



YOURSAY TO 2020

HOW CANBERRANS
EXPERIENCE ENGAGEMENT
WITH THE ACT GOVERNMENT

ENGAGEMENT REPORT

CHIEF MINISTER, TREASURY
AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
DIRECTORATE

AUGUST 2019

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY3

WHY WE ENGAGED AND WHAT WE ASKED4

WHO WE HEARD FROM.....5

 ONLINE SURVEY5

 PHONE SURVEY5

WHAT WE HEARD5

 TELEPHONE SURVEY RESULTS IN DETAIL.....6

 ONLINE SURVEY RESULTS IN DETAIL7

 SAMPLE OF OTHER COMMENTS RECEIVED ONLINE.....12

NEXT STEPS13

 HAVE MORE FEEDBACK?15

APPENDICES16

 A ONLINE SURVEY RESULTS.....16

 B PHONE SURVEY QUESTIONS AND RESULTS20

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To better understand how Canberrans experience engagement with the ACT Government, Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate (CMTEDD) surveyed the community about their engagement experience via telephone and online.

- Seventy-two percent of phone survey respondents felt they were 'well informed' about ACT Government services at the territory level.
- Twenty percent (20%) of respondents said they had accessed or provided feedback through the YourSay website. Awareness of YourSay is improving with this figure up from 13% in February 2018.
- Seventy-three per cent (73%) felt the YourSay website was easy to use and 73% felt as though they were given the opportunity to have their say through the website.
- Of the 20% who said that they have accessed or provided feedback on YourSay, 83% said they would be interested in providing feedback in the future. This is a significant increase from the March 2018 survey where 55% of respondents were interested in providing feedback after accessing the YourSay website.
- The key themes in the online survey feedback indicated that the ACT Government's online engagement platform YourSay was relatively user-friendly and accessible.
- The feedback indicated a need to improve accountability in sharing feedback received and explaining the outcomes of engagement processes. It also indicated a need to provide more opportunities for a greater diversity of Canberrans to engage.

In response to this feedback, the ACT Government is investing in even more ways for Canberrans to have their say on Government policy and service delivery. We are continuing to improve the YourSay platform to make it easier for participants to be kept up to date on the engagements they were involved in.

On 1 July 2019, the ACT Government launched the YourSay Community Panel (www.yoursaypanel.act.gov.au) to provide an innovative new way for Canberrans to contribute to Government consultations and engagements. The Panel will provide widespread, meaningful and targeted research and discussion on a diverse range of topics.

WHY WE ENGAGED AND WHAT WE ASKED

The ACT Government is committed to strengthening engagement and delivering genuine engagement opportunities, in line with the following principles:

- We provide **meaningful** engagements where the community has **clear, relevant** and **timely** information to help shape decisions.
- We are **accountable** when we engage and we give the community feedback to help them understand how they are contributing to decisions, projects and policies.
- We are **responsive** to the community seeking to grow strong relationships for **future collaboration** and cooperation.
- We are **inclusive** and **respectful** when we engage, finding ways to ensure engagement is **equitable**.

At the beginning of 2018, the first [Whole of Government Communications and Engagement Strategy](#) was published so Canberrans could see when they might be able to engage in decision-making. At the same time, we surveyed the community on YourSay and by phone to better understand the engagement experience of Canberrans. You can see a summary of [What We Heard here](#) and a detailed [Engagement Report here](#).

The key themes in the feedback indicated that while the ACT Government's online engagement platform YourSay was relatively user-friendly and accessible, we could improve awareness of the website. The feedback indicated a need to improve accountability in providing feedback and outcomes of engagement processes, and to better report on how different groups and stakeholders were involved in engagements.

The feedback received led to the government improving our process to provide participants with information from the consultation through 'What We Heard' reports.

We wanted to check in with the community to see whether these initiatives were having an impact on the community's engagement experience with the government and where we could still improve.

We asked the community to tell us whether we were engaging in line with the principles, whether they felt informed about government services, what information residents prefer to receive from the ACT Government and which sources of information they use most often.

WHO WE HEARD FROM

ONLINE SURVEY

From 4 March to 29 April 2019, the Canberra community was invited to share their engagement experiences through a survey on the YourSay online engagement platform, www.yoursay.act.gov.au.

