City of Ipswich

Community Reference Groups Six Month Monitoring and Evaluation Report

City of Ipswich

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Ipswich City Council respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners as custodians of the land, winds and water we share. We pay our respects to their elders, past, present and emerging, as the keepers of the traditions, cultures and stories of a proud people.

BACKGROUND

Ipswich City Council (ICC) is committed to meaningful engagement with the community on issues affecting the city, and on local issues that significantly impact on the community. Public participation and engagement is the foundation of good decision-making, and is mutually beneficial to the community and council. One of the ways that council engages with the Ipswich community is through its five (5) Community Reference Groups; Economic Development, Environment, Growth Management, Resilient Communities and Transparent Governance, which align to the standing committees of council.

As part of this engagement, ICC are undertaking ongoing research to monitor and evaluate the work of the Community Reference Groups. The research draws on the Democracy 2025 framework for "assessing the quality of engagement with citizens" (Moore, 2019) and draws on ways in which other local councils measure community engagement (e.g. Sunshine Coast Council, 2014).

The objectives of the Community Reference Groups are:

- To provide a deliberative forum for members to discuss issues of community interest related to matters within the scope of each particular group.

- To draw on local knowledge and enhance community voice in decision making processes and outcomes related to matters within the scope of each group.

- To build community understanding of council's core business functions and specific projects or activities related to matters within the scope of each group.

The monitoring and evaluation (M&E) project tracks these key objectives, as well as monitoring the quality of engagement practice and processes. This has included:

- Demographics of members

- Participation in decision-making

- Access to information

- Facilitation of meetings
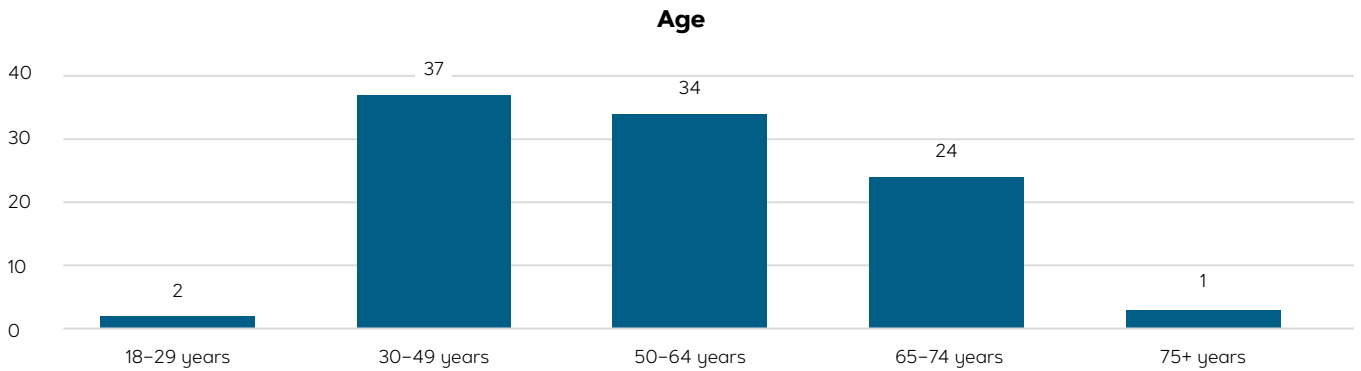
- Satisfaction of purpose and objectives.

The measurement and evaluation metholodolgy utilised thus far have consisted of:

- A **baseline survey** for community reference group members in June 2019. This survey sought to establish the baseline position of participants regarding community engagement undertaken by council.

- A **follow-up survey** in December 2019. This survey sought to track feedback on the key questions asked in the baseline survey, as well as gathering feedback on process, quality and legitimacy of decision-making and perceptions of success (see Appendix A and Appendix B for copies of both surveys).

- **Interactive engagement** at the end of year Community Reference Group meeting in December 2019.
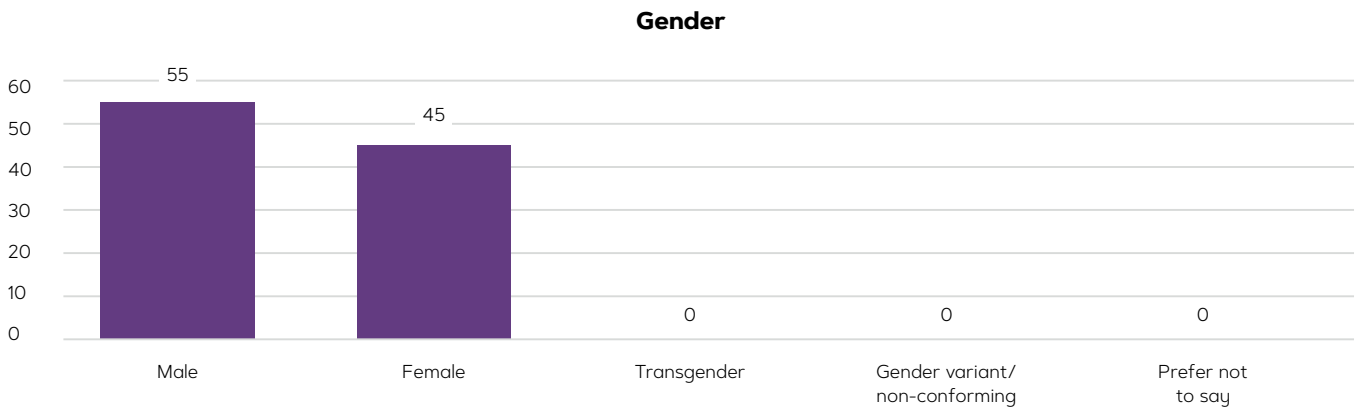
DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE COMMUNITY REFERENCE GROUPS

The following demographics data was collated at inception of the Community Reference Groups (CRG), in July 2019, based on 100 initial members.
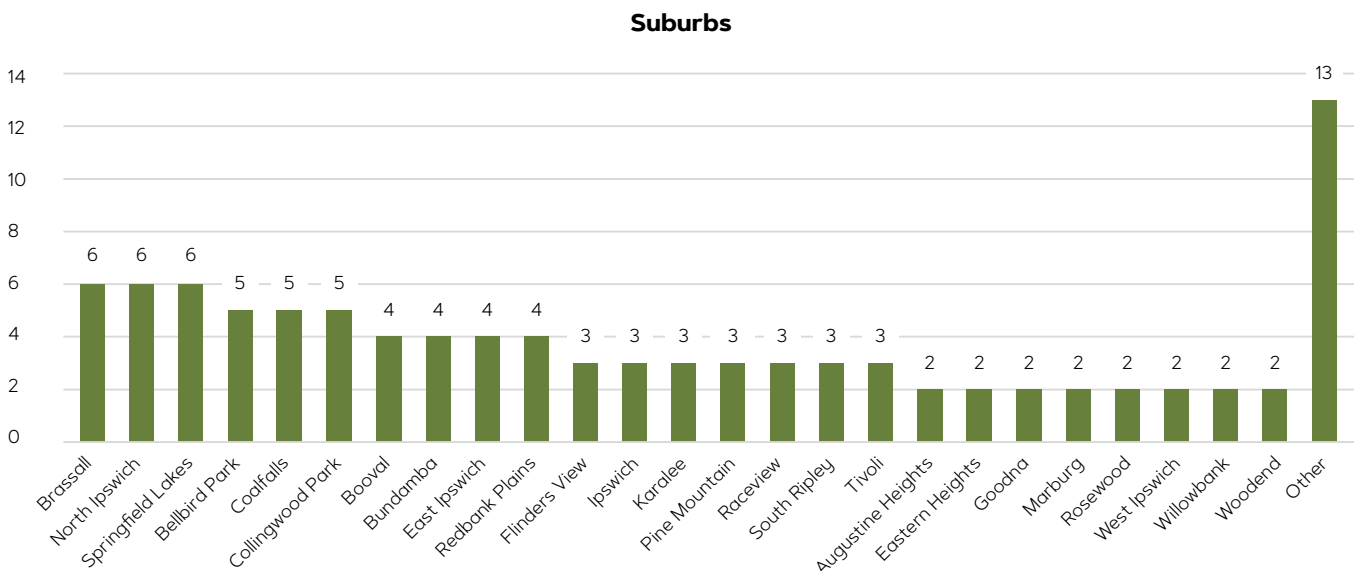
The majority of members are aged between 30 and 74 years of age.

