Ballina Shire Council

Development Application Research

Prepared by: Micromex Research

Date: February 23, 2018

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Background

Methodology & Sample

Data collection

Micromex Research, together with Ballina Shire Council, developed the questionnaire. Where possible, questions that had been used in previous DA studies for other Councils were included, so normative comparisons could be made.

Data collection period

Telephone interviewing (CATI) was conducted during the period 11th January – 22nd January 2018.

Sample

N=301 interviews were conducted. A sample size of 301 provides a maximum sampling error of plus or minus 5.7% at 95% confidence. This means that if the survey was replicated with a new universe of N=301 residents, that 19 times out of 20 we would expect to see the same results, i.e. +/- 5.7%.

The 301 telephone interviews were drawn from a sample universe of 4,291 applications from 994 unique entities (i.e. persons or companies) who had applied for a DA from January 2015 to November 2017. Some entities may have given more than one response if (say) two or more staff members from the one company could be interviewed about different applications. Respondents were randomly selected.

Interviewing was conducted in accordance with the AMSRS Code of Professional Behaviour.

Methodology & Sample

Data analysis

The data within this report was analysed using Q Professional.

Percentages

All percentages are calculated to the nearest whole number and therefore the total may not exactly equal 100%.

Word Frequency Tagging

Verbatim responses for open questions were collated and entered into analytical software. This analysis 'counts' the number of times a particular word or phrase appears and, based on the frequency of that word or phrase, a font size is generated. The larger the font, the more frequently the word or sentiment is mentioned.

Sample Profile

Sample Profile

Gender

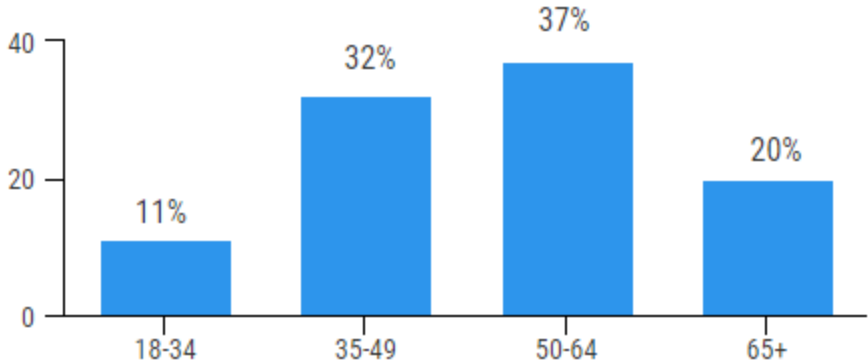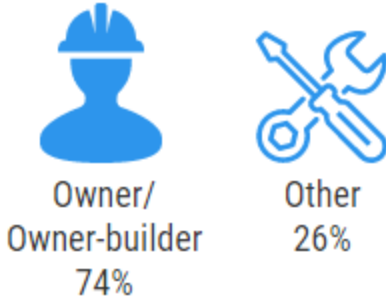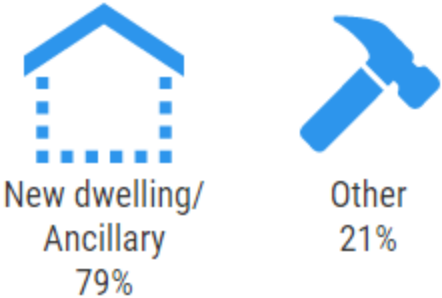
73% 27%

Age

	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
	11%	32%	37%	20%

Application type

Owner/Owner-builder 74%   Other 26%

Development type

New dwelling/Ancillary 79%   Other 21%
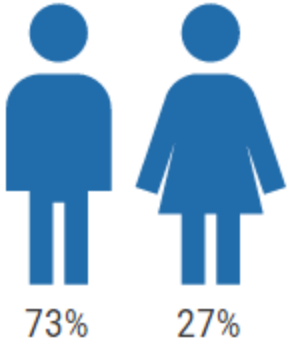
Key Findings

Key Findings

Based on the survey findings, Council has delivered a high quality DA service in 2017, with normative data and direct external comparisons suggesting Ballina Shire Council is performing above average:

When compared to other councils, 49% of those who had lodged with other councils, stated their experience with **Ballina Shire Council was better** than previous experiences with other councils (only 13% said Ballina was 'worse')

49%

94%

94% of Applicants were at least '**somewhat satisfied**' with Council's overall performance, with 51% committing to the top 'very satisfied' code

When compared to our normative data, Council is **performing significantly better** for overall satisfaction

↑4.26
(very high satisfaction)

All agreement statements (pre and post lodgement) were rated **above our norms** – most of them significantly above.
'The Council Officers were polite and courteous' and 'the Assessment Officer was courteous and polite' achieved 'extremely high' agreement levels

Key Findings

Areas of opportunity for Council include the following:

'The time taken to process my application was reasonable' and 'the Assessment Officer kept me informed of the progress of the application', although greater than our norms, were rated lower in comparison to other statements, suggesting there is room to improve these areas in order to lift overall satisfaction.

Open-ended comments also highlighted the importance of continuous/meaningful communications
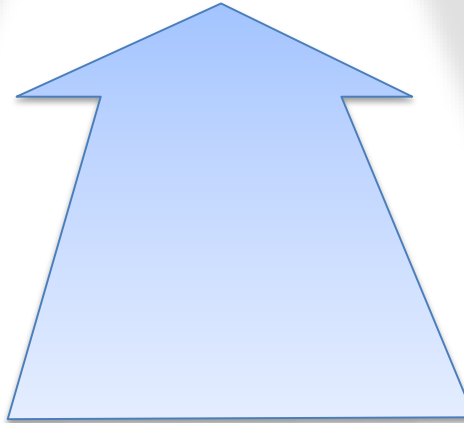
Usage of the **online tracking application** could also be optimised to help assist Applicants in being informed of the progress of their application. 57% of Applicants stated they did not use the tracking application, with 16% of those not aware that they could

Politeness of staff is currently excellent – this should of course be maintained, but trying to improve it further may not deliver increased overall satisfaction as 'politeness' is already so highly rated. Rather, Council could focus on other areas such as making instructions and information in Policies/Guidelines/Controls easier to understand, and keeping Applicants informed of the progress of their application (and managing their processing time expectations) – possibly by making Applicants more aware of the online tracking App and utilising this for continual updates

Detailed Findings:
1. Satisfaction with
Overall Process

Overall Satisfaction with Service During the Process

Q1a. *Thinking of your most recent development application with Ballina Shire Council, overall how satisfied were you with the service you received from Council staff who assisted you during the process?*
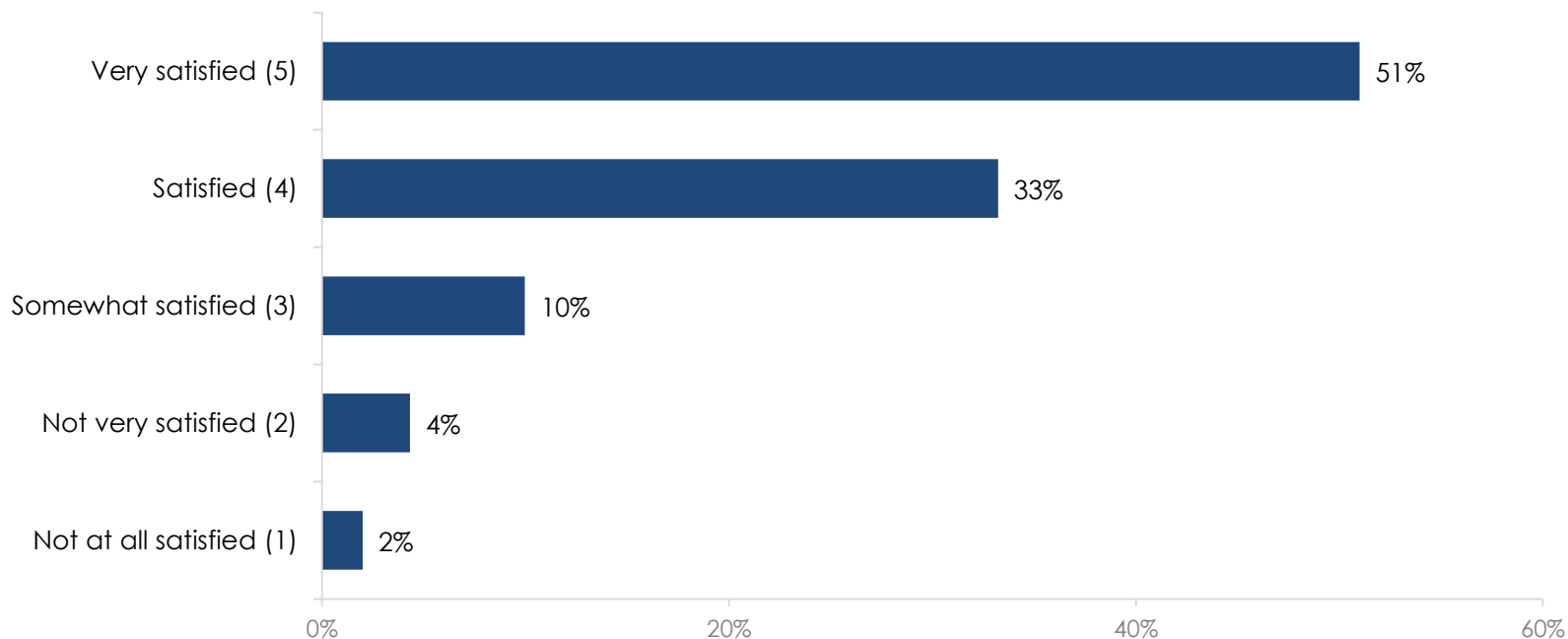
	Micromex Benchmark	Overall	Applicant Type		Development Type		Application took:	
			Owner/ Owner-builder	Other applicants	Dwelling/Ancillary	Other applications	1-20 days	>20days
Mean	4.10▼	4.26▲	4.23	4.33	4.28	4.19	4.42▲	4.03
Base		301	222	79	238	63	175	126

Scale: 1 = not at all satisfied, 5 = very satisfied
▲▼ = significantly higher/lower (by group)

A very high 94% of Applicants were at least 'somewhat satisfied' with the overall service, with just over half (51%) committing to the top 'very satisfied' code. The resulting mean score of 4.26 out of 5 is above the Micromex norm of 4.10. Those whose applications were processed in up to 20 days were more favourable – but even those whose applications took more than 20 days were still positive, with a mean score just below our overall norm

Reason for Level of Satisfaction During the Process

Q1a.   *Thinking of your most recent development application with Ballina Shire Council, overall how satisfied were you with the service you received from Council staff who assisted you during the process?*

Q1b.   *Why did you give that rating?*

The most common reason for Applicants stating they were satisfied was the 'prompt/ efficient and easy process'.

The helpful/ positive attitude from staff was also a contributing factor.

Those who were less favourable appear to have had difficult or more complex/ time-consuming applications

Very satisfied/Satisfied – 84%	N = 301
Prompt/efficient/easy process	50%
Helpful/knowledgeable/informative/friendly staff	32%
There were no issues	12%
Good communication/feedback	10%
Good customer service	9%
Good/everything was approved	3%
Somewhat satisfied – 10%	
Difficult/costly/lengthy process	4%
Lack of knowledge/unhelpful staff	2%
Poor customer service	2%
Received conflicting advice/incorrect information	2%
Not at all/Not very satisfied – 6%	
Difficult/costly/lengthy process	5%
Poor/lack of communication	2%
Lack of knowledge/unhelpful staff	1%
Poor customer service	1%

Please see the Appendix for results fewer than 1%

Detailed Findings:

2. Preparing and Lodging Your Development Application

Seeking Information Prior to Lodging Application

Q1c.   How, if at all, did you seek information prior to lodging your most recent application?

