

# Litchfield Council

## 2019 Community Survey Report

Prepared by True North Strategic Communication  
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## Overview

True North Strategic Communication was engaged by Litchfield Council to report on the findings of the 2019 Litchfield Community Survey.

The survey is conducted each year to understand community sentiment and satisfaction. The objectives of the survey are to:

- measure level of importance and satisfaction of services and communication by Council
- establish benchmarks
- guide future priorities for Council.

The survey ran for four weeks from 5 August to 2 September 2019 and attracted 127 responses. The survey was promoted in a number of ways including:

- Have Your Say website
- Facebook
- community noticeboards
- emails to stakeholders, community groups and recreation reserves
- media, including radio interviews.

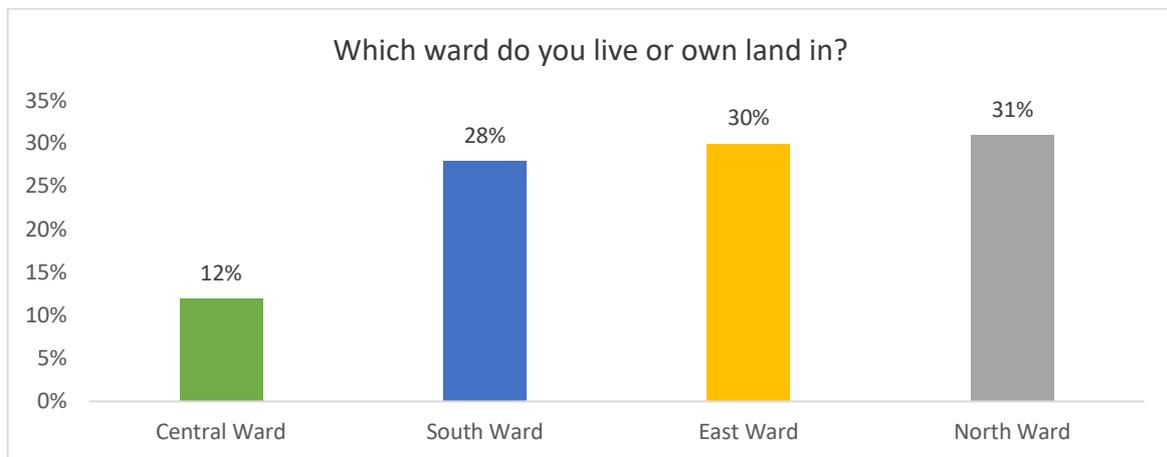
This report outlines the findings of the survey and provides some analysis. Percentages have been rounded up to the nearest whole per cent.

## Findings

### Respondent profile

The majority of respondents said they were a resident and landowner (89%) and 11 per cent said they were a resident but do not own land. There were no responses from people who own land but are not residents.

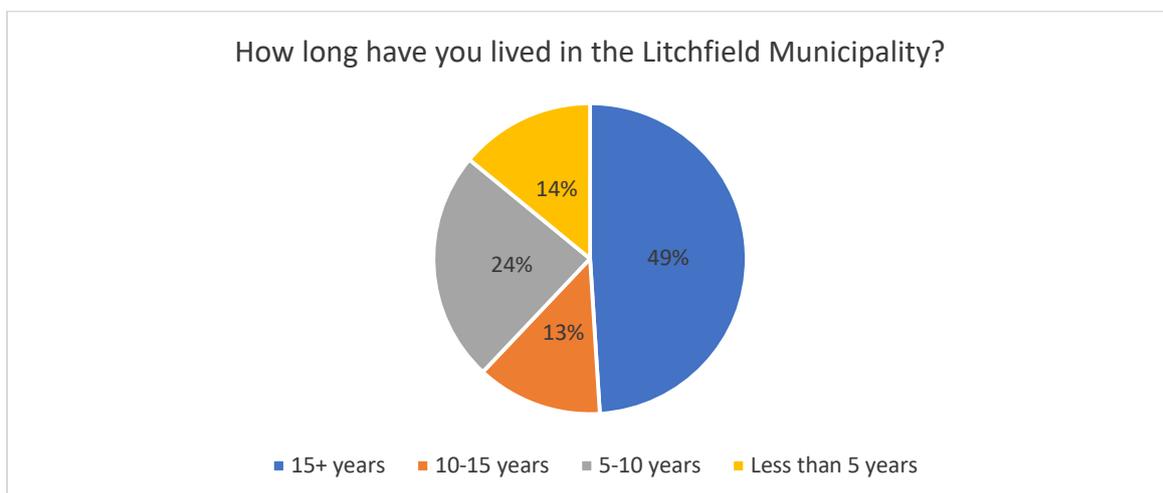
There was a fairly even spread of residents from the North Ward (31%) and East Ward (30%).



