

# Why Local Government Matters

Mid North Coast Joint Organisation of Councils  
Results of a Phone Survey (DRAFT)

UTS



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# Research objectives

## **Provide baseline data to**

- Understand what matters about local government across the Mid-North Coast
- Understand strengths of each Council
- Understand what matters regionally, as potential basis for MNCJO work program

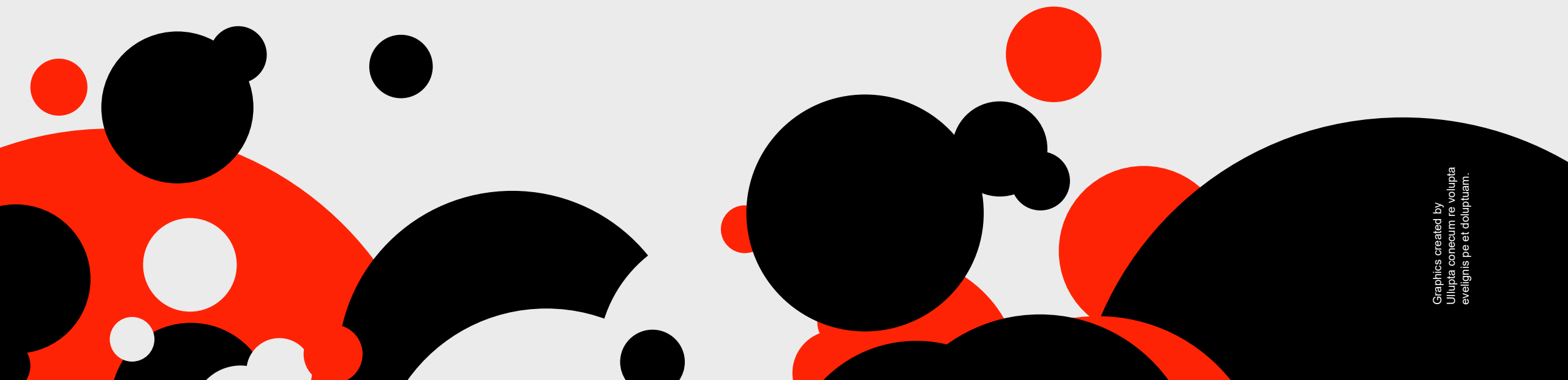
## **Questions on**

- **Local government** (knowledge, what's important about place, service delivery and governance preferences)

# Method



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# Methods

- Discussions with MNCJO Executive to scope
- Review MNCJO Draft Strategic Plan to align questions
- Review other surveys for comparison questions and data
- Phone survey, fieldwork late February 2019, stratified and proportionate to LGA population



N=793

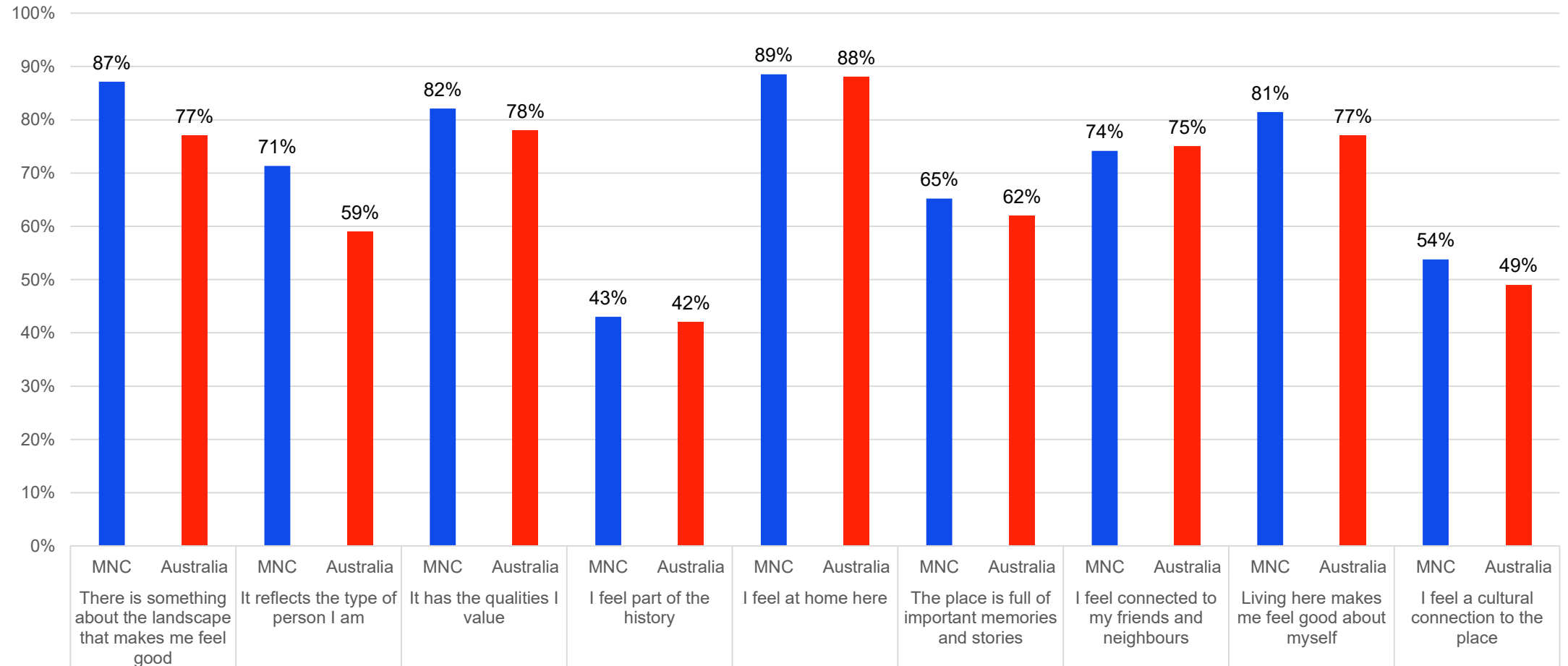
# Mid North Coast 'The Place'



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# Place Attachment – Top 2 Box

Residents of the Mid North Coast love the environment around them.  
It enables and reflects their lifestyle, which makes them feel good.



# Regional Comparison

Where people live on the Mid North Coast influences their attachment to place and lifestyle connection to the region. Residents of Kempsey and coastal centres have a stronger connection compared to people living in outlying areas.

	MNC	Difference to region				
		PMHC	Bellingen	Kempsey	Coastal Centres	Outlying Areas
There is something about the landscape that makes me feel good	87%	0%	-7%	11%	-2%	-6%
It reflects the type of person I am	71%	0%	-1%	2%	2%	-8%
It has the qualities I value	82%	-1%	1%	1%	0%	-4%
I feel part of the history	43%	1%	-1%	-2%	4%	-6%
I feel at home here	89%	0%	-5%	6%	-1%	-3%
The place is full of important memories and stories	65%	0%	-2%	3%	2%	-11%
I feel connected to my friends and neighbours	74%	-4%	3%	8%	-6%	-3%
Living here makes me feel good about myself	81%	0%	-4%	7%	-2%	-3%
I feel a cultural connection to the place	54%	-2%	2%	2%	1%	-12%

# What's important about the MNC? (1/2)



Overall, what is important to a Mid North Coast resident is similar to your average Australian. But what stands out is just *how much* these things matter.