Age

Age group	Count
18–29 years	2
30–49 years	37
50–64 years	34
65–74 years	24
75+ years	1

There are slightly more men than women involved in the Community Reference Groups.

Gender

Gender	Count
Male	55
Female	45
Transgender	0
Gender variant/non-conforming	0
Prefer not to say	0

Members represent 38 suburbs across Ipswich, including central areas, new suburbs, and rural areas.

Suburbs

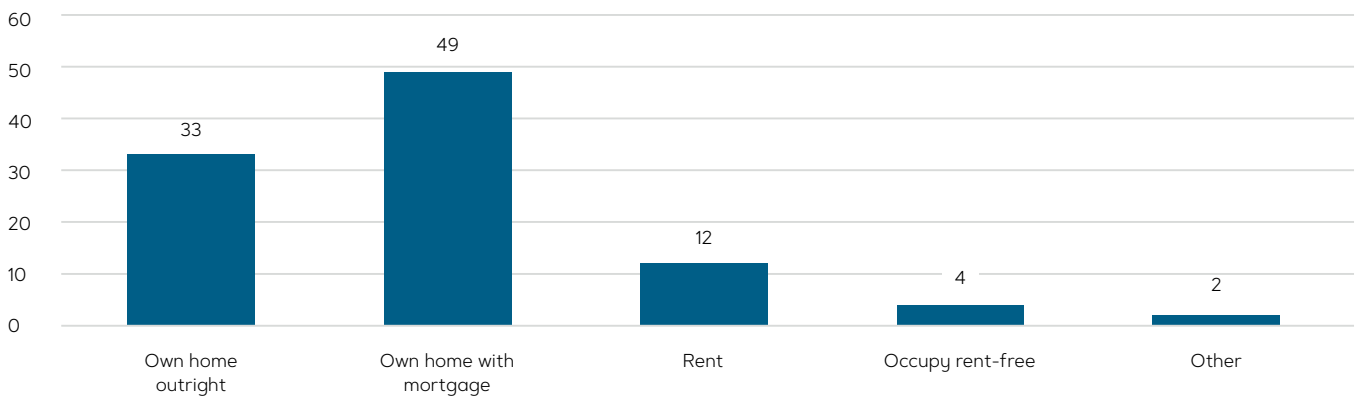| Suburb	Count
Brassall	6
North Ipswich	6
Springfield Lakes	6
Bellbird Park	5
Coalfalls	5
Collingwood Park	5
Booval	4
Bundamba	4
East Ipswich	4
Redbank Plains	4
Flinders View	3
Ipswich	3
Karalee	3
Pine Mountain	3
Raceview	3
South Ripley	3
Tivoli	3
Augustine Heights	2
Eastern Heights	2
Goodna	2
Marburg	2
Rosewood	2
West Ipswich	2
Willowbank	2
Woodend	2
Other	13

While the majority of CRG members identify as Australian, other cultural backgrounds of members include: Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, Indian, South African, Nepali, Austrian, German, USA, Spanish, Iranian, British/Iranian, Kenyan.
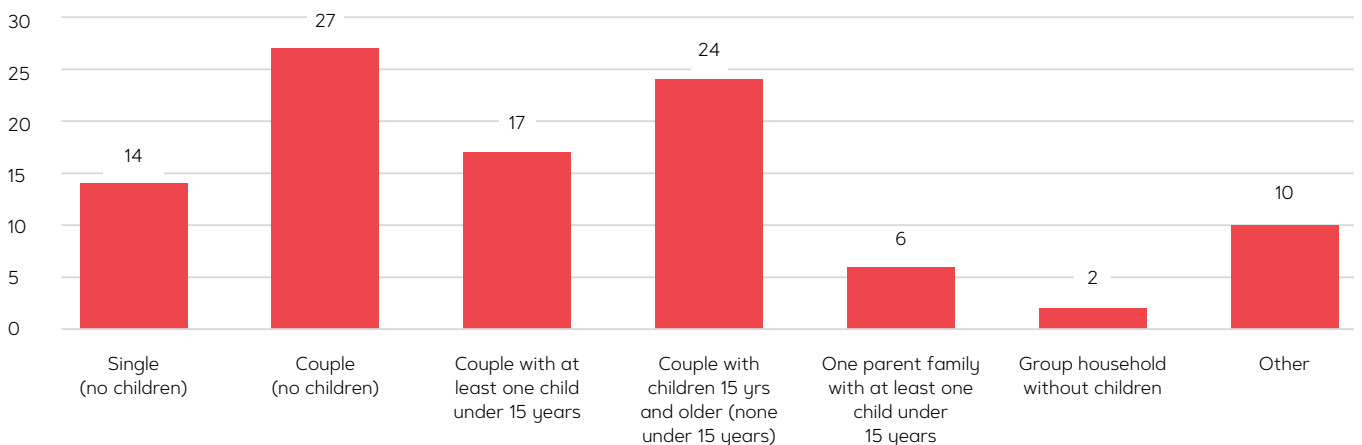
Cultural Background

Cultural Background	Count
Australian	83
England	6
Other	11

The majority of CRG members are home owners – compared to around 58% of the broader Ipswich population (id.profile, 2020).

Housing Tenure

Housing Tenure	Count
Own home outright	33
Own home with mortgage	49
Rent	12
Occupy rent-free	4
Other	2

Family composition is fairly evenly split between those who live with children, and couples or single people without children.

Family Composition

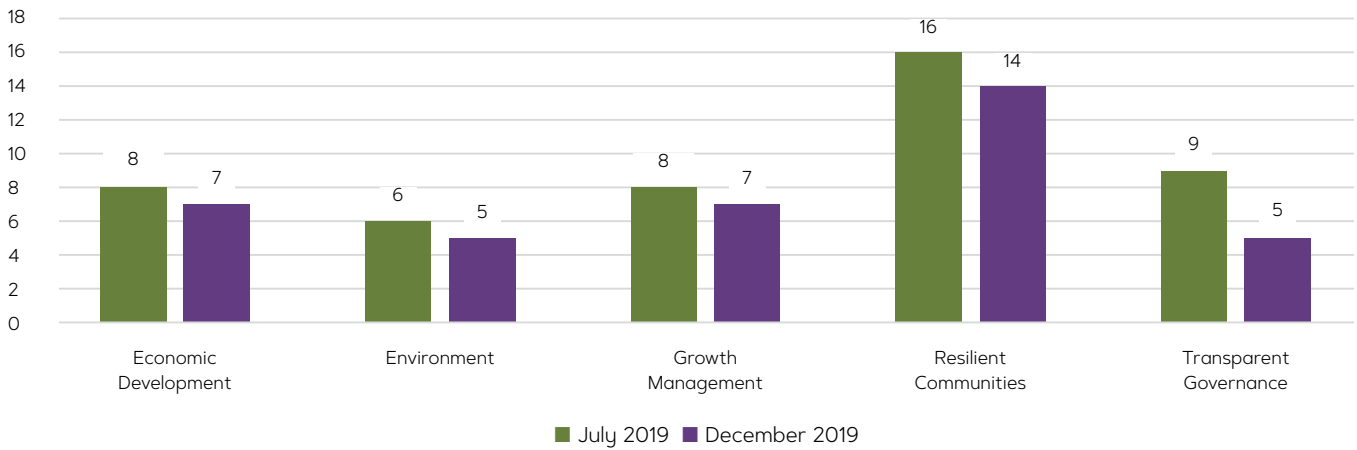| Family Composition	Count
Single (no children)	14
Couple (no children)	27
Couple with at least one child under 15 years	17
Couple with children 15 yrs and older (none under 15 years)	24
One parent family with at least one child under 15 years	6
Group household without children	2
Other	10

SURVEY RESULTS

The following section collates the results on a baseline survey, administered in July 2019, and a follow-up survey, administered in December 2019, along with feedback gathered via interactive engagement at the end-of-year meeting in December 2019, and via email.

