



Insight for
Business & Government

Willoughby Council 'Fit for the Future' Community Engagement Survey

Prepared for



Prepared by
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Executive summary

This report presents the results of Willoughby City Council's 'Fit for the Future' Survey, 2015. IRIS Research was commissioned by Willoughby Council to conduct research amongst the area's residents in relation to the NSW Government's 'Fit for the Future' reform program. The survey sought to attain the preferences of residents and businesses towards 4 'Fit for the Future' options, that ranged from Willoughby Council remaining as it is, to merging with other Councils.

To attain the views of those that make up Willoughby Local Government Area, a comprehensive telephone-based poll among the area's residents was used.

A random sample of households was selected by IRIS Research for the telephone based survey with 606 residents participating.

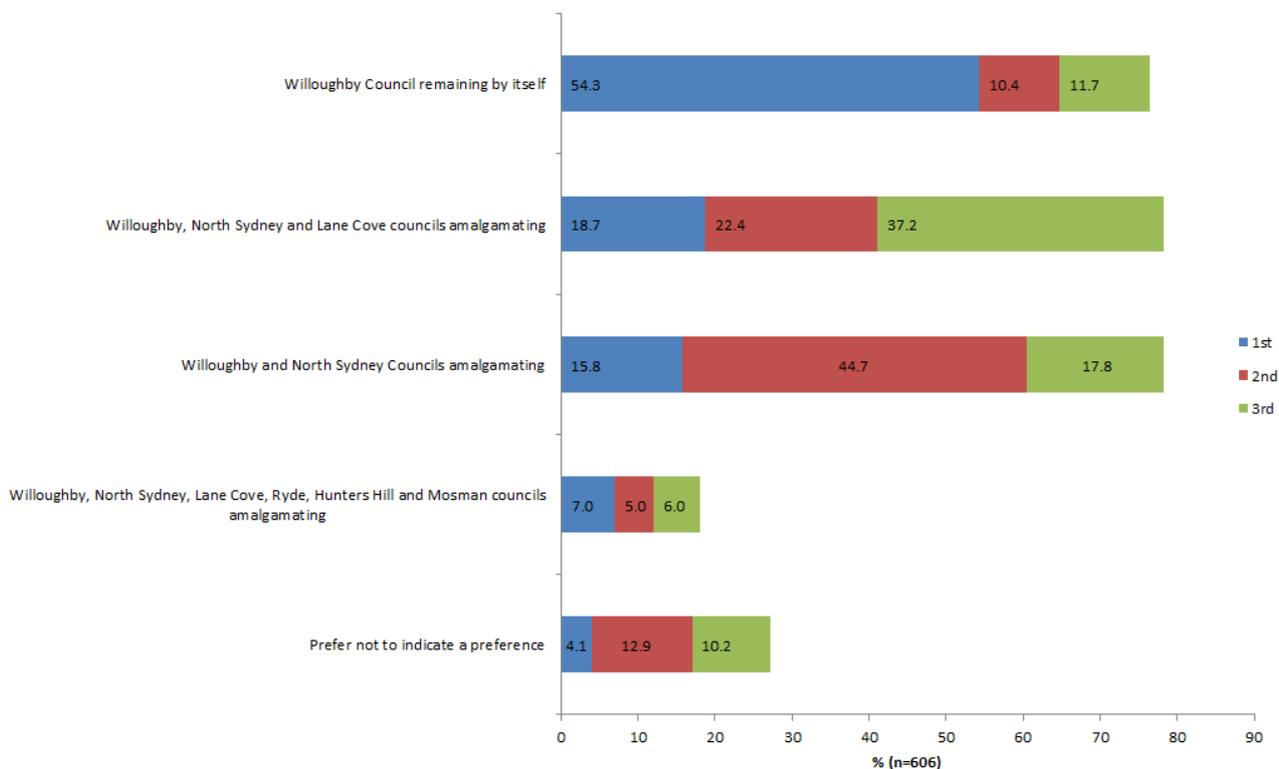
The main findings of the survey were:

Most preferred option

Results showed that over half of all residents surveyed (54.3%) indicated their most preferred option was for Willoughby Council to remain by itself. This was significantly the most preferred option.

The second highest 'most preferred' option was for Willoughby to merge with North Sydney and Lane Cove Councils (18.7%). This was closely followed by only merging with North Sydney (15.8%).