Mid North Coast residents do not consider affordable housing as high a priority as other Australians

## These Really Matter to Mid North Coast Residents



Essential Services



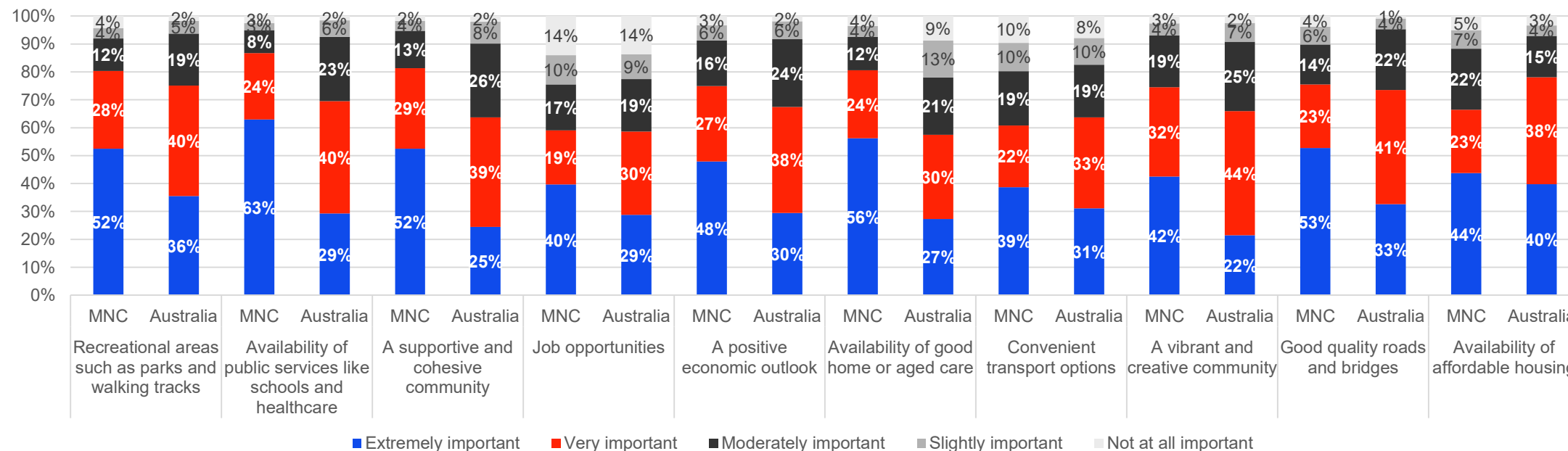
Social Cohesion



Creative Community



Good home and aged care





# What's important about the MNC? (2/2)

The Mid North Coast lifestyle is clean and green, away from the hustle and bustle, but connected to friends, family and the services they need locally. Residents see a more sustainable future for the region.



Locally grown food



Biodiversity



Local shops / services



Close to friends and family



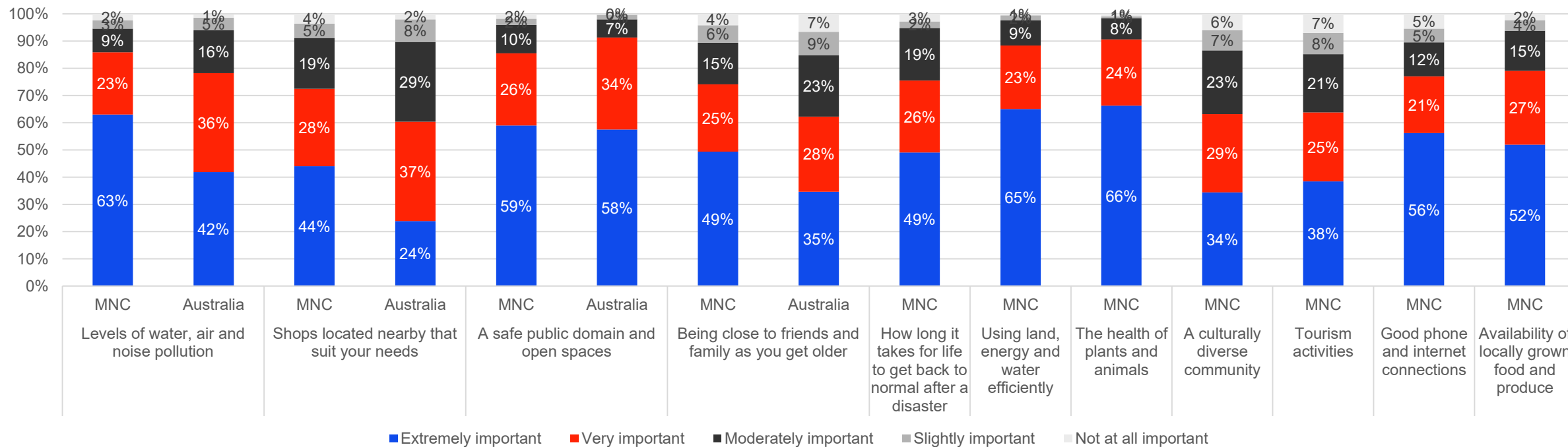
Land, water, energy efficiency



Pollution levels



Good phone and internet



# Regional Comparison

Residents in smaller communities and outlying areas are less likely to identify specific features as important place attributes. For them, it is about 'the feel' of the place.

	MNC	Difference to region				
		PMHC	Bellingen	Kempsey	Coastal Centres	Outlying Areas
Using land, energy and water efficiently	91%	-1%	-1%	-2%	2%	1%
The health of plants and animals	88%	2%	3%	-3%	0%	2%
Availability of public services like schools and healthcare	87%	3%	1%	-10%	9%	-7%
Tourism activities	86%	-21%	-3%	0%	6%	-19%
Availability of affordable housing	85%	-19%	-3%	4%	0%	-7%
A supportive and cohesive community	81%	1%	1%	-4%	4%	-7%
Availability of good home or aged care	81%	3%	-7%	3%	4%	-7%
Recreational areas such as parks and walking tracks	80%	0%	8%	-14%	10%	-16%
How long it takes to get back to normal after a disaster	79%	-5%	2%	3%	-3%	1%
Being close to friends and family as you get older	77%	-4%	7%	-8%	2%	0%
A vibrant and creative community	76%	-3%	12%	-11%	4%	-7%
Levels of water, air and noise pollution	76%	10%	7%	-10%	4%	0%
A positive economic outlook	75%	3%	-2%	-5%	6%	-3%
Good phone and internet connections	75%	5%	-2%	-4%	5%	-1%
Availability of locally grown food and produce	74%	3%	9%	-8%	1%	1%
Good quality roads and bridges	73%	5%	-7%	5%	-1%	3%
A culturally diverse community	66%	-6%	11%	-8%	3%	-9%
A safe public domain and open spaces	64%	23%	2%	-8%	7%	-8%
Shops located nearby that suit your needs	63%	7%	7%	-4%	5%	-21%
Convenient transport options	61%	4%	-7%	-2%	8%	-11%
Job opportunities	59%	2%	-1%	-4%	5%	-4%

