Quantifying Organisation-Public Relationships

A thesis submitted to fulfil the requirements for a Masters of Arts (Communication) by Research

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Thanks

I would like to thank Sally and Maggie for their support and contribution to this research.

To Sally, my wife, who is always there to encourage and support me in whatever way she can.

To Maggie Walsh, my supervisor, who has given me the freedom I needed to complete this research and the gentle guidance that has been so valuable in ensuring I stayed on track.
Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; and, any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged.

[Signature]

David Hawkins

20 January 2009
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### Glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>communal relationship</td>
<td>Relationships with external groups that are not based on a financial exchange.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exchange relationship</td>
<td>Relationships with external groups that are based on a financial exchange.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>component</td>
<td>The individual parts or elements of a relationship such as trust or commitment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>theme</td>
<td>The classifications or themes (governance, communication and value) that have been used to group the relationship components.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>one-dimensional formula</td>
<td>Where a formula bases its finding only using the level of satisfaction of the questions or statements used in the survey.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>two-dimensional formula</td>
<td>Where a formula bases its finding on both the level of satisfaction and the level of importance of the questions or statements used in the survey.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organisation-public relationships (OPR)</td>
<td>The relationships that an organisation has with the stakeholders that can have an impact on the future of the organisation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Abstract

To date, limited means of accurately measuring the communal relationships between an organisation and its various publics have been developed. Researchers and practitioners have acknowledged the need for a more accurate measurement tool. Previous analysis of communal relationships has typically been done in an anecdotal or non-quantifiable way. This study establishes a new method of quantifying the relationship between an organisation and its publics; this method allows organisations to more accurately measure their OPRs, diagnose their strengths and weaknesses and quantify changes in the relationships over time. In so doing, organisations will be able to improve their relationships with their stakeholders and work more effectively to achieve mutually beneficial goals.
2. Introduction

One of the greatest challenges facing the public relations profession is the development of effective forms of evaluation that clearly demonstrate how the work of public relations professionals contributes to the achievements and well-being of an organisation (Hon and Grunig, 1999). As a profession, public relations tends to have very basic measurement tools. As a result, the profession’s primary modus operandi is that of a promotional culture, with measurement that evaluates the effectiveness of the communication tools used in a campaign, rather than measuring the impact on the relationship that the communication is trying to affect.

Both academics and public relations professionals have articulated the need for the profession to develop more scientific rigor in the form of relationship measurement tools (Hon and Grunig, 1999; Bruning and Ledingham, 2000). While this need has been evident for some time, accurate tools based on scientific evidence have not been developed:

Many public relations practitioners have not incorporated relationship management theory into the practice of public relations because the quantitative and qualitative benefits derived from effective relationship management have been, more often than not, inferred rather than demonstrated (Bruning, 2005; p 1).

The public relations profession began its transition into the sphere of relationship management with the work of Sedgwick (1974) and was furthered by Clark and Mills (1982). This was a very positive move for the profession as it signalled that public relations professionals needed to be
involved not only in tactical work, but more importantly in all communication work throughout an organisation. This saw public relations practitioners involved in grass roots work and also saw them move much closer to the CEO of the organisation, giving them the opportunity to influence opinion at the top.

The past decade has seen a rise in the number of organisations placing advertisements in major daily newspapers, such as The Age, Australian Financial Review and The Australian, for ‘relationship managers’. Despite this increased focus on OPRs, there remains an absence of accurate and reliable tools that can be used to quantify their success. It is difficult to demonstrate value to senior management when there are few tools to measure output and quantify how public relations has assisted an organisation in achieving its goals.

By experience, it is noticeable that the public relations profession has been successful in convincing some senior management that its relationships with both external and internal stakeholders (not just the target audience for the sale of a product/service) are critical in influencing the success of the business. This has not been achieved through proven methodology and measurable outcomes, but by less convincing calls to common-sense and trial-and-error tactics. Clearly, the argument for public relations to be an integral part of any organisation at all levels is much more powerful when there is a range of measurable outcomes that can be compared to a benchmark.
Researchers such as Hon and Grunig (1999), Huang (2001), Bruning and Ledingham (2000) have clearly identified a gap in the way the public relations profession measures the outcomes of its work.