Graph E.1: Preferences for 'Fit for the Future' program



Most preferred option when status quo is removed

Table E.1 shows the preferred options selected by respondents if the option of 'Willoughby Council remaining by itself' was excluded as a viable preference. To calculate the table below, those residents that nominated 'Willoughby Council remaining by itself' as their most preferred option, had their second preferred option reallocated to essentially become their first selection.

Table E.1: Most preferred Option with reassignment of status quo option

n=606	%
Willoughby and North Sydney Councils amalgamating	50.8%
Willoughby, North Sydney and Lane Cove councils amalgamating	28.3%
Willoughby, North Sydney, Lane Cove, Ryde, Hunters Hill and Mosman councils amalgamating	8.0%
Prefer not to indicate a preference	12.9%

When the data was extrapolated in this way, having Willoughby amalgamate with North Sydney was by far the most preferred option (50.8%).

Preferences for 'Fit for the Future' program

Table E.2 shows the cumulative responses given by residents to their preferences for the 'Fit for the Future' program.

Table E.2: Preferences for 'Fit for the Future' program

	1 st option	1 st & 2 nd options	1 st , 2 nd & 3 rd options
Willoughby Council remaining by itself	54.3%	64.7%	76.4%
Willoughby and North Sydney Councils amalgamating	15.8%	60.5%	78.3%
Willoughby, North Sydney and Lane Cove councils amalgamating	18.7%	41.1%	78.3%
Willoughby, North Sydney, Lane Cove, Ryde, Hunters Hill and Mosman councils amalgamating	7.0%	12.0%	18.0%
Prefer not to indicate a preference	4.1%	17.0%	27.2%

As mentioned previously, the stand out most preferred option for residents is for Willoughby to remain by itself (54.3%). When factoring in the second round of responses, the results are closer in that 64.7% are happy for Willoughby to remain by itself, but a similar proportion (60.5%) mentioned Willoughby Council amalgamating with North Sydney Council.

Table E.3: Frequency of various first preferences

	1 st Preference
Willoughby remaining by itself + Willoughby, North Sydney and Lane Cove Councils	73.0%
Willoughby remaining by itself + Willoughby and North Sydney Councils	70.1%
Willoughby remaining by itself + Willoughby, North Sydney, Ryde, Hunters Hill and Mosman Councils	61.3%
Willoughby remaining by itself + prefer not to indicate a preference	58.4%
Willoughby and North Sydney + Willoughby, North Sydney and Lane Cove Councils	34.5%
Willoughby, North Sydney and Lane Cove Councils + Willoughby, North Sydney, Ryde, Hunters Hill and Mosman Councils	25.7%
Willoughby and North Sydney + Willoughby, North Sydney, Ryde, Hunters Hill and Mosman Councils	22.8%
Willoughby, North Sydney and Lane Cove Councils + prefer not to indicate a preference	22.8%
Willoughby and North Sydney + prefer not to indicate a preference	19.9%
Willoughby, North Sydney, Ryde, Hunters Hill and Mosman Councils + prefer not to indicate a preference	11.1%

Agreement Statements

Willoughby residents were asked to rate their level of agreement toward 4 statements concerning being part of a larger Council area. Of the 4 statements put to residents, 3 attained mean agreement scores in the 'medium' range. Residents showed most agreement with the statement 'Representation for local residents in an amalgamated Council will be reduced', with over half of the residents surveyed (55.2%) providing a 'high' agreement score.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

IRIS Research was commissioned by Willoughby Council to conduct research amongst the area's residents in relation to the NSW Government's 'Fit for the Future' reform program. The survey sought to attain the preferences of residents towards 4 'Fit for the Future' options, that ranged from Willoughby Council remaining as it is, to merging with other Councils.

To attain the views of those that make up Willoughby Local Government Area, a comprehensive telephone-based poll among the area's residents was used.

1.2 Study Objectives

The objective of the poll was to:

- Identify the preferred 'Fit for the Future' option amongst Willoughby Local Government Area residents.

1.3 Survey Response

The table below shows the compliance rate achieved for the entire sample. The compliance rate is the number of refusals as a proportion of completed surveys plus refusals. A compliance rate of 64% is considered a good result for a community survey.