An email was sent to more than 6,000 YourSay subscribers and over 50,000 Our Canberra e-newsletter subscribers inviting them to participate in the survey.

There was a total of 247 respondents. Sixty-one people said they had never engaged with the ACT government. As they were unable to continue with the survey on engagement experience, this figure was adjusted to 182 respondents. Not all respondents answered every question.

Most of the people who responded to the online survey were members of the community. A small amount were from peak bodies or interest groups, and business owners and operators. The age range was:

- 4.3% aged under 24
- 12.8% aged 25-34
- 15.5% aged 35-44
- 18.7% aged 45-54
- 16% aged 55-64
- 8% aged over 65
- 24% preferred not to say or didn't answer.

The younger and older cohort is underrepresented compared to the demographics of the ACT.

PHONE SURVEY

A total of 600 randomly selected Canberrans participated in the statistically representative telephone survey. There were around 85 participants from each region of North Canberra; South Canberra; Woden; Weston Creek; Belconnen; Gungahlin; and Tuggeranong. Around half were male and half were female.

Eleven percent identified as coming from a non-English speaking background, eight percent identified as having a disability, and one percent identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

WHAT WE HEARD

A summary of the results was published in the [Report on What We Heard](#).

TELEPHONE SURVEY RESULTS IN DETAIL

Seventy-two percent of phone survey respondents felt they were 'well informed' about ACT government services at the territory level. The preferred channels for receiving communications were a newsletter sent via mail (31%), email (17%) social media (11%) and advertising on TV (9%).

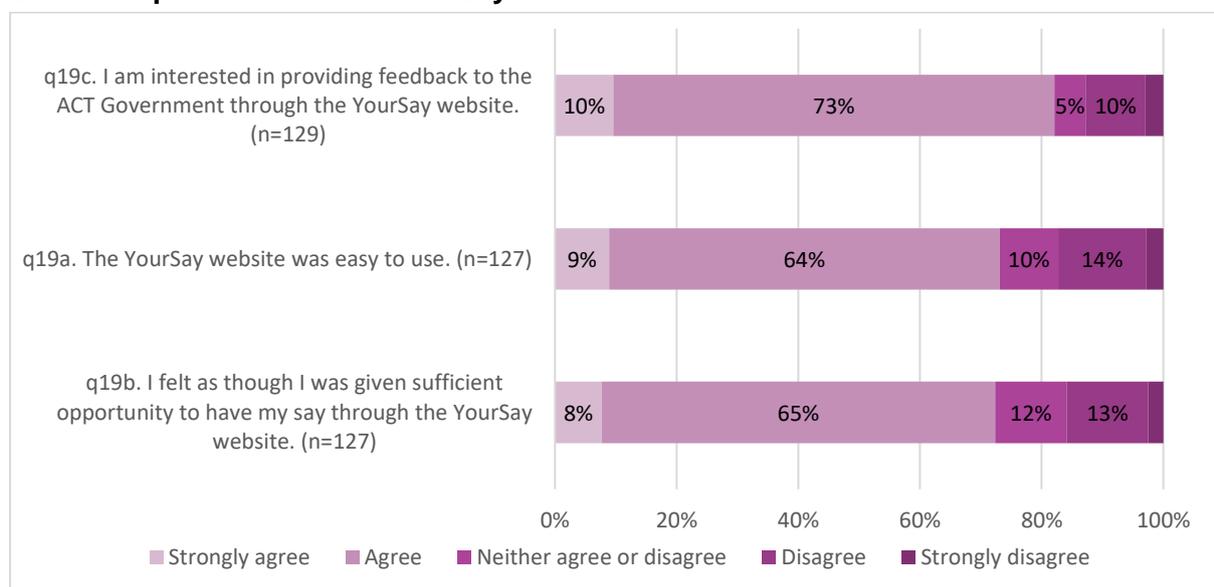
When searching for ACT Government information, 76% of phone survey respondents found the information they were looking for. ACT Government websites (47%) and Google searches (18%) were the channels respondents most frequently used to find out information from the ACT Government.

Twenty percent (20%) of respondents said they had accessed or provided feedback through the YourSay website. Awareness of YourSay is improving with this figure up from 13% in February 2018.

Seventy-three per cent (73%) felt the YourSay website was easy to use and 73% felt as though they were given the opportunity to have their say through the website.