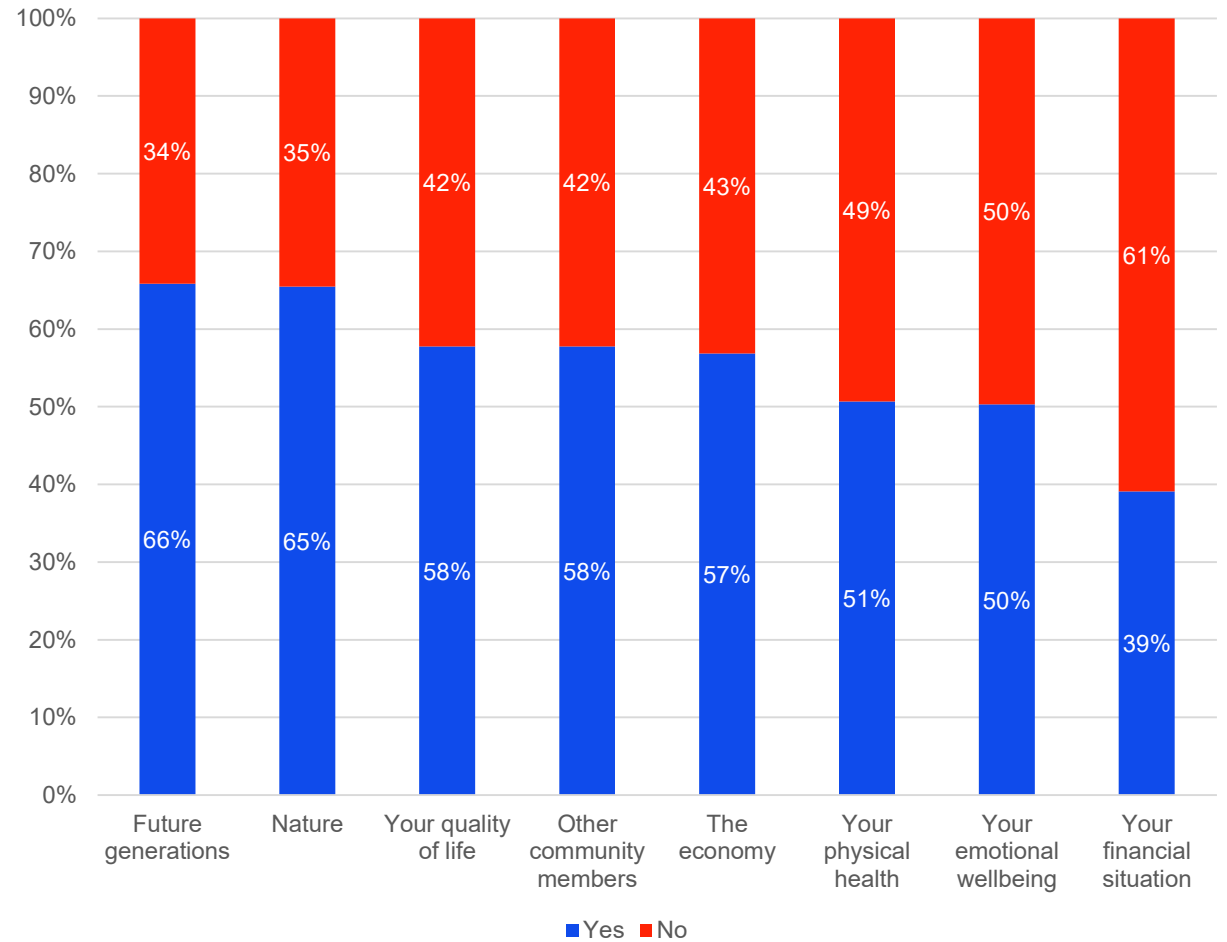
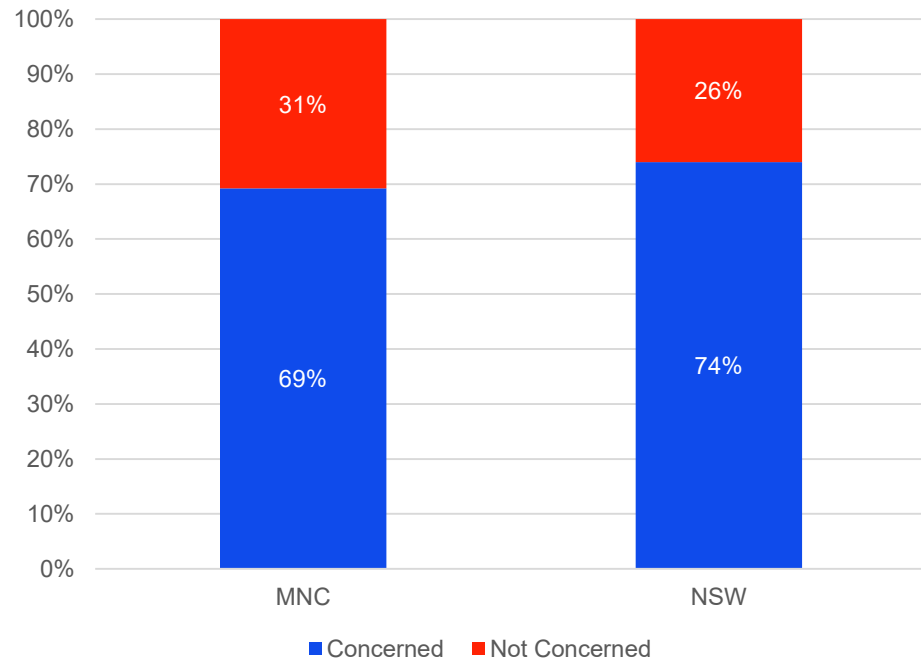
# The Environment



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# Concern for environmental problems

The impact on future generations, plants and animals, and their lifestyle motivates Mid North Coast residents' concern for the environment.



# Regional Comparison

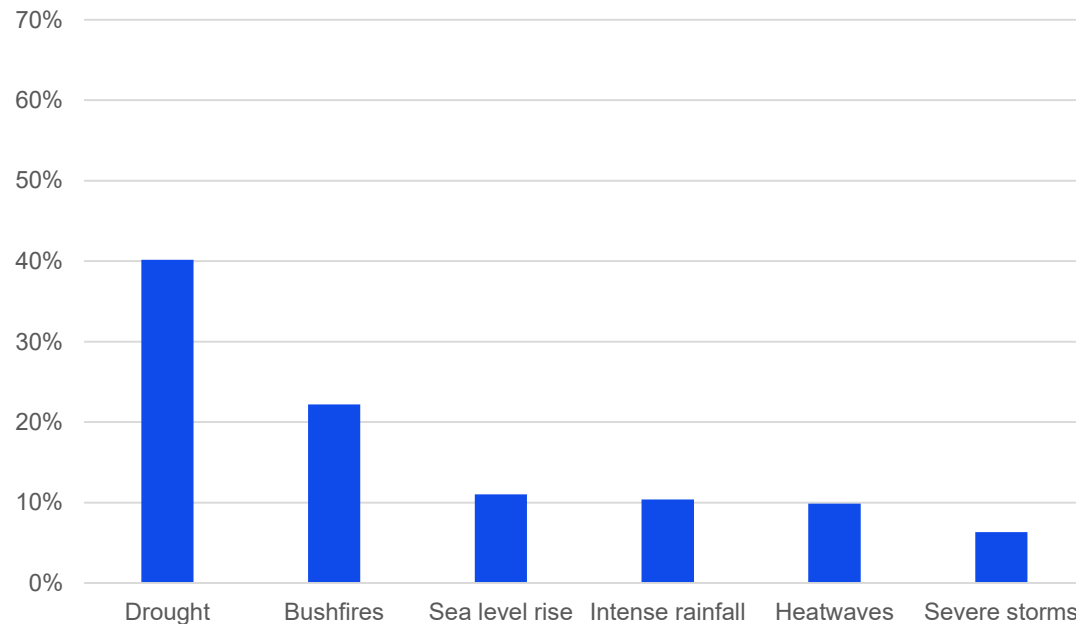
No major differences in how concerned residents in different places are, or what they are concerned about. Bellingen is clearly the LGA with the strongest environmental conscience whilst residents in outlying areas tend to be less environmentally conscious.

		Difference to Region				
		PMHC	Bellingen	Kempsey	Coastal Centres	Outlying Areas
Concern	MNC 69%	-1%	3%	-1%	1%	-2%
Your physical health	51%	-2%	4%	1%	0%	0%
Your emotional wellbeing	50%	-2%	6%	0%	0%	-1%
Your financial situation	39%	0%	0%	0%	0%	-1%
Your quality of life	58%	-1%	5%	-2%	1%	-3%
Future generations	66%	-1%	3%	-1%	1%	-3%
The economy	57%	0%	3%	-1%	2%	-4%
Nature	65%	-1%	4%	-1%	1%	-2%
Other community members	58%	-1%	5%	-2%	1%	-2%