Table 1.1 Survey compliance rate

Response sequence	Outcome
Interviews	606
Refusals	338
<i>Valid contacts (Excludes disqualified – businesses, out of area, under 16yrs etc)</i>	944
Compliance rate	64%

1.4 Survey Accuracy

When analysing results for the entire sample, the maximum error rate will be about $\pm 4.0\%$ at the 95% confidence level, assuming a proportional response of 50%. Put another way, we can be confident that if the survey were to be repeated there would be a 95% chance that the new result would lie within $\pm 4.0\%$ of the result achieved in this survey.

1.5 Mean Scores

Given that IRIS undertakes many residents' surveys such as this; we are able to benchmark mean scores. As such, mean importance and satisfaction scores can be further classified as being a low, medium or high score based on this experience. Table 1.3.1 highlights the mean classifications.

Table 1.3.2: Classification of mean scores

Mean importance scores	
0 – 2.99	Low
3.00 – 3.99	Medium
4.00 – 5.00	High

Mean satisfaction scores	
0 – 2.99	Low
3.00 – 3.74	Medium
3.75 – 5.00	High

Survey Results

2 Resident Telephone Survey

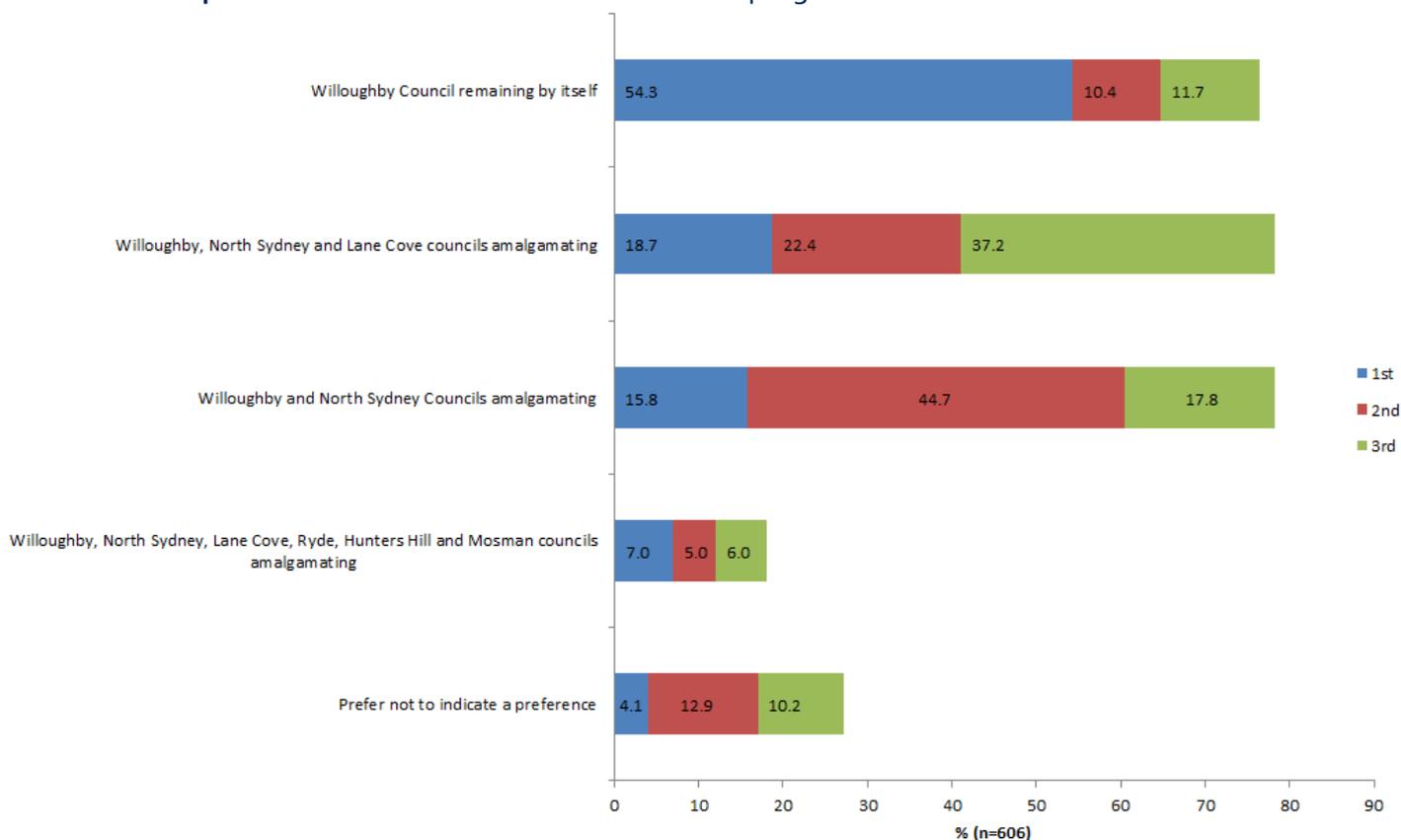
The NSW State Government released its 'Fit for the Future' program, which requires most NSW Council's to consider amalgamation options with neighbouring councils. This section looks at the views held by Willoughby Council residents as measured by IRIS' telephone survey.