Of the twenty percent who said that they have accessed or provided feedback on YourSay, 83% said they would be interested in providing feedback in the future. This is a significant increase from the March 2018 survey where 55% of respondents were interested in providing feedback after accessing the YourSay website.

Overall impressions of the YourSay website



n=130 respondents who have used YourSay website; Sourced from Orima phone survey results March/April 2019.

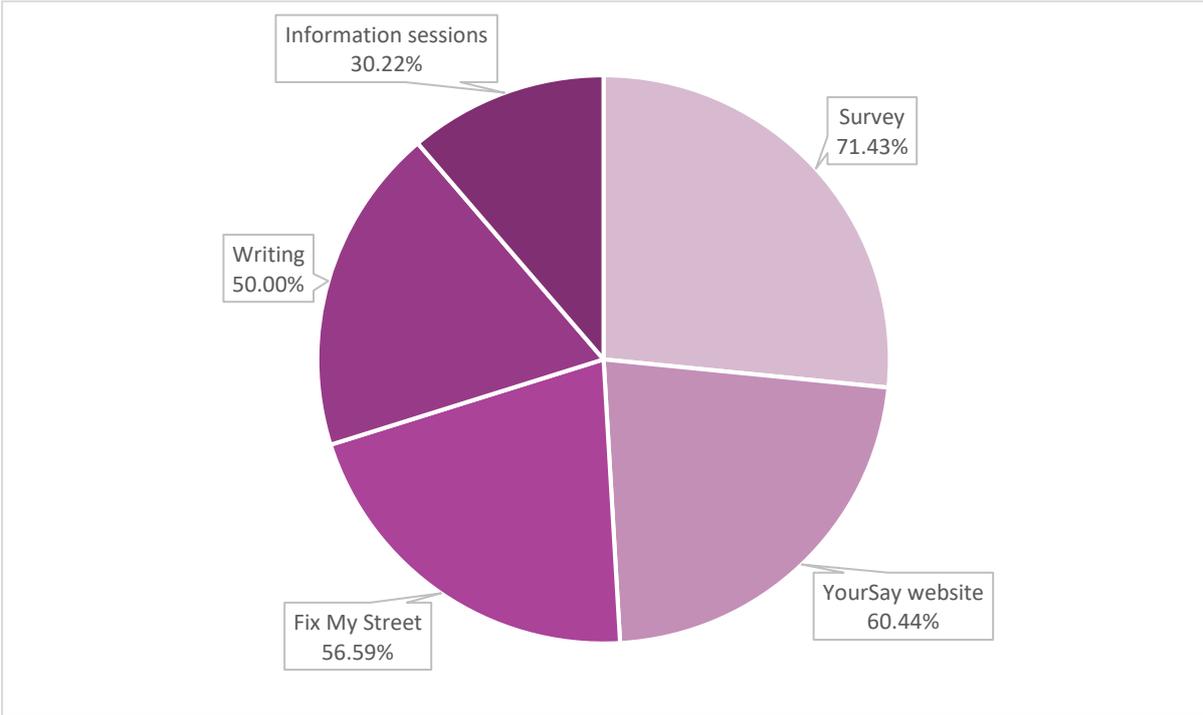
There was strong interest from phone survey respondents in joining the new YourSay Community Panel, with 45% of respondents providing an email address so that they can be advised about its launch.

ONLINE SURVEY RESULTS IN DETAIL

Thirty-nine (39%) of the online survey respondents said the YourSay e-newsletter is how they found out about an engagement opportunity. 20% of respondents said ACT Government social media was the source of their information, and 18% said the Our Canberra (digital) newsletter. Respondents were able to select more than one response and the results were broadly consistent with the 2018 online survey results.

- Completing a survey was the most popular response (71.43%), followed by visiting the YourSay website (60.44%), using the Fix My Street form (56.59%), writing correspondence by submission or email (50%), and attending formal information sessions (30.22%).