Number of survey respondents

The Resilient Communities CRG had the highest survey response rate (at both survey points), while the Environment CRG has the lowest response rate. Note that response numbers to subsequent survey questions vary.
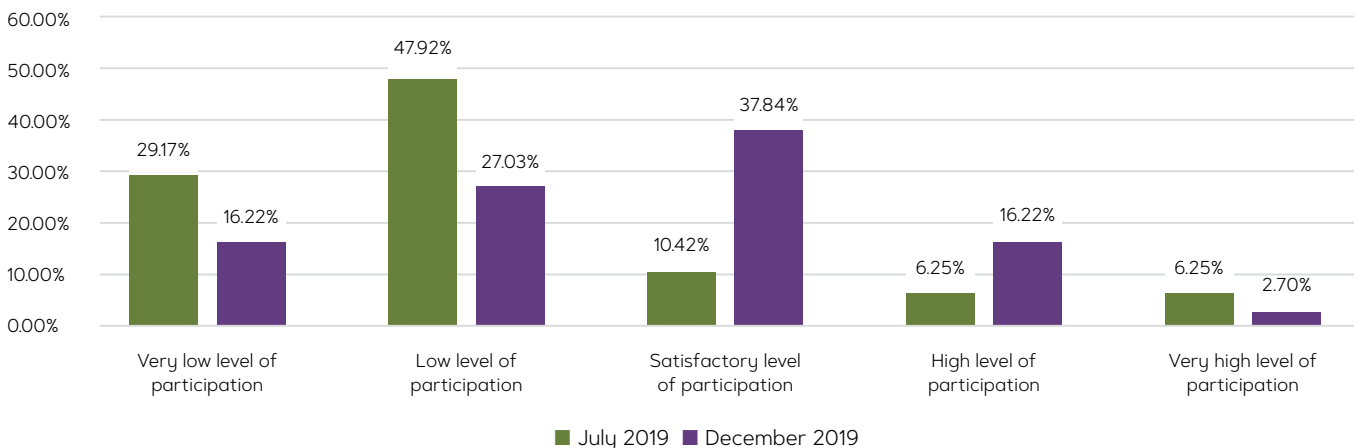
Response by CRG
(Jul '19 = 48, Dec '19 = 38)

CRG	July 2019	December 2019
Economic Development	8	7
Environment	6	5
Growth Management	8	7
Resilient Communities	16	14
Transparent Governance	9	5

■ July 2019 ■ December 2019

How would you rate current levels of community participation in council's decision-making processes?

In order to gauge perceptions around council's community engagement processes, participants were asked, 'how would you rate current levels of community participation in council's decision-making processes?' There has been a small overall improvement since the baseline survey in July 2019, but 43.25% of respondents still felt that levels of community participation were low or very low.
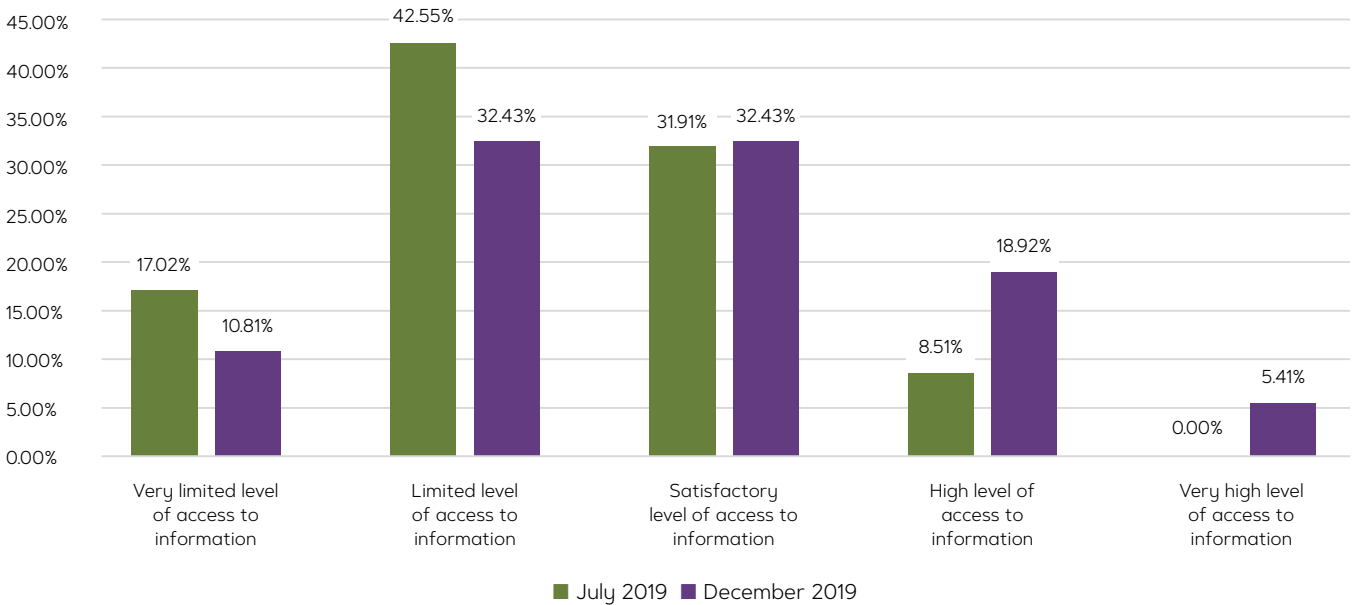
How would you rate current levels of community participation in council's decision-making processes?
(Jul '19 = 48, Dec '19 = 37)

Level	July 2019	December 2019
Very low level of participation	29.17%	16.22%
Low level of participation	47.92%	27.03%
Satisfactory level of participation	10.42%	37.84%
High level of participation	6.25%	16.22%
Very high level of participation	6.25%	2.70%

■ July 2019 ■ December 2019

How would you rate current levels of community access to information about council decisions?

There has been a small improvement in perceptions around the provision of information regarding council decisions, with around 24% of respondents indicating that the community have high or very high levels of access to information (compared to 8.51% in the baseline survey).
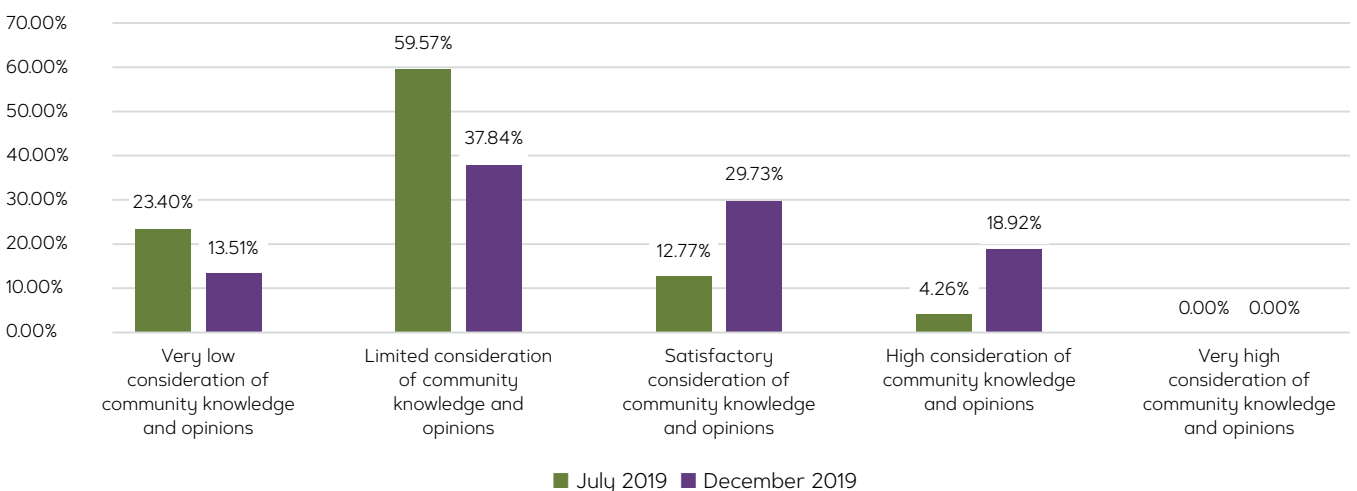
How would you rate current levels of community access to information about council decisions?
(Jul '19 = 47, Dec '19 = 37)

Legend: ■ July 2019 ■ December 2019

	Very limited level of access to information	Limited level of access to information	Satisfactory level of access to information	High level of access to information	Very high level of access to information
July 2019	17.02%	42.55%	31.91%	8.51%	0.00%
December 2019	10.81%	32.43%	32.43%	18.92%	5.41%

Do you feel that council currently draws on community knowledge and opinions when making decisions?