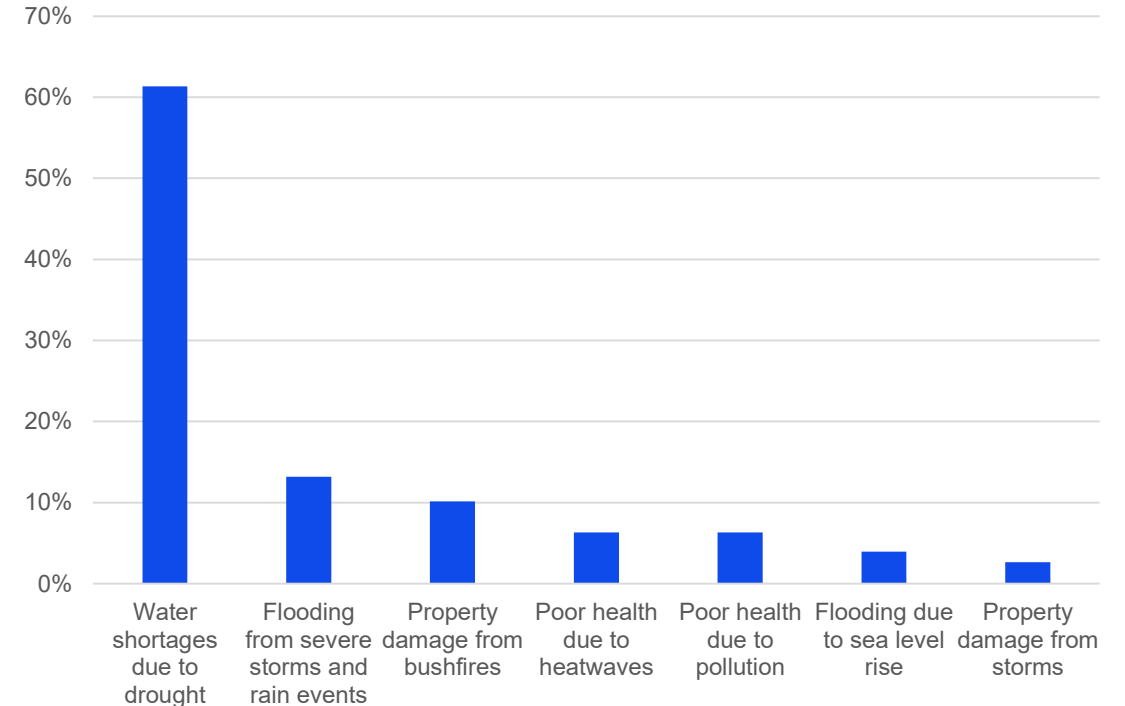
# Climate change impacts

Mid North Coast residents worry most about the impact of drought and bushfires - they worry about a drying continent more than the more intense wetter conditions of a changing climate. They think government has to take more concerted action on securing water, and responding to flooding should be 'business as usual'.

Impacts most concerned about



Requires greatest attention from government



# Regional comparison

Drought  
 Bushfires  
 Sea level rise  
 Intense rainfall  
 Heatwaves  
 Severe storms

MNC  
 40%  
 22%  
 11%  
 10%  
 10%  
 6%

Difference to Region				
PMHC	Bellingen	Kempsey	Coastal Centres	Outlying Areas
4%	-6%	3%	0%	2%
3%	-2%	-10%	-1%	3%
-3%	0%	4%	2%	-5%
-3%	3%	5%	0%	1%
1%	-1%	-2%	0%	-2%
-1%	7%	0%	0%	2%

Flooding due to sea level rise  
 Flooding from severe storms and rain events  
 Poor health due to heatwaves  
 Poor health due to pollution  
 Property damage from bushfires  
 Property damage from storms  
 Water shortages due to drought

MNC  
 3.81%  
 12.69%  
 6.09%  
 6.09%  
 9.77%  
 2.54%  
 59.01%

Difference to region				
PMHC	Bellingen	Kempsey	Coastal Centres	Outlying Areas
-1%	3%	-2%	-1%	2%
-3%	3%	5%	-5%	0%
0%	0%	0%	-1%	3%
0%	0%	-1%	1%	0%
0%	0%	-1%	0%	3%
-1%	3%	-4%	0%	3%
4%	-10%	3%	6%	-10%

# Disaster Planning and Recovery



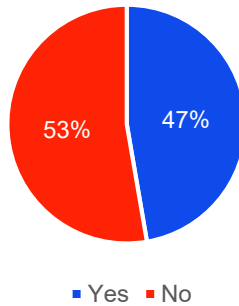
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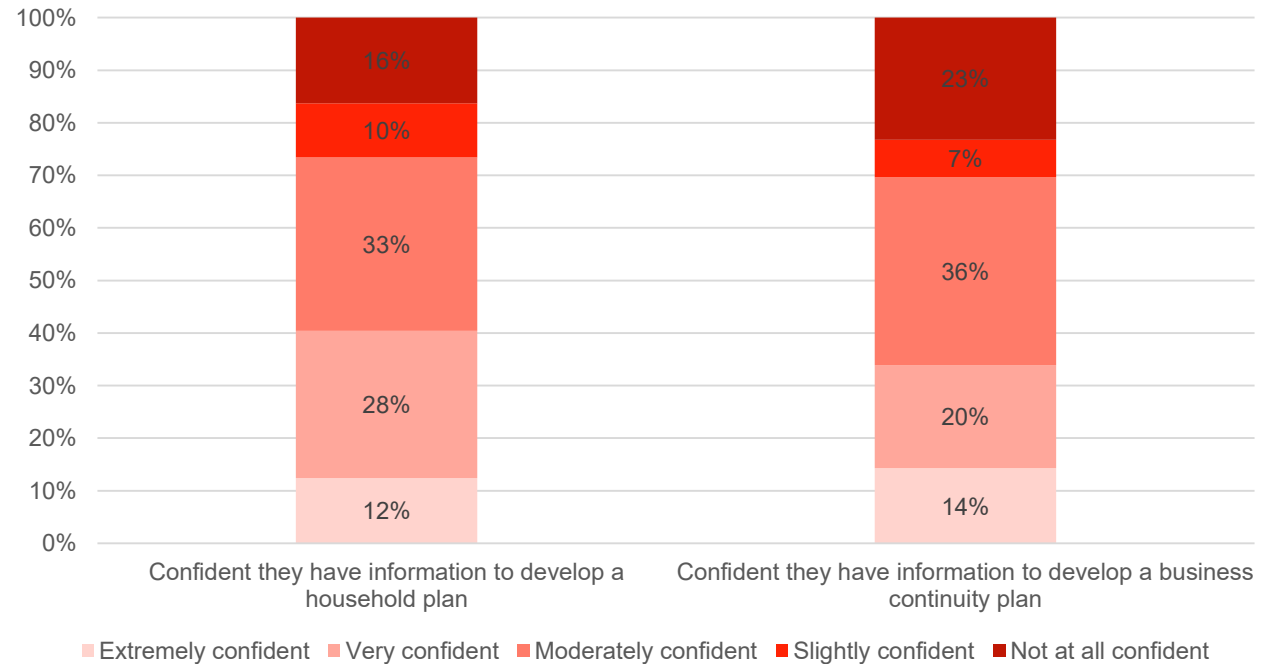
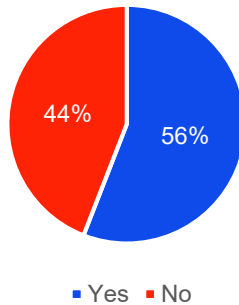
# Disaster planning

More businesses than households have a plan for what to do in the event of a natural disaster. More information on what to include in a plan would benefit up to two thirds of Mid North Coast residents and businesses.

