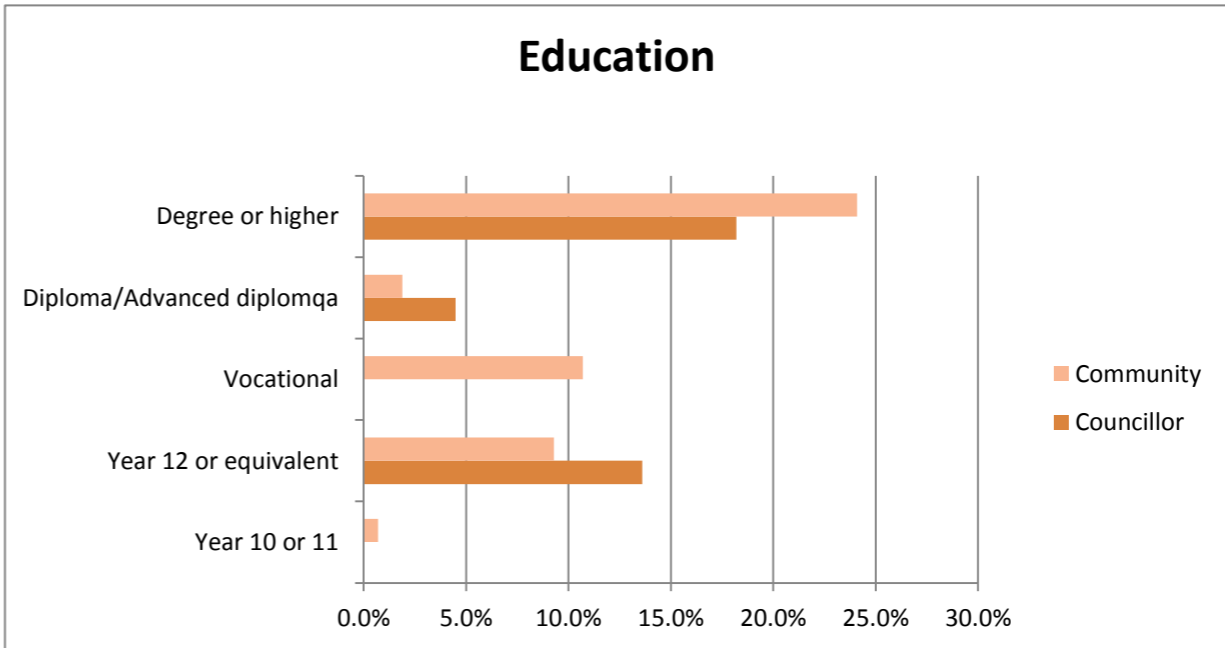
LG Pro - Councillor Survey

Is the dwelling you live in...		
	Councillor	Community
Rented from a Government / community agency	0.0%	0.00%
Rented privately	4.5%	17.30%
Being purchased (i.e. have mortgage)	31.8%	52.40%
Owned	63.6%	29.90%
Don't know	0.0%	0.40%

Analysis

Aligns with Q.6,7 & 8 indicating Councillors generally come from a higher

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LG Pro - Councillor Survey

Employment Status		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Not working	22.7%	5
Full timer carer	0.0%	0
Part time, employee	22.7%	5
Full time, employee	22.7%	5
Self employed	31.8%	7
<i>answered question</i>		22
<i>skipped question</i>		3

Industry you work/worked in		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing	4.8%	1
Mining	4.8%	1
Manufacturing	9.5%	2
Electricity, Gas, Water, Waste Services	0.0%	0
Construction	0.0%	0
Retail Trade	4.8%	1
Wholesale Trade	0.0%	0
Accommodation and Food	4.8%	1
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	0.0%	0
Information media and telecommunications	0.0%	0
Financial and insurance services	0.0%	0
Renting, hiring and real estate services	4.8%	1
Professional, scientific and technical services	9.5%	2
Administrative and support services	4.8%	1
Public administration and safety	9.5%	2
Education and training	9.5%	2
Health care and social assistance	23.8%	5
Arts and Rec	0.0%	0
Other (please specify)	9.5%	2
<i>answered question</i>		21
<i>skipped question</i>		4

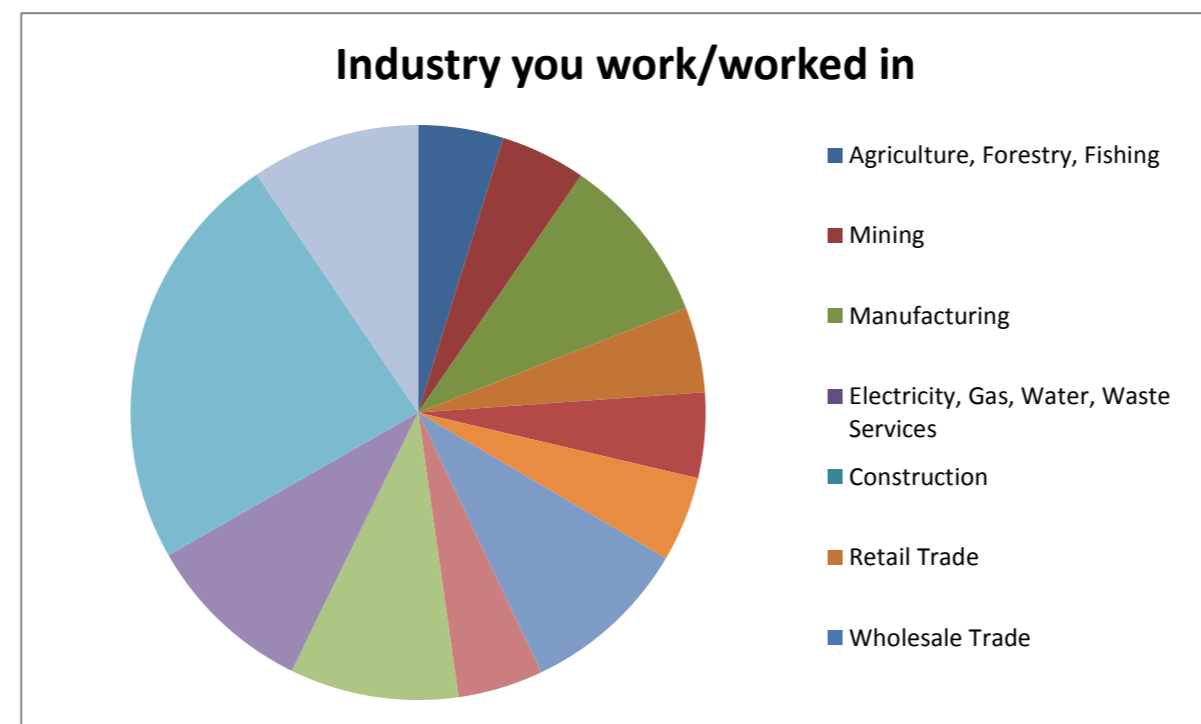
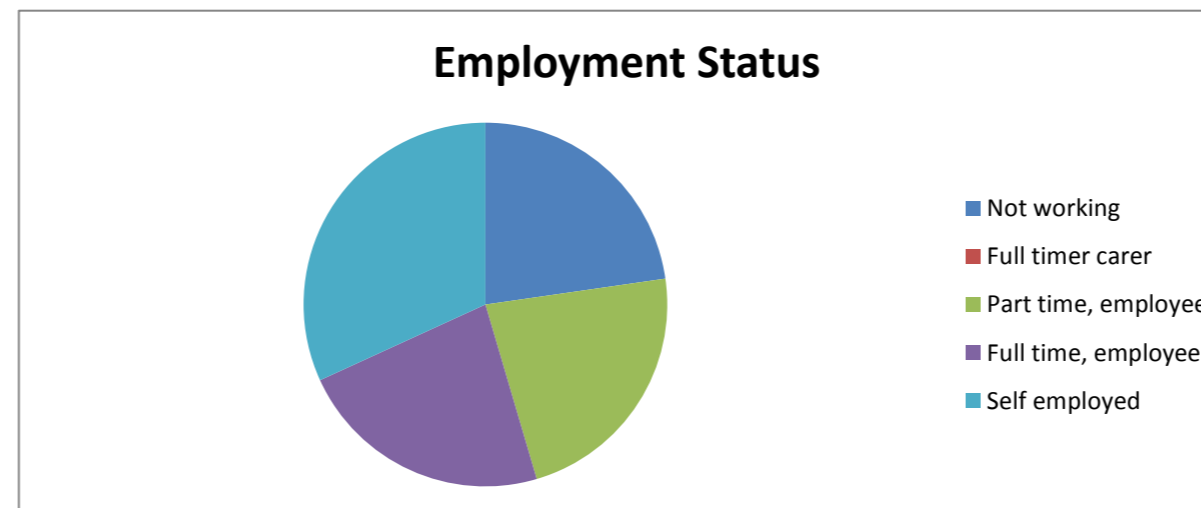
Number	Response Date	Other (please specify)
1	Oct 6, 2010 11:43 PM	Media
2	Oct 10, 2010 9:42 AM	community development

Analysis

Results seem in line with previous data - mostly over 45 and higher educated. Only surprise is the 22.7% full time employed - when reviewed with Q.8 (highest single industry being healthcare) and majority 45+ indicates higher educated more senior workers with the ability to manage flexible working arrangements.

This is interesting when looking at reasons why people would not consider becoming a Councillor at Q.21 in the community survey where two major factors were lack of time and family/carer commitments - i.e this survey indicates that current councillors can hold down full time jobs and have carer duties (Q.5) from this survey).

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LG Pro - Councillor Survey

Time as a Councillor		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
First term	40.9%	9
Two terms	27.3%	6
Three terms	9.1%	2
More than three terms	22.7%	5
<i>answered question</i>		22
<i>skipped question</i>		3

Analysis

Interesting to note that the majority are first or second term councillors.

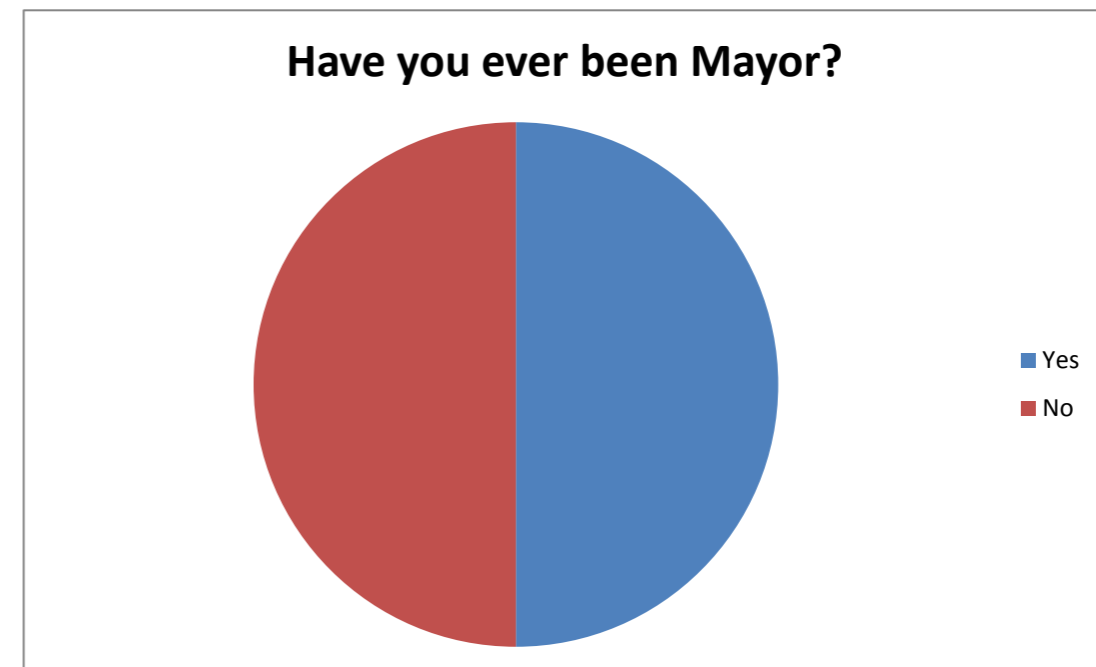
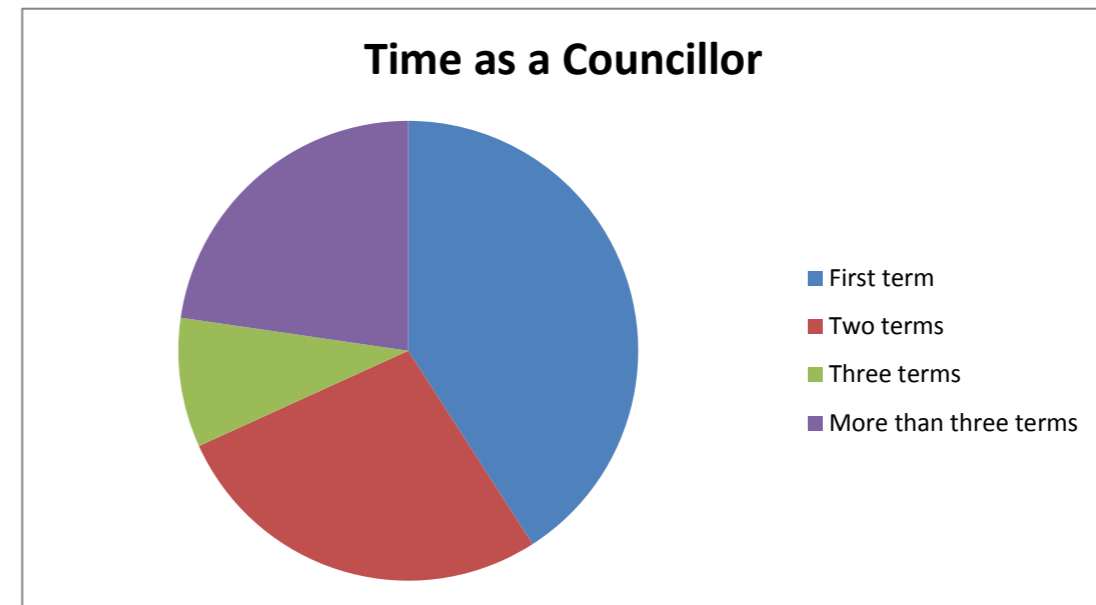
When analysed in conjunction with the reasons given by community members for voting the way they did (Q.14 on the community survey), 27% of respondents said they voted for policies, and 20% to give someone new a go. This seems to correlate to the results here. The implications here are that whilst there is a large issue - based ('educated') vote, there is also a large 'dissatisfied' or 'generational change' vote which is not necessarily rationally based on future outcomes. This is another potential educational issue to maximise the rational vote.