There has been a small improvement in the perception that council draw on community knowledge and opinions when making decisions. 51.35% of respondents still feel that there is low or limited consideration of community opinions (down from 82.97% in July).

Do you feel that council currently draw on community knowledge and opinions when making decisions?
(Jul '19 = 47, Dec '19 = 37)

Legend: ■ July 2019 ■ December 2019

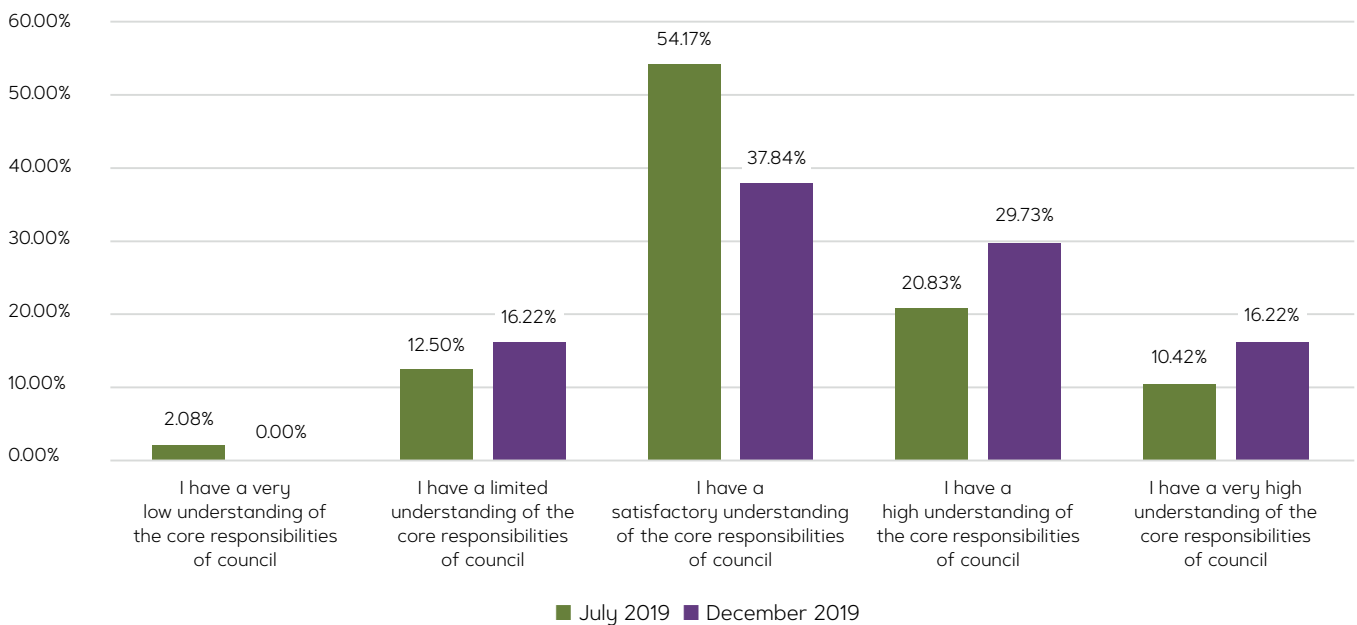|	Very low consideration of community knowledge and opinions	Limited consideration of community knowledge and opinions	Satisfactory consideration of community knowledge and opinions	High consideration of community knowledge and opinions	Very high consideration of community knowledge and opinions
July 2019	23.40%	59.57%	12.77%	4.26%	0.00%
December 2019	13.51%	37.84%	29.73%	18.92%	0.00%

How well do you feel you understand the core responsibilities of council?

There has been an improvement among participants regarding an understanding of the core responsibilities of council – 45.95% of respondents felt they had a high or very high understanding of the core responsibilities of council, up from 31.25% in July.

How well do you feel you understand the core responsibilities of council?
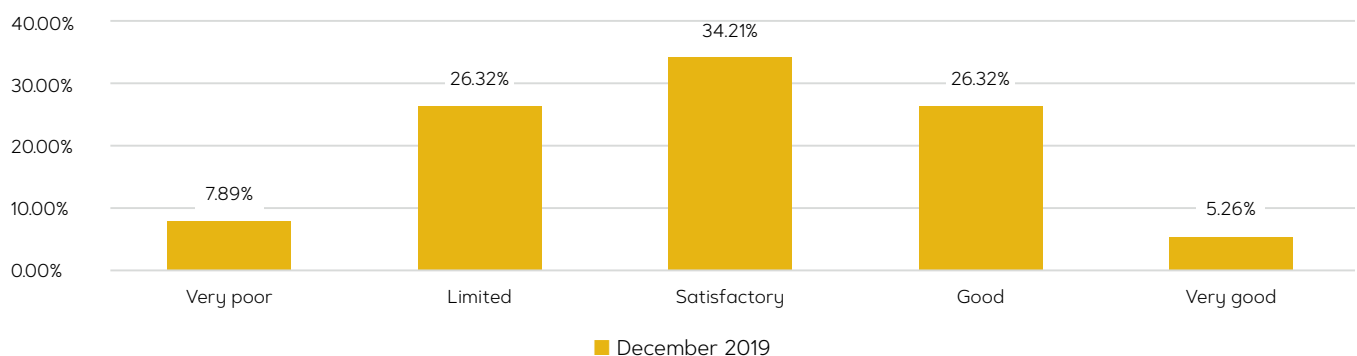*(Jul '19 = 48, Dec '19 = 37)*

Category	July 2019	December 2019
I have a very low understanding of the core responsibilities of council	2.08%	0.00%
I have a limited understanding of the core responsibilities of council	12.50%	16.22%
I have a satisfactory understanding of the core responsibilities of council	54.17%	37.84%
I have a high understanding of the core responsibilities of council	20.83%	29.73%
I have a very high understanding of the core responsibilities of council	10.42%	16.22%

■ July 2019 ■ December 2019

Regarding the operation of the Community Reference Groups to date, how would you rate: The purpose and objectives of the reference groups has been met?

CRG members were asked to what extent they felt that the purpose and objectives of the references groups had been met. A third of respondents felt positively, responding 'good' or 'very good'. Note that this question was not asked in the baseline survey, and as such a comparison is not included.

