CITY OF PARRAMATTA - YOUR PLACE, YOUR VOICE! COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

Epping Ward – Summary Report

Contents

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Parramatta is committed to listening to the needs and priorities of our local residents to inform decision making and future planning. To understand community views and insights into what's important for our residents, in mid-2023, the City of Parramatta worked alongside RPS Consulting to design and deliver five, ward-based workshops across the local government area (LGA), encompassing the Parramatta, Rosehill, Dundas, North Rocks and Epping wards.

More than 200 local residents participated in the workshops, to:

- Explore what is important and of value to them about where they live.
- Prioritise services through a participatory budgeting activity to help understand the relative priorities for how Council spends money.
- Provide feedback on how they receive information from and engage with Council, on services, activities, and projects.

In addition to the face-to-face workshops and in line with our commitment to accessibility, the City of Parramatta also provided an online option for residents that were unable to attend their respective workshop. An online survey which featured a subset of the questions asked during the workshop was completed by 32 persons.

This report focuses on the Epping ward and provides a quantitative and qualitative summary of the key findings from the final community workshop as well as the responses that were received online from Epping ward residents.

Epping ward community workshop

The Your Place, Your Voice! Epping Ward Community Workshop was held at the Boronia Grove Community Centre, on Victoria Street, Epping on Saturday 16 September from 2pm until 5pm. Activities were designed to be practical, outcomes focused and fun.

The workshop was attended by 41 people, with a larger mix of females than males, ranging in age from 26-75. Participants represented most suburbs in the Epping Ward. Feedback was captured through table facilitators notes on templates provided as well as through digital in-room polling questions.

The online survey was completed by 6 residents from the Epping ward.

Key outcomes

The top three things people identified as being unique to their suburbs across the Epping ward were convenience, facility investment, and sense of community. In addition to these key ward attributes, participants reflected that architectural and historical elements were also unique in many of the suburbs.

What participants found unique about the Epping ward?
1. Convenience – transport access, connectivity, community and sporting facilities, proximity to local shopping villages, expanding options.
2. Facility investment – high quality schools, shopping venues, hospital, parks, walking and bike tracks.
3. Community – diverse, safe, connected.

- Participants were highly networked, with most belonging to more than one type of community group; almost a third (28%) reported being part of a resident/community advocacy group.

- Reflecting on where they lived, around 65% felt that they knew their neighbours only 'a little' (38%) or 'not at all well' (27%).

- 41% of participants believe Council does not listen 'at all well', but 59% feel that Council communicates 'somewhat well'.

- Through a prioritisation exercise, the top services that participants most highly valued were 'waste management', 'maintaining roads, footpaths and drains', and 'environmental sustainability'.

2 EPPING WARD
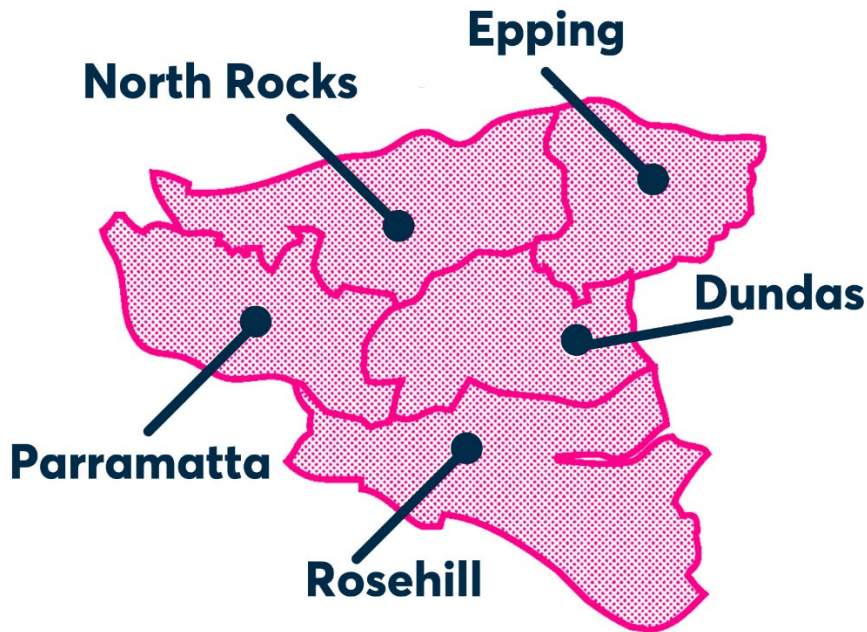
There are five wards within the City of Parramatta LGA. The fifth ward-based workshop targeted the Epping Ward which includes the entire suburb of Epping, as well as parts of the suburbs of Beecroft, Cheltenham, Eastwood, Dundas Valley, and Carlingford.