Have you ever been Mayor?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	50.0%	11
No	50.0%	11
<i>answered question</i>		22
<i>skipped question</i>		3

Analysis

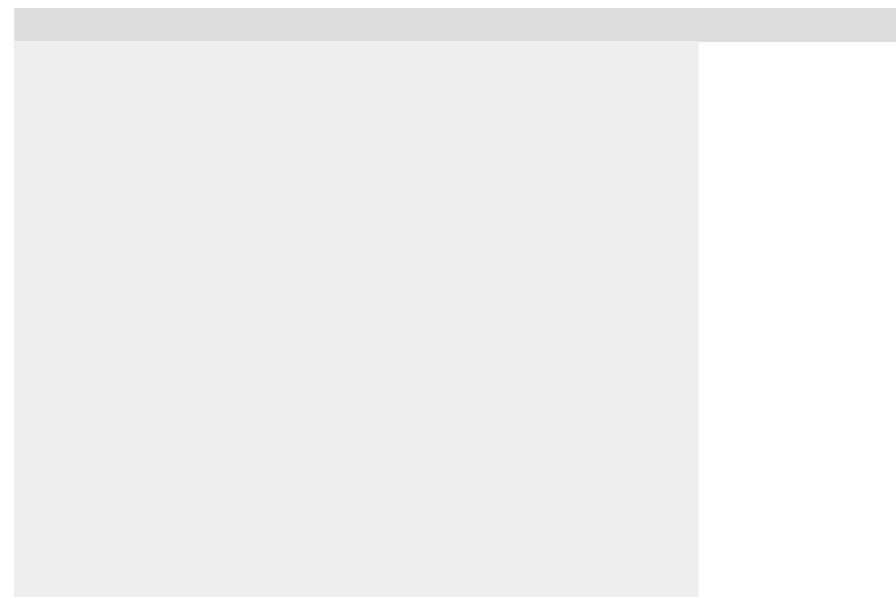
Rather surprising when there were so many first term councillors - maybe political dealing?
Possibly more study needs to be undertaken into the relative 'power' each mayor yields over each Council for

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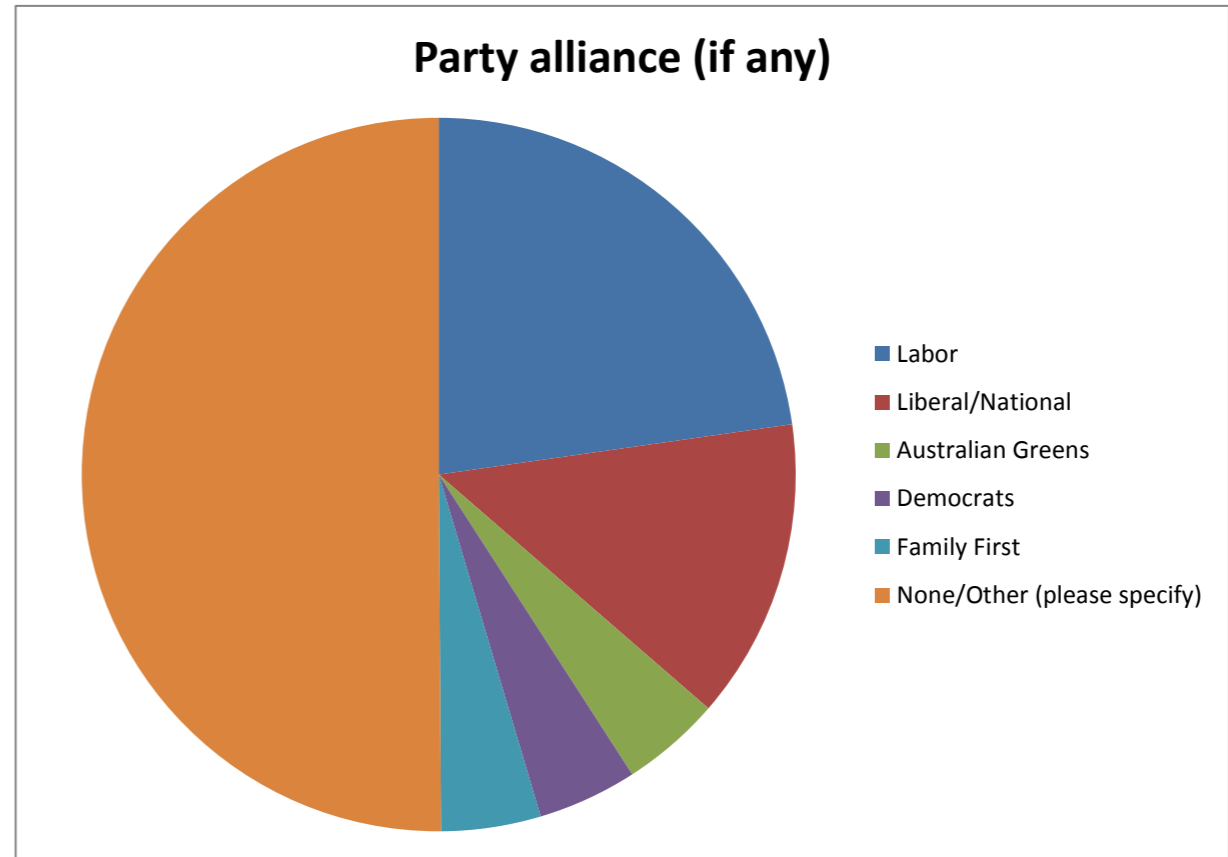


LG Pro - Councillor Survey

Party alliance (if any)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Labor	22.7%	5
Liberal/National	13.6%	3
Australian Greens	4.5%	1
Democrats	4.5%	1
Family First	4.5%	1
None/Other (please specify)	50.0%	11
<i>answered question</i>		22
<i>skipped question</i>		3



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Analysis

Indicates majority have no firm party allegiances - major implications for policy and operations of local government. No party affiliation generally leads to more representative 'grass roots' councillors who are generally more responsive to differing community wants and needs. However, independant members can still be influenced by community pressure groups and can still form 'voting blocks'.

Should in my view be an education and governance issue but would be very difficult, if not actually illegal at the moment (i.e freedom of association laws, etc) to enforce.

LG Pro - Councillor Survey

What do you see as the most important role of a Councillor?		
	Councillor	Community
To set the strategic direction of Council	60.0%	16.4%
To build accountability (i.e. 'Keep the bastard's honest')	0.0%	8.2%
To advocate for the community	15.0%	24.6%
To represent the community	10.0%	42.6%
To lead the community	15.0%	6.6%
Other (please specify)	0%	1.6%

Other (please specify) - Councillor

To encompass all of the above points

By setting the strategic direction we lead, advocate and represent our community good governance

suggest more than one option should be provided here

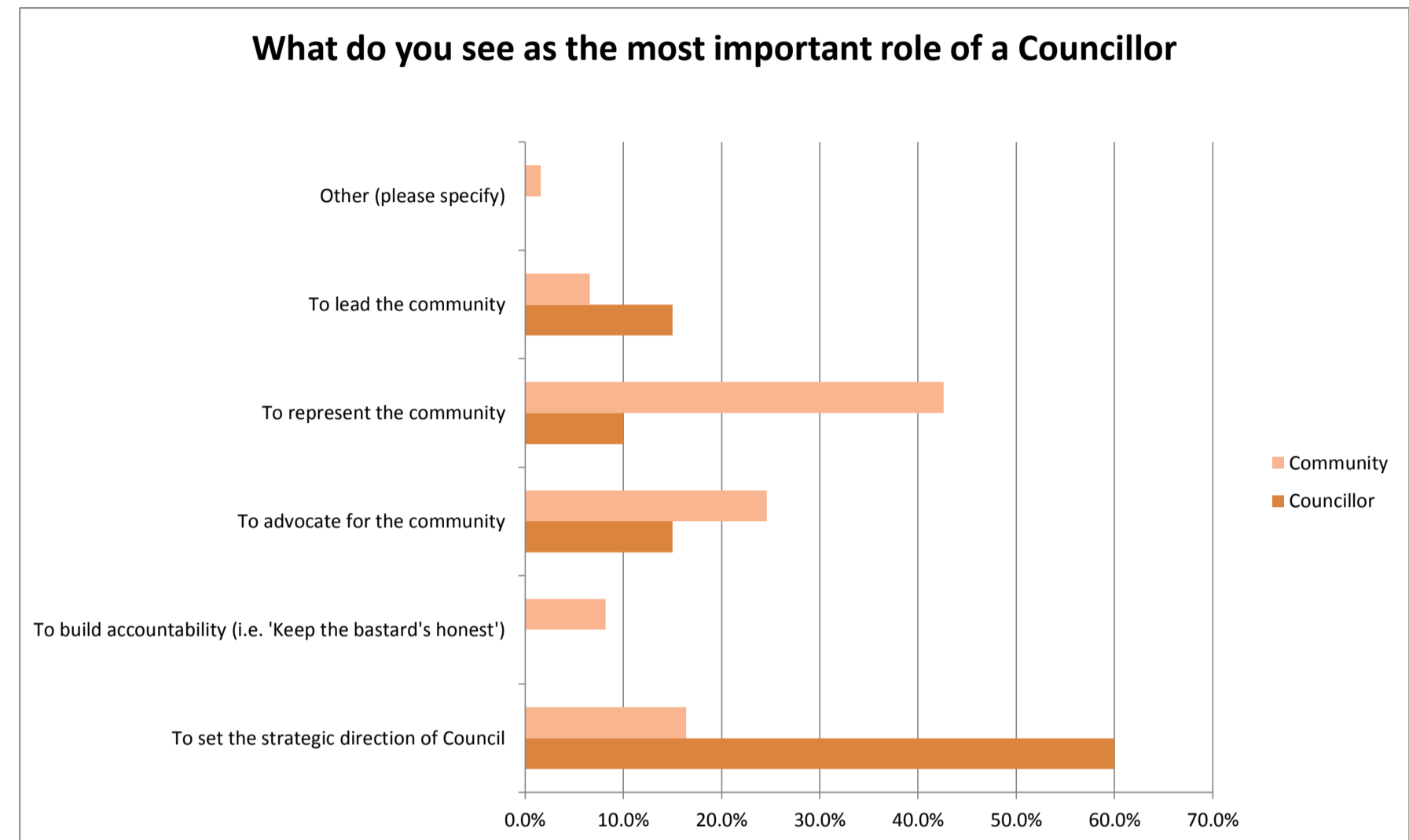
Other (please specify) - Community

- All of the above
- To Waste Council Time & Money
- Nearly all of those priorities listed above
- Council has multiple functions described above, they must form strategic direction
- First 4 roles as outlined above
- There is more than one role. Leadership and representation is important along with
- Most of them wouldn't know how to set the strategic direction or lead the
- Strategic Direction, community advocacy, representation and leadership of the
- Its all of the above

Analysis

The majority of community members believe that the most important role of Councillors is to represent the community, while the majority of Councillors believe their role is to set the strategic direction of Council. There is clearly a disjoint between the perceptions of the community and their elected representatives. This builds a strong case that local government is not representative, because the majority of Councillors do not believe that their most important role is to represent the community.

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LG Pro - Councillor Survey

What do you think are the key issues in your community Council should focus on?		
	Councillors	Community
Provision of facilities/infrastructure	13.6%	83.6%
Provision of services	27.3%	59.0%
Rates	9.1%	27.9%
Planning & Building	4.5%	49.2%
Environmental issues	4.5%	41.0%
Other (please specify)	40.9%	8.2%

Councillor	
Number	Other (please specify)
1	all important
2	All of the above
3	To provide a competency in all of the above they all interrelate to the achievement of council. They are all of one key objective
4	cost of local government relative to what is offered
5	all of the above
6	providing increased and improved services and facilities to residents whilst having mind to non-resident ratepayers and their desire for low rates. (Seachange)
7	Services and facilities.infrastructure
8	all of the above
9	creating a better future for the community which may include all of the above

Community	
Number	Other(s) (please specify)
1	roads
2	expanding local transport networks (i.e. trams)
3	As an individual councillor to ensure that the whole of the group of councillors is a true representation of the community ideal/wishes/etc- not a group of individuals pushing their own barrow.
4	all of the above
5	All of the above

Analysis

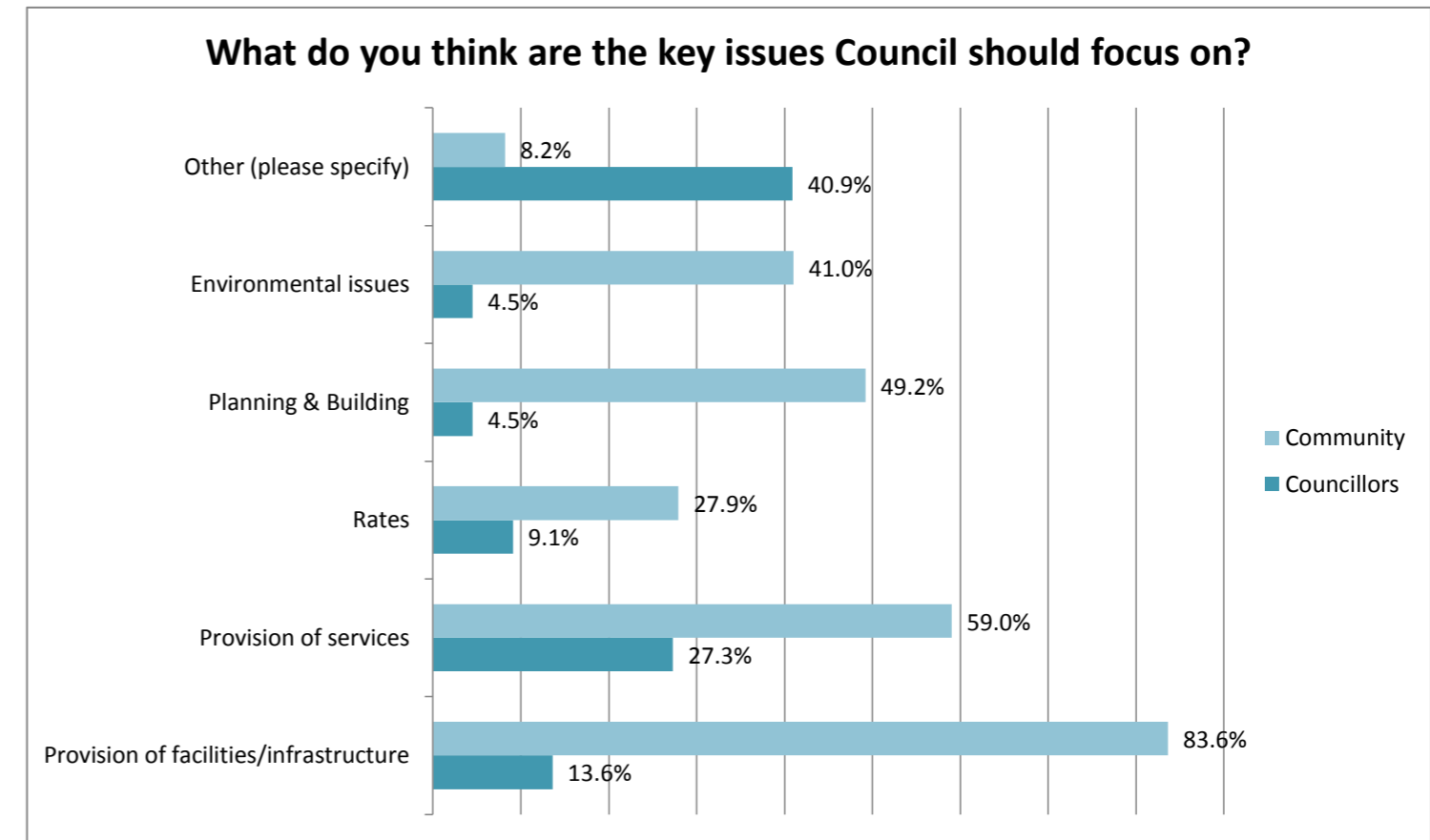
Interestingly many Councillors (from the verbatim comments) seemed to group infrastructure and services together, whereas the community appear not to have. It is pretty clear that infrastructure and services are considered vital by both parties - which is indeed reflected in the amount of work being undertaken across the industry in these areas (i.e STEP program, LG Credibility program, Building communities programs, etc). It is also important to note the subtle difference here - it appears most Councillors consider them to be intrinsic to each other (i.e improved infrastructure leads to improved services) whilst it is not clear that the community fully understands this link.

One very interesting fundamental difference however is the vast difference in the importance community place on Building and Planning and Environmental issues which were both considered low by Councillors. One interpretation of this could be that Councillors regard these issues to be intrinsic to the provision of infrastructure and services. There may also be a view that building and planning issues are not of a strategic nature and are left to the operational side of the organisation to focus on.