Approximately 46 per cent of respondents said they were aged between 30-49, 37 per cent said they were 50-64, 11 per cent were 65 and over and 6 per cent were aged between 18-29. The majority of respondents were female (72 per cent).

When respondents were asked how they would best describe their family type, 49 per cent said they were a family, followed by 34 per cent who said they were a couple, 11 per cent who were single and 6 per cent who were single with kids.

Almost half of respondents said they have lived in the Litchfield municipality for more than 15 years (49 per cent), followed by 24 per cent who said 5-10 years and 14 per cent who said less than five years. Around 13 per cent of respondents said 10-15 years.



## Importance and satisfaction of Council services

### Importance of Council services

Respondents were asked to rank how important Council's services were to them. They were asked to rank in order of importance, with 1 being most important and 10 being least important.

Maintenance of local roads including potholing, grading and sealing was ranked the most important service with an average score of 2.72. This was followed by road drainage maintenance with a score of 4.44, weed management on Council land with a score of 4.76, and waste transfer stations with a score of 4.89.

Service category	Importance score
Maintenance of local roads (potholing, grading, sealing)	2.72
Road drainage maintenance	4.44
Weed management on Council land	4.76
Waste transfer stations	4.89
Roadside maintenances (mowing, slashing, road signs)	5.02
Waste recycling solutions	5.35
Recreation reserves	5.96
Animal management	6.20
Community Library	7.65
Thorak Regional Cemetery	8.02

In the 2018 community survey, there was a similar result with respondents indicating that the top four most important services were maintenance of local roads, waste transfer stations, weed management and road drainage maintenance.

