

Executive Summary



City of Newcastle (CN) carries out a community survey on a quarterly basis to better understand key issues, community needs and priorities about the services and facilities provided by the City.

The Winter 2020 survey focused on the City's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The online survey was open from 1 June to 21 June 2020. A total of 401 people took part in the survey.

Overall satisfaction with CN's response to COVID-19

74% of survey respondents said CN's response met or exceeded their expectations.

Community opinion on CN's performance relating to key objectives of the response was positive with:



64%

satisfied with CN providing timely information.



67%

satisfied with CN applying State and Federal Government advice at the local level.



67%

satisfied with CN adjusting operations to protect the health of the public and staff.

CN's role in economic recovery



88%

The majority of people (88%) supported CN having a role in the City's economic recovery.



58%

Most (58%) were supportive of CN creating stimulus work, in response to the economic impact of the pandemic.

CN support initiatives



70%

agreed the Community and Economic Resilience Package would help our City get through this period.

About one-in-three people (35%) were aware that CN had developed support initiatives to help locals through the effects of COVID-19.



When prompted with a list of support initiatives, awareness was highest for:



53%

Allowing a hold on rate payments, and not charging interest (53% aware of this)

37%



Grants for community sector groups



50%

Expanded online library services

33%



Relaxing certain restrictions on small businesses



50%

Reduced rents for businesses in City owned buildings

Changes to operation of CN facilities and services

High levels of support for CN's decisions to:

93% Bring forward some road and footpath work

90% Leave Summerhill Waste Management Facility open

82% Reopen beaches and ocean baths when restrictions were lifted on 15 May

75% Temporarily close playgrounds and skateparks until restrictions lifted on 15 May

Decisions that received less support in comparison included:

57% 

Temporarily closing beaches and ocean baths

53% 

Temporarily closing Blackbutt Reserve

Communication

Most people (65%) were satisfied with how CN communicated information during the pandemic.

Information put out by CN was:

 **75%** Consistent with information from other sources (75% agreed)
72% Easy to understand **71%** Timely **64%** Relevant

Main ways people received information about the City's response to the pandemic:



1. Social media
2. TV news stories
3. CN emails and newsletters
4. Onsite signage

Impact of the pandemic on the community

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a mixed effect on the Newcastle community.

Just under half of people (44%) indicated the pandemic had a large or very large impact on their day-to-day lives, and 55% said it had little or a moderate impact.

The main impacts were:



Having children at home and/or home-schooling



Transitioning to working from home



Being unable to socialise and/or visit family and friends



Reduced incomes and/or working hours



Being unable to leave the house



Impacts on mental and physical health

Top three things people would like to carry into the future from their pandemic experience :



Flexibility to work from home



Improved hygiene practices



Social distancing