Category	Percentage
Spoke with Council staff in person at the Council Chambers	56%
Spoke with Council staff over the phone	43%
Obtained information over the internet	38%
Obtained information by email or written correspondence	28%
Via a formal pre-lodgement meeting	14%
Did not seek prior advice	21%
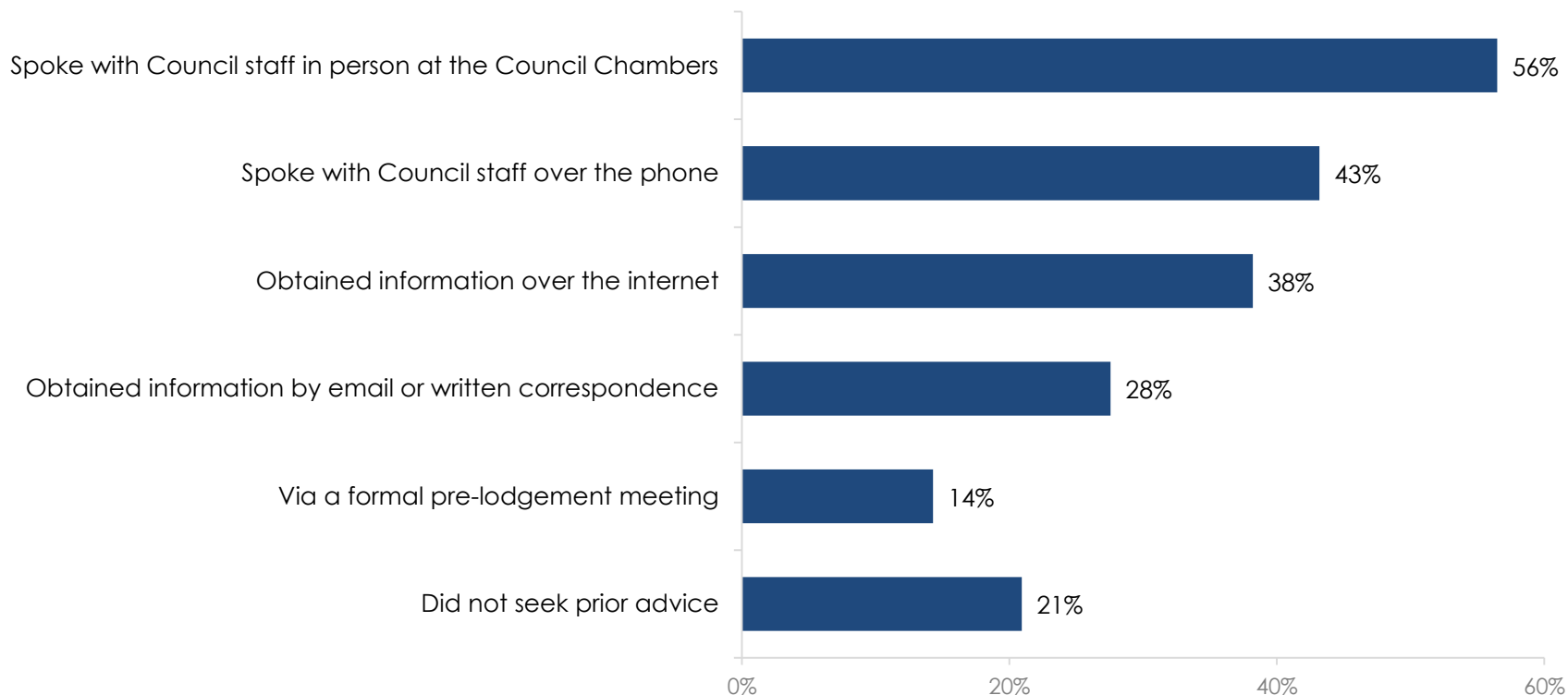
Base: N = 301

One-in-five Applicants (21%) did not seek any advice prior to lodging their application.

More than half the Applicants (56%) sought information in person through Council staff – and a net sub-total of 73% of Applicants 'spoke' to a staff member either in person/meeting or over the phone, highlighting the importance of personal contact

Seeking Information Prior to Lodging Application

Q1c.   How, if at all, did you seek information prior to lodging your most recent application?

	Overall	Applicant Type		Development Type	
		Owner/ Owner-Builder	Other applicants	Dwelling/ Ancillary	Other applications
Spoke with Council staff in person at the Council Chambers	56%	63%	38%	58%	52%
Spoke with Council staff over the phone	43%	44%	41%	39%	60%
Obtained information over the internet	38%	37%	41%	37%	43%
Obtained information by email or written correspondence	28%	27%	28%	24%	40%
Via a formal pre-lodgement meeting	14%	16%	9%	15%	13%
Did not seek prior advice	21%	18%	29%	22%	16%
Base	301	222	79	238	63

Significantly higher/lower by group

Owner/builders were significantly more likely to speak with Council staff in person, whilst those developing a new dwelling/ancillary structure were significantly less likely to speak with Council over the phone, or to obtain information via email or written correspondence

Policies, Fact Sheets and Controls Viewed

Q2. *Did you obtain or view copies of relevant policies, fact sheets and development controls?*

Q3. *Which policies, guidelines or controls did you view or obtain copies of?*

No 48%

Yes 52%

Base: N = 301

Category	Percentage
Development Control Plan (DCP)	59%
Complying Development Explanatory Notes	39%
Ballina Local Environmental Plan 2012 (LEP 2012)	36%
Complying Development - NSW Government Planning Fact Sheet	26%
Pre-DA Lodgement Meeting Fact Sheet	25%
Ballina Local Environmental Plan - Unsure of date	23%
Ballina Local Environmental Plan 1987 (LEP 1987)	11%
Electronic Housing Code (EHC)	6%
Other	32%
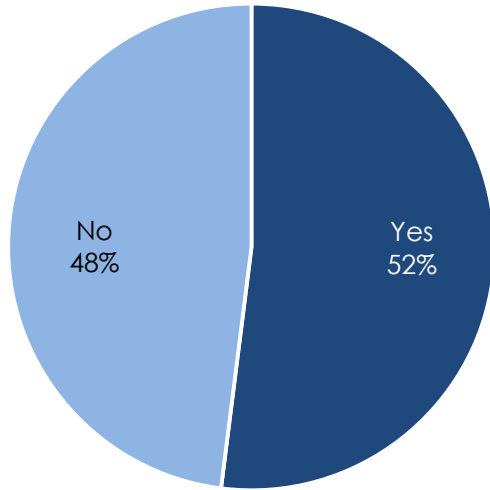
Base: N = 157

Please see the Appendix for 'other' specified

52% of Applicants obtained or viewed relevant policies, fact sheets and controls.

Of those that viewed these documents, the most viewed were one or more of the LEP's (net sub-total of 61% of the 157 Applicants who had viewed any forms) and the 'Development Control Plan' (59% of those who viewed any forms)

17

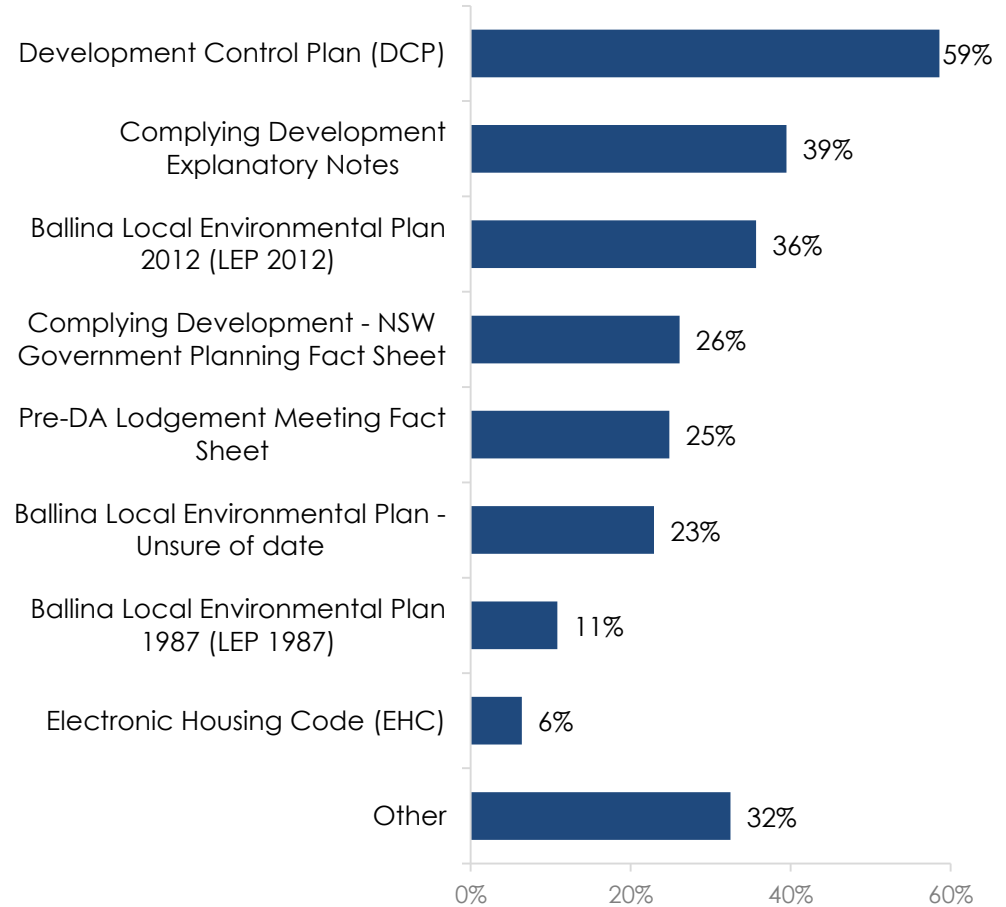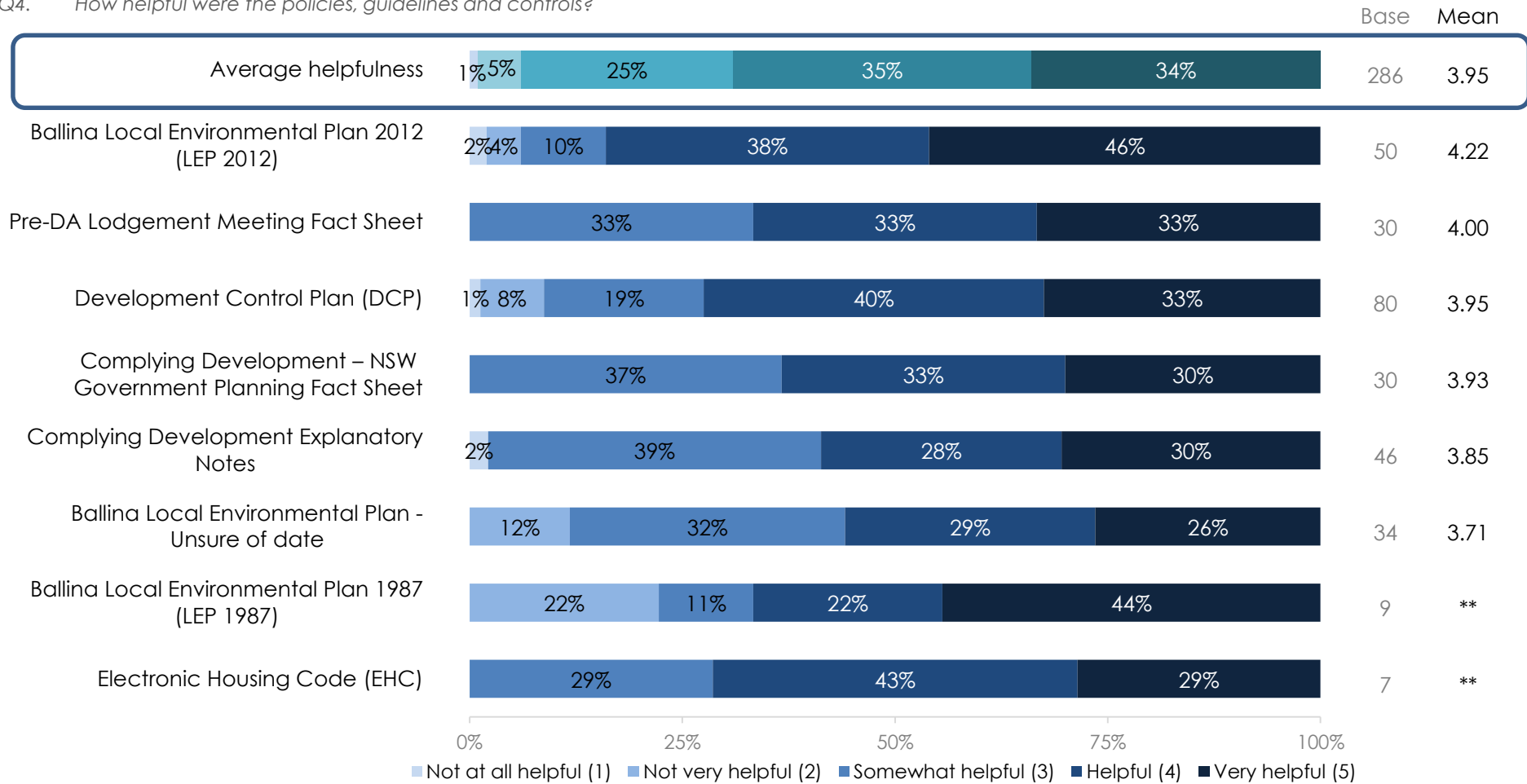# Helpfulness of Policies, Fact Sheets and Controls