Most popular methods to engage with the ACT Government



n=182

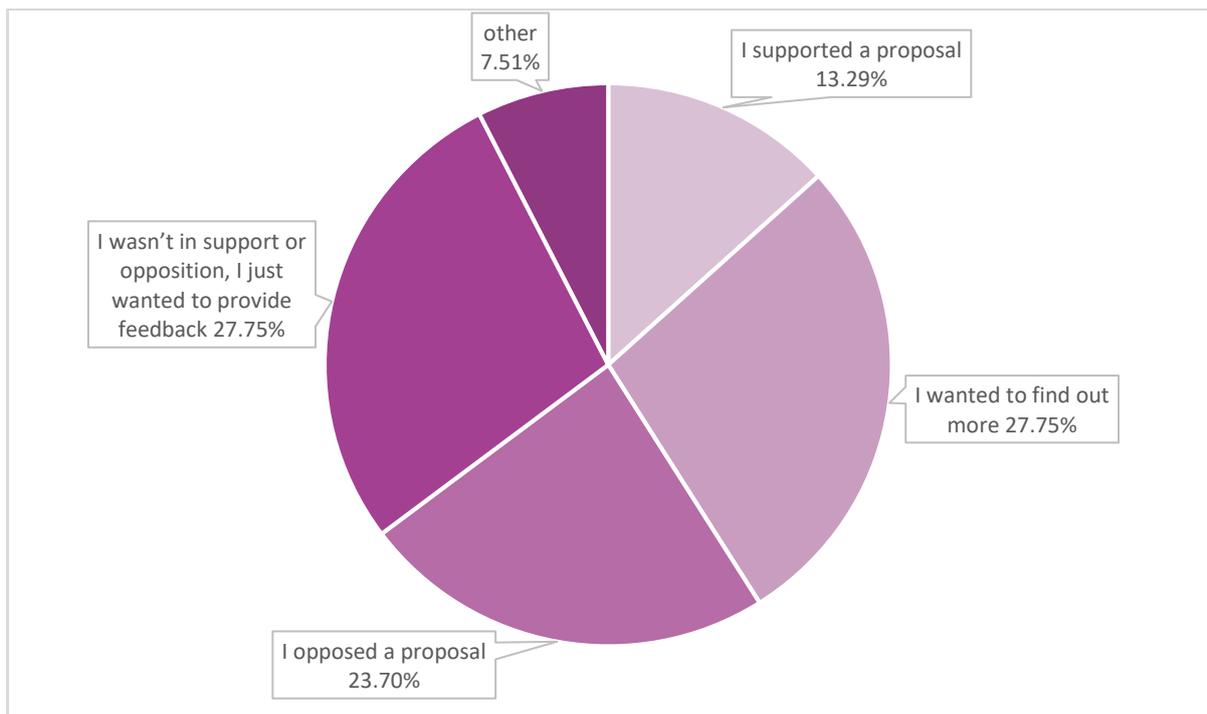
- Participating in face-to-face opportunities or in workshops (29.12%) was slightly more popular than following or commenting on government social media (25.27%).
- As would be expected, due to limits on the number of people who can participate, the least popular selections were calling in to Chief Minister Talkback and being part of small select stakeholder meetings, councils or advisory boards.

When asked the main reason why they participated in engagement with the ACT Government:

- 27.75% said they wanted to find out more about a proposal, initiative or issue
- 27.75% said they weren't in support or opposition and just wanted to provide feedback, 23.70% said it was because they opposed a proposal, initiative or issue, and
- 13.29% said it was because they supported a proposal, initiative or issue.

Other reasons included Fix My Street related feedback, or people just wanted to have their say.

Why respondents participated in engagement with the ACT Government



n=173

In response to questions about the clarity of information provided in engagements:

- around two thirds of respondents agreed that when they participated in an engagement they found the information clear and easy to understand (66.45%).
- most respondents (79.74%) understood how they could participate and how they could provide feedback.
- around half (49.35%) knew where to find information about where an engagement is up to.
- fewer respondents (37.91%) understood who else was consulted and why.

When asked about the extent to which the engagement allowed for the government to hear a broad range of views, the results showed:

- more than half (59.48%) said the engagement was open for long enough to provide feedback (13.72% disagreed).
- most (64.87%) thought the engagement activity they participated in was inclusive and respectful.
- just over half (51.68%) believed the engagement activities for the consultation provided for a diverse range of views to be heard (28.19% disagreed).