Have a household plan for what to do in the lead up and after a natural disaster

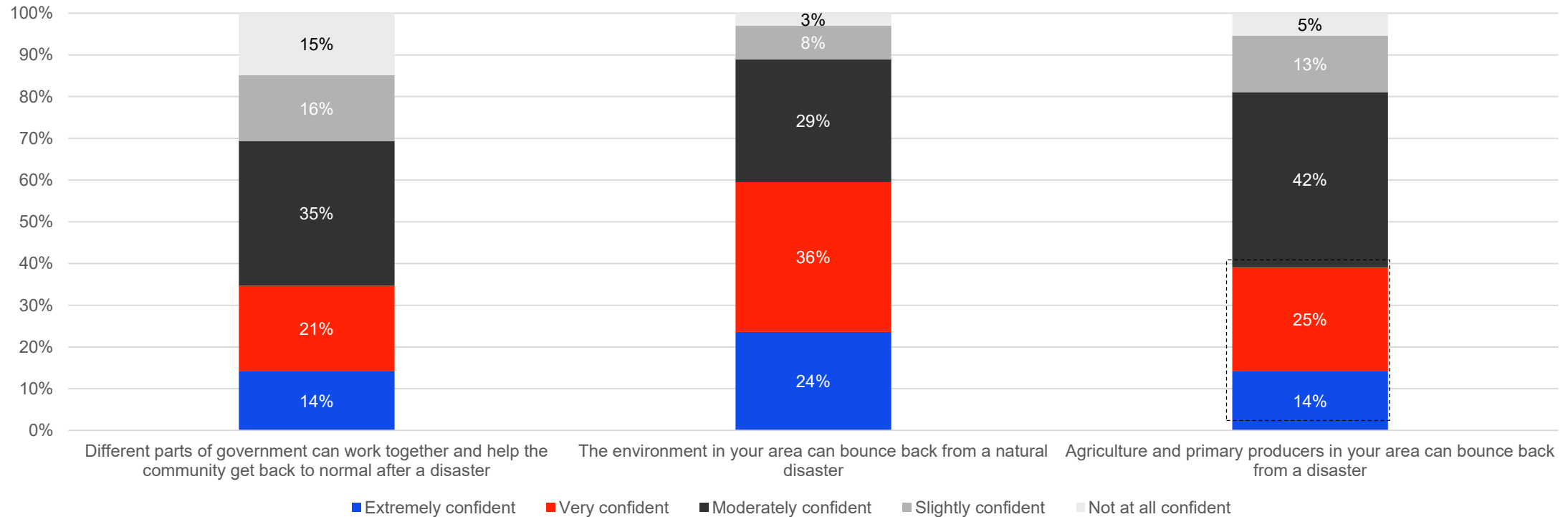


Have a plan for business continuity in the lead up and after a natural disaster



# Disaster recovery

Whilst Mid North Coast residents highly value locally grown food, they are not confident the region's agriculture and primary producers can bounce back from a disaster. They are also not particularly confident governments can help the community after a disaster.



# Regional comparison

Residents and businesses in outlying areas and smaller communities tend to be more prepared for what to do in a natural disaster. They are also the most sceptical that governments can work together to support the community during and after. Those in more heavily populated coastal centres are more confident in government.

		Difference to Region				
MNC		PMHC	Bellingen	Kempsey	Coastal Centres	Outlying Areas
Has a household plan for a natural disaster	47%	-2%	-5%	6%	-4%	10%
Has a business continuity plan for a natural disaster	56%	0%	-6%	3%	-3%	3%
Have the information they need to make a household plan	73%	-2%	4%	1%	-1%	3%
Have the information they need to make a business continuity plan*	70%	-13%	30%	3%	5%	-6%
Confident governments can work together during and after a disaster	69%	1%	-4%	1%	4%	-9%
Confident the environment can bounce back from an environment	89%	-1%	2%	1%	0%	-1%
Confident agriculture and primary producers can bounce back	81%	0%	-1%	1%	2%	-4%

*\*caution, small sample at LGA level*

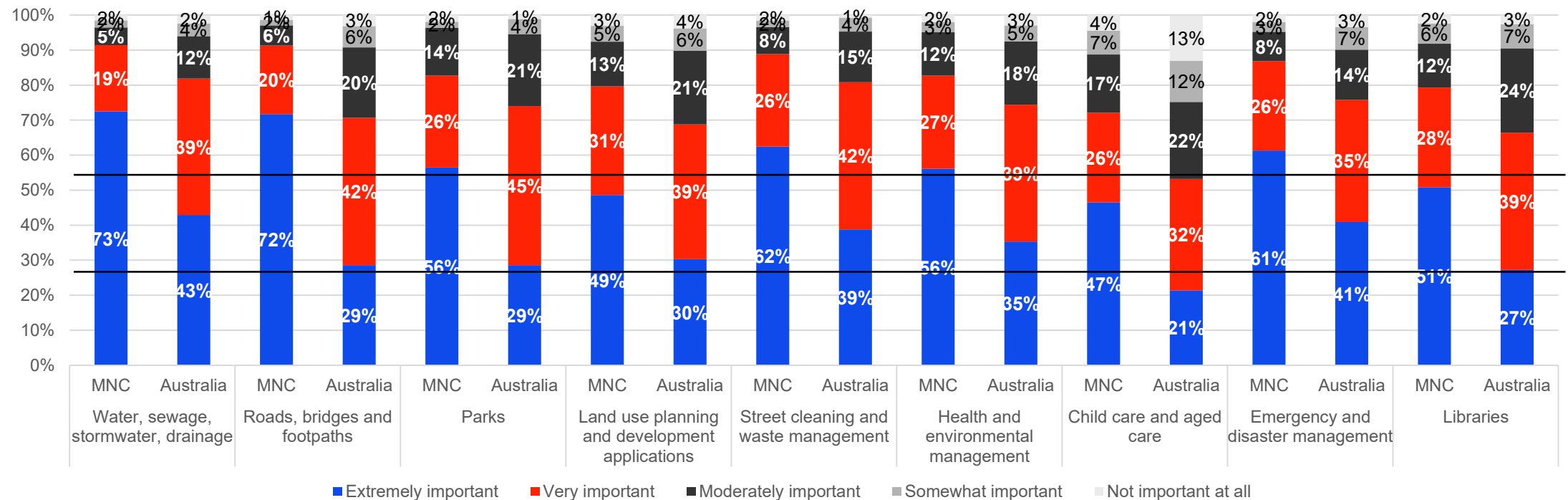
# Local Government Functions



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# What's important about what councils do across the MNC do? (1/2)

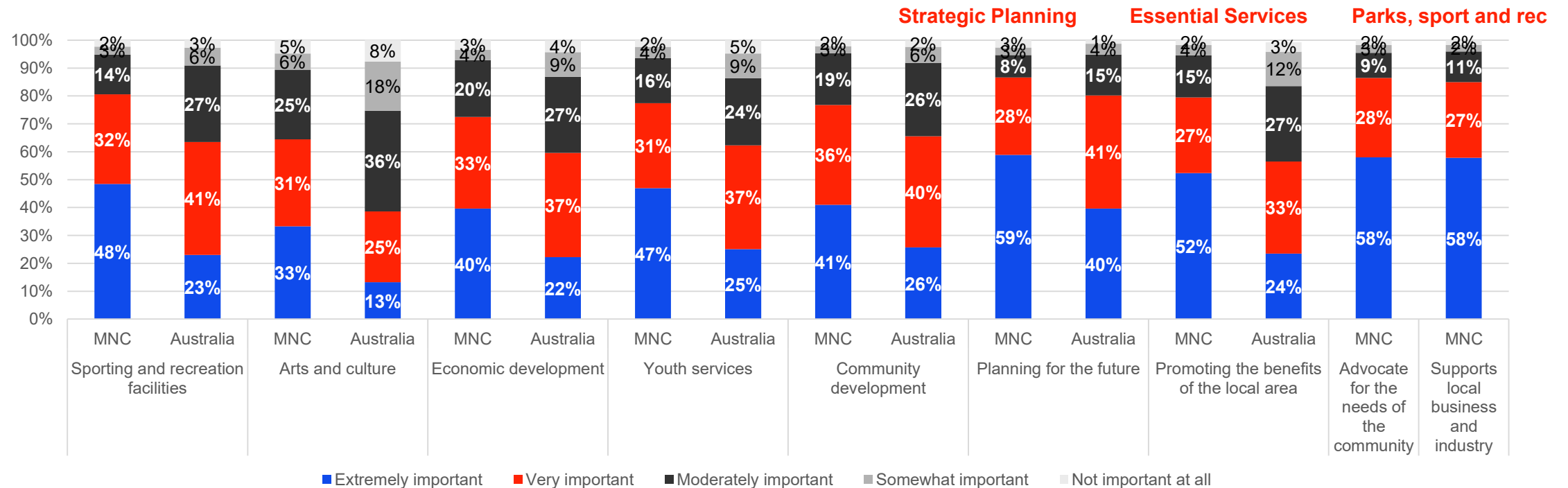
What's surprising is not so much what matters about local government to a Mid North Coast resident, but *how much*. What councils do is more likely to be *very* important to a Mid North Coast resident compared to your average Australian.