This could be something the education group looks at in regard to what Councillors and indeed Councils as an organisation do.

This reflects that Councillors do not always know the key issues in the community.

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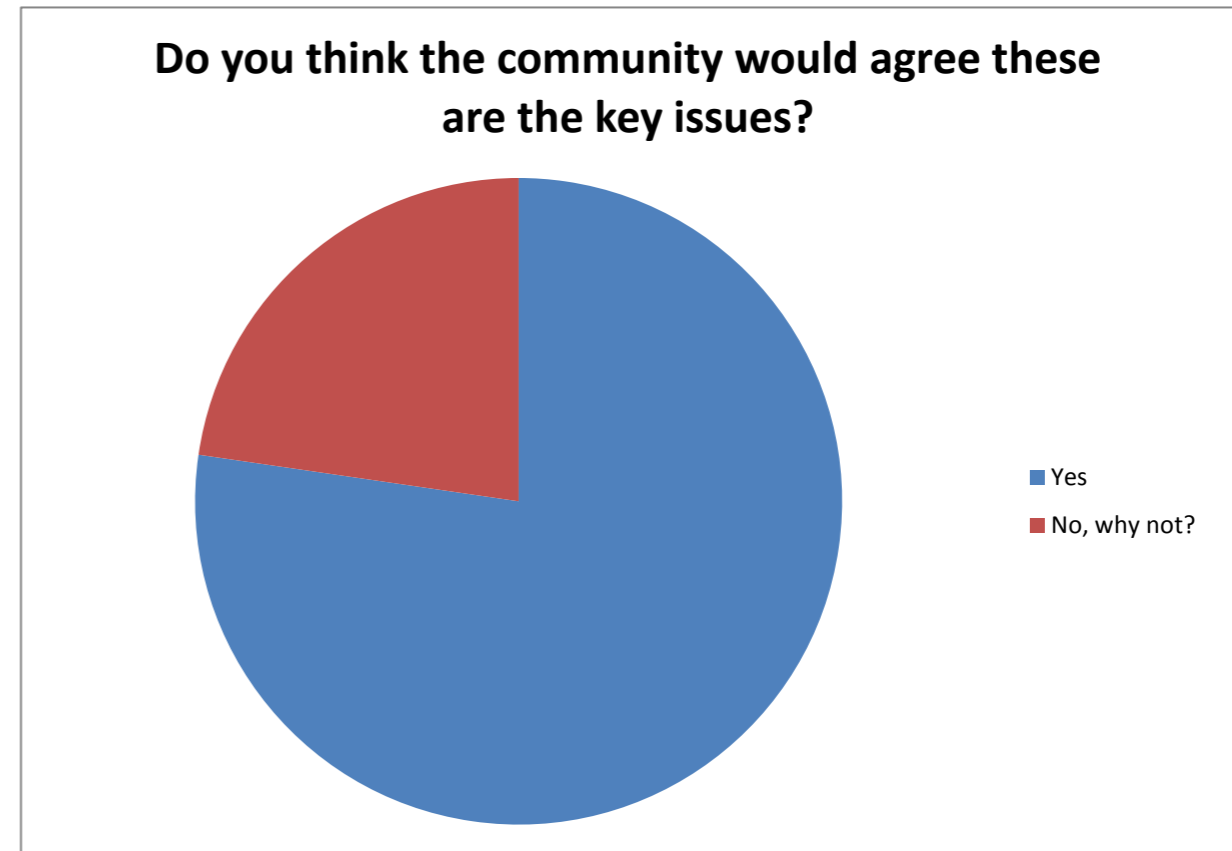


LG Pro - Councillor Survey

Do you think the community would agree these are the key issues?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	77.3%	17
No, why not?	22.7%	5
<i>answered question</i>		22
<i>skipped question</i>		3

Number	Response Date	No, why not?
1	Sep 28, 2010 11:18 PM	many and varied agendas - many self serving
2	Oct 4, 2010 12:54 AM	By and large, the community has little if any understanding of the challenges Council faces, the resource limitations with which we contend or the Statutory and Regulatory environment within which we operate. Most folk have never even attended a Council Meeting or Briefing and have absolutely no idea what we do or how.
3	Oct 4, 2010 9:48 AM	as with all people, there are different priorities for different groups and it comes down to what affects them today. However, without the provision of services, whilst they may not be noticed now, they would be immediately critical if not provided
4	Oct 6, 2010 11:56 PM	Most would, but some would think planning and the environment
5	Oct 10, 2010 9:46 AM	community may put provision of services first

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Analysis

Interesting reponse - again maybe a view that infrastrure, & services are intrinsically linked and not know that community members don't understand this. Same education comments as previous question.

LG Pro - Councillor Survey

How do you know what the needs of the community are?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
The community tells me	66.7%	14
Advised by officers/administration	4.8%	1
Local media	0.0%	0
Need emerges through planning processes	0.0%	0
Other (please specify)	28.6%	6
answered question		21
skipped question		4

Number	Response Date	Other (please specify)
1	Sep 27, 2010 2:31 AM	I have special powers
2	Sep 28, 2010 11:18 PM	many sources including community consultation and planning bring this picture together
3	Oct 4, 2010 12:54 AM	Most of the above, excluding the media, plus an understanding of trends developing in the sector and an informed awareness of issues within the community as they develop.
4	Oct 6, 2010 11:56 PM	Mixture. Community tells me/Council, and through community engagement
5	Oct 7, 2010 2:20 AM	Stood on a clear platform and take account of community input.
6	Oct 10, 2010 9:46 AM	actively seeking community views

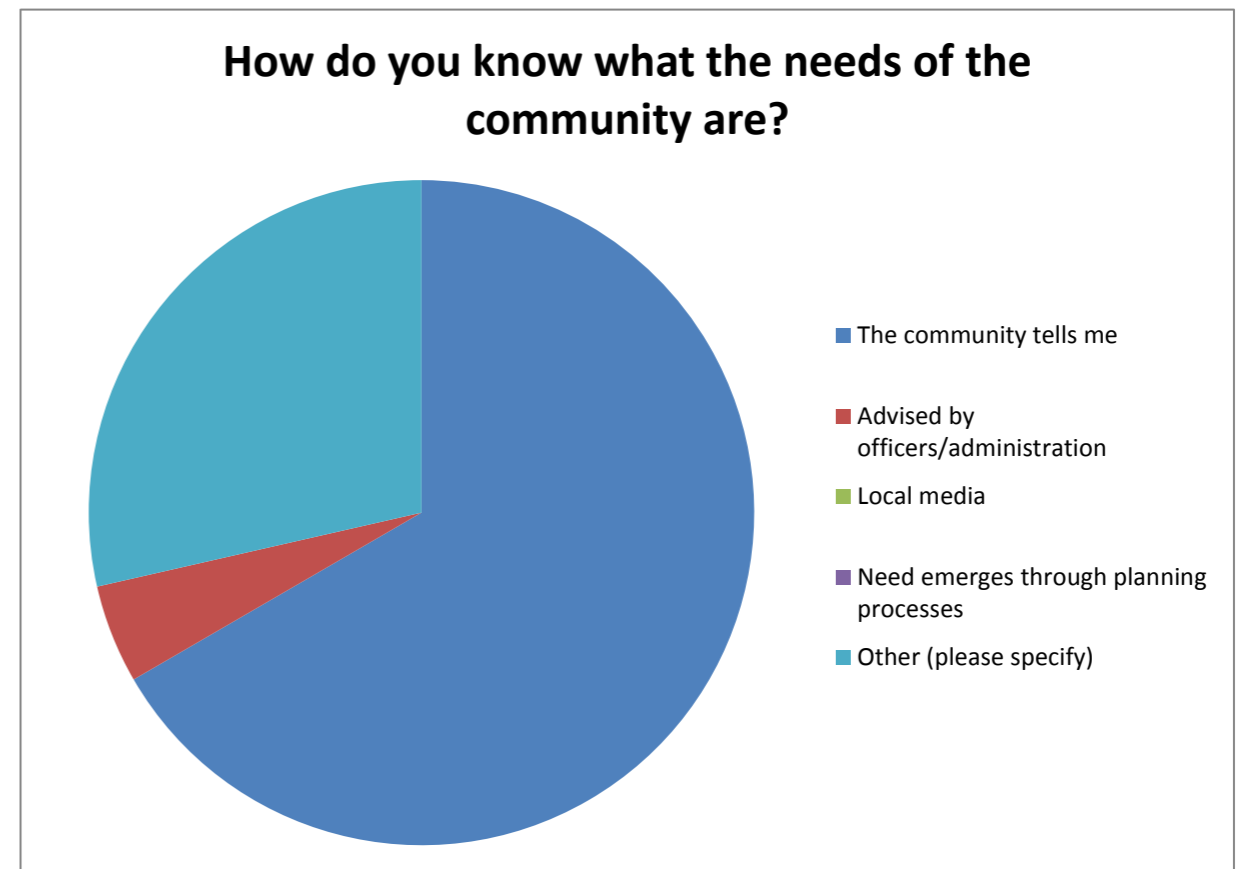
Analysis

Interesting result indicates Councillors often in contact with constituents. Interesting when combined with Q.17 where a large number of Councillors say people approach them and they receive emails from public - this supports the proposition that most Councillors are in direct contact with the public.

One disturbing response is the very low responses for being advised by Council officers and as identified from planning processes. Just about every Council undertakes extensive community planning and consultation processes - if indeed Councillors are not gaining any understanding of community needs from these processes it questions the effectiveness and indeed need for these extensive time consuming and often expensive processes. A mitigation could be that Councillors see these processes as being to further investigate and/or reinforce views that have been identified to them via direct public contact.

There is clearly a disjoint between the perceptions of the community and their elected representatives. If only a third of the community have historically contacted a Councillor than this will not represent the views and needs of the majority.

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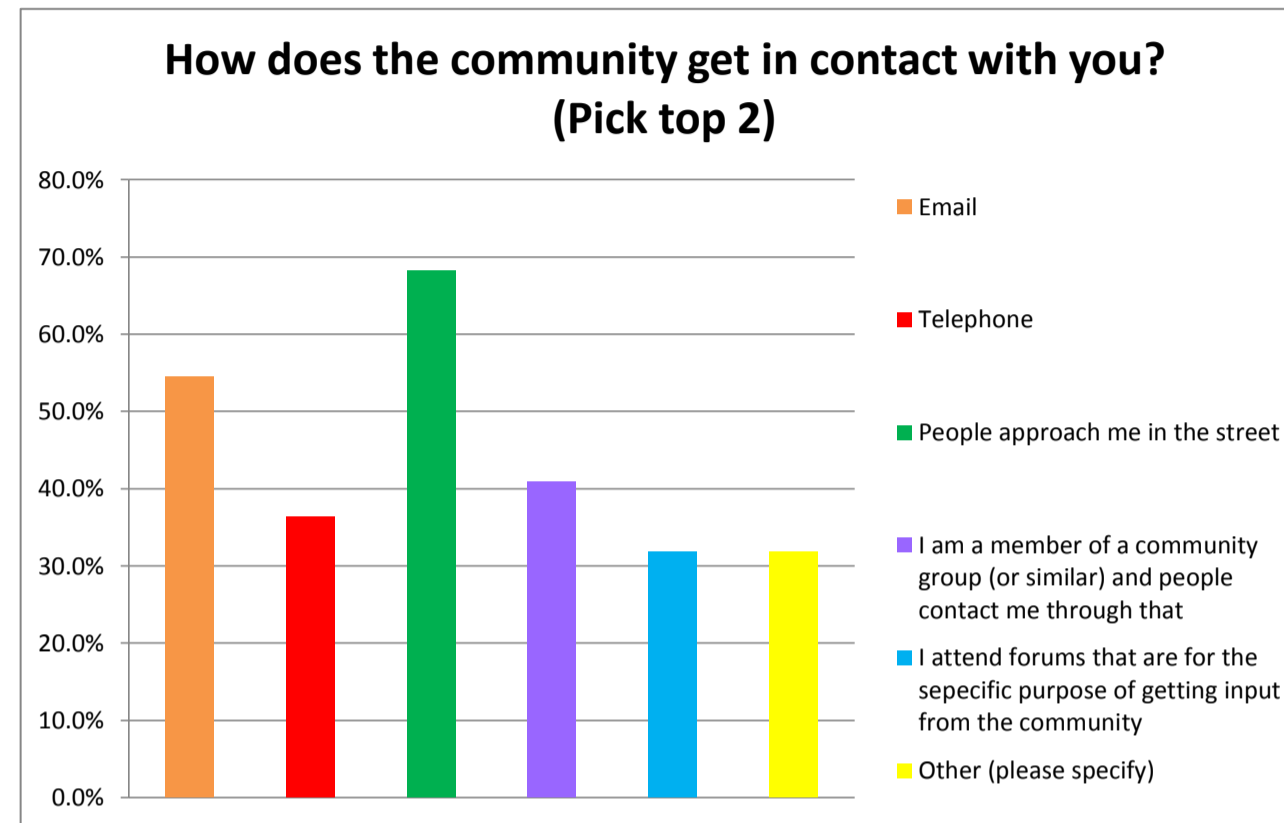


LG Pro - Councillor Survey

How does the community get in contact with you? (Pick top 2)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Email	54.5%	12
Telephone	36.4%	8
People approach me in the street	68.2%	15
I am a member of a community group (or similar) and people contact me through that	40.9%	9
I attend forums that are for the sepecific purpose of getting input from the community	31.8%	7
Other (please specify)	31.8%	7
answered question		22
skipped question		3

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Number	Response Date	Other (please specify)
1	Sep 27, 2010 2:31 AM	comment
2	Sep 29, 2010 3:50 AM	All of the above
3	Sep 30, 2010 11:59 AM	Sorry there is no top two for if you are out and about doing your job then the avenues even out
4	Oct 2, 2010 2:55 AM	all of the above
5	Oct 4, 2010 12:54 AM	In a Country Town people really do approach you in the street, at the supermarket, leaving Church. But other than that, all of the above are common, with email the most common.
6	Oct 7, 2010 2:20 AM	Visit ratepayers at home or workplace on request.
7	Oct 13, 2010 8:30 AM	small community all ways accessible which is a challenge at times



Analysis

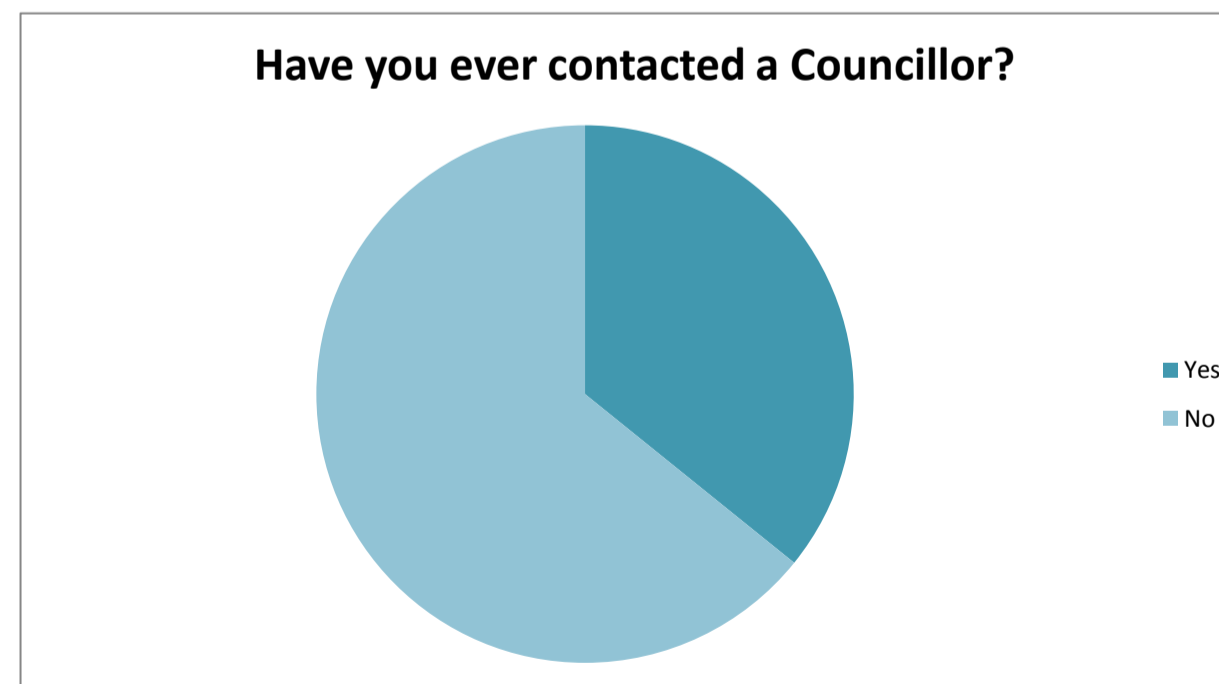
There appears to be a broad range of methods of contact here - both traditional face to face and 'new' technology. It seems that most Councillors have no problems with adapting to what is required to stay in touch with the community.