We wanted to understand perceptions of how well we shared information on what we heard with the community, and how we used the feedback we received:

- Respondents views were mixed on whether they believed they could access information about the feedback government received in an engagement or information about how the feedback would be used (33.33% agreed and 28.58% disagreed).
- Respondents views were also mixed on whether the engagement felt genuine and if they believed it would be used to shape or inform a decision (39.86% agreed and 35.81% disagreed).
- Around one-third of respondents (35.29%) thought the reports on YourSay (e.g. What We Heard Reports) were clear and gave a good understanding of the engagement insights, noting these reports have only been required for the last year, and nearly

half of respondents said they neither agreed nor disagreed, or didn't know/couldn't say (44.44%).

Where respondents disagreed with any of the statements, we asked them to tell us why. We received a number of comments, that can be broadly themed as follows.

- The majority of respondents who added a comment were not convinced about the genuineness of engagements. Comments included:
 - *Decisions appear to be made prior to asking for community input*
 - *Decisions have already been made and business cases and justifications come later*
 - *The current Government...has already formed a view / made a decision*
 - *I do not trust that the results of community consultation are taken seriously by Government*
 - *While your consultation process is good, you still pick and choose the result you want and dismiss genuine, supported feedback*
 - *I found that the What We Heard reports lacked probity. I thought I was reading a political advertisement.*
- Some respondents thought accessibility of engagement activities could improve. For example, one respondent commented that, "*those with full-time work, or full-time family/caring responsibilities can less afford to dedicate time and effort to feedback, especially face-to-face consultation sessions*". Others were concerned about online engagements being inaccessible or less accessible to older Canberrans or people without access to technology.
- Others commented that the structure of survey activities could be improved. For example:
 - *Too many open questions is overwhelming*
 - *online surveys are easy but may be guided to get a certain outcome. Free text comments are too lengthy*
 - *Some of these surveys don't provide the opportunity for two way engagement.*
- Some respondents were concerned about whether feedback received was representative of community views. One person said, "*Often I think it is only those of us who are often visiting YourSay and care strongly about particular topics who are consulted rather than the general citizens of the ACT.*" Another commented that, "*The*

consumer groups you listen to are not a true cross section of our community and represent only a small amount of the demographic...

- Some respondents were concerned that they did not hear about engagement opportunities or about the outcome:
 - *Not advertised widely enough or in places where most of the community will see it*
 - *Often all of the options to engage are not known or accessible*
 - *Feedback was difficult to find and the decision process was difficult to follow*
 - *Please follow up with a summary of feedback received on the site for everyone to see.*

SAMPLE OF OTHER COMMENTS RECEIVED ONLINE

"I applaud the act govt for asking residents what they think, and I hope you take the views into account."

"It seems like a 'tick and flick' community consult on policy or projects that have already been decided."

"Too reliant on electronic communication. Older residents don't have a great interest or desire to learn how to use computers."

"Newsletters are most useful. I would like to see more of it on diverse issues."

"I often find the reports long, dense, and slightly repetitive, however the info provided at the top of a YourSay survey spot is usually very helpful."

"I appreciate that there is widespread consultation and that I have the opportunity to voice an opinion."

"I do feel like my feedback is being heard. If there are outcomes that I don't agree with and 'voted' or spoke up against, then at least I know that I was outvoted by my community - which makes me feel ok about it."

"It seems as though some consultations with community are fairly genuine, but many things - such as development or re-zoning either have little/no opportunity for input or have already been determined."

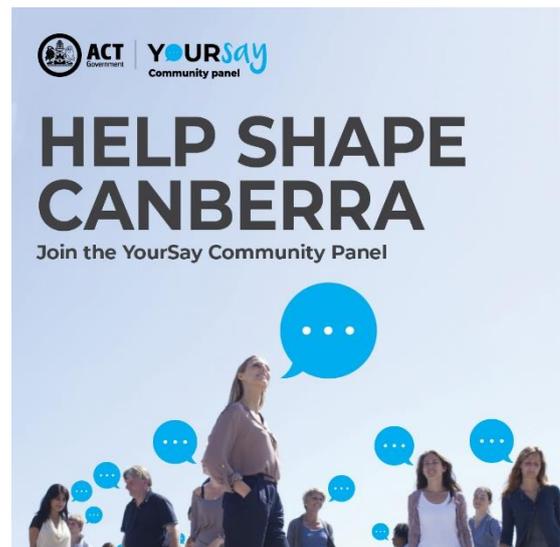
NEXT STEPS

The feedback received during this engagement gives us useful insights into where we are doing well and where we can do better. We have already introduced a number of changes to the way we do things.