Q2.   Did you obtain or view copies of relevant policies, fact sheets and development controls?
Q3.   Which policies, guidelines or controls did you view or obtain copies of?
Q4.   How helpful were the policies, guidelines and controls?

		Base	Mean
Average helpfulness	1% / 5% / 25% / 35% / 34%	286	3.95
Ballina Local Environmental Plan 2012 (LEP 2012)	2% / 4% / 10% / 38% / 46%	50	4.22
Pre-DA Lodgement Meeting Fact Sheet	33% / 33% / 33%	30	4.00
Development Control Plan (DCP)	1% / 8% / 19% / 40% / 33%	80	3.95
Complying Development – NSW Government Planning Fact Sheet	37% / 33% / 30%	30	3.93
Complying Development Explanatory Notes	2% / 39% / 28% / 30%	46	3.85
Ballina Local Environmental Plan - Unsure of date	12% / 32% / 29% / 26%	34	3.71
Ballina Local Environmental Plan 1987 (LEP 1987)	22% / 11% / 22% / 44%	9	**
Electronic Housing Code (EHC)	29% / 43% / 29%	7	**

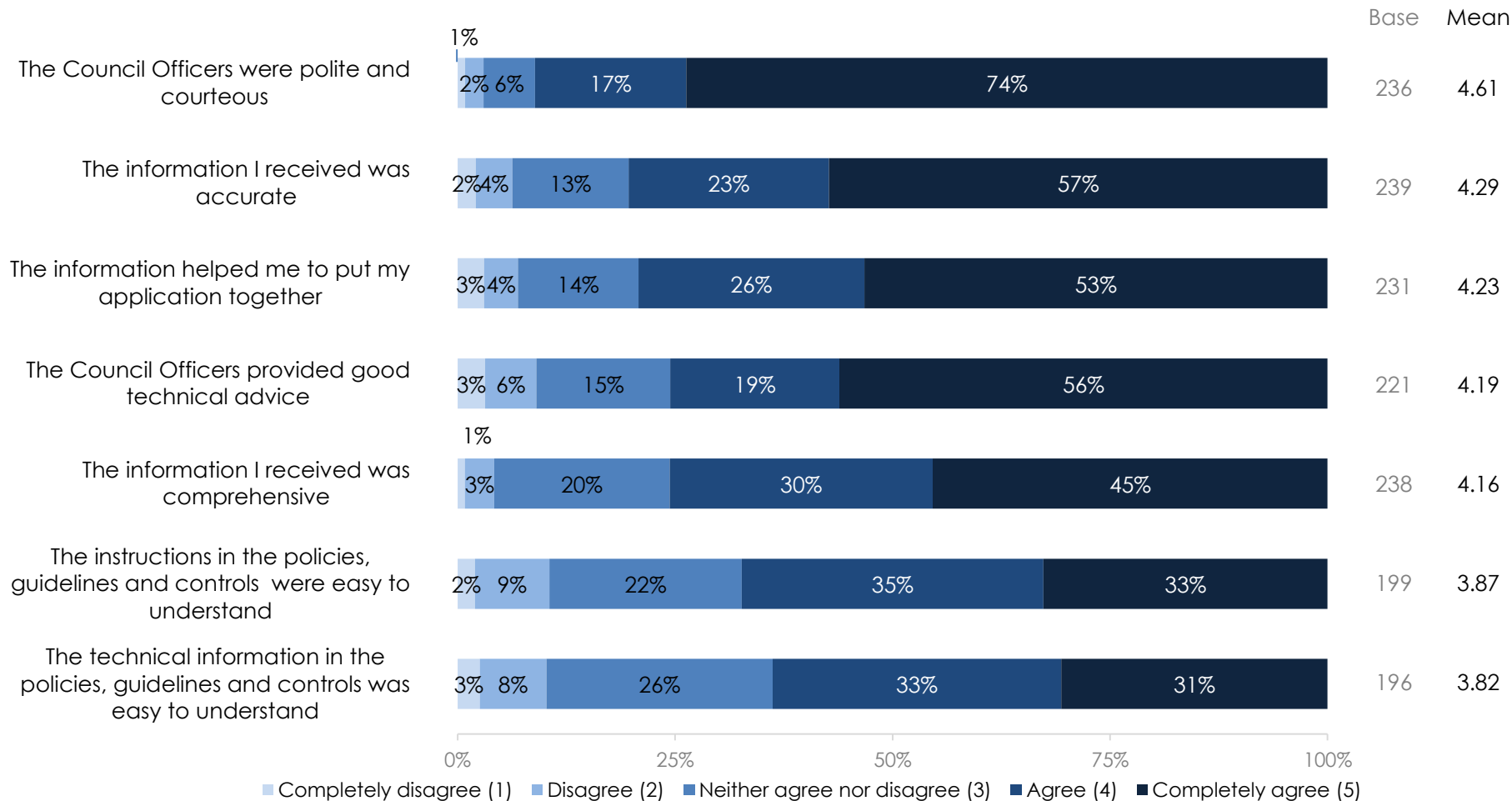■ Not at all helpful (1) ■ Not very helpful (2) ■ Somewhat helpful (3) ■ Helpful (4) ■ Very helpful (5)

Note: Not all respondents were asked to rate all policies/guidelines or controls that they obtained copies of

Scale: 1 = not at all helpful, 5 = very helpful
**Means have not been calculated due to low base size

Based on all documents combined (top bar of chart), 69% found them 'helpful' or 'very helpful' – and negative ratings (bottom two codes) were generally low.

Agreement with Statements – Prior to Lodging Application

Q5. The following are a number of statements about the information you received before lodging your most recent application with Council. Please rate each statement.

Statement	Base	Mean
The Council Officers were polite and courteous	236	4.61
The information I received was accurate	239	4.29
The information helped me to put my application together	231	4.23
The Council Officers provided good technical advice	221	4.19
The information I received was comprehensive	238	4.16
The instructions in the policies, guidelines and controls were easy to understand	199	3.87
The technical information in the policies, guidelines and controls was easy to understand	196	3.82

The Council Officers were polite and courteous: 1%, 2%, 6%, 17%, 74%

The information I received was accurate: 2%, 4%, 13%, 23%, 57%

The information helped me to put my application together: 3%, 4%, 14%, 26%, 53%

The Council Officers provided good technical advice: 3%, 6%, 15%, 19%, 56%

The information I received was comprehensive: 1%, 3%, 20%, 30%, 45%

The instructions in the policies, guidelines and controls were easy to understand: 2%, 9%, 22%, 35%, 33%

The technical information in the policies, guidelines and controls was easy to understand: 3%, 8%, 26%, 33%, 31%

Legend: ■ Completely disagree (1) ■ Disagree (2) ■ Neither agree nor disagree (3) ■ Agree (4) ■ Completely agree (5)

Scale: 1 = completely disagree, 5 = completely agree

Almost three quarters of Applicants (74%) committed to the top 'completely agree' code for the statement 'the Council Officers were polite and courteous'.

Disagreement scores were not excessive, even for the two lowest-rated attributes that can be problems

Agreement with Statements – Prior to Lodging Application

Q5. *The following are a number of statements about the information you received <u>before</u> lodging your most recent application with Council. Please rate each statement.*

Criteria	Ballina 2017	Micromex Benchmarks
Above the Benchmark		
The Council Officers were polite and courteous	4.61▲	4.45
The information I received was accurate	4.29▲	4.04
The information helped me to put my application together	4.23▲	3.97
The Council Officers provided good technical advice	4.19▲	3.92
The information I received was comprehensive	4.16▲	3.90
The instructions in the policies, guidelines and controls were easy to understand	3.87▲	3.67
The technical information in the policies, guidelines and controls were easy to understand	3.82▲	3.64

▲▼ = significantly higher/lower than the benchmark

Scale: 1 = completely disagree, 5 = completely agree

All 7 statements were rated significantly higher than the Micromex benchmarks, which is very encouraging

Agreement with Statements – Prior to Lodging Application

Q5. *The following are a number of statements about the information you received <u>before</u> lodging your most recent application with Council. Please rate each statement.*

	Applicant type		Development type	
	Owner/ Owner-builder	Other applicants	Dwelling/ Ancillary	Other applications
The Council Officers were polite and courteous	4.62	4.58	4.64	4.49
The information I received was accurate	4.27	4.38	4.34	4.13
The information helped me to put my application together	4.21	4.28	4.27	4.09
The Council Officers provided good technical advice	4.20	4.18	4.25	4.00
The information I received was comprehensive	4.14	4.21	4.21	3.98
The instructions in the policies, guidelines and controls were easy to understand	3.81	4.06	3.89	3.83
The technical information in the policies, guidelines and controls were easy to understand	3.77	3.96	3.83	3.76
Base	131	39	131	39

Scale: 1 = completely disagree, 5 = completely agree

Agreement ratings were statistically similar across all application and development types