2.1 Order of preferences

Section 2.1 of this report highlights the options that residents were prepared to accept with regards to the 4 possible amalgamation options they were presented with.

Question: Which is your most preferred option? Followed by 2nd and 3rd

Graph 2.1: Preferences for 'Fit for the Future' program



Graph ranked by 1st preference

Question: Which is your most preferred option? Followed by 2nd and 3rd

Table 2.1 shows the cumulative responses given by residents to their preferences for the 'Fit for the Future' program.

Table 2.1: Preferences for 'Fit for the Future' program

	1 st option	1 st & 2 nd options	1 st , 2 nd & 3 rd options
Willoughby Council remaining by itself	54.3%	64.7%	76.4%
Willoughby and North Sydney Councils amalgamating	15.8%	60.5%	78.3%
Willoughby, North Sydney and Lane Cove councils amalgamating	18.7%	41.1%	78.3%
Willoughby, North Sydney, Lane Cove, Ryde, Hunters Hill and Mosman councils amalgamating	7.0%	12.0%	18.0%
Prefer not to indicate a preference	4.1%	17.0%	27.2%

Ranked by highest result after 2nd choice of options

Key Results:

- Over half of all residents surveyed (54.3%) indicated their most preferred option was for Willoughby Council to remain by itself.
- When factoring in the second round of responses, almost two thirds (64.7%) of residents wanted Willoughby to remain by itself. This was only slightly more than the 60.5% that indicated Willoughby and North Sydney Councils should amalgamate after taking into account 1st and 2nd preferences.
- After 1st and 2nd preferences were factored in, two fifths of residents (41.1%) felt Willoughby, North Sydney and Lane Cove should amalgamate; significantly less than the Willoughby and North Sydney option.

2.2 First Mentioned Option by Suburb

Table 2.2 shows the most preferred option broken up by Suburb.

Table 2.2: Most preferred Option by Suburb

Column %	Artamon	Castle Cove	Castlecrag	Chatswood	Chatswood West	Lane Cove North	Middle Cove	Naremburn	North Willoughby	Northbridge	Roseville	St Leonards	Willoughby	Willoughby East
Willoughby Council remaining by itself	62.7%	53.1%	41.4%	63.9%	57.1%	55.6%	72.2%	45.5%	64.3%	42.9%	62.5%	33.3%	47.5%	42.9%
Willoughby and North Sydney councils amalgamating	6.8%	25.0%	31.0%	11.6%	21.4%	11.1%	11.1%	18.2%	28.6%	20.2%	7.5%	16.7%	14.9%	33.3%
Willoughby, North Sydney and Lane Cove councils amalgamating	15.3%	18.8%	6.9%	17.0%	7.1%	33.3%	11.1%	27.3%	0.0%	21.4%	12.5%	50.0%	27.7%	9.5%
Willoughby, North Sydney, Lane Cove, Ryde, Hunters Hill & Mosman	10.2%	3.1%	13.8%	2.7%	14.3%	0.0%	5.6%	6.1%	7.1%	9.5%	12.5%	0.0%	5.9%	14.3%
Prefer not to indicate a preference	5.1%	0.0%	6.9%	4.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.0%	0.0%	6.0%	5.0%	0.0%	4.0%	0.0%
Sample size	59	32	29	147	14	9	18	33	14	84	40	6	101	21

Red cells highlight areas of interest

Key Results:

- Analysis by suburb showed residents that were interviewed from Castlecrag, Northbridge, St Leonards, Willoughby and Willoughby East were least likely to mention Willoughby Council remaining by itself as their most preferred option.
- A higher proportion of residents from Castle Cove, Castlecrag, Chatswood West, North Willoughby, Northbridge and Willoughby East indicated Willoughby Council should amalgamate with North Sydney Council.