Have you ever contacted a Councillor?		
	Count	Percentage
Yes	96	35.80%
No	172	64.20%

Analysis

These graphs demonstrate that Councillors know their community needs because the community tells them. However, 67.2% of community members have never contacted Council.

There is clearly a disjoint between the perceptions of the community and their elected representatives. If only a third of the community have historically contacted a Councillor than this will not represent the views and needs of the majority.



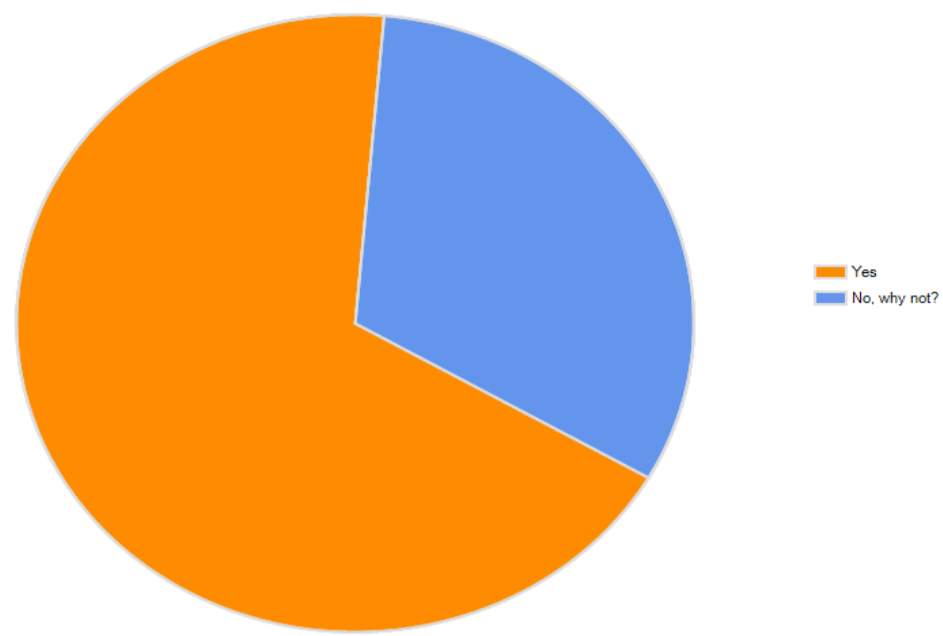
Have you ever provided input to Council? E.g. written a letter, attended a forum, etc.	
Yes	68.50%
No	31.80%

- No. Additional comments
- 1 I haven't felt the need to.
 - 2 No issue to raise
 - 3 mostly due to time restraints
 - 4 HAD NO NEED TO
 - 5 Never had a need to do so.
 - 6 I didn't feel it would make a difference
 - 7 An opportunity hasn't arisen as yet
 - 8 Councils are run by Planners who are all idiots.
 - 9 Have not needed to.
 - 10 Don't know why, maybe never felt to be fully part of the community enough to present my views.
 - 11 Yes in the Council I work for, no in the Council I live in. Haven't contacted a Councillor in the Council I live in as I haven't had the need yet.
 - 12 no reason to
 - 13 Same as above - no need.
 - 14 Time restraints with family commitments
 - 15 Never had a need to.
 - 16 I have better things to do
 - 17 always worked for a Council so had input from the inside.
 - 18 No reason to
 - 19 Because they do what they want anyway
 - 20 No reason to.
 - 21 Haven't ever felt strongly enough about something to do so
 - 22 The situation has never arisen.
 - 23 Never had the time and need to.
 - 24 not sure
 - 25 Never had the need.
 - 26 no need yet, however have considered when encountered problem with a planning permit
 - 27 Don't know
 - 28 Advertising sometimes poor, and when know about have other commitments. Don't feel educated enough on issues to discuss in a meeting/open forum. Have assisted others to write letters regarding a road.
 - 29 Haven't needed to.
 - 30 No Need
 - 31 have not had a reason to do so
processes do not always 'seem' inclusive of all
 - 32 Never taken the time
 - 33 Timing
 - 34 Not enough time to do 'extra work'
 - 35 As I am employed by council I tend to keep away from these things.
 - 36 conflict of interest with my work
 - 37 As an employee I try to separate being an employee from a ratepayer
 - 38 never needed to at this stage
 - 39 Have not been passionate enough about a particular subject
 - 40 No need
 - 41 Again nothing to raise at Council level, anytime I've provided input its been directed at the State or Federal level
 - 42 No reason to
 - 43 Never thought to do it. Unsure if you could just turn up to a forum, not sure where to get information regarding this from?
 - 44 no need to
 - 45 As above
 - 46 never had an issue i felt warranted a letter or attending a forum.
 - 47 Never really had the need to.
 - 48 Haven't had the need
 - 49 I trust that Council are doing all they can to service my community withing their constraints.
 - 50 been too young to understand a lot

Analysis

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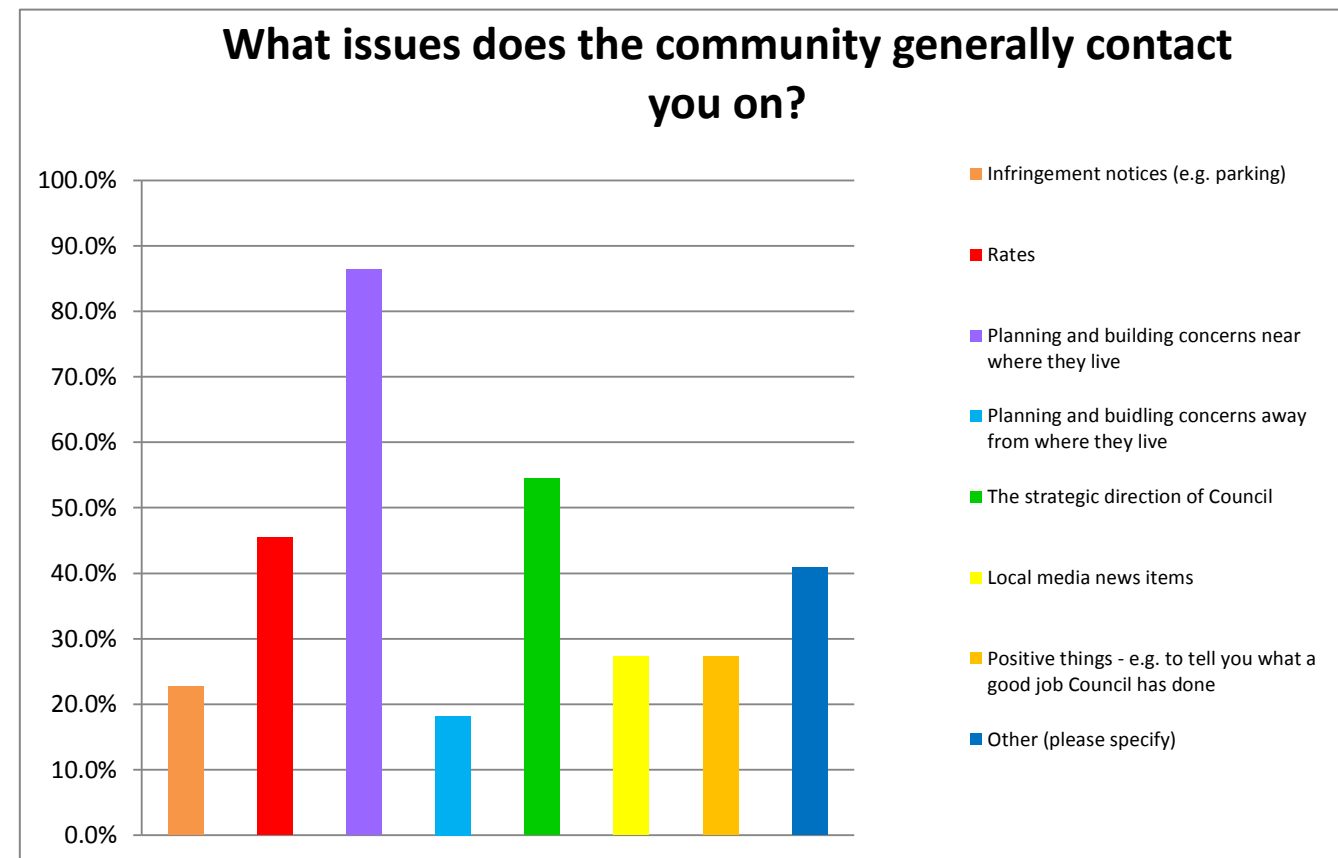
Have you ever provided input to Council? E.g. written a letter, attended a forum, etc.



LG Pro - Councillor Survey

What issues does the community generally contact you on?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Infringement notices (e.g. parking)	22.7%	5
Rates	45.5%	10
Planning and building concerns near where they live	86.4%	19
Planning and building concerns away from where they live	18.2%	4
The strategic direction of Council	54.5%	12
Local media news items	27.3%	6
Positive things - e.g. to tell you what a good job Council has done	27.3%	6
Other (please specify)	40.9%	9
answered question		22
skipped question		3

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Analysis

This is a very interesting response. The highest response here by some margin was relating to planning & building issues, which were not considered to be the key issues affecting Councils by Councillors in Q14 & 15. The possibility here is that many Councillors may see this as being an operational issue rather than a strategic one (as per their role as outlined in the Local Govt Act).

The implication here is that Councillors are being contacted largely on issues they do not seem, from other responses given, to regard as their key role, or as a key issue to focus on. There are both Governance and education issues here as to what the role of a Councillor is and should be (i.e. are they 'wasting' time and resources on things that they should not be at the expense of their statutory required focus), and how this role is communicated to the general public.

LG Pro - Councillor Survey

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Of the last three people who contacted you (in your role as a Councillor) can you please describe their age (if possible), gender and issue/concern. e.g. Female, 30's, disability parking		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Person 1	100.0%	21
Person 2	100.0%	21
Person 3	100.0%	21
answered question		21
skipped question		4

Number	Response Date	Person 1	Person 2	Person 3
1	Sep 28, 2010 7:05 AM	FEMALE , 60'S, DRAINAGE PROBLEMS	MALE, 50'S, COUNCIL RESPONSE TO PROBLEM WITH FOOTPATHS	FEMALE, 30'S, WORKPLACE SAFETY ISSUE IN COUNCIL WORKPLACE
2	Sep 28, 2010 8:23 AM	Male 60s Special Charge Scheme	Male 60s Drainage issue	Female 50s Drainage issue
3	Sep 28, 2010 11:18 PM	female 60 planning issue	female 70's housenumbering issue	male 40's planning issue
4	Sep 29, 2010 3:50 AM	Male,55 recycling	Female 58 roads	Female 35 rates
5	Sep 30, 2010 11:59 AM	35- 60 yrs mixed sex - planning issues male, 30s, change to parking arrangements	early 30s anti social behaviour - toilets male 80s, managing change associated with planning	early 40's - youth issues
6	Oct 1, 2010 6:45 AM	Male 70's issue around committee of Management	Male 50's re council's management of a drainage issue	female, 50s, Council environment policy
7	Oct 2, 2010 2:55 AM		Female, 60's, lack of pedestrian crossings	Female 50's delay in getting planning permit
8	Oct 4, 2010 12:54 AM	Male, 40's, deterioration of Bass Highway.	on Highway	Female, 20's, Inadequate Library Services.
9	Oct 4, 2010 4:24 AM	Male, 60's, road conditions	Female, 50's, Parking Infringement	Female, 60's, Public reserve, planning
10	Oct 4, 2010 5:20 AM	male, 30, planning	female 50, development plan	female 50 shop owner, community bus
11	Oct 4, 2010 9:48 AM	female 40's traffic and parking	male 50's parking	femal 40's traffic and building
12	Oct 4, 2010 11:33 PM	Male, 45, car parking line marking	Male, 55, footpath problems	Male, 60, road repair issue
13	Oct 6, 2010 8:23 AM	male 30s Replacement Bus Stop	Female late 20s Planning subdivision	Male 50S Planning issues subdivision
14	Oct 6, 2010 11:56 PM	Male, 60s tree removal	Male 50s hard rubbish	Female 60s street tree
15	Oct 7, 2010 12:45 AM	male, 60+, infrastructure (road problem)	female, 55+, planning issue	male, 40+, planning issues
16	Oct 7, 2010 2:20 AM	Female over 60, Town Planning	Female 40s, Town Planning	Male 50s, Excessive rates
17	Oct 7, 2010 10:23 PM	Male 60 road maintenance	Male 80 road infrastructure safety	Female 50 events funding
18	Oct 8, 2010 4:44 AM	Female, 40's, community development	Male, 40's, planning male, age not known, concern re local cemetary trust declining to install a donated plaque unless \$110 paid	Female 40's, neighbour problem
19	Oct 8, 2010 6:41 AM	female, 50s re tree planting and parking		male, 40s, parking enforcement in a laneway
20	Oct 10, 2010 9:46 AM	F, 50s, planning male CEO of local hospital no public health care in our shire	F, 50s, planning young mother worry over universal access for her child	M, 50s, concerned about injecting drug use in a park
21	Oct 13, 2010 8:30 AM			as a conduit for event information

Analysis

Seems to bear out results in Q.18 - many planning and infrastructure issues. Same comments re: Q.14 & 15 - are Councillors being contacted for the right reasons? Do we need to educate the public as to what Councillors should and should not be contacted for? One possibility is that Councillors are being contacted as a 'last resort' when the public have not 'got their way' with Council Officers.