Academics such as Hon and Grunig (1999) and Bruning and Ledingham (2000) articulate the need for a tool to help organisations to numerically measure a relationship, defining it in quantitative units. By breaking down the components of an OPR, this research investigates whether it is possible to use these components to develop a more accurate tool that can define an organisation’s relationships in quantifiable units.

2.1 Aims of the thesis

Hon and Grunig (1999) refer to two key types of OPRs – exchange and communal. Exchange relationships refer to OPRs with stakeholders that involve an exchange, usually between an organisation, its customers and suppliers. Communal relationships refer to OPRs with stakeholders that are important to the viability of the organisation but do not involve financial transactions. These include relationships with government, the local community, community groups and activist groups.

This research focuses on the external, communal OPRs of an organisation and where OPRs are discussed, it should be assumed that external, communal OPRs are being referred to. The aim of this research is to develop a model or formula that more accurately quantifies the relationships
between an organisation and its publics or stakeholders using a methodology that can be used on a one-off or on-going basis.
2.2 Research questions

The primary research question that this thesis explores is:

What components of a communal relationship can be defined to more accurately reflect the status of the relationship that exists between an organisation and its publics?

In examining this question, a number of subsidiary questions also need to be answered. These include:

1. What are the types of OPRs and how are they currently measured?
2. What are the components of an OPR?
3. Which components of an OPR are the most important in accurately reflecting the status of the relationship?

2.3 Sources of data and methodology

The research methodology comprised three phases. Firstly, the research used to explore these questions started with qualitative interviews with employees and community group representatives from three local government municipalities to explore the relationships between each Council and its community. The interviews allowed the components of an OPR present in the relationships between the Councils and their communities to be identified. The belief at this stage is that the more components that can be incorporated into the survey, the more accurately the survey is likely to be in reflecting the status of the relationship.
Secondly, the interview results were translated into a series of statements that reflected the components identified in the interviews and these were included in a survey. The survey was sent to a random sample of ratepayers in the three local government areas. The survey allowed the respondent to make two-dimensional assessments of the statements, meaning that respondents ranked statements according to both the level of satisfaction and the level of importance. This is different from the other tools that have been developed for previous research that only ask the participant to rate the satisfaction of a component.

Finally, a series of formulas were developed and applied to the survey results to determine a numerical relationship score.

2.4 Research contribution

The study’s findings contribute to defining the components that can be used to develop a tool that can be used by the public relations profession to more accurately reflect the status of communal relationships, and, perhaps more importantly, the changes in the status of the relationships over time. Increased objectivity in reflecting the status of the relationships between an organisation and its publics is likely to enable the profession to elevate its perceived status by providing a better service to organisations and their publics. This, in turn, will allow senior management teams to see clearly the value that public relations can provide to maximise the success of the organisation.
The data obtained from the interviews and the surveys provide insights into the priorities and expectations that external stakeholder groups have of organisations and how these expectations can be grouped into three key areas – how they are treated, the value that the relationships represent to them and how effective the communication is. The results provide practitioners with a valuable insight into ways of improving these OPRs, which in turn could assist organisations in achieving their goals.

In addition, based on the findings of this research, tertiary education establishments may need to review their curriculum to ensure that development in relationship management - including the findings of this research - is taught to public relations students.

It should be noted that the findings of this study are limited by:

a. Lack of previous research into this area;
b. Limited sample sizes;

Additional research is required before developing a tool that perhaps represents a totally accurate measure of communal OPRs.
3. Literature review

3.1 Introduction

There are four logical questions that need to be answered in reviewing existing literature about the tools available to measure OPRs. These consist of:

- What defines an Organisation-Public Relationship (OPR);
- What are the different types of OPRs;
- What are the components of an OPR; and
- What existing models have been used to analyse them.

Previous work by researchers and the experience of senior public relations practitioners demonstrates that an organisation cannot survive in a vacuum; it can only survive if it has relationships with different groups of internal and external stakeholders (Hon and Grunig, 1999; Valin, 2004; Ledingham and Bruning, 2000).

The relationship with both internal and external stakeholders fits into two key categories - exchange relationships and communal OPRs (Clark and Mills, 1979; Hon and Grunig, 1999).