2.3 Excluding Status Quo

Table 2.3 shows the preferred options selected by Willoughby residents if the option 'Willoughby Council remains by itself' was excluded as a viable preference. To calculate the table below, those residents that preferred for 'Willoughby Council remaining by itself' (54.3%) had their second preferred option reallocated as their first preference.

Table 2.3: Most preferred Option with reassignment of status quo option

n=606	%
Willoughby and North Sydney Councils amalgamating	50.8%
Willoughby, North Sydney and Lane Cove councils amalgamating	28.3%
Willoughby, North Sydney, Lane Cove, Ryde, Hunters Hill and Mosman councils amalgamating	8.0%
Prefer not to indicate a preference	12.9%

Key Results:

- If the status quo was not an option, then half of the residents surveyed (50.8%) would prefer for Willoughby and North Sydney Councils to amalgamate.

2.4 Main reasons for selecting 'most' preferred option – Resident Phone Survey

Question: What are the main reasons you chose your MOST preferred option?

Table 2.2: Main reasons for choosing 'Willoughby Council remaining by itself'

Sample size = 329	%
Happy with status quo / not broken so no need to fix	38.6
Local Councillors know the area / need to have local knowledge	13.8
Can't see any improvement if amalgamation happens / services most likely would diminish	9.8
Would become too big and lose its local identity / wouldn't get a say	9.7
Smaller is better and easier to manage	7.1
Area is big enough now	6.9
Demographics and issues don't match up with other Councils / unique area	1.9
Would become too big and would result in bigger problems	1.9
Don't want other Councils to burden Willoughby	1.1
Need more information	1.0
Would get swallowed up	0.2
No response given	7.0
Other	0.9

Not surprising, the top response given as to why this was the most preferred option was because residents are happy with the status quo as they feel Council is doing a good job.

Table 2.3: Main reasons for choosing 'Willoughby and North Sydney Councils'

Sample size = 96	%
Similar area, similar needs, close together. It works.	40.2
Makes the most sense	21.7
Don't want to get too big	14.3
Need to save cost / economies of scale / financially better	12.8
Council needs help	2.2
Area is big enough now	0.8
Access to a bigger budget / stronger together	0.7
Need more information	0.4
No response given	5.7
Other	1.1

The main reason given for wanting to amalgamate with North Sydney Council is because it is seen as a similar area, with similar needs that is close in proximity and the match up would simply work.

Table 2.4: Main reasons for choosing 'Willoughby, North Sydney and Lane Cove'

Sample size = 114	%
Similar area, similar needs, close together. It works.	40.3
Need to save cost / economies of scale / financially better	23.5
Makes the most sense	19.9
Don't want to get too big	8.5
Access to a bigger budget / stronger together	7.1
Council needs help	0.7

The main reason given for wanting to amalgamate with North Sydney and Lane Cove Councils is because they are seen as similar areas, with similar needs that are close together and the match up would simply work.

Table 2.5: Main reasons for choosing 'Willoughby, North Sydney, Lane Cove, Ryde, Hunters Hill and Mosman councils'