The 2022 estimated resident population for the North Rocks ward is 50,008, with a population density of 3,853 persons per square km (source: profile id). Below is a snapshot of 'who' this community is:

[1]

51.2% Female	**48.8%** Male		**0.3%** First Nations
22.2% 0-17 yrs	**22.8%** 18-34 yrs	**34.7%** 35-59 yrs	**20.3%** 60 yrs +

57.5% Born overseas	**39.6%** Born in Australia	**2.9%** Unknown

Top 5 countries of origin

China 19.1%   India 7.2%   South Korea 6.6%   Hong Kong 5.2%   Malaysia 1.9%

47.3% Separate house	**14.9%** Medium density	**37.6%** High density

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[1] Statistics source: ABS Census 2021

2.1 Participant recruitment *(workshop only)*

The City of Parramatta undertook an Expressions of Interest (EOI) to recruit participants for the Epping Ward – Your Place, Your Voice! Community Workshop. The EOI was open from 1 to 15 August 2023, attracting 59 responses.

The goal was to recruit 50 participants from a variety of suburbs within the Epping Ward with broad representation across age and cultural diversity. All 59 persons that expressed an interest were invited to participate in the session.

The workshop was attended by 41 people, with a larger group of women than men, ranging in age from 21 to 78. Participants represented most suburbs in the Epping ward.

Participation in the workshop was incentivised with a $100 gift voucher.

2.2 Who was in the room? *(workshop only)*

Key demographics:
- Gender representation was skewed to female participants.
- Participants were aged between their early-20s and late-70s.

Participants were from:
- Epping
- Carlingford
- Dundas Valley
- Eastwood

Why people came:
- Interested in contributing to future planning and decisions.
- Wanting to understand what Council does/ is doing / will do.
- Workshop sounded interesting and fun.
- Wanted to meet others.

2.3   What were they expecting? *(workshop only)*

Mostly people came to the workshop because they were interested in contributing to and understanding future planning and decisions. They wanted to 'understand,' have the opportunity to 'contribute' and be heard by providing 'feedback' and 'suggestions' on the future directions of Council. Some wanted to make sure Council knew what features were important in their suburb and wanted action from the feedback and ideas shared.

3 CHARACTERISTICS OF EPPING WARD

Participants were asked about what they love and value about their local area.

3.1 Social connections in Epping ward *(workshop & online)*

- Around 65% of the participants felt they know their neighbours and social groups 'not at all well' (27%) to 'a little' well (38%), while over a quarter felt they know them moderately well (29%) and a few felt they knew them extremely well (7%).

- Participants were highly networked, with most belonging to more than one local community group:

  - Around a third of participants reported being involved in resident/community advocacy groups (28%).

  - A quarter of participants reported being involved in sports clubs and associations (25%).

  - Less than a quarter of participants indicated they belong to a Church/Temple/Mosque or other places of worship (20%), school-based community (20%), volunteer and civic organisations (Meals on Wheels, SES, Rotary, etc.) (15%), work, business and/or professional associations (15%), hobby or interest-based clubs (15%) and other not specified (15%).

  - A small number reported their involvement with support groups (e.g., Men's Shed/ Woman's Shed, parenting groups, etc) (8%) and cultural or ethnic associations (3%).

  - While approximately a third (30%) of participants reported not being involved in any community network.

3.2 Unique features of Epping ward *(workshop & online)*

Through an interactive exercise, participants identified what is important and unique to their local area/suburb. The outcomes are summarised below.

- Convenience – transport access, connectivity, community and sporting facilities, proximity to local shopping villages, expanding options.

- Facility investment – quality schools, shopping venues, hospital, parks, walking and bike tracks.

- Community – diverse, safe, connected.