The purpose and objectives of the reference groups has been met
(Dec '19 = 38)

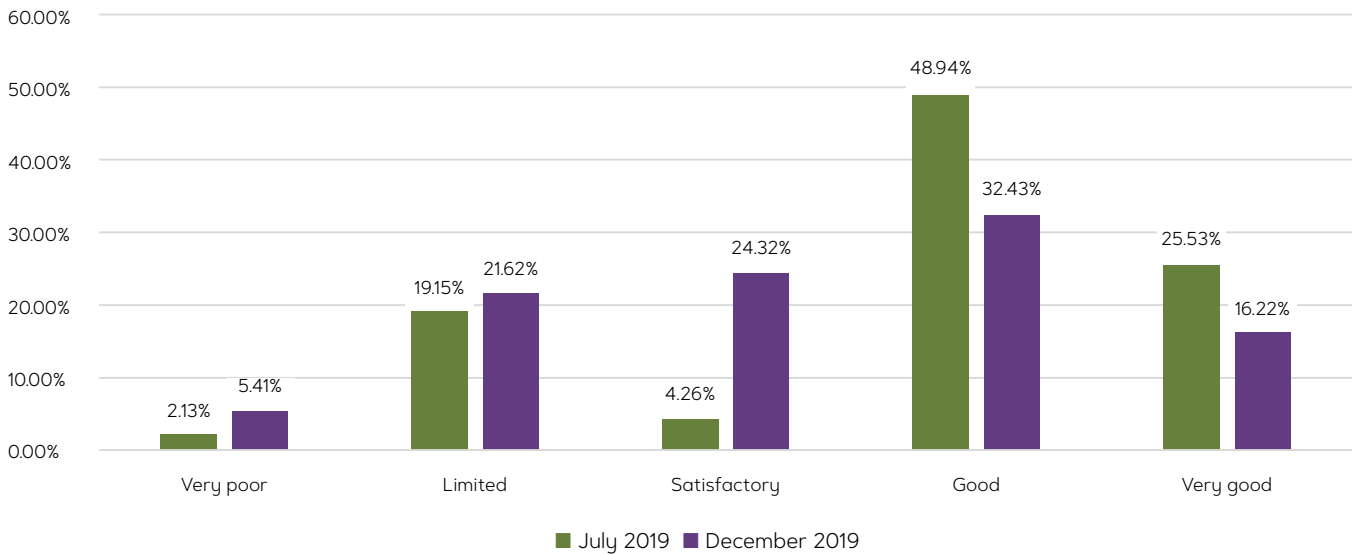| Category	December 2019
Very poor	7.89%
Limited	26.32%
Satisfactory	34.21%
Good	26.32%
Very good	5.26%

■ December 2019

Regarding the operation of the Community Reference Groups to date, how would you rate: Provision of relevant information

There has been a small decline in perceptions regarding the provision of relevant information to CRG members.

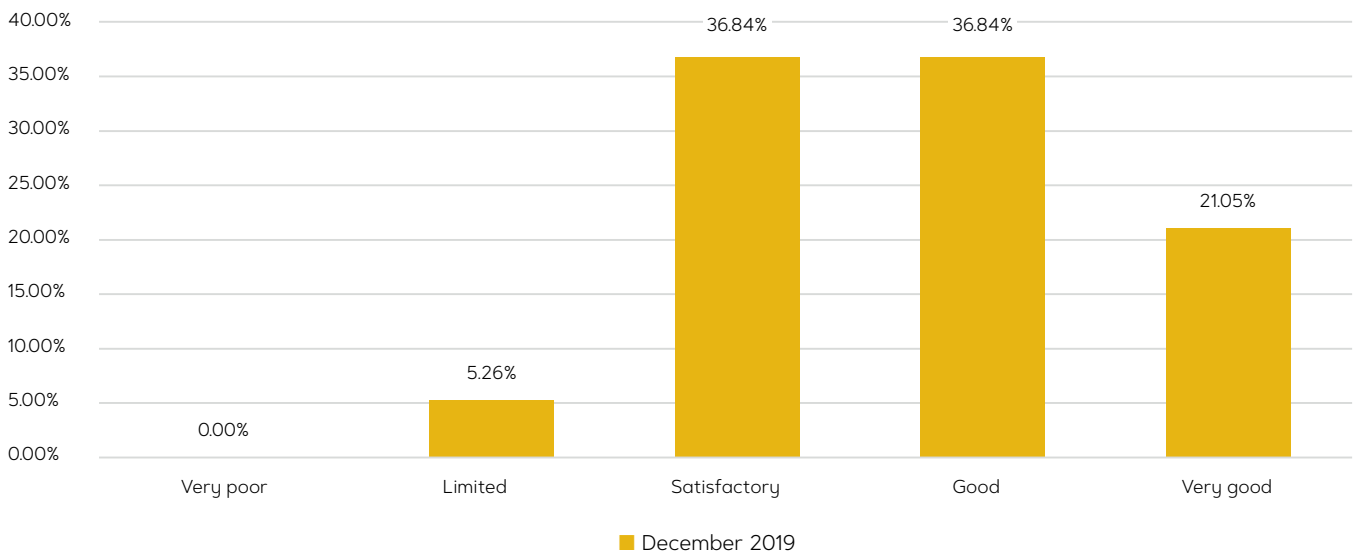**Provision of relevant information**
(Jul '19 = 47, Dec '19 = 37)

	Very poor	Limited	Satisfactory	Good	Very good
July 2019	2.13%	19.15%	4.26%	48.94%	25.53%
December 2019	5.41%	21.62%	24.32%	32.43%	16.22%

Regarding the meetings, how would you rate: Facilitation of the meetings

Nearly 58% of respondents positively rated the facilitation of the meetings. Please note that this question was not asked in this form in the baseline survey, and as such, a comparison is not included.

Facilitation of the meetings
(Dec '19 = 38)

	Very poor	Limited	Satisfactory	Good	Very good
December 2019	0.00%	5.26%	36.84%	36.84%	21.05%

Regarding the meetings, how would you rate: Consideration of your ideas and input at the meetings

Just over half of respondents in December 2019 – 51.35% – felt positively regarding the consideration of their ideas and input. Note that the July 2019 data is based on feedback from the inaugural meeting only.
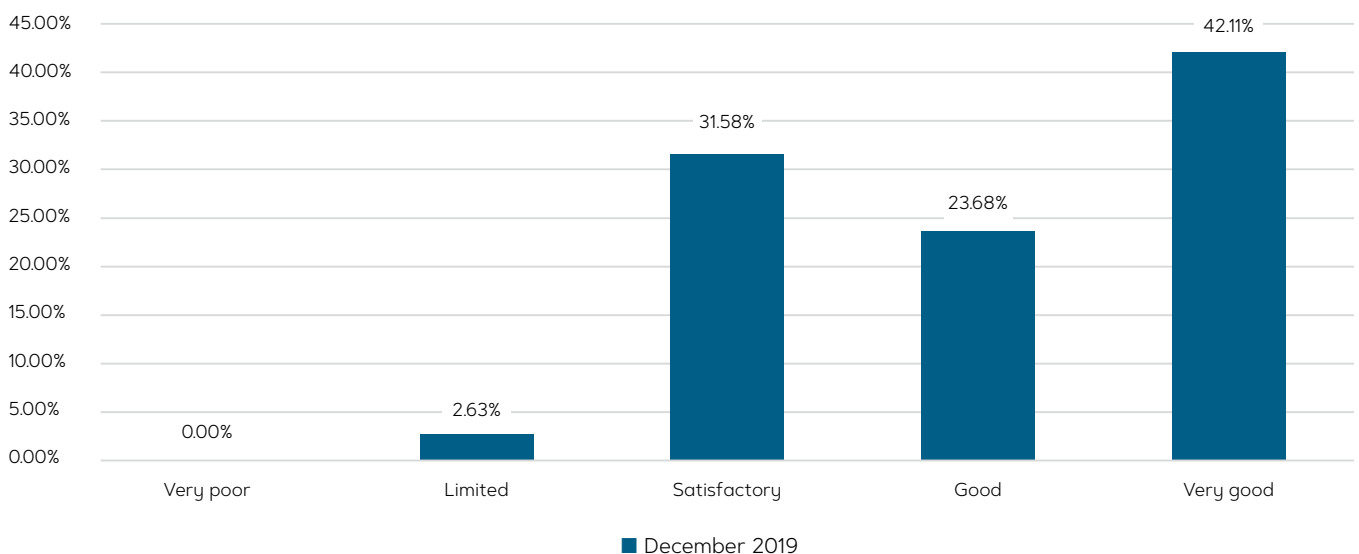
Consideration of your ideas and input at the meetings
(Jul '19 = 47, Dec '19 = 37)

Legend: ■ July 2019 ■ December 2019

Regarding the meetings, how would you rate: Collection and publication of minutes

In December, 65.79% of respondents felt positively regarding the collection and publication of minutes. Please note that this question was not asked in this form in the baseline survey, and as such, a comparison is not included.

Collection and publication of minutes
(Dec '19 = 38)

Legend: ■ December 2019

Going forward into 2020, what would success for the Community Reference Groups look like to you?

CRG members were asked, "Going forward into 2020, what would success for the Community Reference Groups look like to you?" Response themes are presented in the table below, along with respondent comments.