Overall Rating of Service Prior to Lodging Application

Q6a.   Overall, how would you rate the service given to you by Council's staff prior to lodging your application?
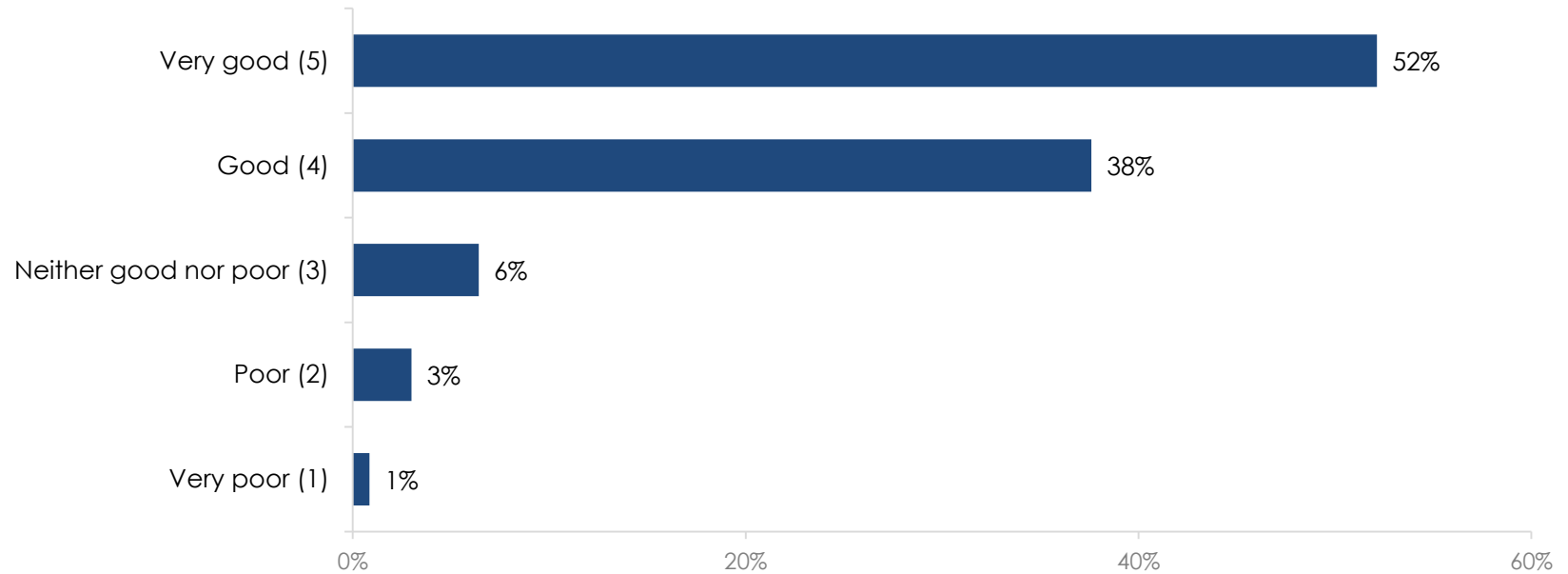
	Micromex Benchmark	Overall	Applicant Type		Development Type		Application took:	
			Owner/ Owner-builder	Other applicants	Dwelling/ Ancillary	Other applications	1-20 days	>20days
Mean	4.11▼	4.37▲	4.36	4.41	4.41	4.25	4.45	4.28
Base		234	180	54	182	52	129	105

Scale: 1 = very poor, 5 = very good
▲▼ = significantly higher/lower (by group)

90% of Applicants gave a rating of 'good' to 'very good' for the service prior to lodging their application, with the resulting mean score well above the Micromex norm

Reason for Rating of Service

Q6a.   Overall, how would you rate the service given to you by Council's staff prior to lodging your application?
Q6b.   Why do you say that?

Half (51%) of the Applicants felt the service given to them was 'helpful, informative, with knowledge-able staff and good advice given'

Very good/Good– 90%	N = 234
Helpful/informative/knowledgeable staff/good advice given	51%
Available/responsive/prompt/efficient service	24%
Polite/professional/courteous/friendly staff	19%
Answered my questions when needed	15%
Easy/smooth process	9%
No problems/happy with the outcome	7%
Some staff were not polite/helpful	1%
Neither good nor poor– 6%	
Unhelpful/obstructive staff/lack of information given	3%
Rude staff/negative attitude	1%
Slow process/response times	1%
Incorrect information/advice was given	1%
Front desk staff were good	1%
Poor/Very poor– 4%	
Unhelpful/obstructive staff	2%
Rude/arrogant staff	2%
Incorrect information given/processed incorrect form	1%

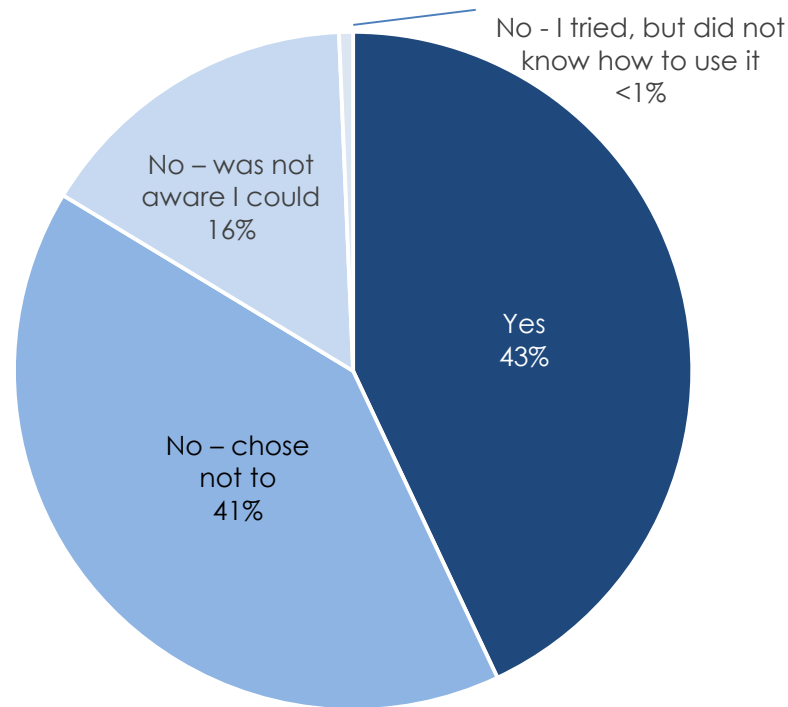Please see the Appendix for results fewer than 1%

Detailed Findings:

3. Application Processing and Contact with Council

Online Tracking of Application

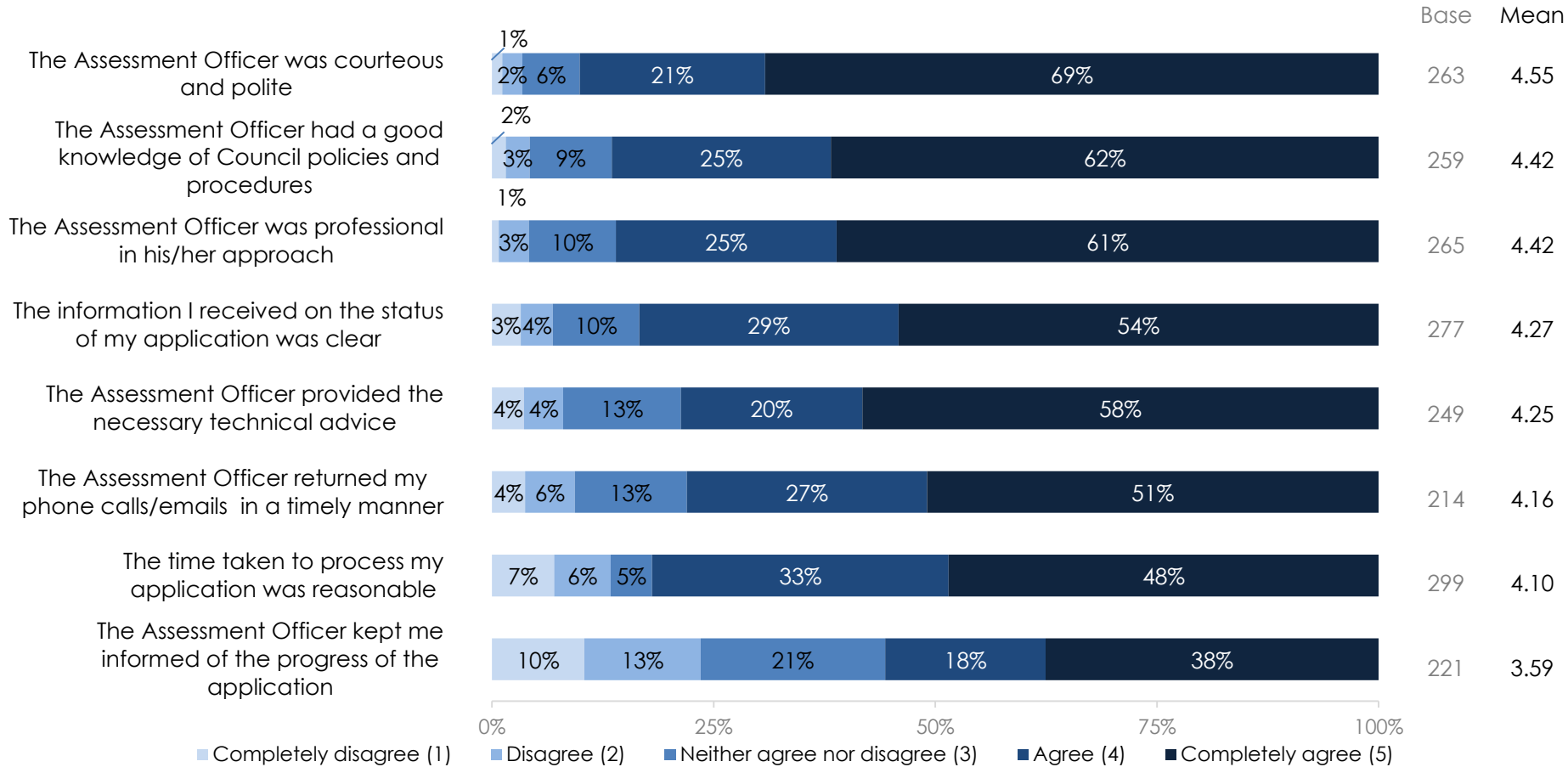*Q7.* *After you had lodged your application, did you track your application <u>online</u> using Council's DA's online?*

Pie chart:
- Yes — 43%
- No - I tried, but did not know how to use it — <1%
- No – was not aware I could — 16%
- No – chose not to — 41%

	Overall	Applicant Type		Development Type	
		Owner/ Owner-builder	Other applicants	Dwelling/Ancillary	Other applications
Yes	43%	44%	39%	42%	46%
Base	300	221	79	237	63

Almost half (43%) of the applicants tracked their application online

Agreement with Statements – After Lodging Application

Q8a.   The following are a number of statements about the information you received after lodging your application with Council. Please rate each statement.