3.3 More of this, less of that, and keep these *(workshop only)*

Each table facilitator guided the discussion to understand their views and captured the outputs on table resources. The most common themes under the categories are tabled below.

| More of	Less of	Keep	New initiatives / ideas
Green space – tree canopy, community gardens and open space.	Traffic and congestion on roads and parking lots.	Open space and tree canopy.	Community events – fitness, school holidays.
Public facilities – sports, libraries, skate parks, community centres.	Ad hoc planning and overdevelopment – local infrastructure and high-rise development.	Community facilities – library, pool, shopping centre.	Electric car charging stations.
Driving infrastructure – parking, traffic lights, drop off/pick up locations.	Nature removal – limit green space removal for developments.	Heritage.	Recycling programs.

3.4   Connecting with Council *(workshop & online)*

Council undertakes a large number of activities to both communicate and engage with our community.
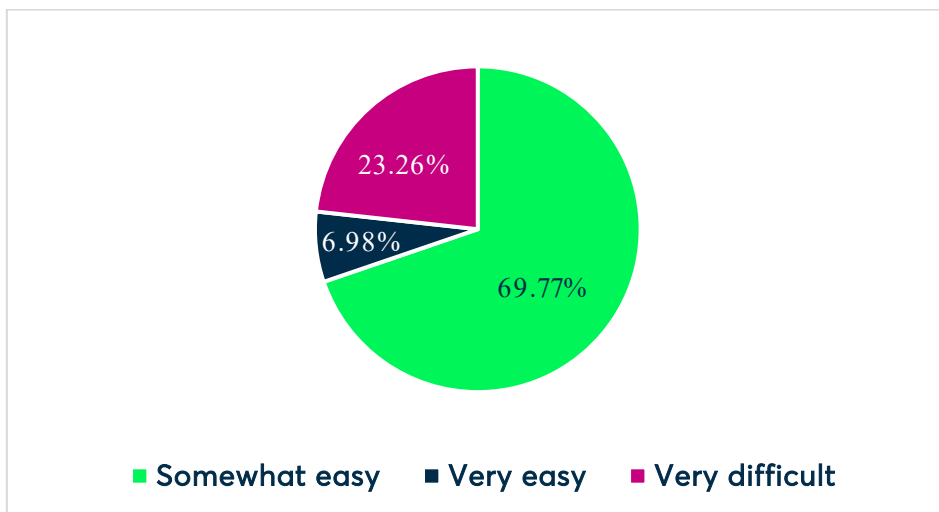
Residents that participated in the workshop were provided with a snapshot of community engagement and research projects, activities, community participation and feedback received annually. Information was also provided to workshop participants on the types of communications Council issued and the channels used to inform residents in Parramatta about Council activities and projects.

A series of questions were asked of workshop participants and those that responded online to better understand how well Council is performing in the communications and engagement space. The graphs provided below detail the results of these questions.