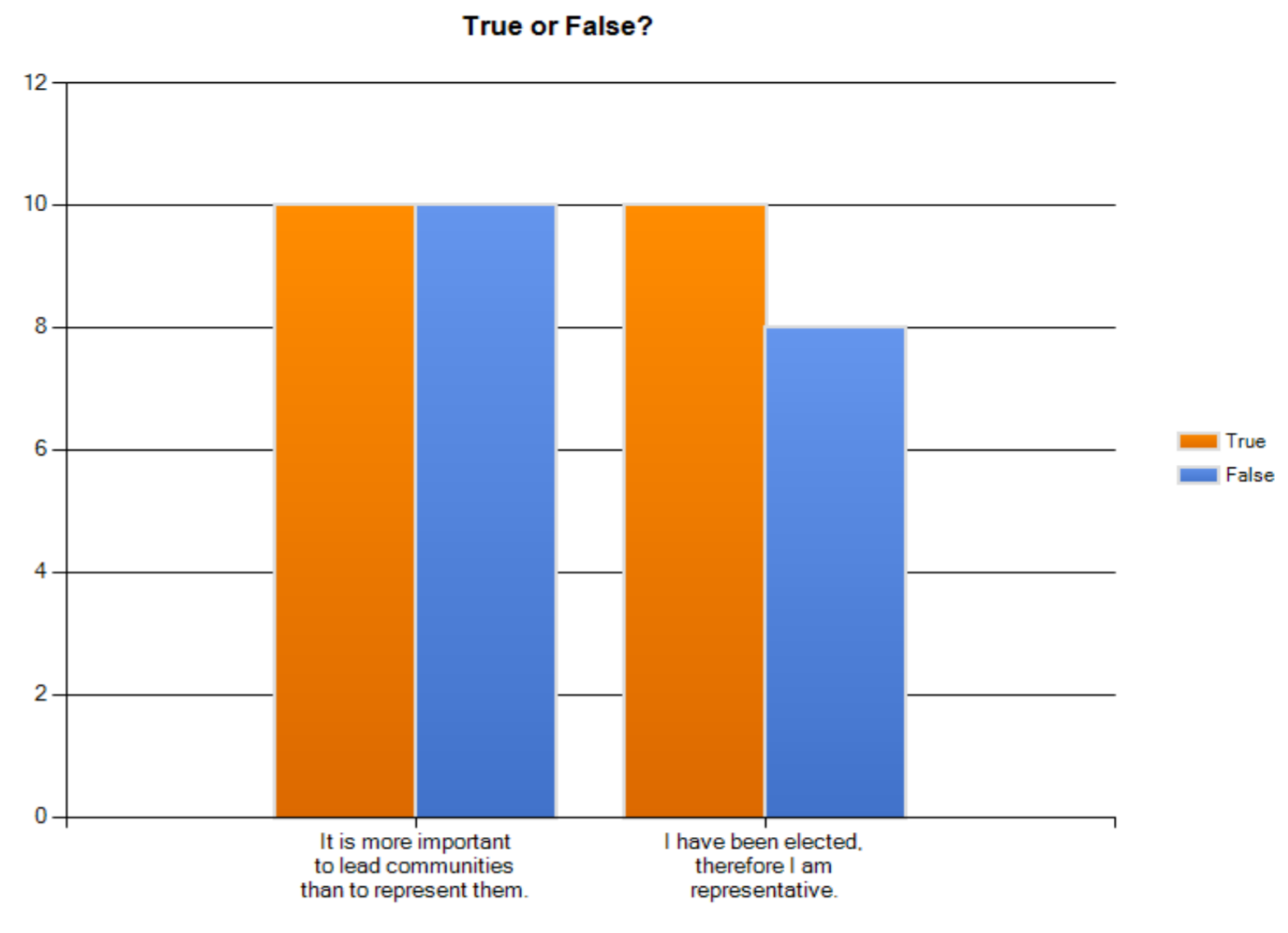
Interesting when compared to the verbatim answers given in Q17 in the Community survey - there appears to be little correlation, although there were few verbatim answers given in that question.

LG Pro - Councillor Survey

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True or False?			
Answer Options	True	False	Response Count
It is more important to lead communities than to represent them.	10	10	20
I have been elected, therefore I am representative.	10	8	18
Please comment			17
	<i>answered question</i>		20
	<i>skipped question</i>		5

Number	Response Date	Please comment
1	Sep 28, 2010 8:23 AM	I have been elected so I am responsible to make decisions in the best interest of the whole municipality (noting my responsibility as a representative).
2	Sep 28, 2010 11:18 PM	there are many views in community and we can not represent them all - we must trust our judgment and knowledge - there is a time to both represent a view as well as lead given we often have more knowledge available to us as councillors
3	Sep 29, 2010 3:50 AM	You cannot assume you know what the community want, without asking.
4	Sep 30, 2010 11:59 AM	An interesting question. No demographic is fully representative nor can it be described as not possessing leadership qualities. The better answer is one should provide leadership that is representative of the community wish. The second proposition reliant perhaps on non core influences as mentioned is fraught with weak justification
5	Oct 1, 2010 6:45 AM	You are elected to represent, but leadership and vision are part of what electors look at when voting
6	Oct 2, 2010 2:55 AM	Councillors need to lead AND represent. Education is an important function of council eg re environmental issues, climate change, land use etc etc
7	Oct 4, 2010 12:54 AM	Both comments are true. I certainly represent the community as their elected Councillor. I have access to much more information than they do however, and am aware of more issues. When the community expresses the clear and unambiguous desire to self immolate, a strict representative supplies petrol and matches; A Leader tries to understand the real issues behind such a crazy desire and seeks to address those. You lead from the front, taking a considered position and then persuading others to join you. Representatives often pander to the lowest common denominator. There is nothing worse than a Populist, which many representatives are.
8	Oct 4, 2010 4:24 AM	In leading the Community you must be able to represent their values, goals etc. Councillors must be leaders, however must always be prepared to listen and represent the Community on specific issues. With leadership you must be setting the vision for the Community into the future. Just being elected doesn't automatically mean that you are representative. It is the actions by the Councillor that determines whether or not they have listened to and are representative of the Community.
9	Oct 4, 2010 5:20 AM	Not sure about the second comment, I am elected but its debatable whether I represent everyone... leaders need to have the knowledge and represent what is best for the whole community, which on occasion is not what they can see and therefore as a community leader we must pursue the unpopular but best outcome.
10	Oct 4, 2010 9:48 AM	
11	Oct 6, 2010 8:23 AM	Most People vote not based on issues so must represent all views when specific issues come up. My margin is always small (Elected 8 times) so I know I do not represent the views of all the community
12	Oct 6, 2010 11:56 PM	It is important to both represent and lead, one is not more important over the other. As an elected councillor I am my community's representative, but I have to represent all views, not just mine.
13	Oct 7, 2010 12:45 AM	a good leader leads while advocating on behalf of the community
14	Oct 7, 2010 2:20 AM	It is a Councillor's responsibility to represent the community to the Council (consistent with pre-election commitments), NOT sell dud Council decisions (eg excessive rate increases) to the long suffering public.
15	Oct 8, 2010 6:41 AM	Leadership however, distinguishing between personal opinion and opinion based on sound public policy position. It involves bringing the community with you in considering options and reasons for each of these, providing information as part of consultation and receiving input based on knowledge of appropriate parameters for decision making
16	Oct 10, 2010 9:46 AM	I really don't like these dualities
17	Oct 13, 2010 8:30 AM	I am an elected leader of the community and they are the determinants if i am representing them or not that is not my call it is theirs.



Analysis

Fascinating response with almost even responses to both propositions for both questions. Some of the responses link representation to leadership, and many infer that it is not possible to represent all differing views, and that the best that can be hoped for is to represent a best fit for the majority. The mixed response to me indicates that this would make a fascinating study for a thesis!

LG Pro - Councillor Survey

What motivated you to stand for Council?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Wanted to do something for the community	72.7%	16
Rates rises	0.0%	0
Didn't like what Council was doing about a specific thing	18.2%	4
Interested in an issue and wanted to do something about it	4.5%	1
Interested in State/Federal politics	0.0%	0
Other (please specify)	4.5%	1
answered question		22
skipped question		3

Number	Response Date	Other (please specify)
1	Sep 27, 2010 2:32 AM	my mum told me to

Analysis

Why community members would not stand for Council

20% of the community are not interested in standing for Council and a further 13% do not feel they have the skills. 22% stated work commitments as an obstacle and further 10% family/caring commitments. If Council is to be more representative then a larger pool of candidates needs to stand for election.

To achieve this;

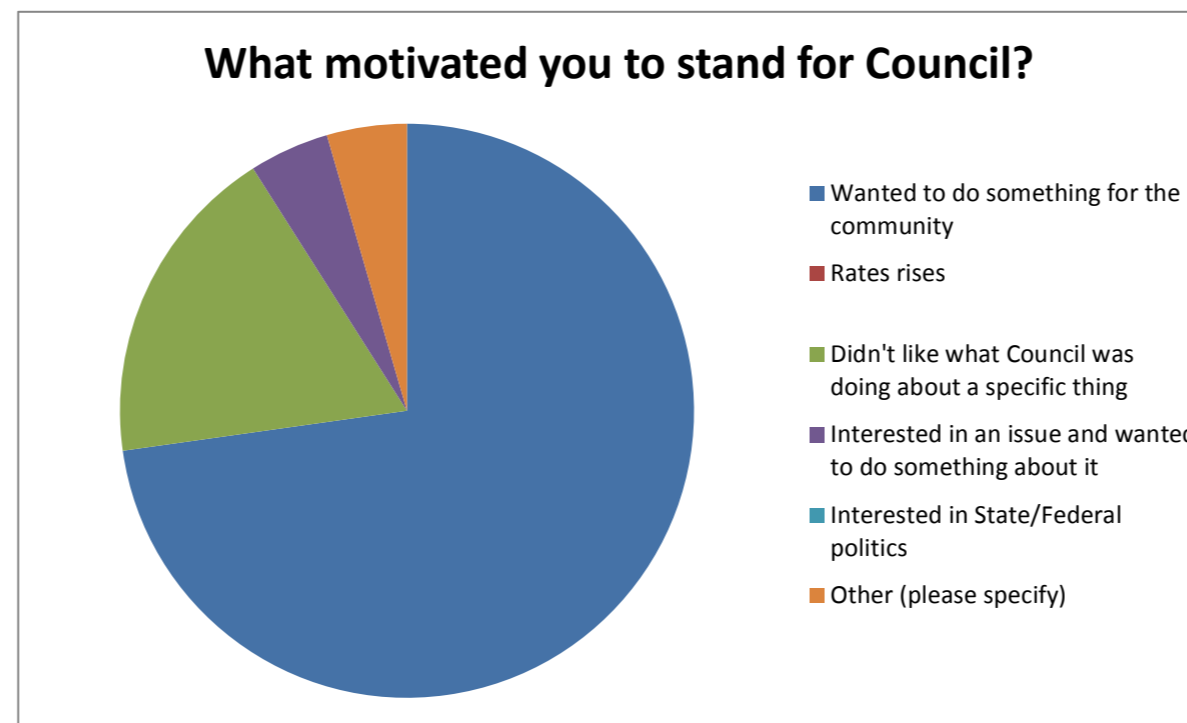
- The community needs better education on the role of the Councillor
 - Training on the skills required to be a Councillor need to offered to a wider section of the community
 - It needs to be viewed as a worthy and rewarding position
 - It needs to be an attractive full time role with a competitive salary as with its current parameters,
- it is difficult for majority of the community to consider the role.

This question looks at both education and governance

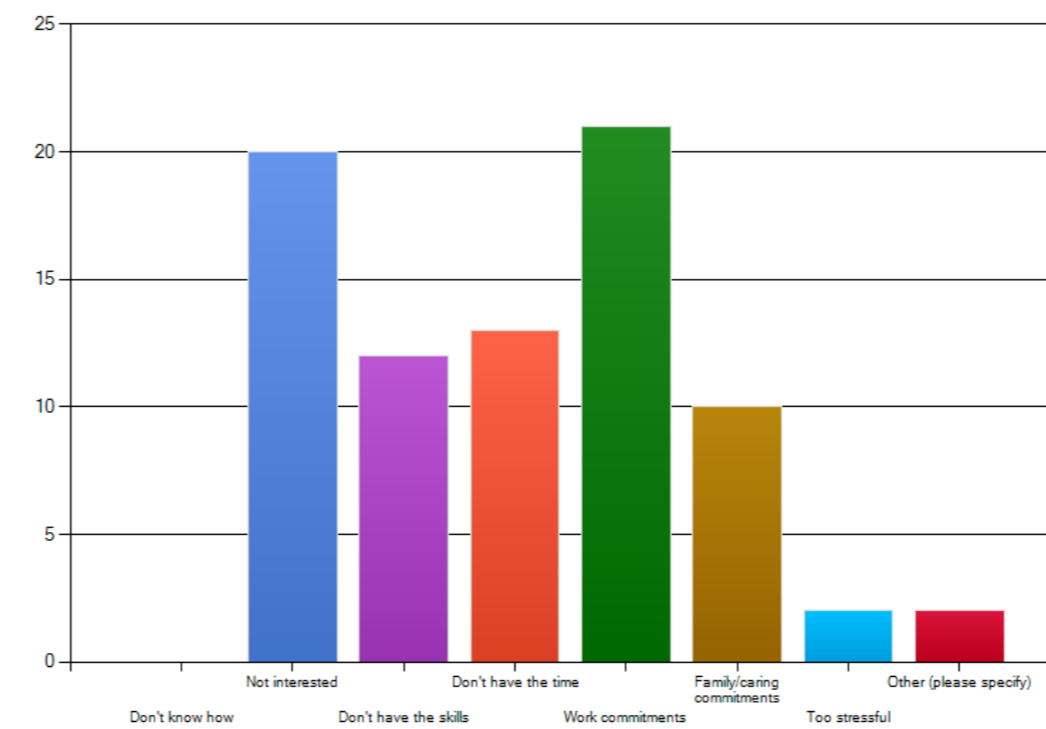
Additional Comments why community members would not stand

- Too political and not practical enough. FAR too much red tape.
- Many issues involved would not be of primary interest to me.
- Conflicting interests
- loss of privacy
- I work at a Council - conflict of interest
- Did stand for council and served a term but would not stand again in the near future
- Don't agree with the current model of local government, it is outdated, too small and costly and run by individuals who are mostly unqualified, would prefer to see it run by a board of appropriately qualified individuals
- never know which others you will end up with and whether the group would work well together...would you sign up to a job where you couldn't find out if anyone else had usefull skills or experience or were even sane?
- puts you in a position of conflict
- Have already served 9 years as a councillor, 3 years as a Commissioner and 5 years as a reviewer of Council performance
- As an employee feel have input into community already
- Working in Local Govn't
- Happy to do things for the Community without being in the spotlight
- Believe it would be a very difficult job which would take a lot out of personal time
- In politics, the best person for the job will never have that position because they are too busy getting the job done.
- I don't find the work of Councillors particularly stimulating.
- I have serious concerns about the model of governance currently being used in local government, particularly the measures used to assess competence of individuals to make such high level strategic decisions for the benefit of all.
- busy with community events & sporting clubs
- I'm waiting for my children to grow a bit older as it would be extremely time consuming.
- It may be something I do when Im a mad old lady in a purple hat.
- not at this stage of my life
- it is not my field of choice for employment
- I think it is too late in life
- I have my opinions and do not wish to represent others.

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If not/maybe/don't know, why?