Theme	Feedback
Attendance and participation	▪ *"All members contribute to the group."* ▪ *"Full attendance from the Community Reference Group members, as several members have missed more than one meeting."* ▪ *"Greater input and reduction in 1 or 2 members over speaking."* ▪ *"Reference group members maintain and/or increase conversations, attendance and momentum (otherwise it's pointless!)."* ▪ *"If members do not attend or have decided to withdraw their membership...will there be opportunity for new members to join?"* ▪ *"My concern is that very opinionated people on the committees are the only ones views heard and the majority of participants take everyone's view into consideration and not just their own."* ▪ *"When the time comes to reappoint the members, maybe a better look of those attending to get less personal agendas on the table."*
Better consideration by council staff of knowledge and opinions	▪ *"Council staff to consider the wisdom and knowledge of the residents in the city. Many have deep knowledge and experience in issues but opinions aren't seemingly valued."*
Building relationships	▪ *"I have appreciated meeting some more like-minded people though."*
Catering	▪ *"Please improve food for dietary requirements."*
Council needs to clearly demonstrate how CRG feedback has been used/considered	▪ *"I would like to see some evidence that the discussions at the Reference Group have had some impact on council decisions."* ▪ *"Implementation of the CRGs ideas as council policy."* ▪ *"Policy created as a consequence of EF discussion and input."* ▪ *"To see the new council take all that these groups into consideration and have the outcomes show that the Reference groups information has been used and will be put in place from 2020 onwards."* ▪ *"Talk is one thing, actions speak louder."*
Engage more broadly	▪ *"Extensive community engagement with relevant organisations. A good communication plan for community and business engagement."*

Engage more meaningfully	▪ *"Bring more ideas to develop community."* ▪ *"Council working with communities, for communities."* ▪ *"Input into decisions, i.e. improving policies, which facilitates to consider upgrading, more real decisions."* ▪ *"The Group is going slowly but appears to be developing."* ▪ *"Input into strategic plans before they are drawn up. Opportunity to provide feedback on operational matters related to strategic plans."* ▪ *"More meaningful involvement in decision making."* ▪ *"The groups continue as intended and are not diluted by allowing other groups involvement. The groups are given a chance to examine the council's current economic policies and programs."* ▪ *"Council represents the balanced governance, provision of the living amenity and welfare of its residents and advocacy through the element of the Community Reference Groups should provide a consolidate guidance to the 'heart beat' of the 'real' delivery of services to the Ipswich community in balance with expectations."*
Engagement with elected representations	▪ *"Also, opportunity meet new mayor and councillors once elected in 2020."* ▪ *"Genuine involvement of the councillors in the process."* ▪ *"Increased engagement on matters impacting Ipswich, particularly once councillors are elected."* ▪ *"Involvement and support from the new councillors such that the committees have a strong line of communication with councillors."* ▪ *"That the new councillors would attend the meetings to learn."* ▪ *"Looking forward to continued/increased role for this CRG following election of councillors in 2020."*
Ensure representation	▪ *"To be able integrate community representation into council."* ▪ *"To keep moving forward as it has been doing. I would like to see more emphasis on the Disability Community which has been lacking under previous council."*
Facilitation	▪ *"Great survey. Thank you all for your hard work. I have found all staff awesome."* ▪ *"Impressed with the high level of respect shown to the group members by council and the level of information given to us by the highest status members of the administration."* ▪ *"Keep up the good work. Thank you to all the council staff that have worked tirelessly to get the council back on track after many years of neglect."*
Feedback for Administrator	▪ *"It's very disappointing the Administrator is leaving with six months left on his contract. This is another negative look for Ipswich."*
Focus on key issues	▪ *"Future challenges could be – the ageing population, their current roll in community direction verses the inability to engage youth."* ▪ *"Reducing red tape, improving on call centre."* ▪ *"There are several 'streams' to Economic Development in Ipswich – address ALL areas – not pick and choose a few."* ▪ *"Reducing red tape, real transparency without smoke screen."*
Link to council decision-making	▪ *"Also link meeting agendas with current items being considered by ICC."*

Making more efficient agendas and facilitation	▪ *"Covering up subject matter, not repeating same issues each meeting."* ▪ *"Facilitation of meetings has been constructive and supportive but the agendas have been too big and we always run out of time."* ▪ *"Subgroups of the Reference Group could focus on an issue in depth."* ▪ *"Although there are 5 Reference Groups each with its own agenda, it must be obvious that some members of those groups have certain personal agendas, which is not a bad thing, my personal agenda is Disability, there must be other members within the Groups who feel the same way so why not give those persons an opportunity to group together, the same applies to those who have a leaning towards Art or Sport would it not be better to get the best out of these people collectively."*
More frequent meetings	▪ *"More meetings to progress agenda items further."* ▪ *"Continue on, but with meetings 2 months apart."*
Ongoing building of a positive relationship	▪ *"A good partnership with the council post Chemello's departure and then later on the new elected council."* ▪ *"Creating a successful community/council relationship which can be assessed and modified where necessary."*
Online engagement	▪ *"More dialogue online on issues being decided in council. Needs to be a continuous process."*
Promotion of the work and value of the CRGs	▪ *"Wider communication of group's work to general community."*
Scepticism regarding the depth of engagement	▪ *"Facilitation is friendly and useful, but it seems like we are just there to listen and not make any changes or reforms. Perhaps I have a different idea about what these groups would be."* ▪ *"I believe we are heading in the right direction but are yet to see any real tangible outcomes on environmental concerns."* ▪ *"I feel that the discussions so far have been too general. Nowhere nearly enough detail. Mostly 'motherhood' statements. Not at all confident that the discussions are more than a 'talkfest' or a 'sop to the masses'."* ▪ *"Tokenism is the best way to describe this level of Community engagement. We were led to believe that transparency in decision making was a commitment of council however that is far from the case. Council officers who do not live in Ipswich making decisions about community events is ridiculous."* ▪ *"My understanding was that the opinion of Community Reference Group members would be sought when council was considering policy matters and operational issues proposed by council officers. This has not occurred in fact the meetings are nothing more than to TELL the groups what council officers had decided."* ▪ *"More involvement, focus group involvement – at the moment it appears like the decisions are already made based on limited input – and bringing the information to the Community Group is a mere 'formality' to tick the box for community engagement."* ▪ *"More engagement, less talking and speeches."*

INTERACTIVE ENGAGEMENT AT THE END OF YEAR COMMUNITY REFERENCE GROUP MEETING

An end of year CRG meeting was held on Wednesday 11 December 2019. All group members were invited for a briefing session from council's Interim Administrator, followed by a Q and A session with the CEO and Interim Administrator. A series of interactive feedback displays and vox pops (short videos) were set up, to engage participants prior to the meeting beginning. The feedback captured is included below.

What have you enjoyed most about the Community Reference Groups so far?

Group members were asked to share their feedback in writing or via a short video.

Response themes are presented in the table below, along with respondent comments.

Theme	Feedback
Provision of information	▪ *"Information from council staff and ideas from others."* ▪ *"I have enjoyed the openness and sharing of information and challenges facing Ipswich."* ▪ *"It's good to start learning about the workings of council and how much they do have jurisdiction over us, and it is quite a bit to get your head around."*
Relationship building	▪ *"I have enjoyed speaking with council officers and having an understanding of process."* ▪ *"Meeting with passionate people of Ipswich to progress ideas – being heard!! Having a voice."* ▪ *"Meeting people from various backgrounds and sharing knowledge and experiences."* ▪ *"Meeting people with similar views and ideas."* ▪ *"Watching and joining a team that epitomises transparency and belief in Ipswich and its future as an amazing city."* ▪ *"Meeting all of the other people who have similar interests too in our group."* ▪ *"It's been really helpful talking to the head of planning, the head of infrastructure to find out what the process is for getting things done around town. It's been really great for our understanding as well as being able to get our point across."*
Sharing ideas	▪ *"Different opinions; everyone's enthusiasm; respectful discussion."* ▪ *"Understanding thought processes from all sides."* ▪ *"It's good to have an opportunity to go in and talk about what our networks have been telling us about in regards to problems and current issues in a timely way."*
Scepticism	▪ *"Very little. The input has mostly not related to the topics we were supposed to advise on."*
Contributing to policy development	▪ *"I've really enjoyed being involved in actually contributing to the policies and procedures that have been developed."*
Future planning	▪ *"We've all got to join together and work towards the future so we can plan. Think ahead. Wouldn't you love to see a light rail at the health plaza all the way up to the hospital? They're the things we should be thinking of now, and planning for them. There was a lot of mismanagement and bad decisions in the past and that can be all turned around. And as a city we can start to grow and get a bit of life back."*

How can Community Reference Groups better operate in 2020?