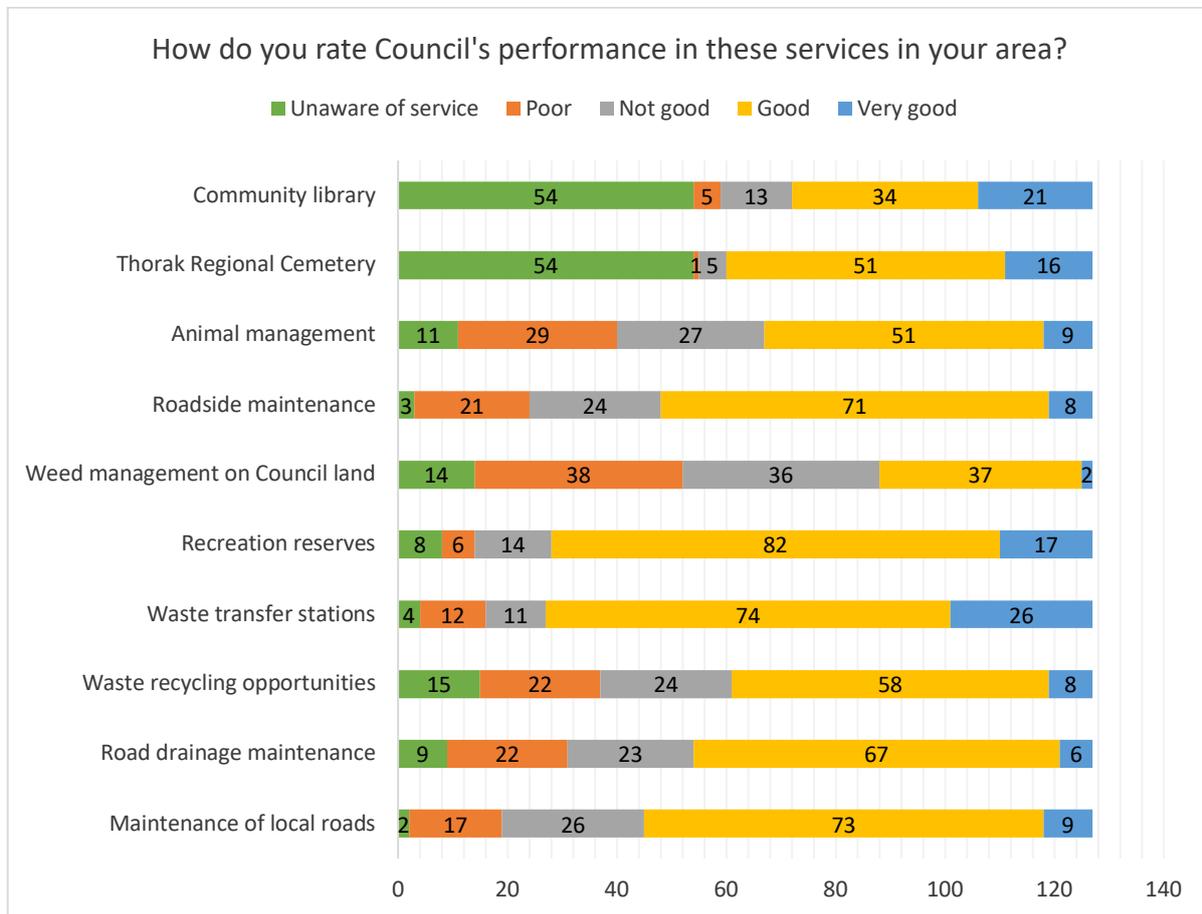
### Satisfaction of Council services

Using a rating scale of very good to poor, respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with Council's performance in each of the service areas. Respondents had the option to outline whether they were unaware of a particular service. Satisfaction levels were determined based on those who said they were aware of the service.

Interestingly, 57 per cent of respondents said they were unaware that the community library and Thorak Regional Cemetery were serviced by Council. Of the 43 per cent of respondents who were aware that Council is responsible for the community library, 92 per cent rated this service as good or very good.

The next highest performing services were recreation reserves, with 83 per cent of those who said they were aware of the service rating them as good or very good. This was closely followed by waste transfer stations, with 81 per cent of respondents rating them as good or very good.

The lowest performing service was weed management on Council land, with 65 per cent of respondents who were aware of this service rating this as not good or poor. This was followed by animal management, with 48 per cent of respondents rating this as not good or poor.



The table below demonstrates the level of awareness and importance of services outlined by respondents compared to their level of satisfaction for each.

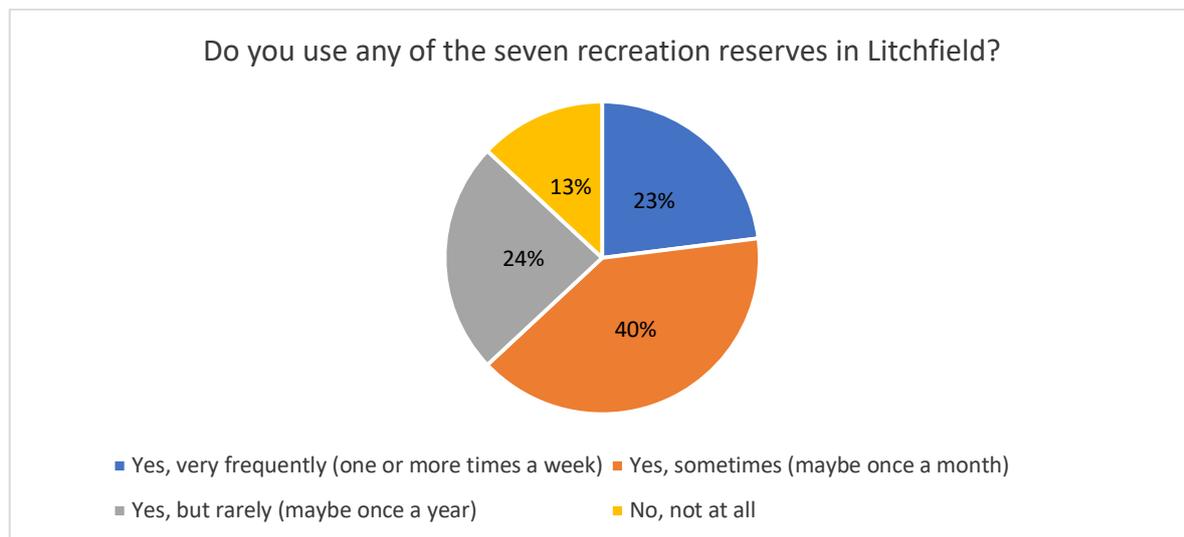
Service category	Level of awareness of service	Importance score	Level of satisfaction of those who were aware of service
Maintenance of local roads (potholing, grading, sealing)	98% aware	2.72	66% good or very good
Road drainage maintenance	93% aware	4.44	62% good or very good
Weed management on Council land	89% aware	4.76	65% not good or poor
Waste transfer stations	97% aware	4.89	81% good or very good
Roadside maintenances (mowing, slashing, road signs)	98% aware	5.02	62% good or very good
Waste recycling opportunities	88% aware	5.35	52% good or very good
Recreation reserves	94% aware	5.96	83% good or very good
Animal management	91% aware	6.20	52% good or very good
Community Library	57% unaware	7.65	92% good or very good
Thorak Regional Cemetery	57% unaware	8.02	75% good or very good