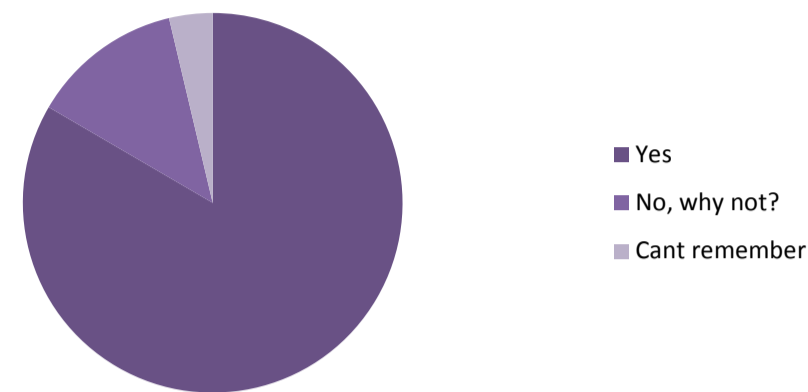


Did you vote in the last local Government Election

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	83.4%	226
No, why not?	12.9%	35
Cant remember	3.7%	10

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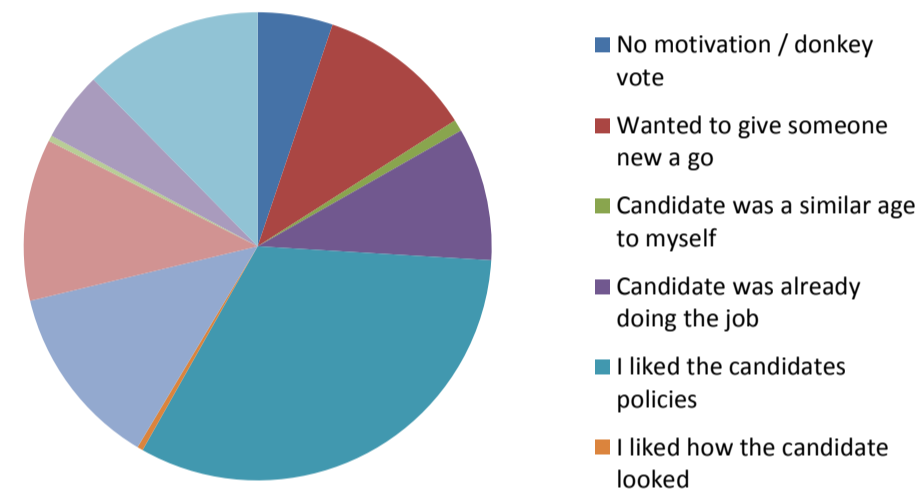
Did you vote in the last election



Why Did you Vote for the Candidate?

No motivation / donkey vote	5.20%
Wanted to give someone new a go	10.80%
Candidate was a similar age to myself	0.80%
Candidate was already doing the job	9.20%
I liked the candidates policies	32.30%
I liked how the candidate looked	0.40%
I liked the political party the candidate supported	12.70%
I had met/was familiar with the candidate	11.20%
Someone else told me to	0.40%
Didn't like the other candidates	4.80%
other comments	12.40%

Why did you vote?



OTHER COMMENTS

N/A

Didn't really like any of the candidates but went with best of a bad bunch!

I preferred the candidates policies to others

cannot remember if i voted

Didn't vote

They understood local concerns, had a passion, and were active in supporting the community

I don't recall my reason/s.

I voted for her because she does a great job in the community even though she doesn't belong to my preferred political party.

Did not vote (as not an Australian Citizen)

I choose a candidate with a range of reasonable objectives....ie: one who doesn't make stupid statements about things they have no power to do.

Didn't vote

Felt his previous work background would represent my values

I was the candidate

Read the brief information supplied with the voting paper and made a decision based on that information only. In other words had very little information about who you were voting for and what they actually stood for. Very unsatisfactory process

Overview in the paper. Some knowledge of the candidates I voted for.

Voted for preferences 1-7 however do not agree with how votes are counted and preferences given. In a lot of cases this means that a preferred candidates losers due to preferences because they did not get a % of 1st votes.

Appeared to have the background and experience that would make them an effective councillor

Wanted to vote for a woman candidate who was someone young and new to local government

No wards, so had to vote for multiple candidates. Top ones chosen because they were doing the job; I was familiar with them; their policies and directions were positive for the LGA; didn't like other candidates as much

Evaluated what sort of representative they appeared to be compared to their counterparts

It was a matter of selecting the best out of the options which were limited.

can't remember

Candidate was already doing the job AND doing a good job

'the best of a bad bunch'.

forgot to vote

No other choice

Was not registered as I had just moved interstate

I didnt vote.

picked who ever was running in the party that i prefer

Unopposed

Didn't vote

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LG Pro - Councillor Survey

What is the greatest challenge for Councillors?	
Answer Options	Response Count
	22
<i>answered question</i>	22
<i>skipped question</i>	3

Number	Response Date	Response Text
1	Sep 27, 2010 2:32 AM	tt
2	Sep 28, 2010 7:07 AM	HONEST AND OPEN DIALOGUE WITH COMMUNITY
3	Sep 28, 2010 8:24 AM	Making decisions in the best interest of the entire Municipality
4	Sep 28, 2010 11:20 PM	Making sound decisions based on facts and fair
5	Sep 29, 2010 3:56 AM	Representing the silent majority, and putting the vocal minority into perspective. To bring about corporate and moral change within the local government . To lift the bench mark of
6	Sep 30, 2010 12:08 PM	good management achievement, corporate image and behaviour
7	Oct 1, 2010 6:46 AM	Understanding how to be effective
8	Oct 2, 2010 2:58 AM	Balancing everyone's expectations. The amount of time needed to do the job properly. Or the Tail wags the Dog. Which, because of the
9	Oct 4, 2010 1:02 AM	limited amount of time most Councillors put in, it usually does.
10	Oct 4, 2010 4:26 AM	Planning matters as well as Wildfire management. To work for community when the state government steps in and takes over the local councillors and
11	Oct 4, 2010 5:23 AM	community....how to overcome Justin Madden time management - I want to do so much to help my community but with a young family and trying to
12	Oct 4, 2010 9:51 AM	pay a mortgage it is hard to find the time with work.
13	Oct 4, 2010 11:35 PM	Time
14	Oct 6, 2010 8:24 AM	Skills knowledge takes time to gain and time poor
15	Oct 6, 2010 11:58 PM	Lack of time/resources.
16	Oct 7, 2010 12:48 AM	cost shifting by both upper levels of government and the viability of small rural councils A professional local government bureaucracy that seeks to run its own empire building agenda to the
17	Oct 7, 2010 2:25 AM	detriment of the community it is meant to serve.
18	Oct 7, 2010 10:25 PM	Keeping abreast of all the issues before Council
19	Oct 8, 2010 4:45 AM	Getting council officers to work. Keeping on top of the plethora of issues raised and needing to be dealt with, in a part-time councillor
20	Oct 8, 2010 6:44 AM	role - impossible to do properly part-time really
21	Oct 10, 2010 9:47 AM	leading rather than following to prioritise and have a life, time management and family time, as well as putting up with people who
22	Oct 13, 2010 8:34 AM	talk rubbish, and lie.

Notes:

From the answers given there seems to be a theme around a lack of time to fully cope with the complexities. This has obvious governance issues in regard to whether part time Councillors are truly effective and capable of being effective. An alternative may be to go back to full time commissioners or even part time board members such as water authorities - however, the most likely and PC answer would be to better define the role of a Councillor and prevent them from getting too involved in day to day operational issues - in my opinion a Councillor should fulfill the role of a board member of a private sector company (who are almost always part-time) - it seems to be a matter of focusing Councillors to do what they should and leave operational issues to officers (i.e not behave like a 'full time' politician at other levels of government)

Another theme that appears is the level of representation and making decisions for the 'whole' municipality and 'silent majority'. This seems to fit in line with some of the responses in Q.20 - interesting perhaps needing more study.

Also some very disappointingly negative comments about working with Council Officers.

LG Pro - Councillor Survey

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What is the greatest reward?	
Answer Options	Response Count
	22
<i>answered question</i>	22
<i>skipped question</i>	3

Number	Response Date	Response Text
1	Sep 27, 2010 2:32 AM	tt
2	Sep 28, 2010 7:07 AM	HEARING FROM COMMUNITY THAT THEY FEEL YOU ARE HEADING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION
3	Sep 28, 2010 8:24 AM	Satisfaction of having given due consideration of pros and cons and of having come to a conclusion getting to meet with great community members and celebrate their work and contribution to our
4	Sep 28, 2010 11:20 PM	communities
5	Sep 29, 2010 3:56 AM	Seeing improvements in the community ,and having agreement between council and community. To excell community ethical, fincancial and planning expectations and for the communityh to recognise
6	Sep 30, 2010 12:08 PM	that effeort. whcih by the way occurs more often than not.
7	Oct 1, 2010 6:46 AM	Getting things changed for the better
8	Oct 2, 2010 2:58 AM	Serving the community.
9	Oct 4, 2010 1:02 AM	Adopting Policies which will pay Social Dividends in future years. Other than that, there are no rewards.
10	Oct 4, 2010 4:26 AM	Community acceptance of your role.
11	Oct 4, 2010 5:23 AM	Being able to get some jobs, usually small, done
12	Oct 4, 2010 9:51 AM	helping people who were unable to get things resolved or didnt know how,
13	Oct 4, 2010 11:35 PM	Achievements
14	Oct 6, 2010 8:24 AM	Seeing a community need met
15	Oct 6, 2010 11:58 PM	Being able to make a difference
16	Oct 7, 2010 12:48 AM	doing the best you can and completing a project
17	Oct 7, 2010 2:25 AM	Achieving what the community wants.
18	Oct 7, 2010 10:25 PM	Seeing projects get off the ground where you have had an influence
19	Oct 8, 2010 4:45 AM	Getting Council officers to work
20	Oct 8, 2010 6:44 AM	Seeing outcomes on ground and receiving feedback from community on outcomes
21	Oct 10, 2010 9:47 AM	it is so interesting and diverse
22	Oct 13, 2010 8:34 AM	knowing i am still me and i am proud of my achievemnts and abiltiy to stay true to my goals

Notes:

The overwhelming theme is a sense of achieving some community improvements - this does in a way fit with the 'strategic direction' objective of Councillors as their key role from Q.13

This is something that should be highlighted in any educational package around being a Councillor - i.e the benefits and 'good things' need to be highlighted!

LG Pro - Councillor Survey

[Return to Perceptions Page](#)

Has being a Councillor met your expectations?	
Answer Options	Response Count
	22
<i>answered question</i>	22
<i>skipped question</i>	3

Number	Response Date	Response Text
1	Sep 27, 2010 2:32 AM	tt YES AND NO, IT IS SOMETIMES VERY FRUSTRATING TRYING TO DO THE BEST FOR THE COMMUNITY, AND
2	Sep 28, 2010 7:07 AM	STRIKING OBSTACLES
3	Sep 28, 2010 8:24 AM	Yes
4	Sep 28, 2010 11:20 PM	had little expectation
5	Sep 29, 2010 3:56 AM	Yes It has reintroduced me to the highs and lows of community/human behaviour. Some behaviour by individuals has lowered my expectations but the ability of council to meet its responsibilities has often
6	Sep 30, 2010 12:08 PM	excelled my expectations.
7	Oct 1, 2010 6:46 AM	yes
8	Oct 2, 2010 2:58 AM	Yes
9	Oct 4, 2010 1:02 AM	In no sense.
10	Oct 4, 2010 4:26 AM	Yes. Far exceeded, I had no idea what I was coming in to and still feel like I am not sure what my expectations
11	Oct 4, 2010 5:23 AM	are? exceeded - both positive and negative - it is incredibly difficult to achieve positive change within the way Councils operate and the work is a lot, but when you make a difference and people appreciate it (no
12	Oct 4, 2010 9:51 AM	matter how small) it is worth it
13	Oct 4, 2010 11:35 PM	Yes
14	Oct 6, 2010 8:24 AM	Yes but it has changed a lot since I was first elected
15	Oct 6, 2010 11:58 PM	On the whole, yes
16	Oct 7, 2010 12:48 AM	exceeded my expectations - elected then 4 weeks later the deputy Mayor, Mayor 12 months later To some extent. Resisting the excessive control of the local government bureaucracy is a constant
17	Oct 7, 2010 2:25 AM	challenge.
18	Oct 7, 2010 10:25 PM	Yes
19	Oct 8, 2010 4:45 AM	No
20	Oct 8, 2010 6:44 AM	Yes - but is certainly more demanding in hours and breadth of issues needing attention than anticipated
21	Oct 10, 2010 9:47 AM	abundantly
22	Oct 13, 2010 8:34 AM	this gig is far far more onerous than i thought but i love it and would not change it.

Notes:

Seems to be in line with responses from Q.22 - a generally positive note - again this satisfaction should be highlighted in any educational package.

EDUCATION RESEARCH

The initial survey indicated a need to further educate the community in regards to the role and benefits of being a Councillor.

This group looked at what educational material and resources were already available and found a wealth of information; however it was in some instances difficult to find, and at best found in a variety of locations.

This has led to the creation of an e based tool, which has all the information linked on the one page. Local government organisations can add this list to their council or organisational website and the programming will then direct users to various other websites and locations to this important information.

[Trial the tool.](#)

Recommendation:

That LG Pro commit to maintaining and updating an e based tool which collates and maintains a list of websites that provide information on the process of becoming a councillor and the objectives of the role.

That LG Pro commit to providing this list on an ongoing basis to all Councils for the inclusion on the councils website.

Back to [METHODOLOGY](#)



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

IS LOCAL GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVE? (AND DOES IT NEED TO BE?)

Our initial survey drew in excess of 250 responses and overwhelmingly said:

“YES – LOCAL GOVERNMENT **SHOULD** BE REPRESENTATIVE”

Further analysis of the findings revealed the different ways that Local Government has the potential to be and is representative and the areas where Local Government is not representative.

It is this on which we have concentrated our work – how to ensure that the future of Local Government continues to be grounded in good governance and leadership for the community which it represents?

We have investigated councillor and community perceptions of the role of Local Government, governance structures which enhance or diminish the ability of Local Government to be representative, and the education that may be required to further clarify the role of Local Government.

The contents page has a link to the resources and tools which are outcomes of the study. A newspaper based in 2030 which highlights some of the perceived outcomes of the recommendations of this paper in the future. And an e based tool which can be developed into the future – providing a single entry point and access to a wide range of information on the role of Local Government.

[BACK](#)

Local Government Councillor Convention

The task was to compile research on the current procedures and systems that are in place and determine whether local government is representative. Local government means the elected councillor's.

We also explored whether other mechanisms/systems/procedures could be introduced that would make local government (elected councillor's) more representative. To provide a purpose and to give the audience something to take from this research, the group has provided some recommendations that may be implemented to ensure that local government is representative.

Local Government Act 1989 - SECT 1

PART 1 PRELIMINARY

Preamble

1. Preamble

(1) Section 74A(1) of the Constitution Act 1975 provides that local government is a distinct and essential tier of government consisting of democratically elected Councils having the functions and powers that the Parliament considers are necessary to ensure the peace, order and good government of each municipal district.

(2) It is the role of Councils in exercising those functions and powers to work in partnership with the Governments of Victoria and Australia.

(3) It is necessary to ensure that the Councillors who comprise each Council are democratically elected by persons entitled to vote at municipal elections and that the Council is responsible and accountable to the local community.

(4) It is the role of the Council to provide governance and leadership for the local community through advocacy, decision making and action.

(5) It is essential that there is a legislative framework that provides for Councils to be accountable to their local communities in the performance of functions and the exercise of powers and the use of resources.

(6) The purpose of this Act is to establish a legislative scheme that supports the system of local government in accordance with Part IIA of the Constitution Act 1975.

POPULARLY ELECTED MAYOR

Only the City of Melbourne has a popularly elected Mayor. This is because of the distinctions provided by the City of Melbourne Act.

The Local Government Act s71 provides that the Council must elect a Mayor to lead the Council for a one year term and therefore a popularly elected Mayor is not currently possible. It is possible for the Council to elect the same Councillor as Mayor for consecutive 1 year periods however and therefore effectively for the life of the Council if the same Councillor was elected by the Council for 4 terms:

The Ombudsman Victoria “Investigation into the alleged improper conduct of councillors at Brimbank City Council, May 2009” is critical of party political or other allegiances leading to practices of taking turns for the Mayoral role stating in the conclusion on the issue that:

“926 I do not consider that taking turns to be mayor is democratic. In my view, it excludes the free election of a mayor, based upon the merits of the candidate and the requirements of the position.”