# What's important about what councils do across the MNC? (2/2)

But there are some differences in what matters most to a Mid North Coast resident compared to your average Australian

## Council Responsibilities that Matter Most



# What matters more...and less...

To a Mid North Coast resident compared to your average Australian

Availability of good home or aged care	23%
A supportive and cohesive community	18%
Availability of public services like schools and healthcare	17%
Shops located nearby that suit your needs	12%
Being close to friends and family as you get older	12%
A vibrant and creative community	9%
Levels of water, air and noise pollution	8%
A positive economic outlook	8%
Recreational areas such as parks and walking tracks	5%
Good quality roads and bridges	2%
Job opportunities	0%
Convenient transport options	-3%
A safe public domain and open spaces	-6%
Availability of affordable housing	-12%

# Regional comparison

Residents in smaller communities tend to value what their council does more highly, particularly human and environmental services. Residents in outlying areas do not value it as highly. There are mixed views on the role of councils in economic development and promoting the benefits of the area.

	MNC	Difference to Region				
		PMHC	Bellingen	Kempsey	Coastal Centres	Outlying Areas
Water, sewage, stormwater, drainage	91%	-1%	1%	0%	2%	-5%
Roads, bridges and footpaths	91%	-1%	1%	-1%	0%	0%
Street cleaning and waste management	89%	-1%	1%	3%	2%	-5%
Emergency and disaster management	87%	-1%	3%	-4%	2%	-5%
Planning for the future	87%	0%	-3%	2%	0%	-1%
Advocating for the needs of the community	87%	-2%	0%	4%	2%	-4%
Supporting local business	85%	0%	-2%	2%	1%	-2%
Parks and gardens	83%	0%	5%	-1%	2%	-5%
Health and environmental management	83%	-2%	2%	4%	1%	-2%
Sports facilities	81%	1%	-3%	3%	3%	-7%
Land use planning and development applications	80%	-1%	3%	2%	1%	-3%
Libraries	79%	1%	4%	-1%	3%	-8%
Promoting the benefits of the local area	79%	-1%	-7%	8%	1%	-2%
Youth services	77%	0%	0%	2%	1%	-2%
Community development	77%	-1%	1%	0%	3%	-6%
Economic development	73%	-2%	-2%	7%	2%	-5%
Child care and aged care	72%	-1%	0%	-1%	0%	0%
Arts and culture	64%	2%	-1%	0%	2%	-4%



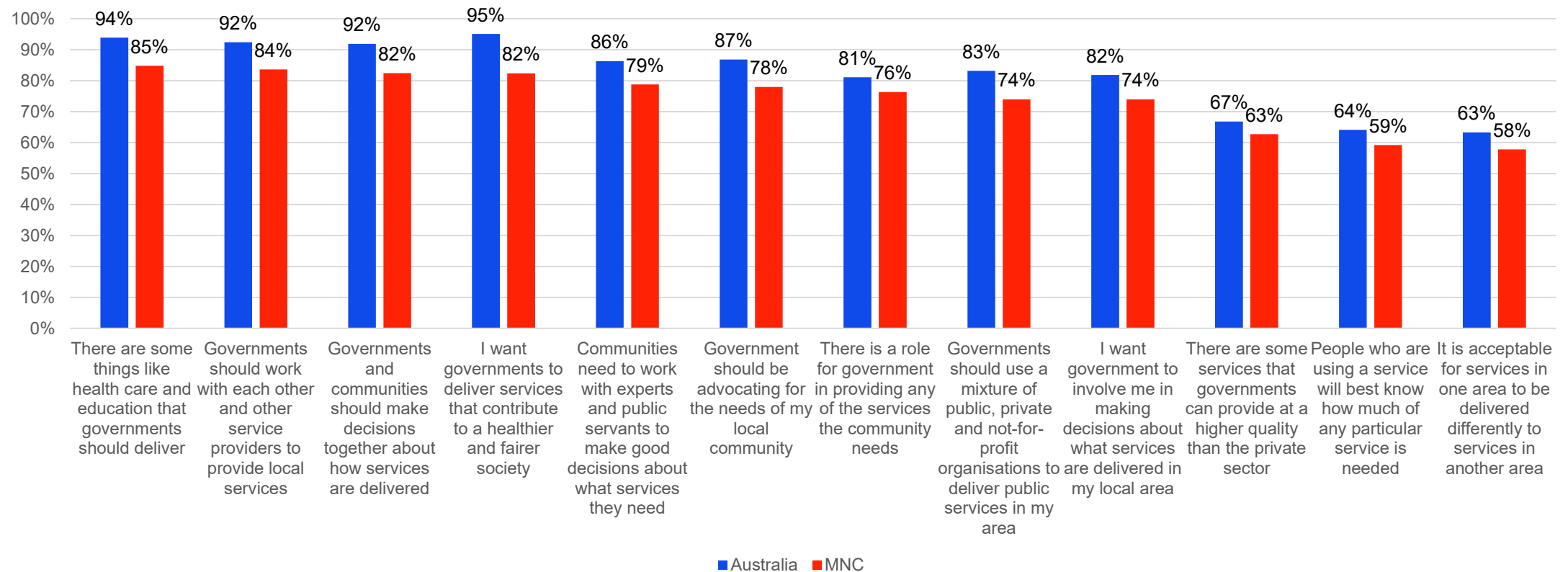
# Service Delivery and Governance



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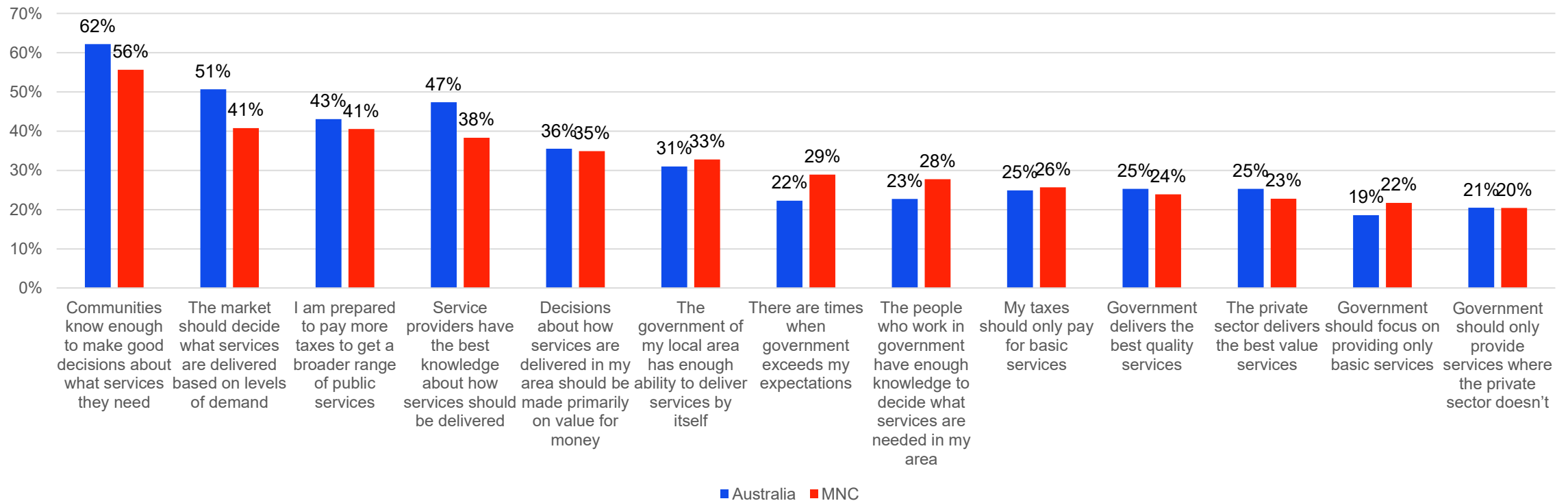
# Service delivery and governance preferences (1/2) – Top 2 Box

Compared to your average Australian, Mid North Coast residents have a more positive view about government and public servants. They are skeptical of market based service delivery models, and see an enlarged and direct role for council in service delivery. This sentiment is strongest in smaller communities and outlying areas.



# Service delivery and governance preferences (2/2) – Top 2 Box

The preferences of Mid North Coast residents for service delivery and governance models tend to mirror your average Australian, particularly those living in coastal centres and Port Macquarie-Hastings. But what is surprising is that these preferences are not as strongly held as the rest of Australia.