Maintenance of local roads was considered to be most important to many respondents but it was not the highest performing service in terms of satisfaction. While respondents were generally satisfied with this service, 34 per cent rated it as not good or poor indicating that there is room for improvement. Other areas that could be improved based on the ratings were road drainage maintenance which was second most important with 38 per cent of respondents who were aware of this service rating the service as not good or poor and weed management which was ranked third in level of importance but more than half (65%) rated this service as not good or poor.

### Recreation reserves

Recreation reserves in the Litchfield region are regularly used, with most respondents indicating they use these at some time during the year (87%).

This result was a slight increase compared to the 2018 community survey where a total of 81 per cent of respondents said they use recreation reserves at some time during the year.



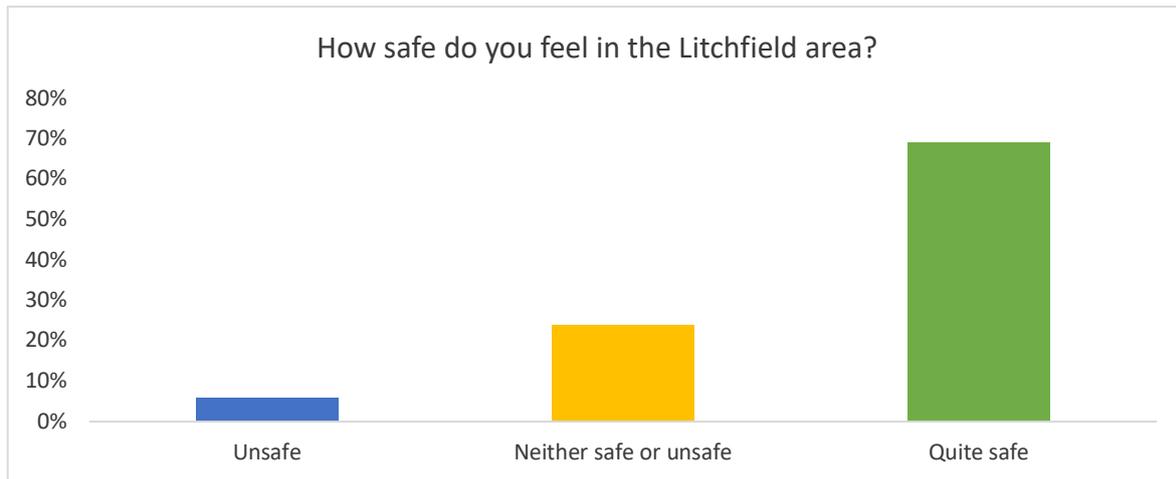
Respondents said they generally use the recreation reserves for sport, exercise, community events and socialising. Some comments were:

- *Humpty Doo park and skate park. Fred's pass for kids sport*
- *Fred's pass and McMinns lagoon - personal exercise and kids sports, markets*
- *Village green - every weekend with the kids, and the skate park to ride their bikes, regularly out to Howard park and Berry Springs for birthday parties as well.*
- *Fred's pass - horse riding*
- *Berry springs reserve once a week for exercise class.*

When asked how Council could improve any of the recreation reserves there were a range of suggestions, including more bins, more cycle paths to get there, better weed control and a public swimming pool.

## Safety

Respondents ranked how safe they feel in the Litchfield area, with most indicating they feel quite safe (69%). Of those who said they feel quite safe, there were 67 per cent women compared to 75 per cent men.