Considerations:

- increases the profile and attractiveness of the role to candidates
- is clearly more representative in being elected by the community
- provides a clear mandate for the mayor
- removes the party political and power games of candidates for the mayoral role over the term of the Council which can result in a loss of community faith in elected representatives.
- Elected based on individual perceived merit rather than party political or other elegancies
- assists the profile of local government as a legitimate form of government with representative election of the Mayor.
- a Mayor for the life of a Council has greater ability to lead a vision or Council programs for the term of that Council increasing community confidence in the Council
- Potential disbenefits if appointee is ineffective for a 4 year term
- Potential candidate may not have the support of the Council.

Emerging Leaders Recommendation:

The peak bodies examine the proposal to amend the Local Government Act to provide each Council with the option of a popularly elected Mayor for the term of that Council.

WARD SYSTEMS (NO WARDS, SINGLE MEMBER WARDS, MULTI MEMBER WARDS)

The Local Government (Democratic Reform) Act 2003 which amended the Local Government Act 1989 was passed by Parliament in Spring 2003. The amendments included provisions for independent Electoral Representation Reviews of all Council's and establishes a process for these periodic independent review of the electoral representation structures of councils. This included the number of Councillors and electoral structure (wards, ward boundaries) that provide fair and equitable representation for the voters of the municipality.

Prior to this time the electoral arrangement were established by the Council themselves.

Electoral Representation Reviews are conducted in each local government area every second general term (every 8 years). Following gazettal of a notice by the Minister that a review is to be conducted a Council is required under legislation to appoint an electoral commission by an electoral commission to conduct a review. The scope of a review includes establishing recommendations to the Minister for local government on:

- a) The number of Councillors
- b) The electoral structure of the city (whether it should be unsubdivided or subdivided into wards, and if subdivided the number of wards and the number of councillors per ward
- c) If subdivided into wards the boundaries of those wards that will:
 1. Provide for a fair and equitable division of the city; and
 2. Ensure equality of representation, through the number of voters represented by each Councillor being within 10% of the average number of voters represented by all councillors.

Legislation provides that a Council must consist of between 5 and 12 councillors

In 2004 the size of council's in Victoria varied between 4131 to 155,000 voters

In 2004 the VEC produced a table that lists each Council and the voter/councillor ratio. – (I have a copy)

Moreland Case Study 2004

The VEC were appointed by Moreland City Council in January 2004 to undertake an Electoral Representation Review. They developed and followed a rigorous and transparent process in undertaking an electoral review for a municipality focussed on:

- Creating an awareness of the review process through an advertising and public relations strategy.
- distributing a community information leaflet for all voters in the municipality
- conducting an information session to outline the review process and to respond to questions from members of the community

- communicating with the local community through the use of media releases and the VEC website
- ensuring the review process remains transparent by publishing all preliminary submissions and making them available to the public
- releasing a Preliminary report and making the report available at the Council offices at the VEC and on the VEC website
- Conducting a public hearing
- providing information for those persons or organisations with an interest in the review process by establishing a helpline for responding to community questions and distributing a guide to assist those persons who decided to make preliminary submissions for consideration by the VEC.

The process involved:

- >Giving notice of the review and seeking preliminary submissions (49 received)
- >Producing a preliminary report based on preliminary submissions from individual and organisations and other factors in accordance with s219F(6). The report set out a recommended preferred option and an alternative option for public comment
- >Seeking written submissions in response to the preliminary report in accordance with s219(7) (85 submissions received)
- >Holding a public hearing
- >Preparing and publishing its final report and recommendation

Relevant Considerations by the VEC

- Submissions received
- Legislation provides that a Council must consist of between 5 and 12 councillors
- Fairness and equity of representation.
- The demographics of the Council and the projected growth of the Council
- The total number of voters and their geographical distribution
- anticipated changes in the total number of voters
- The number of Councillors for similar sized Victorian municipalities. In 2004 the size of council's in Victoria varied between 4131 to 155,000 voters. VEC produced a table that lists each Council and the voter/councillor ratio. – (I have a copy) This allowed VEC to compare a council being reviewed with council's of similar voter numbers and size.
- The workload and responsibilities of councillors including council business requirements
- Communities of interest within the municipality
- Using logical boundaries such as main roads, physical features and existing boundaries for easy identification of wards, plus collector districts for future demographic data collection and voters roll administration.

The Electoral system in 2004

10 single member wards. Some wards had a Councillor who had stood for election unopposed in a number prior elections.

Preliminary Report recommendations

Preferred option: Eleven councillors to be elected from three ward, comprising two four-councillor wards and one three-councillor ward.

Alternative option: 10 modified ward boundaries with 1 councillor per ward.

The information leaflets and media releases were impressive in the clarity of information provided about the review considerations and the process.

The Guide for Submissions document was particularly useful it setting out the matters to consider when preparing submissions including tables outlining the Positive and Less positive features of:

- A large versus a small number of councillors
- Subdivided wards versus no wards
- Single member wards
- Multi-member ward
- A combination of single and multi-member wards

Recommendation & Findings

Number of Councillors

An increase from 10 to eleven Councillors would result in a drop in the voter Councillor ratio below the state average in allowing for the anticipated future growth in the municipality and recognising the cultural diversity and aging population in the municipality and its implications for Councillor workloads. *“The VEC considers that the City of Moreland’s current and projected growth and its ageing and culturally diverse population combine to produce an environment in which an increase in the number of councillors is well justified.*

Electoral Structures

“VEC has been conscious of the existing communities of interest in the municipality and the need to maximise opportunities for their representation.”

The larger 3 ward structure would be able to reflect broader geographic communities of interest. Ward boundaries also reflect projected growth to ensure the legislated variation of +/- 10% tolerance in the voter/councillor ratio throughout the wards will not be exceeding (goes to equal representation of community throughout the municipality)

A proportional representation voting model throughout the wards, *“At the voting stage, voters are given a greater say in the makeup of their council. In a three multi-councillor ward structure for example, instead of electing one councillor, voters elect either three or four councillors (depending upon the ward), and have a say in constructing a significant portion of the entire Council. Also, once candidates are elected, voters have a greater choice of councillors to approach, all of whom are*

directly responsible for their wards as well as for municipality wide policy decisions. Under a multi-councillor ward structure, voters in the City of Moreland would be empowered by having the opportunity to elect a range of candidates and by having access to a greater range of directly accountable local representatives.”

Emerging Leaders Recommendation:

- 1. The introduction of the Local Government (Democratic Reform) Act 2003 would appear to have positive implications for the level of representation across local government.**
- 2. It would be timely for the Minister for Local Government to call for a state wide review of the outcomes, successful or otherwise, that have arisen from the various Electoral Representation Reviews which may determine any emerging themes for improved representation across the sector.**

PARTY POLITICS

Definition of party politics:

"political acts and principles directed toward the interests of one political party or its members without reference to the common good"

Party politics creates a situation where councillors are not representative. For fear of losing nomination for a particular party, one may operate and align their decisions to the party political line.

Party politics by its nature removes fair and reasonable representation from the community.

See NSW ICAC below

Emerging Leaders Recommendation:

Council's to amend Code of Conduct to include a prohibition on binding caucus votes. Introduce a financial penalty system for a breach of the Code of Conduct.

COUNCILLORS ROLE CLARITY

The findings of the Councillor and Community Surveys indicated a lack of clarity in regards to the nature and role of being a Councillor. In looking at various Codes of Conduct throughout the State and comparing with the MAV Model Code of Conduct the following objectives of being a Councillor are consistent throughout:

The role of the Council is to provide leadership for the good governance of [insert name of municipality]. It includes:

- a. acting as a representative government by taking into account the diverse needs of the local community in decision making;*
- b. providing leadership by establishing strategic objectives and monitoring their achievement;*
- c. maintaining the viability of the Council by ensuring that resources are managed in a responsible and accountable manner;*
- d. advocating the interests of the local community to other communities and governments;*
- e. acting as a responsible partner in government by taking into account the needs of other communities;*
- f. fostering community cohesion and encouraging active participation in civic life.*

All Code of Conduct documents then establish guidelines which prohibit inappropriate behaviours that are to be avoided. Further guidance is required to establish the desired outcomes of the role.

Emerging Leaders Recommendation:

The implementation of Key Performance Indicators especially within a portfolio based municipality would further strengthen the understanding of the role. These should be tied to the Council Plan.

COUNCILLORS CODE OF CONDUCT

All Councils are required to adopt a Councillor Code of Conduct pursuant to Section 76C of the Local Government Act, 1989 as amended by the Local Government Amendment (Councillor Conduct and other matters) Act 2008 within 12 months of an election. The COC however while useful in allowing Council's to self police their behaviour are mostly only a policy. Penalties are only applicable under the Local Government Act for misuse of position or failure to disclose a conflict of interest at an Assembly of Councillors. All other adopted behaviours and principles of conduct have limited weight should a Councillor choose to ignore them. It is when they are reported as not having been adhered to that Local Government loses credibility as a legitimate form of government.

The NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption ICAC report into Wollongong City Council planning department operations made two relevant recommendations in response to the possibility of corrupt practises by one or two Councillors having the

ability to influence planning decisions by a committee of Councillors made up of a small number of Councillors through application of party caucus rules.

“Recommendation 26

That Wollongong City Council amends its Code of Conduct to include a prohibition on binding caucus votes in relation to development applications”

Recommendation 27

That all NSW council’s consider a prohibition on binding caucus votes in relation to development applications during their next code of conduct review.”

Similar concerns in respect to the potential mis-use of position were flagged in the Victoria Ombudsman report into the policies and procedures of the planning department at the City of Greater Geelong, February 2007. In respect to the Councillor Hearing Panel, the ombudsman commented in his conclusions that “A minimum of three members is required to form a quorum with the chair and one other Councillor required to make a vote. I consider that this is a poor representation of Council and leaves the process open to allegations of corruption and vulnerable to political decision-making which could interfere with the integrity of the planning system and the decisions made by planning officers.

There is a longstanding stigma associated with Councillor practices and conduct as a result of various media reporting over decades that needs to be turned around in order for the community to regain trust that local government is representative rather than stigmatised by beliefs of self interest, corruption and party political point scoring. Clear penalties and marketing of the legitimacy of local government will be need to turnaround decades of community mistrust.

Emerging Leaders Recommendation:

Council’s to amend Code of Conduct to include a prohibition on binding caucus votes. Introduce a financial penalty system for a breach of the Code of Conduct.

COUNCILLOR CONDUCT PANELS

What are they?

A CCP comprises two independent persons appointed from lists maintained by the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV). One of the members will be a legal practitioner with at least five years experience in legal practice. The other member

will be a person with relevant experience in municipal governance. (Guide to 'Councillor Conduct Arrangements' 2009).

The role of the panel is to hear/deal with issues that could not be resolved using Councils internal disputes resolution processes.

When were they introduced?

Changes were made to the local government Act in 2008 and enacted on the 3rd December 2008, to include 'Division 1B Councillor Conduct Panels 81A Definitions'.

In 2009 The 'Guide to Councillor Conduct Arrangements' was published to provide clarity to the Act.

Why were they introduced?

There was a gap in the system for disputes resolution for individual councillors. If the Council could not resolve a matter via the code of conduct, disputes resolution process then there were limited options. The Courts process was an option however these were often expensive and prohibitive without clear evidence on a matter and many matters were left potentially unresolved.

How many Codes of Conduct Panels have been established?

To date six CCP have been established and these include;

- Warrnambool City Council Councillor Conduct Panel-*Concluded*
- Moira Shire Council Councillor Conduct Panel-*Concluded*
- Manningham City Council Councillor Conduct Panel-*Active*
- Bayside City Council Councillor Conduct Panel-*Concluded*
- Greater Dandenong City Council Councillor Conduct Panel- *Active*
- Nillumbik Shire Council Councillor Conduct Panel-*Concluded*

Panel Hearing outcomes

Three panels have been concluded to date and there has been no need for a progression into a VCAT hearing for any of these three panels.

Here is a brief snapshot of the Concluded Panels.

Warrnambool

Issue: Release of confidential information with regard to a tender process for building works. (the Councillor was quoted as saying the "BDH constructions should have been selected because its tender price was only \$35,000 higher. We need to be fair dinkum in supporting locals")

Panel Decision: Constituted misconduct and;

Was Reprimanded

Had to apologise to council and fellow councillors

Remedial action-media training and mentoring arrangements for 12 months

Moira

Issue: Allegations of misconduct were made against a councillor by two members of the public during the public advertisement of the proposal for the Dillon street, Cobram extension.

Panel Decisions: Actions did not constitute misconduct

Bayside

Issue: A dispute between two councillor regarding a motion to elect a “female ambassador” made by one councillor and the others subsequent belief that that the discussion following was degrading and insulting to her.

Panel Decisions: Application dismissed as “lacking in substance” and that the actions of the respondent do not constitute misconduct

Emerging Leaders Recommendations:

The CCP have been able to be established from December 2008, only six panels have been established and only 3 have been resolved. These have been of such variance in nature that it would be difficult to form an opinion on the process or the success or otherwise of the panels. No recommendations.

MAV are conducting regular workshops for the registered members.

MAV could provide clarity or direction as to where the Panel Report is table within the Council Meeting Minuets.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The Victoria Ombudsman report Investigation into the alleged improper conduct of councillors at the Brimbank City Council May 2009 was a comprehensive investigation involving matters of:

- Influence of unelected persons

“If the culture at Brimbank persists, there is a risk that those charged with the responsibility of representing Brimbank will make decisions based on factional or political alliances, and not in the best interests of the community.

- **Conflict of Interest**
Councillors failed to identify and address conflicts between their public duties and private interests
While some problems related to conflict of interest resulted from a lack of understanding of conflict of interest principles, others reflected deliberate misconduct. This included placing their private interests first and using their positions to obtain confidential information.
I identified two instances where a councillor's duty to a Member of Parliament impact upon the performance of the councillor's public functions”
- **Improper use of Powers**
The evidence points to councillors in the ruling faction voting in block to support the faction, even when those decisions were not necessarily in the best interests of the community.
The ruling faction demonstrated that it was willing to place the council at financial risk for a personal vendetta.
- **Bullying and intimidation**
.... the overbearing attitude of a councillor was allowed to substantially modify how a budget should be developed without the matter going to a full council meeting.
Councillors also interfered in staffing issues, including instructing both the current and former CEO's to terminate the employment of senior staff.
- **Misuse of council funds and equipment**
...inappropriate use of council funds and property by councillors. Gifts, use of mobile phones and laptops and the former CEO remuneration package
- **Inappropriate release of information**
I identified that some councillors inappropriately leaked information to the media for their personal benefit or to tarnish the reputation of Brimbank officers or other fellow councillors.
One Councillor also provided several confidential council documents to an international company, and to others, for his own advantage in an attempt to start a private business competing with a local government supplier. He also misused his position and information obtained through Brimbank to seek an advantage for a family member.

The report made a number of recommendations including:

- Local Government Victoria investigate possible breaches of the LGA by several councillors
- The VEC investigate possible breaches of the Electoral Act by a political party
- The LGA be amended to prohibit elected councillors from being employed by Federal or State Members of Parliament during their term on council.

- Brimbank review its policies in relation to mobile telephone use, regularly audit councillor mobile telephone bills and publish each individuals mobile telephone usage on the Brimbank website quarterly
- Measures be taken to ensure LGV is sufficiently resourced to meet its statutory requirements in relation to investigating breaches of the LGA.
- LGV introduce a dedicated investigative team to investigate complaints under the LGA.