Exchange relationships are described as the relationships that rely on an economic transfer, such as with customers and suppliers, whereas communal relationships are relationships with external stakeholders that are not reliant on economic transactions. Although they are not trading
partners, these stakeholders can still have an impact on the viability of an organisation (Hon and Grunig, 1999).

Examples of communal relationships are those between an organisation and community groups, activist groups, governments and the local community. Local government clearly has a strong connection amongst such groups, and was therefore chosen as the case study for this thesis.

Previous research has revealed a number of individual components that exist within OPRs (Grunig and Huang, 2000; Lendrum, 2000; Kelly, 1998; Bruning and Ledingham, 2000). These components are present in both exchange and communal OPRs and this research has grouped the components into three themes: communication, governance and value. These themes were selected by examining all the components that were identified in the literature review and seeing if they could be grouped according to their characteristics. The reason for this grouping of the components into themes was to allow for the results of the survey to be analysed at both a component and a theme level.

*Communication* covers not only how information is provided but also what information is communicated and how it manages expectations. *Governance* deals with the way that the organisation behaves when it is dealing with external stakeholders, while *value* describes the tangible benefits that the stakeholders believe they derive from the relationship with the organisation. Knowledge about, and exploration of, these components was vital for this research, allowing the researcher to deconstruct an OPR and develop a
survey that included statements relating to individual components of the relationship as well as statements that related to the relationship in totality.

The following literature review revealed that a number of models have been developed in an attempt to analyse relationships or components of relationships (Hon and Grunig, 1999; Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis and Cesaria, 2000; Bruning and Ledingham, 2000). It was important to review the techniques that these researchers had used to develop their models. Indeed, the techniques used in the existing models helped guide the development of the researcher’s survey and the analysis of the data.
3.2 Defining an Organisation-Public Relationship

The complexity of relationship management between an organisation and its publics is demonstrated by the multiple domains of its origins, including interpersonal relationships and psychological aspects (Stafford and Canary, 1991), public relations activities (Grunig and Huang, 2000; Broom, Casey and Ritchey, 2000) and contributing organisational theory (Iacobucci and Ostrom, 1996).

Interpersonal relationships begin when there is perceived interdependency between two or more people (Coombs, 2001; O’Hair, Freidrich, Weimann and Weinmann, 1995).

Huang (2001) believes the concept of interdependency can be applied to an organisation-public relationship (OPR) because a relationship only exists when the interdependency has a direct consequence for both the organisation and the publics concerned. This view is supported by Hon and Grunig (1999).

The belief that principles of interpersonal relationships are similar to organisation-public relationships is shared by Lendrum (2000):

Partnerships, whether business or personal, are about people. Understanding what makes a successful personal relationship will provide an insight into the qualities required of a successful business relationship (Lendrum, 2000; p49).
This concept of interdependency and consequence can be seen in the definitions of OPRs by Broom, Casey and Ritchey (2000):

These relationships have properties that are distinct from the identities, attributes and perceptions of the individuals and social collectivities in the relationship. Though dynamic in nature, organisation-public relationships can be described at a single point in time (Broom, Casey and Ritchey, 2000; p18).

Bruning and Ledingham (1999) adopt a similar position, defining OPRs as “a state of existence in which the actions of either entity affect the economic, social, political and/or cultural well-being of the other entity” (Ledingham and Bruning, 1999; p62).

This research supports the view that OPRs are characterised by interdependency. Given the inherent complexity of an OPR, it became important to the researcher that the relationship in this case study be broken down in as much detail as possible in order to be able to understand the issues within an OPR and be able to dissect their importance.

Similar to Lendrum (2000) and Huang (2001), Bruning and Ledingham (1999) describe the ideal OPR as one where both parties derive some value or benefit by participating in the relationship. The concept that a value proposition is embedded in communal OPRs has been explored in this research along with the themes of governance and communication.

Early research by Clark and Mills (1979), using similar principles underlying interpersonal relationships, define relationships broadly into exchange
relationships, where the outcome can be defined in economic terms, and communal relationships where the concerns are based more on the welfare of the other party (for instance where a Council might be considerate for a community group’s needs). Clark and Mills’ (1979) classification of OPRs into exchange and communal has been adapted and supported by Hon and Grunig (1999). This research accepts the definition of exchange and communal OPRs and chooses to focus on the latter. Although perhaps more difficult to pin-point, this research supports the notion that communal OPRs are just as important as exchange OPRs in the success of an organisation.