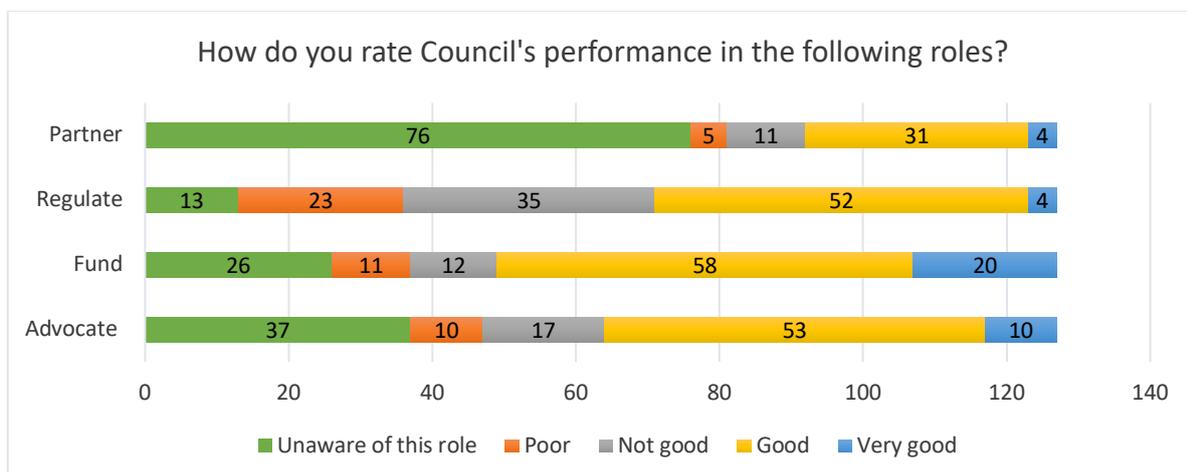


## Satisfaction of Council's performance

### Council's roles

Using a rating scale from very good to poor, respondents rated Council's performance in various roles, including advocacy, funding, regulation and partnering. Respondents were able to outline if they were unaware of the role. Satisfaction was determined based on the responses from those who said they were aware of the role.

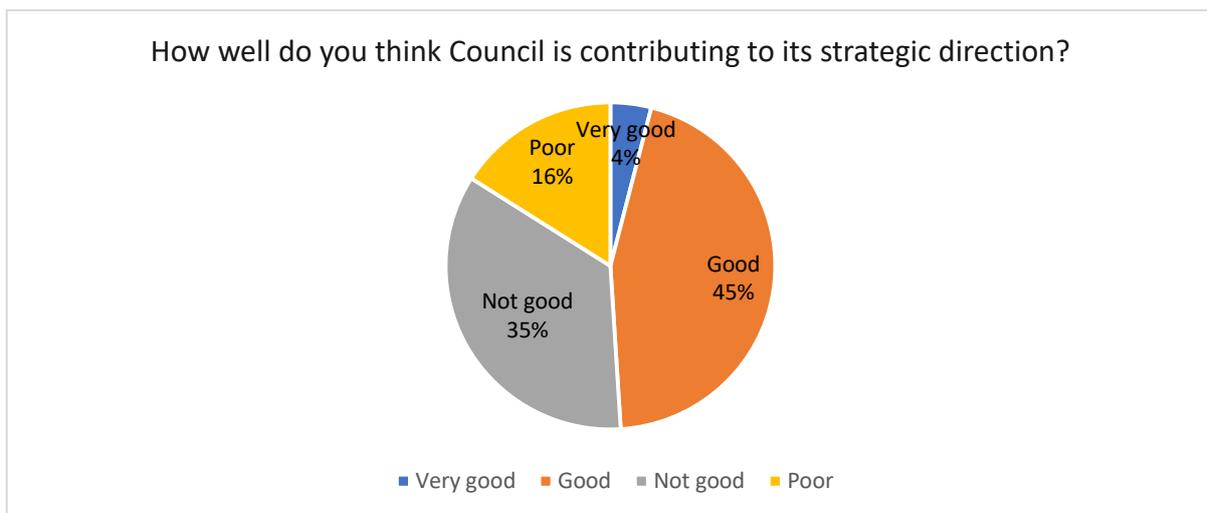
For advocacy, 71 per cent of respondents said they were aware of this role and of this number 70 per cent rated it as good or very good. This was followed by funding, where of the 80 per cent of respondents who said they were of this role 60 per cent rated it as good or very good. The lowest rated Council role was regulation, where of the 90 per cent of respondents who said they were aware of this role 51 per cent rated it as not good or poor. Interestingly, 60 per cent of respondents said they were not aware that Council partnered with neighbouring councils on certain issues.