Emerging Leaders Recommendation:

1. That CEO's, Mayor's and local government sector peak bodies and Local Government Victoria champion the development and introduction of a state-wide model Code of Conduct mandated for inclusion in all Council Code of Conducts with penalties against individual Councillors to be applied in respect to any breach of any section equal to those applicable to misuse of position or failure to disclose a conflict of interest.
2. That CEO's, Mayor's and local government sector peak bodies, write to the Minister for Local Government to recommend regulatory reform to induce new penalties against individual Councillors to be applied in respect to any breach of any section of a Councillor Code of Conduct equal to those applicable to misuse of position or failure to disclose a conflict of interest.
3. Following the above reforms the local government sector actively market itself as one of the more heavily regulated forms of government, free from potential conflicts of interests with significant penalties applicable to Councillors who choose to ignore adopted Codes of Conduct.

ELECTION OF COUNCILLORS - SYSTEM OF ELECTIONS

Preferential Voting (first past the post)

A Preferential Voting system is used where a ward is electing a single councillor. This is similar to the system of vote counting used for single member electorates in the State Legislative Assembly and the Federal House of Representatives.

- All valid first preference votes are counted and sorted to determine the number of first preferences for each candidate
- If no candidate has an absolute majority, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated and their votes are re-allocated according to their second preferences

- Where one candidate has an absolute majority (50% plus 1 of all valid votes) that candidate is declared elected
- This process is repeated until one candidate obtains an absolute majority and is declared elected

Quota (proportional representation)

The Proportional Representation (PR) method is used for counting election results for unsubdivided councils and multi-member wards. Proportional representation is designed to elect candidates in proportion to their share of votes.

PR is used for Australian Senate elections and for the State Legislative Council but does not include above-the-line voting. (ie – party voting), with the exception of Melbourne City Council.

In a proportional representation system, a candidate does not require absolute majority of votes to be elected. Instead they must obtain a quota of votes which is calculated in accordance with a statutory formula.

The vote counting process in a PR system is undertaken as follows:

- At any time during the count, when a candidate obtains a total number of votes that is equal to, or greater than, the quota they are declared elected
- Unless all the vacancies have been filled, if a candidate has received more votes than the quota, the value of votes in excess of the quota is redistributed to the next available preference on each ballot paper (this is done by redistributing all the elected candidate's votes at a lower value, so that the sum of the values is equal to the number of votes in excess of the quota)
- If all the vacancies have not been filled after redistributing the excess votes of elected candidates, the candidate with the lowest number of votes is excluded and all their votes are redistributed to the next available preference on each ballot paper

These procedures are repeated until all the vacancies have been filled. Quota system relies on a candidate reaching a specific number or proportion of votes, which is a slightly complicated formulaic percentage based on eligible voters.

***The quota is calculated by dividing the total number of formal votes by one more than the number of vacancies to be filled in the ward or district and then increasing the result by one. For example, in an unsubdivided district where there are seven councillors to be elected and 80,000 formal votes have been cast, the quota would be calculated as $(80,000 \text{ divided by } (7+1) + 1)$, which is equal to 10,001.*

Positives

- Allows more scope for independent/individual councillors be elected; greater representation of community
- Provides more accurate reflection of voter intentions (less party factional influence)
- May negate the 'parachuting' in of aligned party members

Negatives

- more complicated ballot paper (similar to that of Senate Ballot paper)
- may lead to inconsistent results
- would generally only work with no ward municipality (similar to that of Wangaratta)
- any change to the current system would require legislative change and would change all municipalities to single ward representation

Emerging Leaders Recommendation:

Any change to the voting system be aligned with ward recommendations

VOTER APATHY/FATIGUE

- Federal election = Australian Constitution - Section 28 - Duration of House of Representatives

"Every House of Representatives shall continue for three years from the first meeting of the House, and no longer, but may be sooner dissolved by the Governor-General".

The next Parliament is scheduled to next sit in October 2010 (approximate). Latest next Federal election in October 2013; convention suggests all government do not serve the full 3 year term.

- State election = set term of 4 years (next election last Saturday in November – 27 November 2010)
- Council election – set term 4 years (next election scheduled for November 2012)

Therefore voters could effectively go to the polls 3 times in 2 years, which is a great impost on time, exposure to political material (press, letterbox drops, airtime in chamber, etc)

Anecdotally there is evidence to suggest that a proportion of voters do not know who and why they are voting when they attend the polling booth on election day.

The state and local elections are timed so that they occur within 2 years of each other to mitigate voter fatigue, but with the unknown quantity of federal elections, which are better resourced, more competitive and therefore produce more material, it may overshadow state and LG elections.

Emerging Leaders Recommendation:

No recommendation be made due to legislative requirements that currently exist dictating 3 tier election timing

VOTING SYSTEMS

Attendance voting

- May lead to increased formal voting
- May lead to greater compliance from CALD communities
- May lead to greater understanding of separation of powers by community (ie. Know who/what they are voting for)
- May lead to greater engagement in process
- Gives rigour and validity to process

Postal voting

- Less expense for Councils
- Less likely to have clear winners
- More likely to be effective in communities with higher educational and socio economic level

Emerging Leaders Recommendation:

Wherever possible, attendance voting is to be encouraged; and that voting continue be compulsory.

SINGLE WARD MUNICIPALITIES

Single ward municipalities are as you would expect.

Positives

- Allows for equal representation from all councillors
- Gives constituents more opportunity for advocacy
- Councillors are more aware of issues affecting residents and not just within their specific wards

Negatives

- Overlap of work (ie. Residents using scattergun approach to issues)
- Geographically more challenging to hold ward meetings, be 'all things to all people'
- Reliance on councillors to be more aware of all issues within the municipality

COUNCILLOR TERMS

Since 2008, all Councillors are elected for a four year term. Elections in all municipalities on the last Saturday in November.

State Government orchestrated the reformation of the system to alleviate uncertainty around elections, and to provide linear governance in line with State Government elections

From reviewing case studies in both Canada and England (below), of which their local government systems are slightly different, it does seem as though set 4 year terms are standard and workable, and therefore **no recommendation** is made to change or modify this.

Maximum Terms

Both international comparisons are silent on the issue of maximum councillor terms. By limiting Councillor terms, the following may result:

Positives:

- Introduction of new ideas; trains of thought
- Potential to increase accurate representation in changing community
- May loosen the stranglehold of party dominance

Negatives:

- new council; new direction which may be in conflict with previous
- starting from scratch with new learnings, etc
- no IP

Emerging Leaders Recommendation:

No recommendations

International comparisons

South Stormont, Ontario, Canada

According to the [Canada 2006 Census](#):

- Population: 12,520
- % Change ([2001](#) – [2006](#)): 4.8
- Dwellings: 4,763
- Area (km²): 447.46
- Density (persons per km²): 28.0

The township of South Stormont is governed by three councillors, a deputy reeve and a reeve (mayor). The term length is four years. South Stormont also conducts elections on the internet, using a secure, and cost-efficient website and automated telephone voting system.

Located southeastern Ontario, South Stormont offers the relaxed lifestyle of country living with major metropolitan area just a short drive away. South Stormont is immediately adjacent to Cornwall, Canada's Seaway City. With its rural/urban blend, South Stormont offers an enviable choice of warm inviting villages, or rolling countryside.

Voting is a fundamental right of our democracy. By voting in the municipal and school elections, you are selecting representatives that will determine the priorities and direction of our Township and how we live together.

During the next municipal election, South Stormont residents will cast their ballots for:

- Mayor
- Deputy Mayor
- Councillors
- School Board Trustees

Local government system in England

Elections

The area which a council covers is divided into one or more [electoral divisions](#) – known in district and parish councils as "[wards](#)", and in county councils as "electoral divisions". Each ward can return one or more members; multi-member wards are quite common. There is no requirement for the size of wards to be the same within a district, so one ward can return one member and another ward can return two.

In the election, the candidates to receive the most votes win, in a system known as the [multi-member plurality system](#). There is no element of [proportional representation](#), so if four candidates from the Mauve Party poll 2,000 votes each, and four candidates from the Taupe Party poll 1,750 votes each, all four Mauve candidates will be returned, and no Taupe candidates will. Although this has been said by some to be undemocratic,^[3] minor and local [single-issue parties](#) do tend to do much better at local elections than they do in general elections, so the case for reform is perhaps less clear. In any event, the system is not likely to change for the foreseeable future.

The term of a councillor is usually four years. Councils may be elected wholly, every four years, or "by thirds", where a third of the councillors get elected each year, with one year with no elections. Recently, the "by halves" system, whereby half of the council is elected every two years, has been allowed. Sometimes wholesale boundary revisions will mean the entire council will be re-elected, before returning to the previous elections by thirds or by halves over the coming years.

Future

The Government released a Local Government White Paper on 26 October 2006, *Strong and Prosperous Communities*, which deals with the structure of local government.^{[5][6][7][8]} The White Paper emphasises the concept of "double devolution", with more powers being granted to councils, and powers being devolved from town halls to community levels.

It proposes to reduce the level of central government oversight over local authorities by removing centrally set performance targets, and statutory controls of the Secretary of State over parish councils, bye-laws, and electoral arrangements.

Parish councils can currently be styled parish councils, town councils or city councils: the White Paper proposes that "community council", "neighbourhood council" and "village council" may be used as well.

The White Paper proposes to strengthen the council executives, and provides an option between a directly elected mayor, a directly-elected executive, or an indirectly elected leader – all with a fixed 4-year term. It promises that the Department for Transport will put forward proposals for a reform of the [Passenger Transport Authorities](#). The white paper allows for [structural changes to local government in England](#) and consensus-based proposals for unitary authority status were asked to be submitted before 25 January 2007.

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METHODOLOGY

UNDERSTANDING THE QUESTION

The question “Is Local Government Representative (and does it need to be)?” was posed to the Emerging Leaders at the Induction Retreat held at Glen Erin in Lancefield in February. Our brief was to answer the question, by way of a project deliverable to be submitted by 31 December 2010. The results of the project are to be presented at the LG Pro Annual Conference on Thursday 17 February.

It was quickly decided that the group could only answer the question from a Local Government Officer perspective and that a short survey of Councillor’s, staff and community, posing the question would give us an all round view. In the following weeks the group individually emailed out to their networks, asking the question: “Is Local Government Representative (and does it need to be)?”

By the time the next monthly session came around we had received in excess of 250 responses and these could be naturally sorted via a matrix: Councillor’s perspective, Staff perspective, Community perspective and the Broader Political Context. Each of these headings could be populated with responses that showed when Local Government:

- Is representative
- Isn’t representative
- Has the capacity to be representative (but doesn’t necessarily do so)
- Could be more representative.

However, one part of the question had been answered. Almost unequivocally respondents answered that Local Government **MUST** be representative. That by its very being, Local Government has at its heart a responsibility to represent those in it’s community.

The group then decided to narrow the study given the duplicity of the first part of the question – Is Local Government representative? We broke into four subgroups to further investigate how Local Government could be more representative (dot point four above)?

It was decided that from the responses there were a number of clear areas which influenced the ability of local government to represent the community:

[Governance](#)

[Perception](#)

[Education](#)

Subgroups were formed to investigate each of the above areas. Recommendations were brought back to the whole group.

The group then began to extrapolate these recommendations out to 2030. What would be the impact of these changes? How would other influences change the outcomes?

This led to the development of a newspaper '[The Daily Democrat](#)' published in 2030 which looks at the changes to the community and the sector if the recommendations made in the body of this project were implemented.

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PERCEPTIONS RESEARCH

The 2010 LG Pro Emerging Leaders participants surveyed current servicing Councillors and community members to determine if local government is representative.

View [Councillor and Community Survey](#) results.

The online survey was distributed to community members and sent to Councillors via their Council support staff. 25 responses were received from Councillors. 272 community responses were received ('Community members'). Of these 272 responses, 211 worked or had worked for Council ('Council staff'). 61 had not ('Non-Council Community members').

A snapshot of results:

- Councillors said their most important role was 'to set the strategic direction of Council'. Community members said it was 'to represent the community'.
These do not marry up. It suggests that local government is not representative, because the majority of Councillors do not believe that is their role. Similarly, would the community prefer to set the strategic direction? How many Council's allow the community to participate/provide input into the Council Plan?
- Councillors said the key issue for the community was 'provision of services'. Community members said it was 'provision of facilities/infrastructure'.
Again, these do not marry up.
- Councillors said they knew the needs of community 'because the community tells me'. However, 65% of community members had not contacted a Councillor.
Actually, we thought 65% was surprisingly low. This has implications in terms of the 'silent majority'. Who is it that actually contacts Councillors? More than half (51%) of non-Council staff community members didn't know who their councillor was. Even Council staff struggled with this – 40% did not know who their Councillor was.
- While 65% of community members had not contacted a Councillor, 72% had input into Council.
Is the administration more informed? Does the administration have a better handle on community need?

- The top two reasons for not being a councillor was: 1) work commitments, and 2) not interested.

While things like work commitments, family/caring commitments and time commitments have attracted considerable attention in discussion about barriers to becoming a Councillor, very little has focused on the 'not interested' barrier. Could have implications for education, social marketing of what being a Councillor is, etc.

- 45% of non-Council community members knew what ward they lived in, 44% did not.

If the purpose of the ward system is for Councillors to better represent community members, the fact that 44% of respondents do not know which ward they live in suggests that this is not effective.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of recommendations:

1. That LG Pro commit to maintaining and updating an e based tool which collates and maintains a list of websites that provide information on the process of becoming a councillor and the objectives of the role and that LG Pro commit to providing this list on an ongoing basis to all Councils for the inclusion on the councils website.
2. The peak bodies examine the proposal to amend the Local Government Act to provide each Council with the option of a popularly elected Mayor for the term of that Council.
3. Where municipalities have moved to a portfolio based system of representation and election, the introduction of the Local Government (Democratic Reform) Act 2003 would appear to have positive implications for the level of representation across local government. As such, it would be timely for the Minister for Local Government to call for a state wide review of the outcomes, successful or otherwise, that have arisen from the various Electoral Representation Reviews which may determine any emerging themes for improved representation across the sector.
4. Council's to amend Code of Conduct to include a prohibition on binding caucus votes and a financial penalty system for a breach of the Code of Conduct.
5. The implementation of Key Performance Indicators especially within a portfolio based municipality would further strengthen the understanding of the role. These should be tied to the Council Plan.
6. Council's to amend Code of Conduct to include a prohibition on binding caucus votes. Introduce a financial penalty system for a breach of the Code of Conduct.

7. MAV could provide clarity or direction as to where the Conduct Panel Report is table within the Council Meeting Minutes.
8. That CEO's, Mayor's and local government sector peak bodies and Local Government Victoria champion the development and introduction of a state-wide model Code of Conduct mandated for inclusion in all Council Code of Conducts with penalties against individual Councillors to be applied in respect to any breach of any section equal to those applicable to misuse of position or failure to disclose a conflict of interest.
9. That CEO's, Mayor's and local government sector peak bodies, write to the Minister for Local Government to recommend regulatory reform to induce new penalties against individual Councillors to be applied in respect to any breach of any section of a Councillor Code of Conduct equal to those applicable to misuse of position or failure to disclose a conflict of interest.
10. Following the above reforms the local government sector actively market itself as one of the more heavily regulated forms of government, free from potential conflicts of interests with significant penalties applicable to Councillors who choose to ignore adopted Codes of Conduct.
11. Wherever possible, attendance voting is to be encouraged; and that voting continue be compulsory.

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[Daily Democrat](#)

[How to Participate in Local Government](#)

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