Base   Mean

Statement	Completely disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Completely agree (5)	Base	Mean
The Assessment Officer was courteous and polite	1%	2%	6%	21%	69%	263	4.55
The Assessment Officer had a good knowledge of Council policies and procedures	2%	3%	9%	25%	62%	259	4.42
The Assessment Officer was professional in his/her approach	1%	3%	10%	25%	61%	265	4.42
The information I received on the status of my application was clear	3%	4%	10%	29%	54%	277	4.27
The Assessment Officer provided the necessary technical advice	4%	4%	13%	20%	58%	249	4.25
The Assessment Officer returned my phone calls/emails in a timely manner	4%	6%	13%	27%	51%	214	4.16
The time taken to process my application was reasonable	7%	6%	5%	33%	48%	299	4.10
The Assessment Officer kept me informed of the progress of the application	10%	13%	21%	18%	38%	221	3.59

■ Completely disagree (1) ■ Disagree (2) ■ Neither agree nor disagree (3) ■ Agree (4) ■ Completely agree (5)

	Application took:	
	1-20 days	>20 days
Time taken to process my application was reasonable	4.28 ▲	3.85
Base	173	126

Scale: 1 = completely disagree, 5 = completely agree

As with the pre-lodgement rating, the statement 'the Assessment Officer was courteous and polite' received a very positive response, with 90% of Applicants agreeing with the statement. There is room for improvement in regards to information on the application progression, with 23% disagreeing with the statement 'the Assessment Officer kept me informed of the progress of the application'. Not surprisingly, those whose applications were processed within 20 days were more positive in terms of 'Time taken to process my application was reasonable'

Agreement with Statements – After Lodging Application

Q8a.   *The following are a number of statements about the information you received <u>after</u> lodging your application with Council. Please rate each statement.*

Criteria	Ballina 2017	Micromex Benchmarks
Above the Benchmark		
The Assessment Officer was courteous and polite	4.55	4.45
The Assessment Officer had a good knowledge of Council policies and procedures	4.42▲	4.22
The Assessment Officer was professional in his/her approach	4.42▲	4.25
The information I received on the status of my application was clear	4.27▲	4.03
The Assessment Officer provided the necessary technical advice	4.25▲	4.00
The Assessment Officer returned my phone calls/emails in a timely manner	4.16▲	3.92
The time taken to process my application was reasonable	4.10▲	3.64
The Assessment Officer kept me informed of the progress of the application	3.59	3.50

▲▼ = significantly higher/lower than the benchmark

Scale: 1 = completely disagree, 5 = completely agree

All eight of the post lodgement rating statements were rated higher than the benchmarks – with six of the eight being significantly higher.

Whilst we noted on the previous slide that 23% disagreed with the statement 'the Assessment Officer kept me informed of the progress of the application' it is still a little above our norm

Agreement with Statements – After Lodging Application

Q8a.   *The following are a number of statements about the information you received <u>after</u> lodging your application with Council. Please rate each statement.*

	Applicant type		Development type	
	Owner/ Owner-builder	Other applicants	Dwelling/ Ancillary	Other applications
The Assessment Officer was courteous and polite	4.55	4.54	4.56	4.50
The Assessment Officer had a good knowledge of Council policies and procedures	4.45	4.36	4.49	4.17
The Assessment Officer was professional in his/her approach	4.42	4.42	4.45	4.31
The information I received on the status of my application was clear	4.29	4.23	4.32	4.10
The Assessment Officer provided the necessary technical advice	4.29	4.14	4.31	4.04
The Assessment Officer returned my phone calls/emails in a timely manner	4.12	4.25	4.18	4.09
The time taken to process my application was reasonable	4.10	4.11	4.15	3.92
The Assessment Officer kept me informed of the progress of the application	3.63	3.48	3.61	3.51
Base	134	50	143	41

Significantly higher/lower by group

Scale: 1 = completely disagree, 5 = completely agree

'New dwelling/Ancillary structure' Applicants had significantly higher agreement levels for 'the Assessment Officer had a good knowledge of Council policies and procedures'

Time to Process Application Unreasonable

Reason	N = 54
Took longer than expected	44
Unnecessary/preventable delays/incorrect information creating delays	8
Had to chase up Council/slow responses	4
A lot of back and forth/hard to get in contact	3
Staff were rude/not helpful	2
Poor communication between departments/papers were lost	1

The main reason given by Applicants who did _not_ agree with the statement 'the time taken to process my application was reasonable' was that they felt the application 'took longer than expected' – this could be an issue of better managing expectations and (as per previous slides), better/more regular updates

Identification of Issues with Application

No
82%

Yes
18%
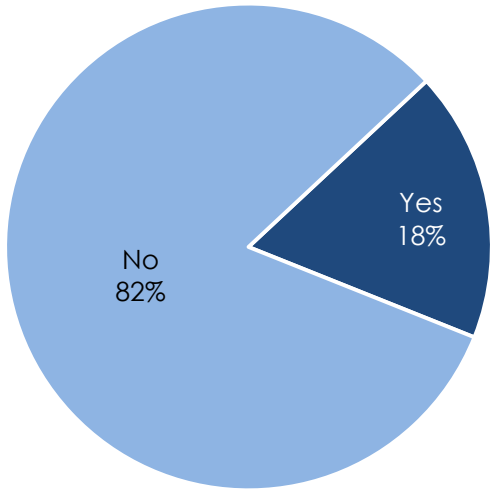
Base: N = 301

	Micromex benchmark	Overall
Yes	22%	18%

Reason	N = 53
Additional action/changes to plans required/regulations not being met	12
Extra reports/information required	7
Bushfire risks/codes/need for plans	6
Information/application type was incorrect	5
Positioning of pool/building was incorrect	4
Allowance/agreement on plans and information kept changing	4
Extra/associated costs	3
Fencing requirements	2
Different certificate needed	2

Please see Appendix for responses fewer than 2

18% of Applicants experienced issues that they felt could have been addressed earlier, which is slightly below our norm of 22% (which is a good result because the aim on this measure is to be <u>below</u> the norm).

The main issues identified were 'additional action/changes to plans required/regulations not being met'

Overall Service from Council Assessment Officers

Q10a. Overall how would you rate the service given to you by Council Assessment Officers during the processing of this application?

Rating	Percentage
Very good (5)	51%
Good (4)	36%
Neither good nor poor (3)	8%
Poor (2)	4%
Very poor (1)	1%
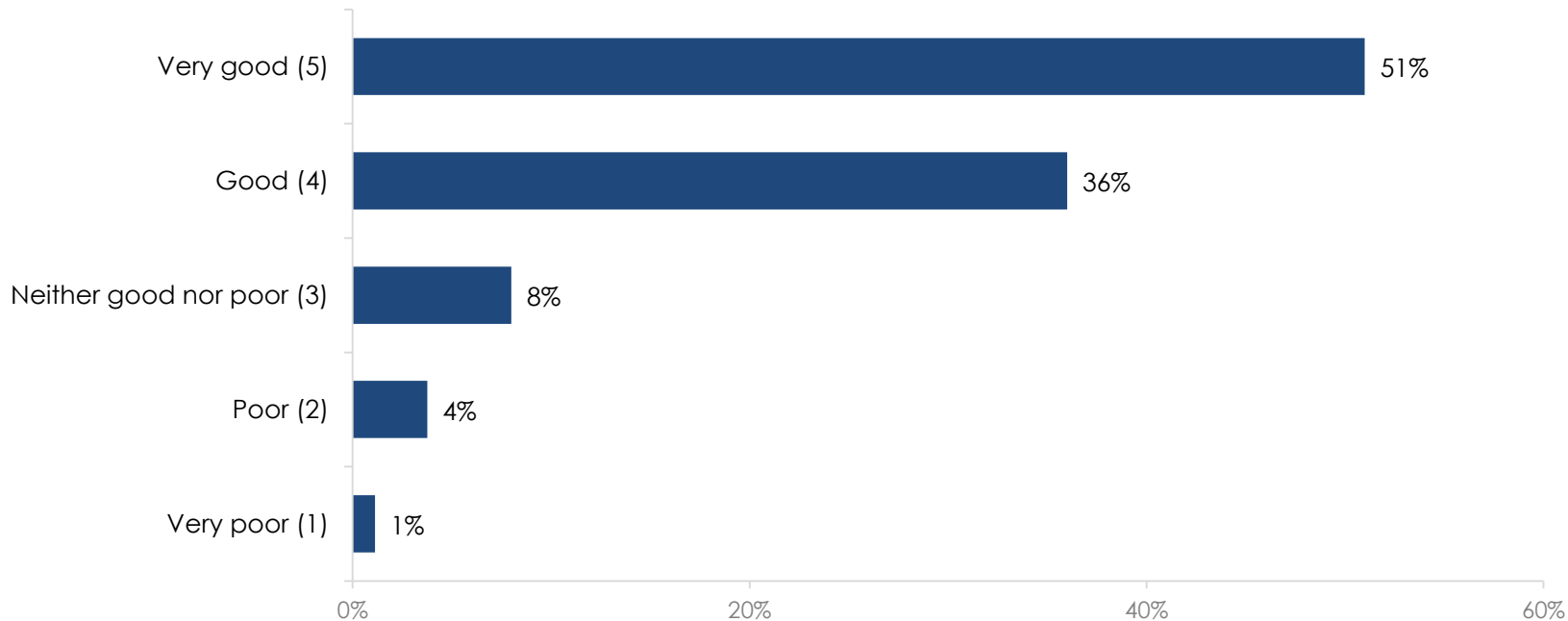
	Micromex Benchmark	Overall	Applicant Type		Development Type		Application took:	
			Owner/ Owner-builder	Other applicants	Dwelling/Ancillary	Other applications	1-20 days	>20days
Mean	4.03▼	4.31▲	4.29	4.36	4.34	4.20	4.46▲	4.11
Base		266	194	72	210	56	154	112

Scale: 1 = very poor, 5 = very good

87% of Applicants rated the service given to them during the processing stage as 'good' to 'very good', with the resulting mean score of 4.31 out of 5 being significantly higher than our norm. Negative ratings ('poor', 'very poor') were low. Those whose applications were processed in up to 20 days were more favourable – but even those whose applications took more than 20 days were still positive, with a mean score <u>above</u> our overall norm

Reason for Service Rating of Council Assessment Officers

Q10a. Overall how would you rate the service given to you by Council Assessment Officers during the processing of this application?
Q10b. Why do you say that?

Very good/Good– 87%	N = 266
Helpful/informative/knowledgeable staff/good advice given	33%
Available/responsive/prompt/efficient service	30%
Fast/easy/smooth process/good communication	28%
Polite/professional/courteous/friendly staff	20%
No problems/happy with the outcome	9%
Answered my questions when needed	7%
Received the information I needed to progress my application/minimal contact	2%
Neither good nor poor– 8%	
Poor communication/correspondence/information given/lack of knowledge	5%
Process took too long/costly	3%
Process didn't go to plan	2%
Poor/Very poor– 5%	
Unhelpful/obstructive/rude staff	3%

Please see the Appendix for results fewer than 2%

Number of Staff and Consistency of Information

Q11a. *Throughout the entire process of your most recent application with Ballina Shire Council, approximately how many different Council staff members in total would you have dealt with who provided any sort of information or advice – either in person, over the phone or in writing?*

Q11b. *Was the information and advice you received from the different Council staff…*

Asked only of those that selected more than one staff member

Category	Percentage
0 - Did not deal with any Council staff	4%
1	14%
2 - 3	52%
4 - 6	28%
7+	2%