# Regional comparison

	MNC	Difference to Region				
		PMHC	Bellingen	Kempsey	Coastal Centres	Outlying Areas
I want governments to deliver services that contribute to a healthier and fairer society	90%	0%	-1%	3%	1%	-2%
Governments should work with each other to deliver services in my area	89%	2%	-3%	1%	0%	0%
Governments and communities should make decisions together about how services are delivered	88%	-1%	3%	1%	1%	-2%
Governments should use a mix of public, private and other organisations to deliver services in my area	81%	1%	-6%	7%	2%	-4%
Government should advocate for the needs of my community	80%	3%	1%	-4%	0%	0%
Communities need to work with experts and public servants to make good decisions about services they need	79%	4%	-3%	-1%	2%	-4%
I want government to involve me in making decisions about what services are needed in my area	75%	1%	2%	-1%	0%	1%
There is a role for government providing any of the services the community needs	75%	4%	-2%	-7%	0%	1%
Communities know enough to make good decisions about what services they need	67%	-2%	0%	4%	-1%	2%
People who use a service will know best how much of any particular service is needed	65%	-2%	-2%	3%	-1%	2%
There are some things like health care and education that only governments should deliver	57%	-2%	11%	-5%	2%	-5%
There are some services that government can provide at a higher quality than the private sector	56%	6%	-7%	-4%	0%	0%
It is acceptable for services in one area to be delivered differently to another area	54%	0%	6%	-5%	-3%	8%
I am prepared to pay more taxes to get a broader range of public services	43%	0%	2%	0%	1%	-2%
The market should decide what services are delivered based on levels of demand	40%	1%	-6%	2%	2%	-6%
My taxes should only pay for basic services	35%	-3%	-2%	9%	1%	-3%
Service providers have the best knowledge about how services should be delivered	35%	1%	-5%	-1%	2%	-4%
Decisions about how services are delivered in my area should be made primarily on value for money	35%	0%	-4%	4%	3%	-8%
Government should only provide services where the private sector doesn't	27%	-3%	1%	7%	2%	-5%
Government delivers the best quality services	26%	2%	-4%	-1%	0%	-1%
The government in my area is capable of delivering services by itself	25%	4%	-4%	-4%	1%	-1%
Government should focus on providing only basic services	25%	1%	-1%	4%	0%	-1%
The private sector delivers the best value services	24%	0%	-4%	4%	1%	-3%
There are times when government exceeds my expectations	19%	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%
The people who work in government know enough to decide what services are needed in my area	15%	2%	-5%	0%	0%	-1%

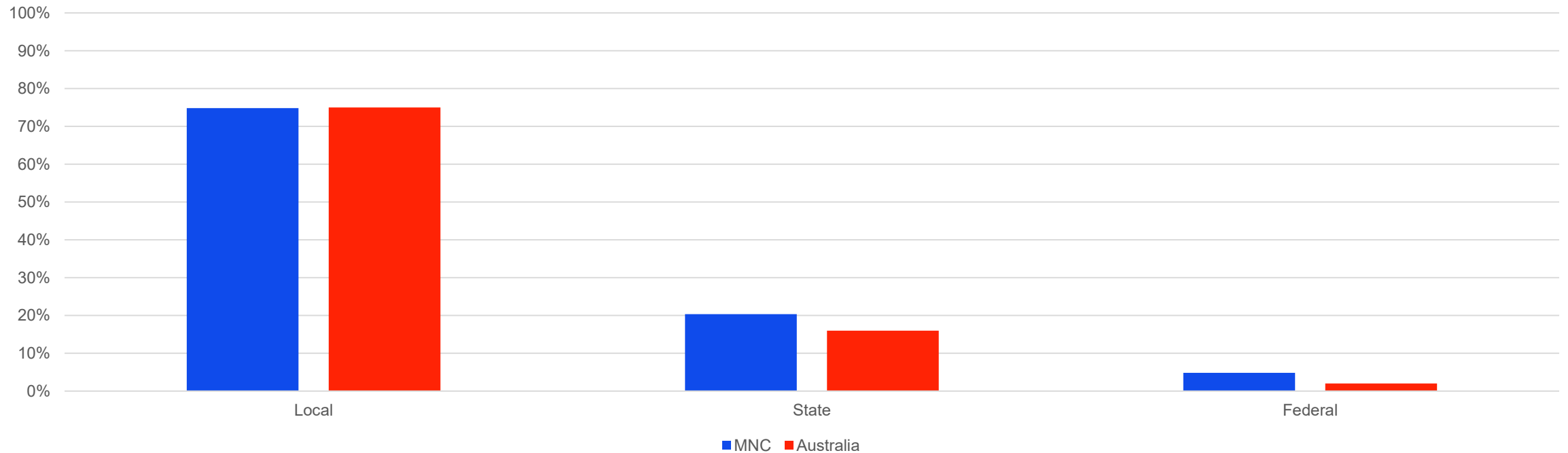
# Local Government and Communities



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# Level of government best able to make decisions about your area

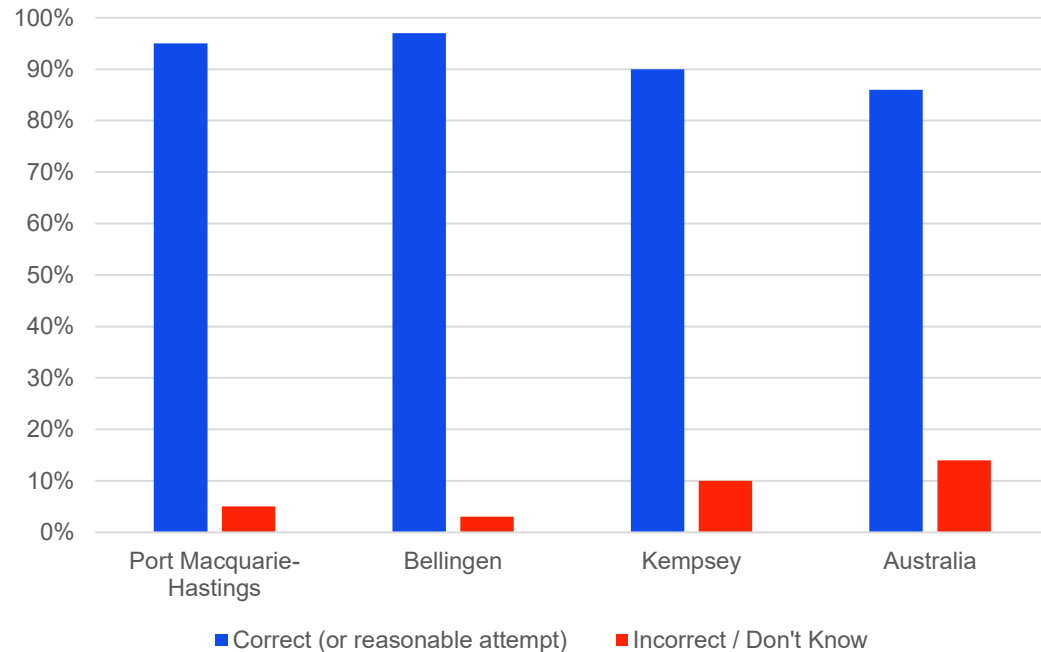
Like most other Australians, most Mid North Coast residents think local government is best placed to make decisions about their area.