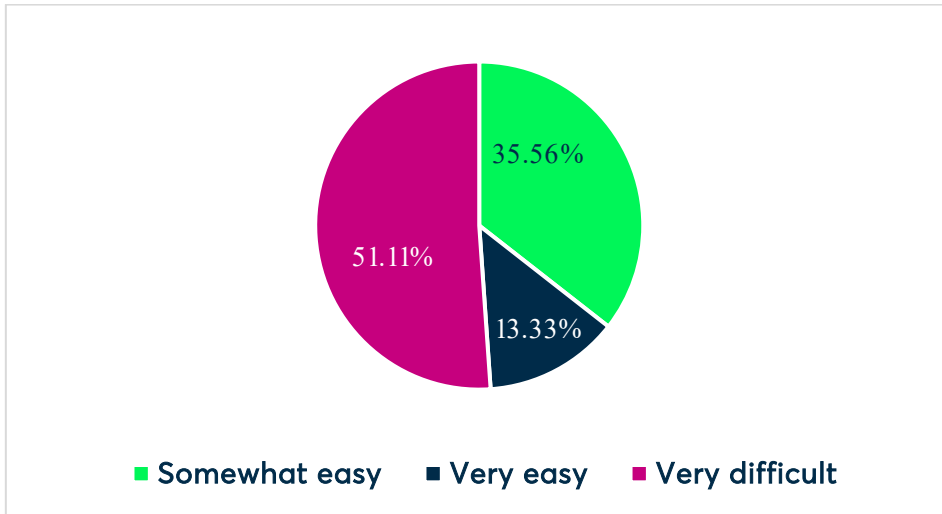### Do you know where to find out information about Council services, facilities, and activities?
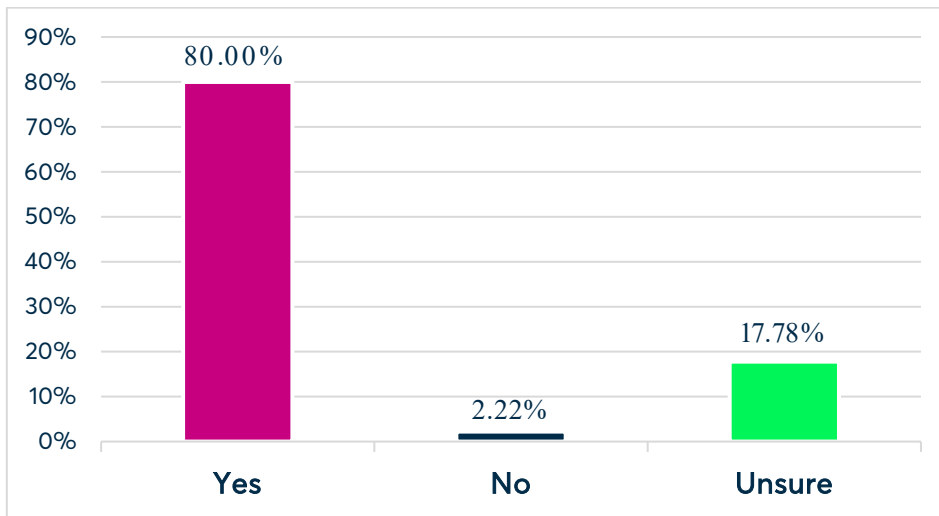
How easy is it for you to get in contact with Council? (e.g. in-person, by phone or email)

- Somewhat easy   - Very easy   - Very difficult

How easy is it for you to have your say on Council projects?

- 35.56% Somewhat easy
- 13.33% Very easy
- 51.11% Very difficult

■ Somewhat easy ■ Very easy ■ Very difficult

How well do you think Council listens to the community?

	Not at all well	Somewhat well	Extremely well
	41.30%	47.83%	10.87%
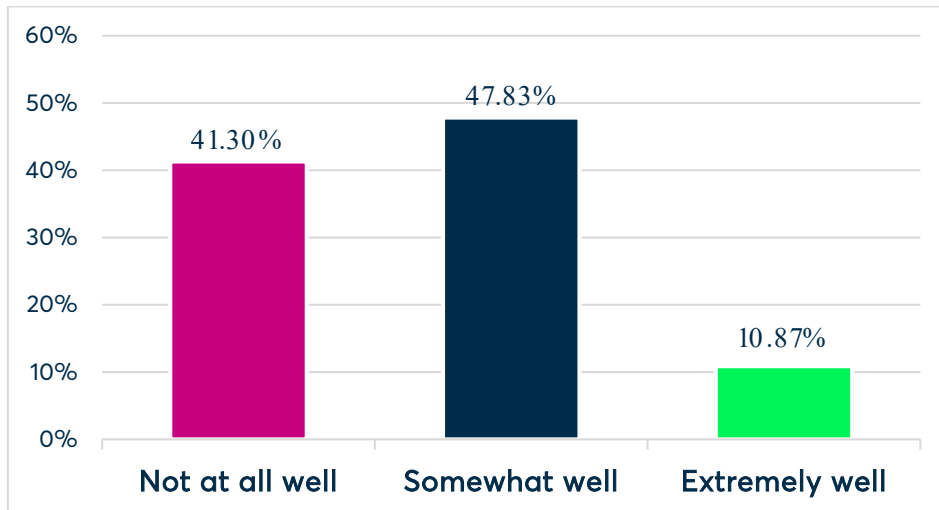
How well do you think Council communicates with the community about what is happening, and the decisions made?