Consistency	Percentage
Always consistent	39%
Mostly consistent	51%
Mostly inconsistent	10%
Always inconsistent	<1%
Can't say	<1%
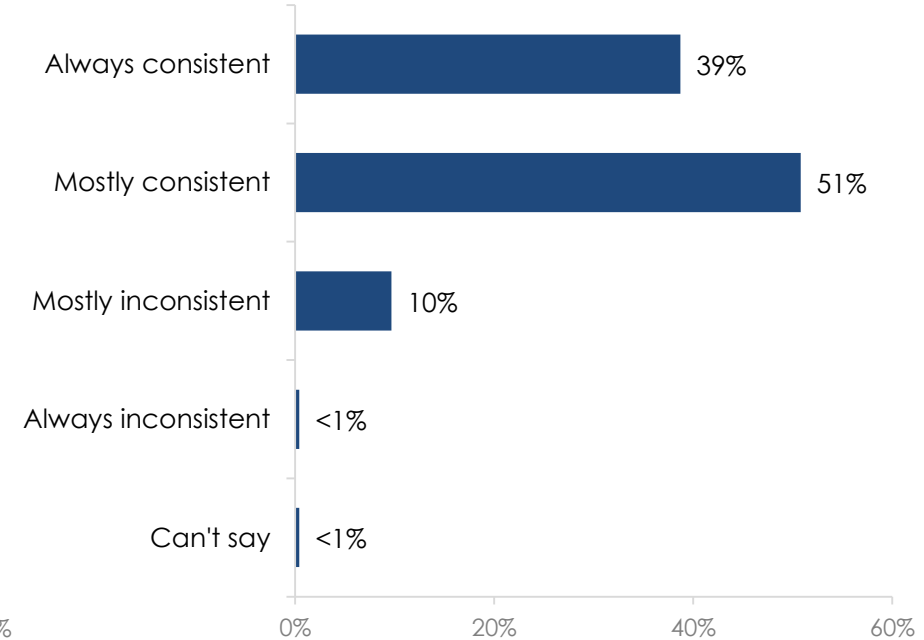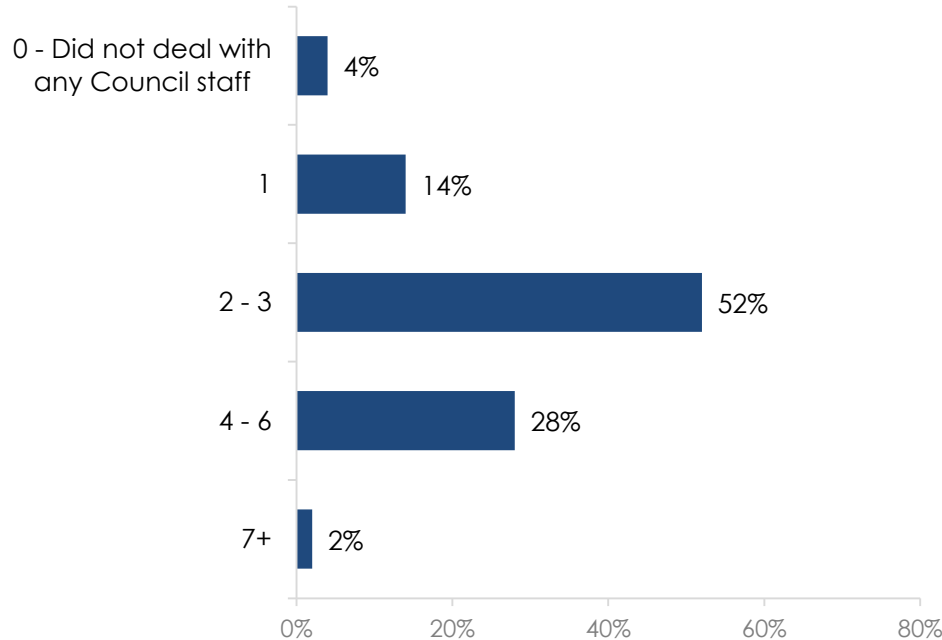
Base: N = 301

Base: N = 248

82% of Applicants dealt with more than one staff member during the process. Encouragingly 90% of those who dealt with multiple staff stated the information they received from the different staff was mostly/always consistent

33

Timeframe for Processing Application

Q12a. *Were you told the estimated timeframe for processing your application?*
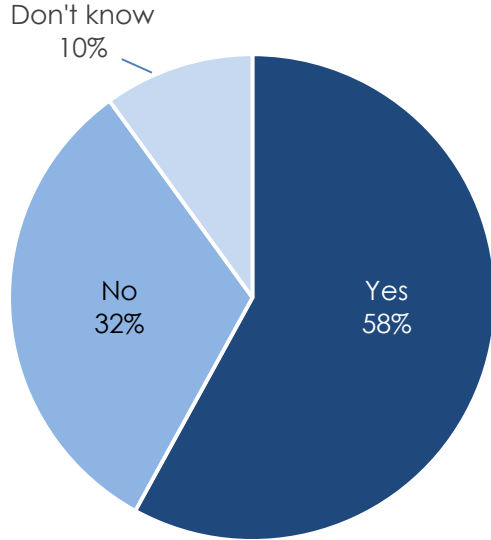
Q12b. *Did it take longer than the estimated time you were given?*

Don't know
10%

No
32%

Yes
58%

Base: N = 301

Don't know
5%

Yes
20%

No
75%
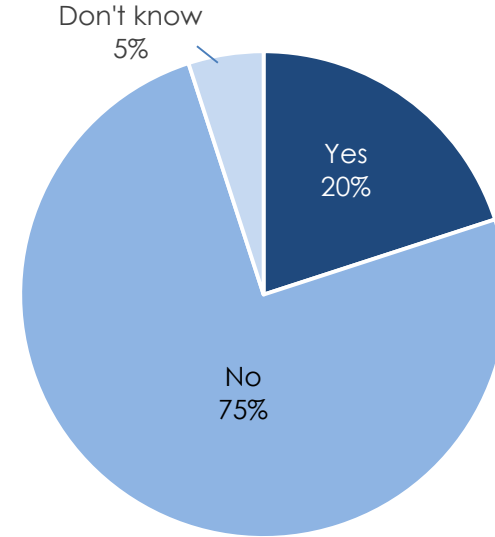
Base: N = 175

	Micromex benchmark	Overall
Yes	61%	58%

	Micromex benchmark	Overall
Yes	33%	20%

58% of Applicants were given an estimated timeframe, which is very similar to our norm.

Importantly, only 20% of those who were given an estimated timeframe said it took longer – this is below our norm of 33%, which is a good result

Detailed Findings:

4. Comparison to Other Applications and Councils

Past Applications with Ballina Shire Council

Q14a. _Apart from_ your most recent development application with Ballina Shire Council, how many _other_ development applications, if any, have you personally been involved with in the past, with Ballina Shire Council?

Q14b. _(If ≥1 in Q14a) Would you say that the overall service you received from Ballina Shire Council on your latest development application was:_
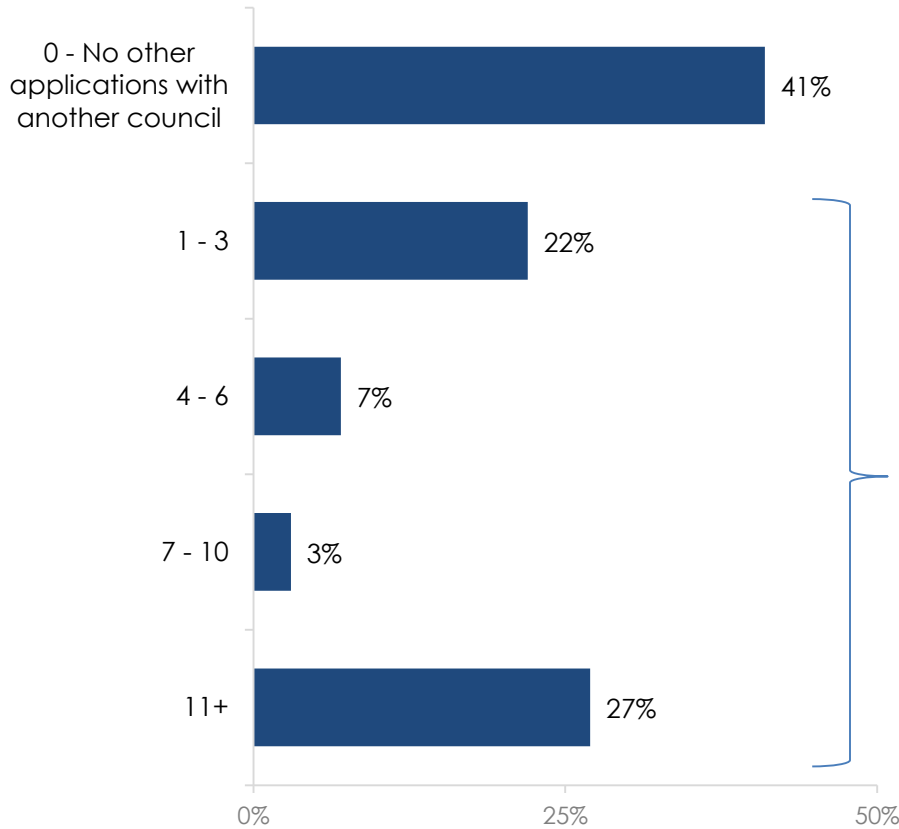

Bar chart (Q14a):
- 0 - No other applications with Ballina Shire Council: 43%
- 1 - 3: 30%
- 4 - 6: 7%
- 7 - 10: 3%
- 11+: 17%

Base: N = 301

Pie chart (Q14b):
- Worse than previous experiences with Ballina Shire Council 16%
- Can't say 1%
- Better than previous experiences with Ballina Shire Council 27%
- About the same 56%

Base: N = 172
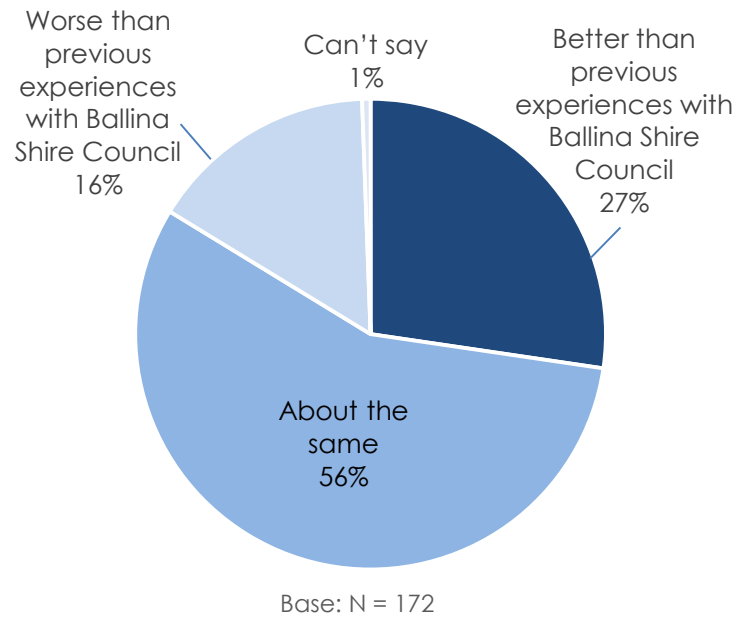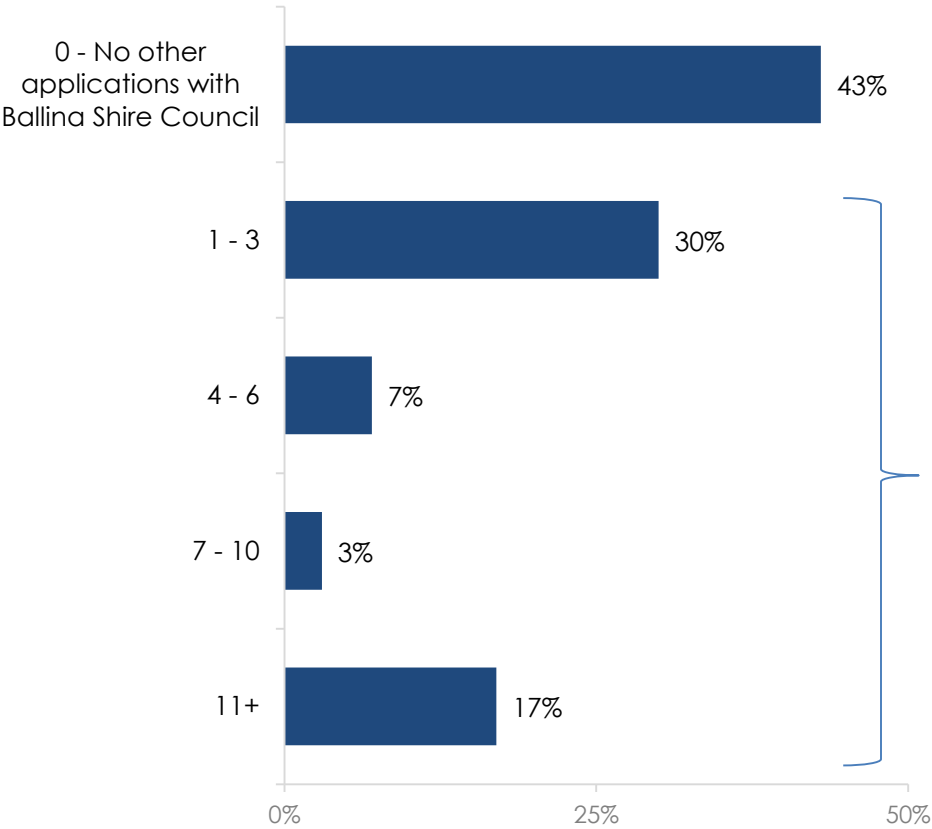
More than half (57%) the Applicants have previously submitted other development applications with Ballina Shire Council.
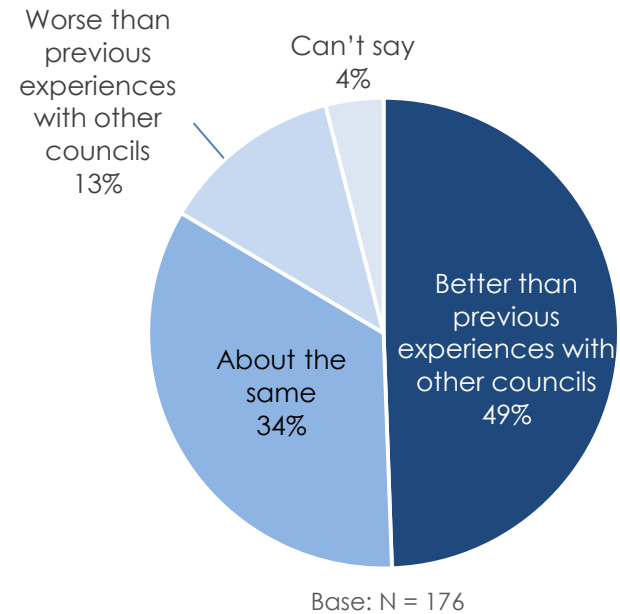
Of those that have previously submitted, the majority stated the recent service was about the same as their previous experience. Encouragingly, there were more that said it was better (27%) than said it was worse (16%)