Group members were asked to share their feedback in writing or via a vox pop. Ticks indicate where another member has seconded (agreed) a comment.

Response themes are presented in the table below, along with respondent comments.
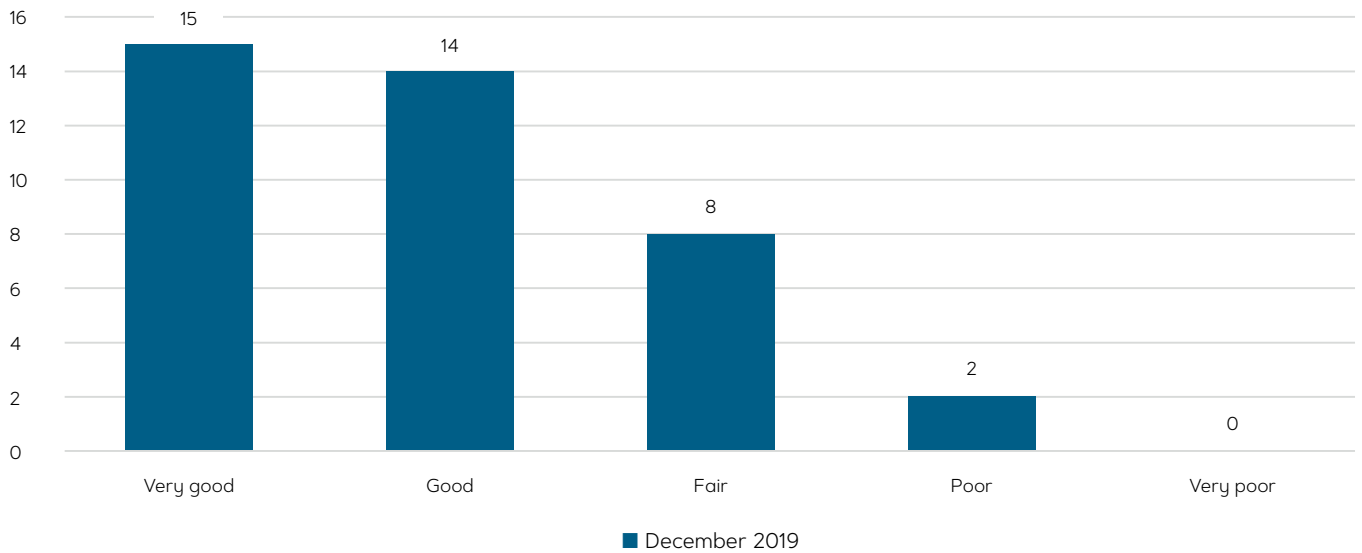
Theme	Feedback
Making more efficient agendas and facilitation	■ *"More specific purposes, eg, specific issues or proposals for consideration rather than general discussion."* ■ *"Meetings monthly. Later start time."* ■ *"Meet more often."* ✔ ■ *"Meetings seemed a little too far apart to keep agendas progressing."* ✔ ■ *"Include a quick catch-up on what other groups are doing."* ■ *"Nominate champions for sub-ideas in each reference group."* ■ *"Not all aspects of economic development are included."*
Representation	■ *"To involve more young people and attract them into the CRGs."*
Online engagement	■ *"Virtual meeting between face-to-face meetings."*
Scepticism regarding the depth of engagement	■ *"Too often it seems like the decisions are made before 'final' input is requested from groups."*
Varied venues	■ *"Stagger meeting venues if possible."*
Site visits	■ *"Make at least 1 trip in the jurisdiction of the committee."*
Engage more meaningfully	■ *"Provide input as a pre-focus group instead of post-decision focus group."* ■ *"By having questions for group regarding operation or improvement of a specific facility or program etc."* ■ *"The new council, when they come in, can bring new master plans to the group to talk about the details of it."* ■ *"Remain relevant to community concerns."*
Continue with engagement method	■ *"There was an opportunity for participants to be engaged in the session at every session we had, which was good. We didn't all just come along and sit down and get spoken to. We were able to make a contribution and we were invited to do so. I'd like to see that format continue because then you get everybody's opinion."*
Council needs to clearly demonstrate how CRG feedback has been used/ considered	■ *"Be more productive in outcomes."*
Better provision of information	■ *"More council info – plans for future growth."*

How would you rate your experience to date?

Group members were asked to indicate their response to the question by placing a sticker dot on a five point scale, from 'very good' to 'very poor'.

The majority of respondents indicated that they had a 'good' or 'very good' experience.

On a scale of one to five, how would you rate your experience to date?

	Very good	Good	Fair	Poor	Very poor
December 2019	15	14	8	2	0

■ December 2019

FEEDBACK VIA EMAIL

Feedback was also provided by members via council's Community Engagement email address (communityengagement@ipswich.qld.gov.au) following the baseline survey. Response themes are presented in the table below, along with respondent comments.

Theme	Feedback
How can the CRGs better operate in 2020?	▪ *"Acknowledge and be briefed on what has been achieved so far. (Within the scope of each group) e.g. council's Community Engagement team have contributed considerable time and resources towards community involvement and have already implemented useful programs. A review might go some way to creating a sense of purpose and future direction among group participants."* ▪ *"Continue to look at ways to create a central hub/document/portal which would assist community groups and individuals to explore options from all funding grants. e.g. – State/Federal/Local Authorities and Private sector."* ▪ *"Continue and refine mentoring programs to guide community groups and individuals through the complex grant application process. 2/ and 3/ Would assist groups to function with less dependence on Local Authority grants and access other funding/guidance to hopefully develop a more self-sufficient organisation."* ▪ *"Build Community morale. Past opportunities have been missed by not including some of Ipswich's prominent identities to help promote Ipswich. e.g. – Ash Barty – tennis, Shane Watson – cricket, Kevin Walters – NRL, Lyle Radford – photography, Will Mitchell – cartoonist etc."* ▪ *"Community education on how to deal with council. I know considerable effort has been expended on this topic but I'm still hearing people wanting to deal directly with councillors/candidates. (Because that's how they've always done it)."*

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[1] This includes feedback provided as part of the monitoring and evaluation program.

Engage more meaningfully[2]	▪ *"For my group I felt that the butchers paper exercise on priorities didn't go that well. I guess I would question going down that path in the first place. We are in the formation stage of getting a group up and running. Have the basics of group dynamics been forgotten?"* ▪ *"The intros were quick and dirty. With a number of 20 members we are a large group, and consequently more difficult to manage. There could be an initial tendency for the members to feel overwhelmed or disconnected. As a group, our first need is to connect or get to know one another. As we will only be meeting quarterly that's 8 meetings in 2 years – harder to connect/bond, potentially leading to decreased productivity. Maybe additional group social get-togethers could be added, simply to give us the opportunity to get to know one another better, without any other agenda."* ▪ *"As to the exercise, I would question whether it was a good idea at all. Might we not have been trying to run before we could walk; too much too soon; a step too far? As to the exercise, in our group, despite encouragement to avoid getting on your hobby horse, one or two of the blokes at my table spent almost all of the time ceaselessly waffling about the arts – to the detriment of giving others an opportunity to have a say. I guess some of my feelings about the exercise was that we didn't know one another; didn't know one another's names – labels being hard to read; didn't know one another's interests. Despite having limited time, our group seemed oblivious to any sense of urgency – to the extent that we seemed unable to even identify a 3rd priority. I guess I 'turned off'."* ▪ *"The exercise having been dealt with, I feel that the term 'Ipswich' needed definition. There are many communities in Ipswich City. Speaking personally I don't identify with Springfield or Ripley. And I get the feeling that council rates are being spent on those communities, where that has never been spent on Ipswich."*
Prioritising issues[3]	▪ *"I find it difficult to understand how homelessness can be an acceptable priority, but housing is not, when one of the first needs of the homeless is simply a roof over their head at night. In other cities – like Vancouver for sake of example, the homeless are a distinct issue, in having to deal with tent cities. As a group, they are obviously a lot of work."* ▪ *"A further issue is that I would appreciate someone telling us how the council works (seeing as how up until now you have been a virtually closed society). What are Standing Committees. How are these committees filled? How is the council doing business in the absence of its councillors? What is 'Advance Ipswich 2015'?"* ▪ *"I feel that there is a lot of data gathering required to identify our priorities."*
Operations and administration of the CRGs[4]	▪ *"I wouldn't advocate a complete turn-over of the membership of the Community Ref Groups every 2 years, because this requires a complete rebuilding of groups dynamics."*