	Not at all well	Somewhat well	Extremely well
	14.89%	72.34%	12.77%
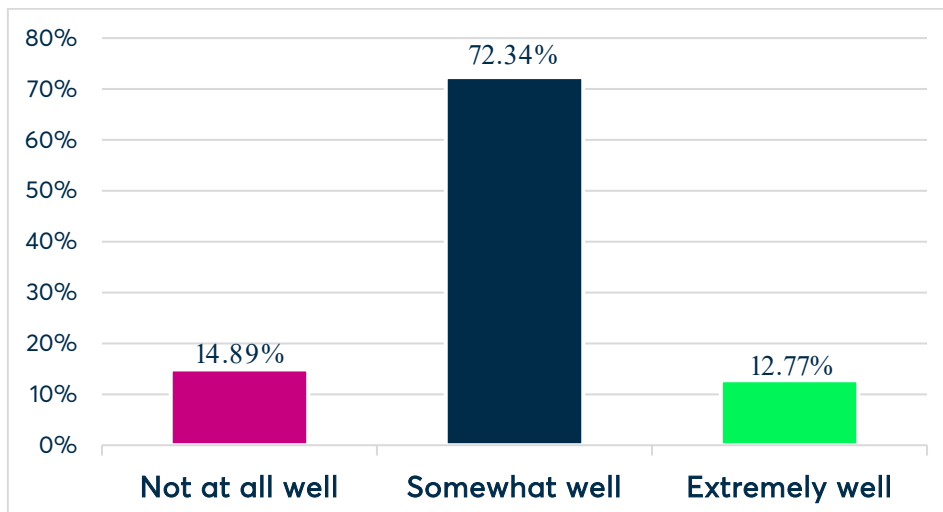
In-person and online participants were then asked, **'What is the one thing that you think Council can do to better promote services, facilities and activities?'**.

Three of the most popular responses are provided below:

- Focus on event marketing including community activities and event stands.
- Improved website functionality with clear chat options.
- Brochures and flyers in rates notices.

In-person and online participants were also asked, **'What is the one thing that you think Council can do to make it easier for you to get in contact?'**.

Three of the most popular responses are provided below:

- Clear contact information, and consistent feedback loop for feedback and enquiries, complaints.
- More community surveys and consultation opportunities.
- Diversity of contact options, e.g. email, online chat, social media.

3.5   Council performance *(workshop & online)*

Participants were also asked how they rated Council's performance in providing appropriate services for the Parramatta community. Responses provided are shown in the figure below.

Overall, how would you rate Council's performance in providing appropriate services for the Parramatta community?
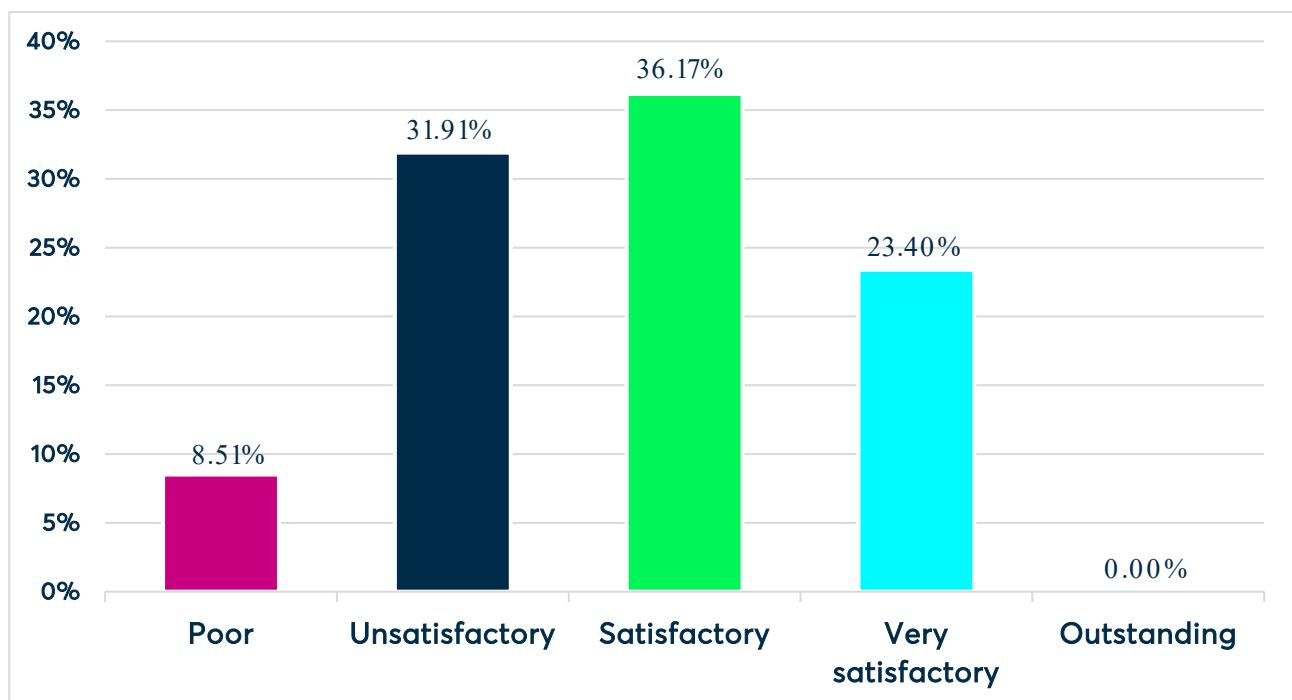
4   WHAT WOULD YOU PRIORITISE