Past Applications with Other Councils

0 - No other applications with another council — 41%

1 - 3 — 22%

4 - 6 — 7%

7 - 10 — 3%

11+ — 27%

0%   25%   50%

Base: N = 298

Worse than previous experiences with other councils 13%

Can't say 4%

Better than previous experiences with other councils 49%

About the same 34%

Base: N = 176

59% of Applicants indicated they have submitted other applications with another council.

Encouragingly, half (49%) of the Applicants that have submitted development applications with other councils stated the service received from Ballina Shire Council was better than the other Council – and only 13% said it was worse. Although not directly comparable, this is consistent with the generally above-norm scores throughout this Report
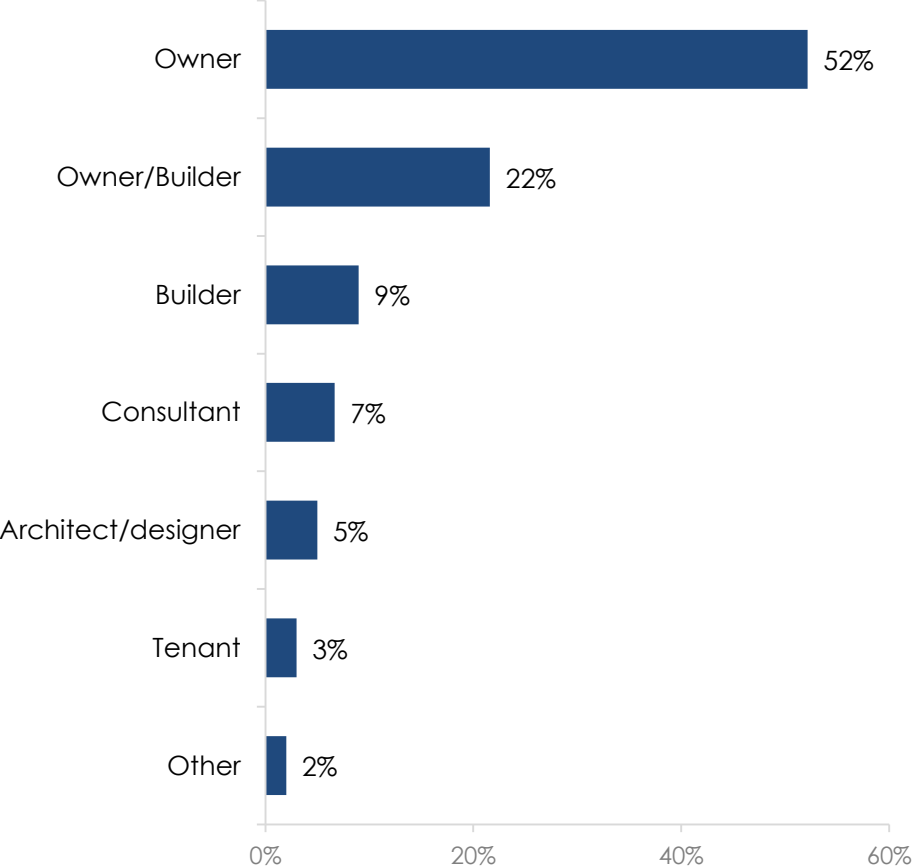
Detailed Findings:
5. Application Details

Type of Applicant

Q13a.   In terms of your most recent application, would you describe yourself as…
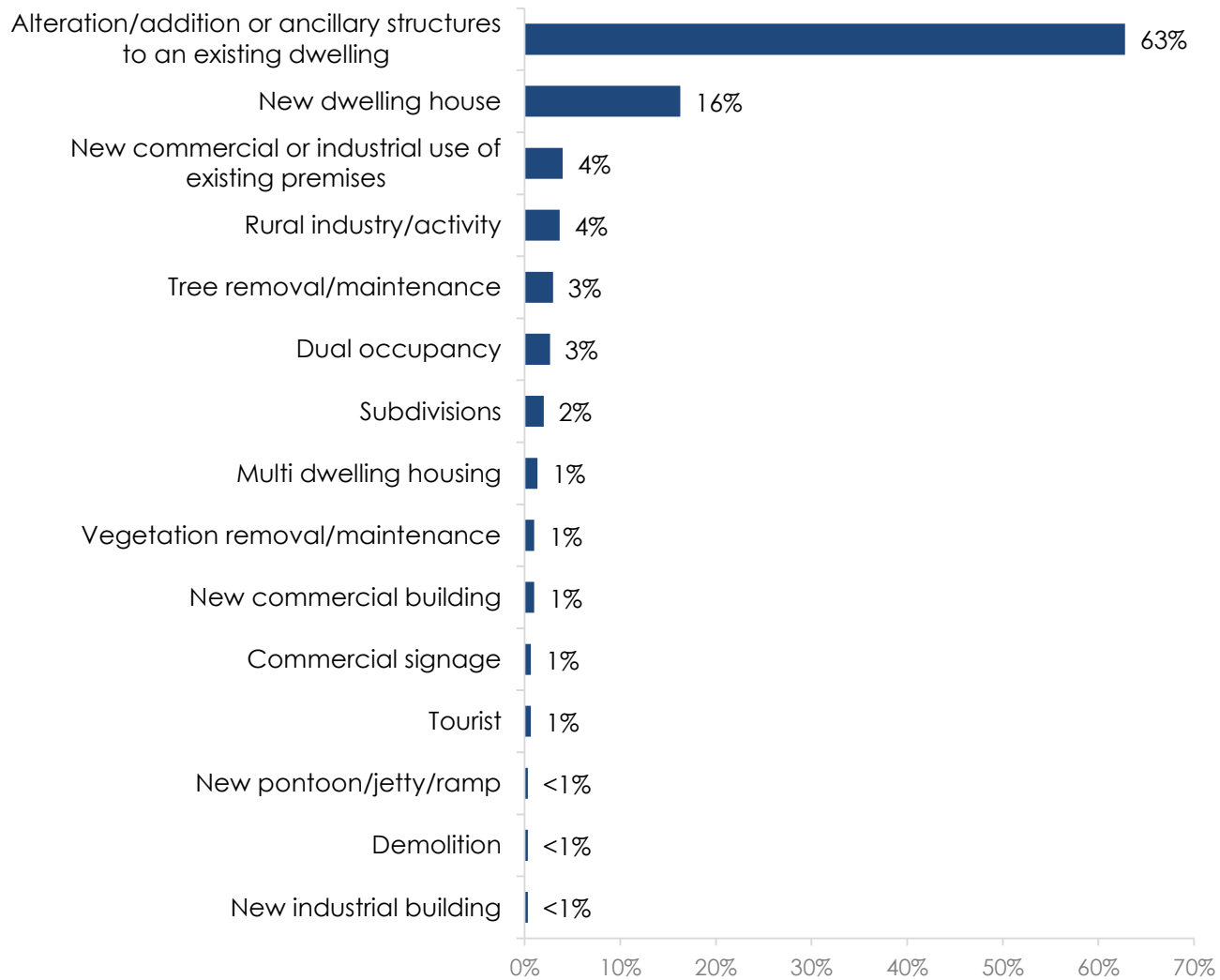
Type	Percentage
Owner	52%
Owner/Builder	22%
Builder	9%
Consultant	7%
Architect/designer	5%
Tenant	3%
Other	2%

Other specified	Count
Owner/Architect	3
Accountant	1
Employee	1
Private School Administrator	1
Surveyor	1
President of the Tennis Club	1

Base: N = 301

Type of Application

Type of Application	Percentage
Alteration/addition or ancillary structures to an existing dwelling	63%
New dwelling house	16%
New commercial or industrial use of existing premises	4%
Rural industry/activity	4%
Tree removal/maintenance	3%
Dual occupancy	3%
Subdivisions	2%
Multi dwelling housing	1%
Vegetation removal/maintenance	1%
New commercial building	1%
Commercial signage	1%
Tourist	1%
New pontoon/jetty/ramp	<1%
Demolition	<1%
New industrial building	<1%

Base: N = 301

Appendix

Reason for Level of Satisfaction During the Process

Q1a. *Thinking of your most recent development application with Ballina Shire Council, overall how satisfied were you with the service you received from Council staff who assisted you during the process?*

Q1b. *Why did you give that rating?*

Very satisfied/Satisfied – 84%	Count
It was a bit expensive	1
Somewhat satisfied – 10%	
Bad hand-off from one person to another	1
Hard to contact town planners when I needed to	1
I felt they had made the decision before the process began	1
Issue with sewer line on Council line that we had to survey, which should have been supplied by Council	1
Little support from Council on regulations for playgrounds	1
Papers were lost from the front desk after lodgement	1
Process was handled well, but I did not like the outcome	1
The process was okay	1
There was an issue that Council did not want to assist me with	1
Went through a private certifier, as the service was better with them	1
Not at all/Not very satisfied – 6%	
Council assumed that I was a developer and not a private person putting in an application for myself	1
Council's engineering documents are not used as a reference by Council's engineers, which created issues	1
Documents do not provide clear information	1
I had to go between Council departments to deliver documents so it could move forward	1
I received some conflicting information from Council	1

Policies, Fact Sheets and Controls Viewed

Q3. *Which policies, guidelines or controls did you view or obtain copies of?*

Other specified	Count	Other specified	Count
Fencing requirements/documents	6	Habitat clearing	1
State Environmental Planning Policy	6	Plumbing	1
Bushfire plans	5	Information relating to what was needed to build on and into the water	1
Swimming pool guidelines/compliance	4	Legislation requirements	1
Secondary dwellings guidelines	3	Local Government Act Section 68	1
Site waste management plan/removal	3	Management Plan for Hampton Park 2005	1
Building Code of Australia	2	Mosquito	1
Erosion guidelines/Sediment Control Plan	2	Regulations surrounding spray painting and booths	1
Height restrictions	2	Road zoning	1
Tree removal	2	Information on rural environment	1
AHD flood levels	1	Soil contamination	1
Asbestos removal	1	Use of Council Land Policy	1
Australian standards on door width	1	Can't remember	8
Distance from road frontage	1		

Note: helpfulness has not been calculated due to low base sizes

Reason for Rating of Service

Very good/Good– 90%	Count
A student tried to help us but did not have the knowledge to help us fully	1
DA staff were good once you could get past the front counter staff to get hold of them	1
I knew the people I was dealing with	1
They didn't give me any alternatives to overcome problems	1
Neither good nor poor– 6%	
Council seem to be able to pick and choose what their guidelines are	1
Council seemed more concerned about political correctness rather than assisting the client	1
Easy process	1
Seemed like all they did was just approve applications and move onto the next thing	1
They provided the information they thought I would require	1
Poor/Very poor– 4%	
I didn't feel confident that what I was being told by Council was right	1
I was not able to understand what they were sending me online	1
Slow process/response time	1

Identification of Issues with Application

Q9a.   Did the Council Assessment Officer(s) you dealt with identify any issues as your application progressed that you felt should have been identified and notified to you earlier in the application process?