Providing opportunities for more people to have their say

On 1 July 2019, we launched the YourSay Community Panel (www.yoursaypanel.act.gov.au) to provide another opportunity for Canberrans to have their say and help government deliver better services, programs and policies for the community. The Panel will provide for widespread and more meaningful and targeted research and discussion on a diverse range of topics relevant to all Canberrans.

Canberrans, 16 and over can join up, provide some demographic information, and can give their views and opinions by participating in activities like online surveys and focus groups. The Panel will help us understand views from a representative cross-section of the community.



Participating in the Community Panel is easy and convenient and can be done anytime and anywhere giving busy Canberrans another option to participate in government decision-making. In the first ten days of the panel launch, nearly 1,500 residents signed up.

Continuing to improve YourSay and making it easier to find out what happened next

There were more than 100,000 visitors to the government's online engagement website, YourSay (www.yoursay.act.gov.au) in the 2018-19 financial year and more than 6,000 people had signed up to receive the YourSay e-newsletter.

The feedback received through this engagement has led to the introduction of the *Follow Me* function on the YourSay website, allowing YourSay users to receive email updates on particular engagement projects they are interested in. This function is currently available on most YourSay projects, with an aim to roll-out to all projects by 2020.

Your feedback helped to refine what is included on YourSay engagements, such as clear information about how to participate (on-line and in person) and clear timelines for all engagement projects.

More consistent information is being implemented for all online engagements on YourSay to users can clearly identify how they can have their say, what we are looking at and how their views will be used.

The use of plain English is being encouraged in our engagement materials and we are including more activities to collect feedback, like discussion panels and pin maps, not just surveys on YourSay.

Making it easier to find out when engagements open

We are continuing to produce the Our Canberra digital (www.act.gov.au/our-canberra/home) and print newsletter to directly communicate with Canberrans on ACT Government news, initiatives and services:

- including a monthly regionalised newsletter to almost 185,000 Canberra households, and
- a monthly digital newsletter delivered to more than 51,000 subscribers (an increase of 13.3% in the past year).

We are now using Our Canberra to provide more stories on when there are opportunities to get involved, how you can participate and what the outcomes were.

We are promoting YourSay and the YourSay Community Panel, through the ACT Government's social media and other channels, such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and LinkedIn.

Being more transparent around what others said

We will continue to publish a summary of [telephone survey results](#). You can see what questions were asked and how people responded when selected randomly and contacted by phone.

Public summary reports (Reports on *What We Heard*) and more detailed engagement reports, like this one, will continue to be published for engagements on the YourSay website. Using the 'Follow' function on YourSay will mean you are notified via email when these reports are posted.

Within government, a whole of government customer relationship management system is being trialled to share information received from key stakeholder organisations between directorates. This will help us understand conversations an organisation has had with us before we go back to them for more information.

Providing opportunities offline to participate

We will continue to provide funding to Community Councils, which are community-led associations based in Woden, Belconnen, Gungahlin, Tuggeranong, Inner North, Inner South and Weston Creek. Community Councils hold nine meetings a year to hear the views of their local community and provide this feedback to government.

In addition, we are updating internal guidance documents and the publication, *Engaging Canberrans*, to place more emphasis on seeking feedback that is representative of broader community views, and using a mix of both online and face-to-face activities to reach a more diverse audience. This will include providing accessible activities at a variety of times to reach young people, older people, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, and people with a disability.



HAVE MORE FEEDBACK?

The survey has now closed but you can leave a comment about engaging with the ACT Government through our short form (www.yoursay.act.gov.au/yoursayto2020) at any time.