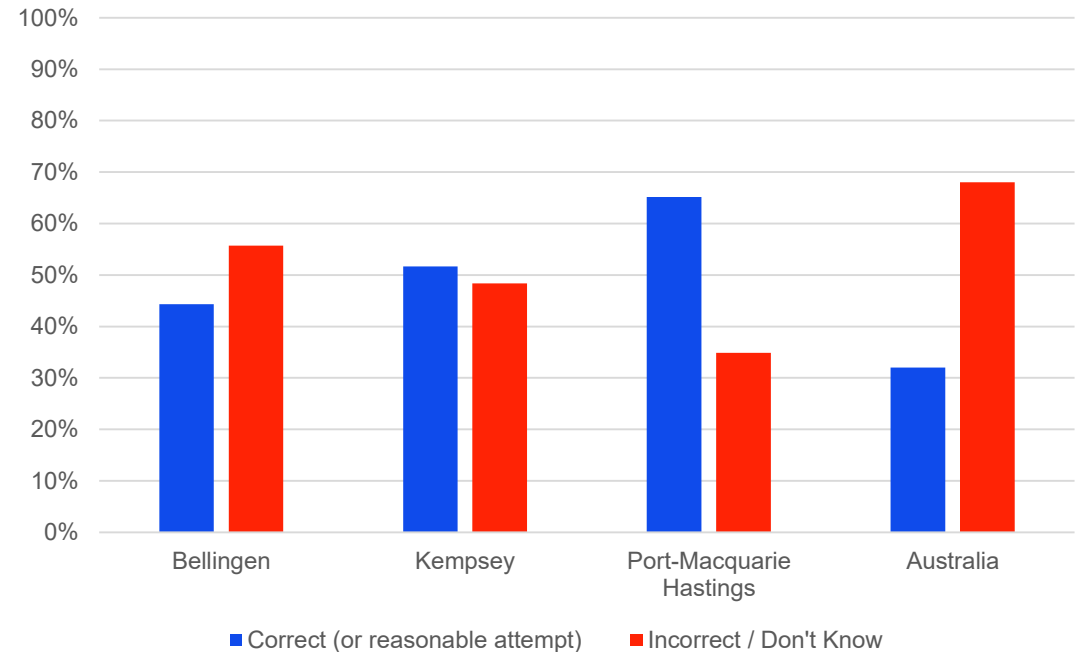
# Knowledge of local government

Mid North Coast residents are more aware of who represents them and who to hold to account. They are more likely to know their council and Mayor than your average Australian.

### Knowledge of Council Name



### Knowledge of Mayor's Name

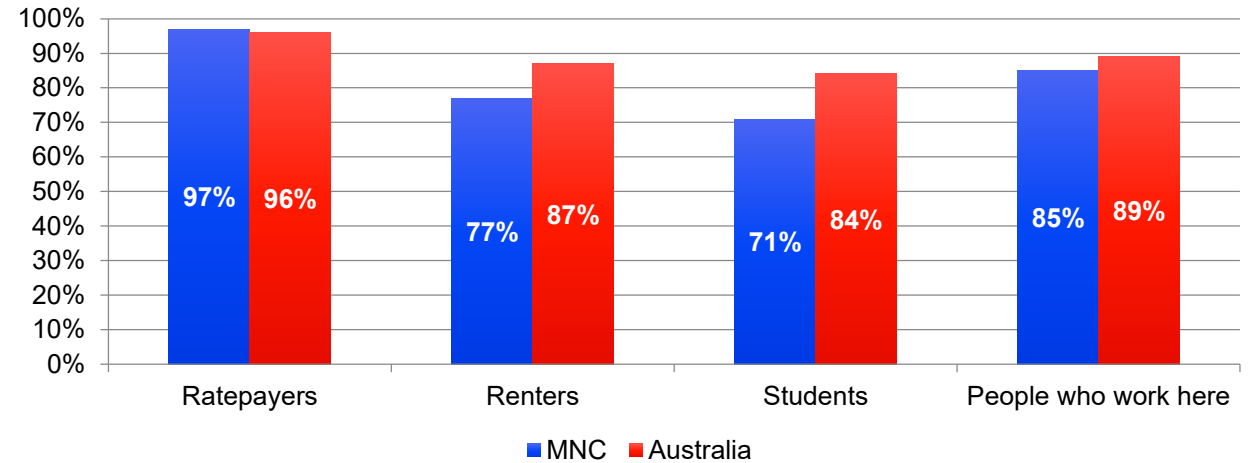


# Who is part of this community?

Mid North Coast residents are not as inclusive as your average Australian community.

Those in outlying areas and large employment centres tend to be less inclusive of renters, students and workers.

Those in smaller communities tend to be more inclusive.



		Difference to Region				
		PMHC	Bellingen	Kempsey	Coastal Centres	Outlying Areas
Ratepayers	MNC 97%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%
Renters	MNC 77%	-1%	-1%	2%	2%	-6%
Students	MNC 71%	0%	2%	-1%	3%	-6%
People who work here	MNC 85%	-2%	0%	3%	1%	-2%



# Implications for MNCJO Strategic Plan



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# Strategic Plan Implications

In many ways, the Mid North Coast is a bellwether for the many coastal lifestyle regions that dot the Australian coastline and have been luring people away from the hustle and bustle of big cities. Whilst there are some differences what residents of each LGA see the role of council being, their views of local government as a highly valued layer of government reflect the average Australian.

There are spatial differences across the region. Those in outer areas and smaller communities, whilst resourceful and resilient, feel forgotten by government. This does not mean they value government any less – in fact, they appear to value it more highly than their counterparts in coastal centres. This is not such a bad thing; part of why they live where they do is to be away from the hustle and bustle – including government. But when things go wrong, like a disaster, they expect government to be their. This also means good phone and web connections, local shops and services are more crucial to these community members.

- Mid North Coast residents are eager for a more sustainable future for the region; one that supports locally made produce, uses scarce land, energy and water resources wisely, and protects from pollution the unique biodiversity and pristine environment that contribute so much to what makes this a great place for those who live here.
- Whilst residents want their councils to support local business and industry, particularly agriculture and primary producers, they have not yet made the link between the crucial role of councils in supporting sustainable economic development and other industries, particularly tourism in the region's major centres.
- The strategic planning function of the MNCJO is highly supported by the community, as are regional leadership and advocacy and pursuing shared and direct service delivery between member councils, particularly for highly valued services such as aged and home care.
- There is potential for more work to be done improving social cohesion and inclusion across the region in such a way that all members of the community are valued for their unique contribution the community, not just their postcode or status as a resident.

## Core MNCJO Functions

**Strategic planning and priority setting** – based on robust processes for identifying regional goals, with the flexibility to respond to changing priorities and needs of member councils as required

**Intergovernmental collaboration** – building effective working relationships with other JOs, councils and the NSW and Australian Governments

**Regional leadership and advocacy** – creating a shared purpose and strategic direction for the region; and a commitment to constructive and cooperative implementation by all member councils

**Building efficient and effective councils** – by examining opportunities for shared services and capacity building across the region.

# Strategic Plan Implications

- The following insights from the survey can further inform the MNCJO Strategic Plan

Action	Detail	Survey insights
1.1	Provide regional facilities and services for recreation, sports, arts and culture within the context of a changing population	Parks, sports and rec amongst the most highly valued council functions
1.2	Build capacity in the regional community to deal with severe weather events and natural disasters	Half the community do not have a disaster plan, and up to two thirds would benefit from information on how to make one
1.3	Plan for the regional impact of ageing populations on health services, accessible and affordable housing and employment	Aged and home care amongst the most important council functions
2.1	Plan for the regional impact of climate change on the community, environment, economy and council services	Intergenerational, biodiversity and community impacts most concerning to residents – particularly drought, bushfires and water security
2.2	Preserve strategic biodiversity and identify land with high environmental value and biodiversity corridors across the region	Unique biodiversity and pristine natural environment free of pollution are major place qualities
3.1	Assess the availability of land across the region for different purposes and instigate cross-council planning where land is scarce/unavailable for a specific purpose	Using land, energy and water resources efficiently important to this environmentally conscious region
3.3.	Continue to support industries which deliver food security for the region and support a focus on agriculture and agriculture-related industries	Locally grown food and supporting local business and industry, particularly agriculture and primary producers, highly valued
3.4	Continue to support tourism as a main regional industry and explore options to 'keep tourists in the region' for longer	Tourism under-valued across the region, particularly major centres
4.1	Support the roll-out of reliable telecommunications and internet access across the region	Good phone and internet considered an essential service across the region, particularly outlying areas
4.2	Design and create safe public places and preserve the unique regional/local character of cities, towns and villages	Design of safe public spaces particularly important in major centres
6.1	Effectively work with state and federal governments to ensure resources are available for the Mid North Coast	The regional leadership and advocacy function of MNCJO is supported, but this should not dwarf the importance of shared, direct service delivery