## Strategic direction

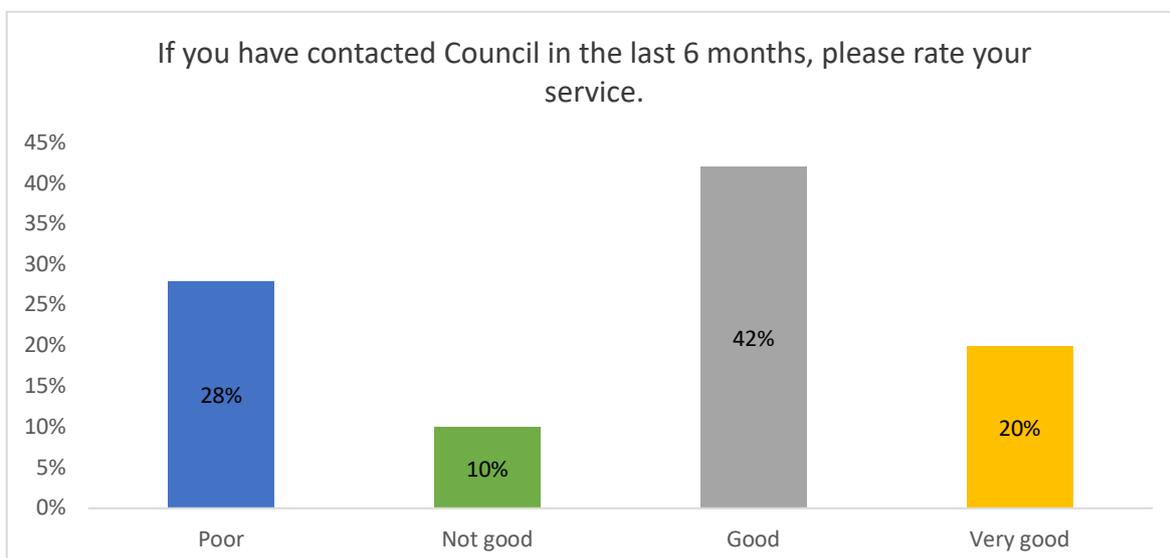
Views on how well Council is contributing to its strategic direction to enable Litchfield to be the best place to live in the Top End were mixed. The highest responses were good (45%) or not good (35%), followed by poor (16%) and very good (4%). In total, 51 per cent of respondents indicated that they were not satisfied with how well Council is contributing to its strategic direction.

This result was fairly similar in comparison to responses in the 2018 community survey where there was a 50/50 split with positive and negative responses.



## Council's communication with the community

Respondents were asked to rate the level of the service they received if they had been in contact with Council in the past six months. Just over half of respondents (53%) said the question was not applicable to them. Of the remaining 47 per cent of respondents who said they had contacted Council in the past six months, 42 per cent of these respondents rated the service as good. This was followed by 28 per cent who said service was poor, 20 per cent who said it was very good and 10 per cent who said it was not good.



When asked how well Council kept the community up to date, there were mixed responses with just over half (52%) who said good, 31 per cent who said not good and 11 per cent who said poor. A small percentage (6%) said Council was very good in this area.

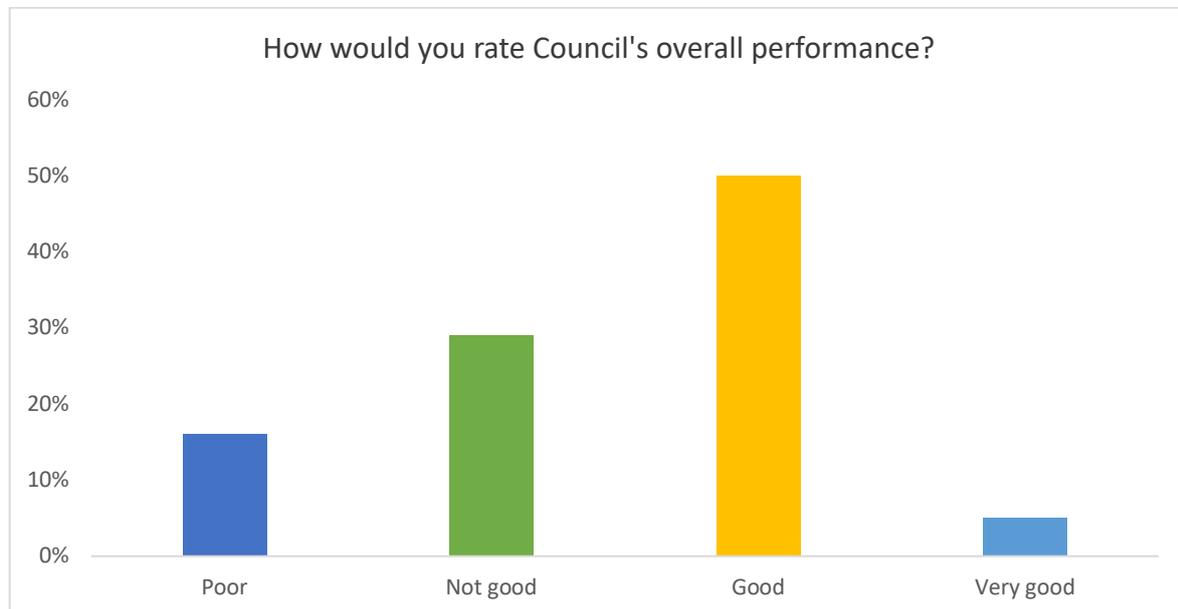
Respondents provided suggestions for how Council could improve in this area. Some suggestions were to ensure calls made to Council are returned, to continue using social media especially Facebook, develop a regular newsletter and to ensure people who aren't on social media or do not have internet access are targeted through community notice boards and direct mail.