2 Feedback in relation to the first CRG meeting on 25 June 2019.
3 Feedback in relation to the first CRG meeting on 25 June 2019.
4 Feedback in relation to the first CRG meeting on 25 June 2019.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The CRGs represent a significant change in direction in terms of council's community engagement work. After six months, we have identified both strengths and weaknesses in how the CRGs are functioning, and opportunities for improving the ways in which the CRGs and CRG members are engaged and utilised.

Feedback indicates that respondents have a positive outlook on the provision of relevant information, and have a deeper understanding of the work of council. Survey and qualitative data indicated that many respondents felt meetings have been run well, and have appreciated the opportunity to meet council staff, council executive, and other community members. Feedback at the December 2019 meeting indicated that most respondents have had a positive experience as a member of a CRG.

The feedback and data gathered here indicates that there remains some scepticism regarding council's engagement and consultation processes. For example, many respondents still felt that council were limited in their consideration of community opinions when making decisions – 51.35% of respondents still feel that there is low or limited consideration of community opinions, down from 82.97% in July. Given that the CRG members are more engaged and included than much of the general population, we could conclude that broader opinions regarding community engagement also remain low. The recent <u>Pulse Check survey</u> supports this – 36% of residents were dissatisfied with their opportunities (or lack thereof) to be heard, down from 43% in 2018.

Linked to this, qualitative feedback indicated some level of scepticism regarding the depth of engagement, and the way in which the CRGs are being utilised. Only a third (31.58%) of respondents felt the purpose and objectives had been met, and qualitative feedback included many comments from respondents who felt engagement to date has been a formality only.

Based on these findings, we can make the following recommendations:

1. **Come to CRGs with critical strategic questions early:** CRG facilitators (the General Managers) should be working proactively with staff to identify critical questions, which can then be brought to CRGs as early as possible.

2. **Better demonstrate the ways in which CRG feedback is used:** Groups should be given feedback from facilitators regarding the ways in which CRG feedback has been used in council decision-making.

3. **Ensure that elected representatives are meaningfully involved:** As we return to elected representation, the effectiveness of the CRGs will rely in part on positive engagement by the mayor and councillors.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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APPENDIX A

Community Reference Groups Baseline Survey (June 2019)

Please take a few minutes to fill out this survey for Community Reference Group participants. Your responses will assist with monitoring and evaluating the facilitation, support and work of the Community Reference Groups. Your responses to this survey are anonymous. You will not be personally identifiable in any reports that come out of this project. Your information will not be given to any other agency and your personal information is handled in accordance with the Information Privacy Act 2009. If you have any questions regarding this survey, please contact the Community Engagement Team at communityengagement@ipswich.qld.gov.au.

1. How would you rate current levels of community participation in Council's decision-making processes?

1	2	3	4	5
Very low level of participation	Low level of participation	Satisfactory level of participation	High level of participation	Very high level of participation

2. How would you rate current levels of community access to information about council decisions?

1	2	3	4	5
Very limited level of access to information	Limited level of access to information	Satisfactory level of access to information	High level of access to information	Very high level of access to information

3. Do you feel that Council currently draws on community knowledge and opinions when making decisions?

1	2	3	4	5
Very low consideration of community knowledge and opinions	Limited consideration of community knowledge and opinions	Satisfactory consideration of community knowledge and opinions	High consideration of community knowledge and opinions	Very high consideration of community knowledge and opinions

4. How well do you feel you understand the core responsibilities of council?

1	2	3	4	5
I have a very low understanding of the core responsibilities of council	I have a limited understanding of the core responsibilities of council	I have a satisfactory understanding of the core responsibilities of council	I have a high understanding of the core responsibilities of council	I have a very high understanding of the core responsibilities of council

5. Having met your reference group colleagues, how representative do you feel the group is of the Ipswich community (consider for example: age, cultural background, gender)

1	2	3	4	5	NA
Very limited representation	Limited representation	Satisfactory representation	High representation	Very high representation	*Did not attend the Inaugural Meeting*

6. **Regarding the establishment and operation of the Community Reference Groups to date, how would you rate the following aspects?**

	1 Very poor facilitation and organisation	2 Limited facilitation and organisations	3 Satisfactory facilitation and organisations	4 Good facilitation and organisation	5 Very good facilitation and organisation	N/A *Did not attend the Inaugural Meeting*
Expression of interest process						
Purpose and objectives						
Provision of relevant information						
Facilitation of tonight's' meeting						
Consideration of your ideas and input at tonight's meeting						

7. **What would success for the community reference groups look like to you?**

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8. **Any other comments?**

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Thank you for completing the survey

APPENDIX B

Community Reference Groups 6 Month Survey (December 2019)

Now that the community reference groups have been operating for some time, please take a few minutes to fill out this survey. Your responses will assist with monitoring the facilitation, support and work of the reference groups as they continue to progress. Your responses to this survey are anonymous. You will not be personally identifiable in any reports that come out of this project. Your information will not be given to any other agency and your personal information is handled in accordance with the Information Privacy Act 2009. If you have any questions regarding this survey, please contact the Community Engagement Team at communityengagement@ipswich.qld.gov.au.

1. **Which Community Reference Group are you a member of?**
   o Economic Development
   o Growth Management
   o Environment
   o Resilient Communities
   o Transparent Governance

2. **How would you rate current levels of community participation in Council's decision-making processes?**

1	2	3	4	5
Very low level of participation	Low level of participation	Satisfactory level of participation	High level of participation	Very high level of participation

3. **How would you rate current levels of community access to information about council decisions?**

1	2	3	4	5
Very limited level of access to information	Limited level of access to information	Satisfactory level of access to information	High level of access to information	Very high level of access to information

4. **Do you feel that Council currently draws on community knowledge and opinions when making decisions?**

1	2	3	4	5
Very low consideration of community knowledge and opinions	Limited consideration of community knowledge and opinions	Satisfactory consideration of community knowledge and opinions	High consideration of community knowledge and opinions	Very high consideration of community knowledge and opinions

5. **How well do you feel you understand the core responsibilities of council?**

1	2	3	4	5
I have a very low understanding of the core responsibilities of council	I have a limited understanding of the core responsibilities of council	I have a satisfactory understanding of the core responsibilities of council	I have a high understanding of the core responsibilities of council	I have a very high understanding of the core responsibilities of council

6. **Regarding the operation of the Community Reference Groups to date, how would you rate the following aspects?**

	1 Very poor facilitation and organisation	2 Limited facilitation and organisations	3 Satisfactory facilitation and organisations	4 Good facilitation and organisation	5 Very good facilitation and organisation
The purpose and objectives of the reference groups has been met					
Provision of relevant information					

7. **Regarding the meetings, how would you rate the following aspects?**

	1 Very poor facilitation and organisation	2 Limited facilitation and organisations	3 Satisfactory facilitation and organisations	4 Good facilitation and organisation	5 Very good facilitation and organisation
Facilitation of meetings					
Consideration of your ideas and input at meetings					
Collection and publication of minutes					

8. **Going forward in 2020, what would success for the community reference groups look like to you?**

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9. **Any other comments?**

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Thank you for completing this survey