This segment of the workshop was designed to demonstrate the complexity of prioritising Council services and sought to understand resident priorities for Council's annual budget allocations. The activities in this section were asked to help inform future Delivery Program and Operational Planning (DPOP).

4.1   Prioritising service areas, in a group *(workshop & online)*

In the workshop setting, each table group was provided 11 cards with the service area headings on them (as identified within Council's Delivery Program and Operational Plan).

Participants were asked to work together as a group to prioritise the service areas in order of importance. In total, there were 8 table groups that completed this activity at the Epping ward workshop.

Online participants were able to rank the 11 service areas using the online survey. The results of the online participants were combined to equal the weight of one 'table group'.

Both the in-person and online participants were provided with a sheet that detailed how $100 is currently being spent across the 11 service areas in the DPOP. Please see image across.

The average of the workshop and online results are provided below ranked from most important to least important service area. The results reflect the importance of traditional Council focus areas of 'roads, rates and rubbish' to the group.

For every $100 spent by Council in 2023/24, Council will spend:

$18 — MAJOR WORKS AND CONSTRUCTION
$17 — PARKS, PUBLIC SPACES AND RECREATION
$16 — ADMINISTRATION AND CORPORATE SERVICES
$12 — MAINTAINING ROADS, FOOTPATHS AND DRAINS
$8 — WASTE MANAGEMENT
$8 — PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
$8 — LIBRARY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES
$6 — CULTURE AND EVENTS
$4 — ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY
$2 — TRADE AND FLEET MANAGEMENT
$1 — ENGINEERING AND TRAFFIC

	DPOP SERVICE AREAS	AVERAGE %
Most prioritised (GROUP)	1. Maintaining roads, footpaths, and drains	13.94%
	2. Waste management	11.36%
	3. Environmental sustainability	10.61%
	4. Parks, public spaces, and recreation	10.30%
	5. Major works and construction	9.85%
	6. Engineering and traffic	9.24%
	7. Planning and development	8.79%
	8. Library and community services	8.64%
Least prioritised (GROUP)	9. Administration and corporate services	8.33%
	10. Culture and events	5.61%
	11. Trade and fleet management	3.33%

4.2   Prioritising service areas, individually *(workshop only)*

Following the group prioritisation, each participant was able to nominate their priorities using Parramatta Dollars. Participants were each provided with $100 worth of 'Parramatta Dollars' that they were asked to allocate as 'funding' across the eleven service areas. Please note that due to the nature of this activity, it could not be offered online.

This had minimal impact on the prioritisation from the group activity, as shown below.

	DPOP SERVICE AREAS	AVERAGE %
Most prioritised (INDIVIDUAL)	1. Waste management	12.86%
	2. Maintaining roads, footpaths, and drains	11.75%
	3. Environmental sustainability	11.66%
	4. Major works and construction	11.04%
	5. Engineering and traffic	10.44%
	6. Parks, public spaces, and recreation	10.03%
	7. Administration and corporate services	7.80%
	8. Planning and development	7.53%
Least prioritised (INDIVIDUAL)	9. Library and community services	7.15%
	10. Culture and events	6.04%
	11. Trade and fleet management	3.70%

5   WORKSHOP FEEDBACK

At the conclusion of the workshop, participants feedback was collected to evaluate their experience.

- 95% of participants considered the workshop to be 'interesting'.
- 39% of participants would recommend attending a similar workshop to their friends and family.

In addition, participants were asked, **'Do you think Council will act on what you have shared?'**. The results, which are presented below, demonstrate that Council has significant work to do in better reporting back on actions taken in response to community feedback.