Just over half of respondents (58%) said they have already liked Council's Facebook page to be kept up to date. Of the 42 per cent who said they hadn't, the most common answers were that people were unaware that the page existed or they do not use Facebook or have a profile.

### Overall performance

Respondents were generally satisfied with Council's overall performance with 50 per cent rating it as good and 5 per cent saying very good. Some respondents said they were not satisfied with 29 per cent indicating Council's overall performance was not good and 16 per cent who said it was poor.

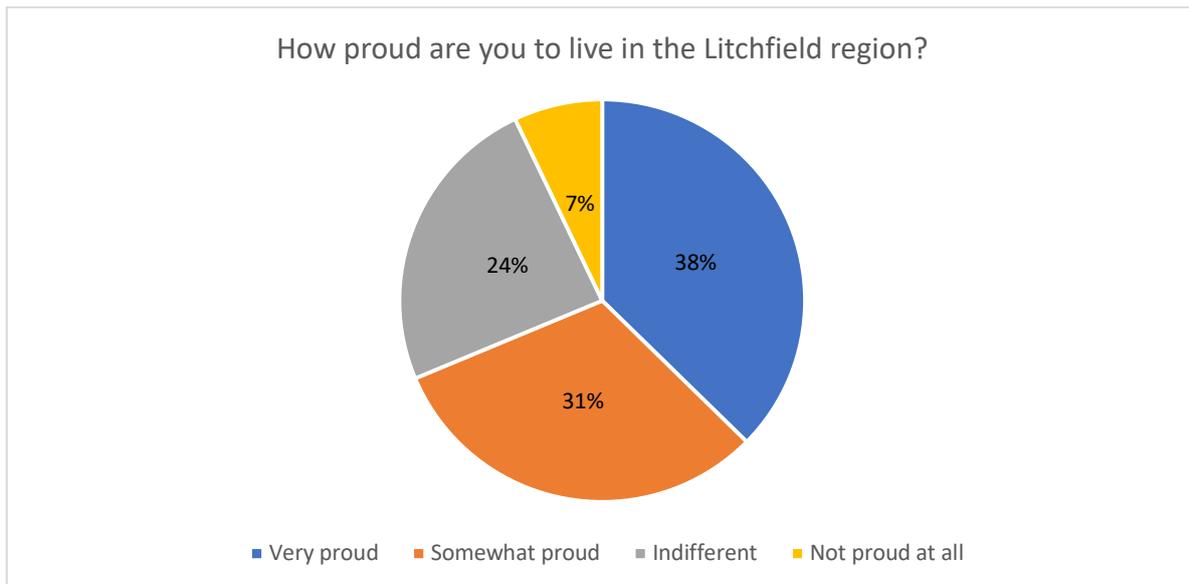
There was a small decline in overall satisfaction with 64 per cent indicating a positive response in the 2018 community survey.



## Sentiment toward living in the Litchfield region

More than half of respondents said they were proud to live in the Litchfield region, with 37 per cent indicating they were very proud and 31 per cent saying they were somewhat proud.