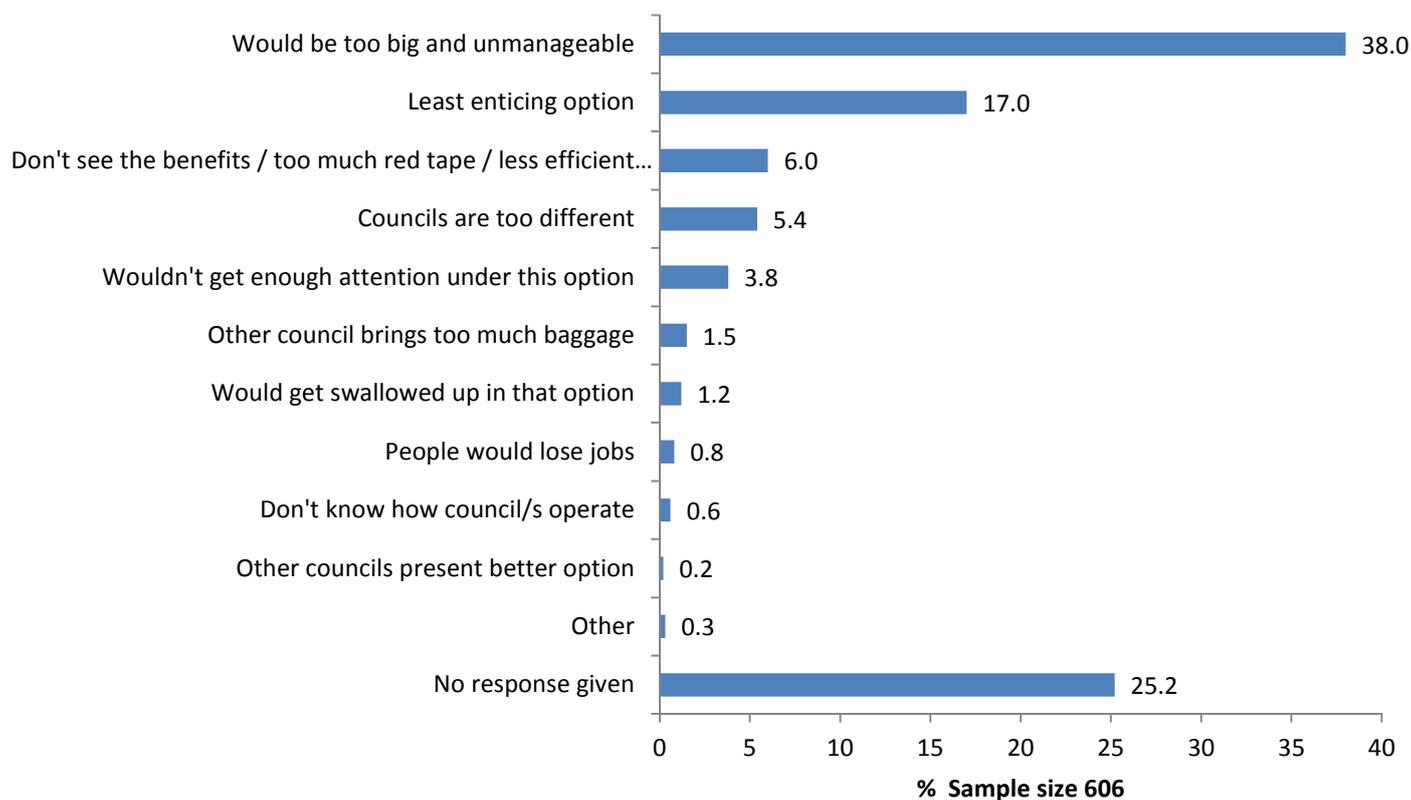
Sample size = 42	%
Need to save cost / economies of scale / financially better	52.0
Access to a bigger budget / stronger together	24.4
Makes the most sense	12.3
Similar area, similar needs, close together. It works.	5.6
Council needs help	4.8
Don't want to get too big	0.9

The overwhelming reason given by respondents for preferring Willoughby to merge with North Sydney, Lane Cove, Ryde, Hunters Hill and Mosman Councils is because it would save costs, produce economies of scale and would make the area financially better off.

2.5 Main reasons for selecting 'least' preferred option

Question: What are the main reasons you chose your LEAST preferred option?

Table 2.9: Main reasons for LEAST preferred



Key Results:

- Close to two in five residents (38.0%) were concerned that having a number of Council's come together to become one, would result in an entity that was too big and unworkable to achieve any outcome of benefit for the amalgamated area.

2.6 Agreement statements

Willoughby residents were asked to rate their level of agreement toward 4 statements concerning being part of a larger Council area. The results are shown in table 2.6.

Table 2.6: Agreement statements

	(%) Low Agreement	(%) Medium Agreement	(%) High Agreement	(%) Can't Say	Mean / 5
Representation for local residents in an amalgamated Council will be reduced	22.0	19.4	55.2	3.4	3.52
Larger local Councils will have more influence with State agencies/Government (& other partners)	20.2	22.7	53.4	3.8	3.43
A larger local Council could save money	24.5	24.9	45.8	4.9	3.29
Larger local Councils could deliver better services for residents and communities	41.3	19.5	36.1	3.1	2.90

Key Results:

- Of the 4 statements put to residents, 3 attained mean agreement scores in the 'Medium' range. Residents showed most agreement with the statement 'Representation for local residents in an amalgamated Council will be reduced', with over half of the residents surveyed (55.2%) providing a 'high' agreement score.
- The lowest agreement came for the statement 'Larger local Councils could deliver better services for residents and communities', with one in three residents (36.1%) providing a 'high' agreement score and 41.3% providing a 'Low' agreement score.



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