Q9b.   What were they?

Reason	Count
AHD levels	1
Block of land was too small	1
Change of use for a double garage	1
Concerns in relation to environmental health	1
Concerns in relation to trade waste	1
Council were not proactive	1
Enviro cycle system	1
Handicapped/disabled provisions	1
Need for a retention tank	1
Property as a new development and not an already existing establishment	1
Should have been informed earlier of a known easement	1
Use of the building	1
Windows that need to have security mesh installed	1
Don't recall specific details	5

Reason for Service Rating of Council Assessment Officers

Very good/Good– 87%	N = 264
Had to chase up information/information was lost	1%
Process could have been quicker online/online lodgement	1%
Some staff need more experience	<1%
Annoyed the online tracker published our personal information	<1%
Was good to deal with Council inspectors and certifiers rather than clerical people	<1%
Neither good nor poor– 8%	
Process didn't go to plan	2%
Some staff were not polite/helpful	1%
Council officers just do their jobs but policy means all responsibility is put onto the owners	<1%
Process would have been quicker if online lodgement was permissible	<1%
Service could be better in all respects	<1%
Poor/Very poor– 5%	
Slow process	1%
Council put my DA on hold/would not approve it	1%
No communication/onsite inspections	1%
Process was confusing/was told different things by different people	1%
Application was handled badly	1%
Council are biased	<1%
I was threatened with being shut down	<1%
The building surveyor was excellent	<1%

Questionnaire

Introduction

Good morning/afternoon/evening, my name is ………….. and I'm calling on behalf of Ballina Shire Council from a company called Micromex. May I speak to [name from database] please?

[If there is no name given on the database] May I please speak with the person who would have dealt with Council in regard to a recent development application?

Ballina Shire Council is conducting a survey to ascertain your views in relation to the application and assessment process and experience. We are particularly interested in your experience in dealing with Council staff, and your overall experience with Council.

Your response will remain confidential and no individual responses will be reported. The survey should take about 10 minutes to complete. Some questions will ask you to provide a rating and others may ask for your opinion.

PREPARING AND LODGING YOUR APPLICATION

Q1a. **Thinking of your most recent development application with Ballina Shire Council, overall how satisfied were you with the service you received from Council staff who assisted you during the process?** *Prompt*

- ○ Very satisfied
- ○ Satisfied
- ○ Somewhat satisfied
- ○ Not very satisfied
- ○ Not at all satisfied

Q1b. **Why did you give that rating?**

…………………………………………………………………………….

Q1c. **How, if at all, did you seek information prior to lodging your most recent application?** *Prompt*

- ○ Via a formal pre-lodgement meeting
- ○ Spoke with Council staff in person at the Council Chambers
- ○ Spoke with Council staff over the phone
- ○ Obtained information by email or written correspondence
- ○ Obtained information over the internet
- ○ Did not seek prior advice

Q2. **Did you obtain or view copies of relevant policies, fact sheets, and development controls?**

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

If Yes on Q2, Continue
If 'No' on Q2 and Code 6 on Q1c, skip to Q7a.
If 'No' on Q2 but Codes 1-5 on Q1c, skip to Q5.

Q3. **Which policies, guidelines or controls did you view or obtain copies of?**

- ○ Ballina Local Environmental Plan 1987 (LEP 1987)
- ○ Ballina Local Environmental Plan 2012 (LEP 2012)
- ○ Ballina Local Environmental Plan – unsure of date
- ○ Development Control Plan (DCP)
- ○ Complying Development Explanatory Notes
- ○ Complying Development – NSW Government Planning Fact Sheet
- ○ Pre-DA Lodgement Meeting Fact Sheet
- ○ Electronic Housing Code (EHC)
- ○ Other (please specify)………………………………….

Q4. **How helpful were the policies, guidelines and controls? Please rate (each one) on a scale of 1-5, where 1 is not at all helpful and 5 is very helpful.** *Prompt*
[Pipe in up to three responses from Q3]

	Not at all helpful			Very helpful		Do not
	1	2	3	4	5	prompt - DK
XXXXX	○	○	○	○	○	○
XXXXX	○	○	○	○	○	○
XXXXX	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q5. **The following are a number of statements about the information you received before lodging your most recent application with Council. Please rate each statement on a scale of 1-5, where 1 is completely disagree and 5 is completely agree.** *Prompt*

	Completely disagree			Completely agree		Do not
	1	2	3	4	5	prompt - DK
The information I received was comprehensive	○	○	○	○	○	○
The information I received was accurate	○	○	○	○	○	○
The information helped me to put my application together	○	○	○	○	○	○
The Council Officers were polite and courteous	○	○	○	○	○	○
The Council Officers provided good technical advice	○	○	○	○	○	○
The instructions in the policies, guidelines and controls were easy to understand	○	○	○	○	○	○
The technical information in the policies, guidelines and controls was easy to understand	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q6a. **Overall, how would you rate the service given to you by Council's staff prior to lodging your application?** *Prompt*

- ○ Very good
- ○ Good
- ○ Neither good nor poor
- ○ Poor
- ○ Very poor
- ○ N/A (Do not prompt)

Q6b. **Why do you say that?**

……………………………………………………………………………………………….

Q7. After you had lodged your application, did you track your application <u>online</u> using Council's DA's online? *Prompt*

- ○ Yes
- ○ No – chose not to
- ○ No – was not aware I could

Q8a. The following are a number of statements about the information you received <u>after</u> lodging your application with Council. Please rate each statement on a scale of 1-5, where 1 is completely disagree and 5 is completely agree. *Prompt*

	Completely disagree			Completely agree		Do not prompt
	1	2	3	4	5	DK
The Assessment Officer was professional in his/her approach	○	○	○	○	○	○
The Assessment Officer had a good knowledge of Council policies and procedures	○	○	○	○	○	○
The Assessment Officer provided the necessary technical advice	○	○	○	○	○	○
The Assessment Officer was courteous and polite	○	○	○	○	○	○
The Assessment Officer kept me informed of the progress of the application	○	○	○	○	○	○
The Assessment Officer returned my phone calls/emails in a timely manner	○	○	○	○	○	○
The information I received on the status of my application was clear	○	○	○	○	○	○
The time taken to process my application was reasonable	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q8b. (If rated1-3 on "The time taken to process my application was reasonable"), you did <u>not</u> agree that the time taken to process your application was reasonable, may I ask why?

....

Q9a. Did the Council Assessment Officer(s) you dealt with identify any issues as your application progressed that you felt should have been identified and notified to you earlier in the application process?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No   **(Go to Q10a)**

Q9b. What were they? *Allow for up to five separate open-ended responses*

1 ....
2 ....
3 ....
4 ....
5 ....

Q10a. Overall how would you rate the service given to you by Council Assessment Officers during the processing of this application? *Prompt*

- ○ Very good
- ○ Good
- ○ Neither good nor poor
- ○ Poor
- ○ Very poor
- ○ N/A (Do not prompt)

Q10b. Why do you say that?

....

11a. Throughout the entire process of your most recent application with Ballina Shire Council, approximately how many different Council staff members in total would you have dealt with <u>who provided any sort of information or advice</u> – either in person, over the phone, or in writing? *Prompt*

- ○ 0 – Did not deal with any Council staff   **(Go to Q12a)**
- ○ 1   **(Go to Q12a)**
- ○ 2
- ○ 3
- ○ 4
- ○ 5
- ○ 6
- ○ 7
- ○ 8
- ○ 9
- ○ 10
- ○ 11+

Q11b. Was the information and advice you received from the different Council staff… (Prompt)

- ○ Always consistent
- ○ Mostly consistent
- ○ Mostly inconsistent
- ○ Always inconsistent
- ○ Can't say (Do not prompt)

Q12a. Were you told the estimated timeframe for processing your application?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No   **(Go to Q13a)**
- ○ Don't know   **(Go to Q13a)**

Q12b. Did it take longer than the estimated time you were given?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Don't know

Q13a. In terms of your most recent application, would you describe yourself as... *Prompt*

- O   Owner
- O   Builder
- O   Owner/Builder
- O   Architect/designer
- O   Consultant
- O   Tenant
- O   Other

Q13b. And was your most recent application for... *Prompt*

- O   New dwelling house
- O   Alteration/addition or ancillary structures to an existing dwelling
- O   Dual occupancy
- O   Multi-dwelling housing
- O   New commercial building
- O   Tourist
- O   Subdivisions
- O   New industrial building
- O   New commercial or industrial use of existing premises
- O   Rural industry/activity

Q14a. <u>Apart from</u> your most recent development application with Ballina Shire Council, how many <u>other</u> development applications, if any, have you personally been involved with in the past, with **Ballina Shire Council:**

- O   0 – No other applications with Ballina Shire Council   **(Go to Q15a)**
- O   1
- O   2
- O   3
- O   4
- O   5
- O   6
- O   7
- O   8
- O   9
- O   10
- O   11+

Q14b. Would you say the overall service you received from Ballina Shire Council on your latest development application was: *Prompt*

- O   Better than previous experiences with Ballina Shire Council
- O   About the same
- O   Worse than previous experiences with Ballina Shire Council
- O   Can't say (Do not prompt)

Q15a. <u>Apart from</u> your most recent development application with Ballina Shire Council, how many <u>other</u> development applications, if any, have you personally been involved with in the past, with <u>any other</u> councils:

- O   0 – No other applications with another council   **(Go to Q16)**
- O   1
- O   2
- O   3
- O   4
- O   5
- O   6
- O   7
- O   8
- O   9
- O   10
- O   11+

Q15b. Would you say the overall service you received from Ballina Shire Council on your latest development application was: *Prompt*

- O   Better than previous experiences with <u>other</u> councils
- O   About the same
- O   Worse than previous experiences with <u>other</u> councils
- O   Can't say (Do not prompt)

Q16. Which of these age groups do you fit into?

- O   Under 18 (Do not prompt)
- O   18 – 34
- O   35 – 49
- O   50 – 64
- O   65+

Q17. Gender (determine by voice):

- O   Male
- O   Female

That completes our interview. Thank you very much for your time.

micromex
research

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