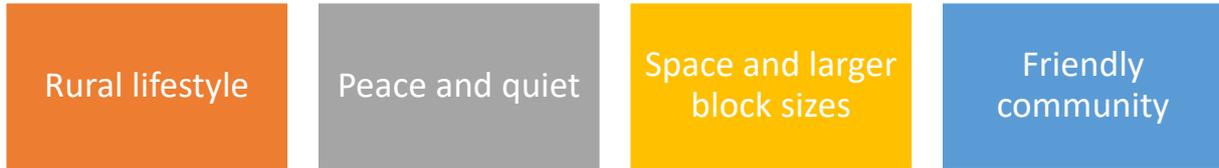
This was a slight decrease compared to the 2018 community survey, where 81 per cent of respondents reported that they felt at least somewhat proud to live in the area.



Respondents were asked to provide examples for why they are proud or not proud. 67 respondents skipped this question, with 60 providing comments. Some notable comments were:

- *People in general are friendly and helpful to each other, often looking out for escaped animals and warning of bushfires etc*
- *Low crime, quiet living.*
- *Community environment, working together and being kept informed. Locals knowledge share on what is going in the area.*
- *Never had an issue with the council they have been supportive towards us with our issues and the friendliness from all staff is amazing.*
- *Lack of footpaths and bike paths in Virginia and Coolalinga areas.*
- *Council used to care about local rural issues, now they are trying to turn us into townies*
- *Love the rural lifestyle, but concerned about Gamba grass and fire management promoting gamba grass*
- *Animal management including pound and after hours service, plus cat management needs to be improved or established*
- *Waste management is a joke! Rumours of unimproved capital value of land to increase rates, scaring old residents... we get a dump, roads that we paid to seal and bugger all else. Community reserves like village green is about all the council is consistent on. Mayor needs to get off her backside and be heard to dispel rumours or at least talk to community. Only time you see anyone is when elections are due! Sad!*

When respondents were asked about what they like most about living in the Litchfield municipality, the most common responses were:



Some notable comments were:

- *The large blocks & community feel of our area. I also love the fact that we now have great shopping & restaurants in our area now*
- *not seeing any neighbouring houses from my home, but having good neighbours. Sense of community at local events eg freds pass markets, berry springs markets, school fetes, freds pass show. the Freds Pass Reserve is also a great place for local as a focal sporting and recreation place open spaces, quiet un suburban living, bushland and wildlife!*
- *Surrounded by trees, great community, good library service, excellent schools, close to city facilities when needed*

When asked what they liked least, the most common responses were:



Some notable comments were:

- *Amount paid in rates compared to Palmerston residents and for what services. No rubbish collection, no street lighting, no water or sewage maintenance.*
- *Lack of footpaths and bike paths. - Lack of recycling and other waste transfer facilities - Lack of tennis courts.*
- *The number of dogs people are allowed to have.*
- *Bogan motorbike and quad riders on public roads etc*
- *Very little maintenance of roadsides, drainage, reflective line marking on roads. No bin service and having to pay dump fees for green waste even though you pay astronomical rates.*

## Summary

The 2019 community survey results are generally positive, however satisfaction has decreased slightly in some areas compared with the 2018 survey results.

Respondents indicated that the most important Council services are maintenance of local roads, road drainage maintenance, weed management on Council land and waste transfer stations. This is consistent with the 2018 survey, where these services were identified as most important but in a slightly different order.

In terms of satisfaction, of those who were aware of each service, the highest performing services were the community library, recreation reserves and waste transfer stations. The lowest performing services were weed management on Council land and animal management which was consistent in the 2018 survey report. Respondents were also generally satisfied with Council's roles in funding and advocacy, however regulation needs improvement.

There were mixed responses regarding Council's communication with the community, with respondents providing some suggestions for how Council could improve this.

Views varied when respondents were asked to rate how well Council is contributing to its strategic direction to enable Litchfield to be the best place to live in the Top End. In total, 51 per cent of respondents indicated that they were not satisfied with this.

More than half of respondents said they felt proud to live in the Litchfield region and many said what they liked most was the rural lifestyle, peace and quiet, space and larger block sizes and friendly community. When asked what respondents liked least about living in the area, the most common responses were increase in rates, lack of rubbish removal and general maintenance, lack of pedestrian and cycle paths, motorbikes and quad bikes on public roads and animal management.

Overall, 55 per cent of respondents said they were satisfied with Council's performance which was a 9 per cent decrease compared to responses in 2018.