APPENDICES

A ONLINE SURVEY RESULTS

Apart from this survey, when was the last time you participated in an ACT Government engagement or consultation process? This includes visiting www.YourSay.act.gov.au, even if you did not provide any feedback.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ In the last 12 months	57.09%	141
▼ In the last 2 years	7.29%	18
▼ More than 2 years ago	4.05%	10
▼ Never	24.70%	61
▼ Don't know/can't say	6.88%	17
TOTAL		247

When engaging with the ACT Government, which of the following describes you? (select all that apply)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ I am a citizen/member of the community	94.51%	172
▼ I represent a community council	2.20%	4
▼ I represent a peak body or interests group	3.85%	7
▼ I am a service provider	2.75%	5
▼ I am a business owner or operator	4.95%	9
▼ Other (please specify)	Responses 4.95%	9
Total Respondents: 182		

Have you ever engaged with the ACT Government in any of the following ways? (select all that apply)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Writing correspondence or submissions by letter or email	50.00%	91
▼ Discussing face to face at events or in workshops	29.12%	53
▼ Attending formal information sessions (eg. kiosks at shopping centres or events)	30.22%	55
▼ Being part of small select stakeholder meetings, councils or advisory boards	11.54%	21
▼ Following or commenting on government social media	25.27%	46
▼ Calling in to Chief Minister Talkback	2.20%	4
▼ Visiting or used the www.YourSay.act.gov.au website	60.44%	110
▼ Using the Fix My Street form	56.59%	103
▼ Completing a survey	71.43%	130
▼ Other (please specify)	Responses 6.04%	11
Total Respondents: 182		

Thinking of the last time you engaged with the ACT Government, what was the main reason you participated in the engagement?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ I was supportive of the proposal/initiative/issue	13.29%	23
▼ I wanted to find out more about the proposal/initiative/issue	27.75%	48
▼ I was in opposition to the proposal/initiative/issue	23.70%	41
▼ I wasn't in support or opposition, I just wanted to provide feedback	27.75%	48
▼ Other (please specify)	Responses 7.51%	13
TOTAL		173

How did you find out about the engagement?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ YourSay e-newsletter	39.31%	68
▼ Our Canberra newsletter (digital)	17.92%	31
▼ Our Canberra newsletter (mail)	12.14%	21
▼ ACT government social media post	19.65%	34
▼ Through a community or stakeholder group	12.14%	21
▼ Mainstream advertising (e.g. radio, television, newspaper)	5.78%	10
▼ Local media article (e.g. article in the Canberra Times)	15.61%	27
▼ Other (please specify)	Responses 19.65%	34
Total Respondents: 173		

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about how the engagement was presented?

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DON'T KNOW/CAN'T SAY	TOTAL
I found the information provided on the topic clear and easy to understand	11.84% 18	54.61% 83	16.45% 25	8.55% 13	4.61% 7	3.95% 6	152
I understood how I could participate in the engagement and how I could provide feedback	20.26% 31	59.48% 91	10.46% 16	6.54% 10	1.31% 2	1.96% 3	153
The engagement was open for enough time for me to consider information and provide considered feedback	13.07% 20	46.41% 71	21.57% 33	7.84% 12	5.88% 9	5.23% 8	153
I know where to find information about where the engagement is up to	9.09% 14	40.26% 62	14.94% 23	19.48% 30	7.14% 11	9.09% 14	154
I understood who else was consulted and why	5.23% 8	32.68% 50	22.88% 35	18.95% 29	11.76% 18	8.50% 13	153
The feedback reports on YourSay (e.g. What We Heard reports) were clear and gave me a good understanding of the engagement insights	7.84% 12	27.45% 42	26.14% 40	10.46% 16	9.80% 15	18.30% 28	153

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the design of the engagement process?

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DON'T KNOW/CAN'T SAY	TOTAL
I believed the engagement was genuine and would be used to shape or inform a decision	6.08% 9	33.78% 50	18.24% 27	18.92% 28	16.89% 25	6.08% 9	148
The engagement activity I participated in was inclusive and respectful	12.84% 19	52.03% 77	16.89% 25	6.08% 9	4.73% 7	7.43% 11	148
I believed the engagement activities for the consultation provided opportunities for a diverse range of views to be heard	13.42% 20	38.26% 57	12.75% 19	16.11% 24	12.08% 18	7.38% 11	149
I could access information about the feedback received in an engagement and how the feedback would be used	6.80% 10	26.53% 39	25.17% 37	15.65% 23	12.93% 19	12.93% 19	147

Do you have any other comments about the way the ACT Government consults or engages with the community, or about why you may not participate in an engagement?

B PHONE SURVEY QUESTIONS AND RESULTS

The results of the telephone survey in March/April 2019 are available at

<https://www.act.gov.au/yoursay/our-conversations/community-views-research-summary-of-actions>.