**Importance of an OPR**

Hon and Grunig (1999) highlight the importance of OPRs by drawing the conclusion that an organisation can only achieve its goals if it develops relationships with both communal and exchange stakeholders:

> …effective organisations are able to achieve their goals because they choose goals that are valued both by management and by strategic constituencies both inside and outside the organisation (Hon and Grunig, 1999; p12).

This view is shared by Valin, past president of Global Alliance, in a speech titled *Overview of public relations around the world and principles of modern practice* at the CONFERP conference in Brasilia, (2004):

> These (public relations) strategies are implemented by developing and deploying communication tools and instruments that are designed to create and manage positive relationships with influential publics. We define influential publics as those believed capable of delaying or accelerating the pursued objectives of an organisation (Valin, 2004).
However, Hon and Grunig (1999) and Lendrum (2000) recognised that an organisation does not need to have a relationship with every public in order to achieve its goals. It can make a conscious decision not to engage in a relationship with a particular stakeholder group.

This, of course, is particularly true of communal OPRs when an organisation can simply decide not to engage with a particular stakeholder group. However, there are certainly varying degrees of interdependency within both communal and exchange relationships and consequently varying types of OPRs.
3.3 Types of OPRs


Rawlins (2006) considers that stakeholders can be categorised into four key groups depending on their level of support and activity. These four groups include (i) advocates (active and supportive); (ii) dormant (inactive and supportive); (iii) adversarial (non-supportive and active); and (iv) apathetic (non-supportive and inactive).

Rawlins’ (2006) and Casey, Broom and Ritchey’s (2000) research acknowledges that all relationships can change as the situation changes, meaning that the relationship can improve or decline over time as the situation and consequence or ‘value proposition’ changes. When this occurs, a stakeholder can move from one quadrant to another, i.e. from advocates to dormant (see Diagram 1 below).
Diagram 1. Rawlins’ classifications of OPRs

While Rawlins’ (2006) version can be expressed as a quadrant, as shown in the diagram above, Lendrum’s model (2000) represents different types of relationships on a continuum with 11 different types of exchange relationships. The types and descriptions of the relationships defined in Lendrum’s continuum (2000; pp 13 - 28) start with a zero relationship category which matches Hon and Grunig’s (1999) belief that there are some stakeholders with whom an organisation does not need to have a relationship to achieve its goals:

Type 0       Zero relationships category, where an organisation makes a conscious and deliberate choice not to have a relationship with an organisation or group of people (Lendrum, 2000; p13).

Lendrum (2000) continued outlining his spectrum of relationships from zero relationship through to pioneering and community relationships:

Type 9.   Pioneering relationships
Pioneering type 9 relationships capture those paradigm shifters and pioneers daring to seek new boundaries and break old rules. They are often spoken about as brave, bold and different relationships and are at the next level of maturity, interdependence and complexity for partnerships and alliances.
Type 10. Community relationships
Community relationships are reserved for extended networks, supply and value chains that we are starting to see develop in airlines, business and financial services, computers and communications, pharmaceuticals, automotive, entertainment and leisure, healthcare and chemicals, energy and resource sectors and elsewhere (abridged version from Lendrum, 2000; p28).

Lendrum’s (2000) continuum of relationships types provides a useful understanding of the categories of basic exchange relationships and the benefits to the organisation of improving these OPRs. This research adopts Hon and Grunig’s (2000) position that OPRs are vital for the success of an organisation and that multiple forms of OPRs, similar to Rawlins’ (2006) quadrant or Lendrum’s (2000) spectrum of exchange relationships, can and do exist.

Hung (2005) also illustrates that different types of relationships on a continuum can be expressed as concern for self interest at one end and concern for others’ interests at the opposite end. Hung’s continuum shows eight types of relationships – exploitive, manipulative, contractual, symbiotic, exchange, covenantal, mutual communal and one-sided communal.

There is no doubt that good exchange relationships are vital for the survival of most organisations, however, there are communal relationships that could be considered equally as important, based on their potential impact on the organisation. They include an organisation’s relationships with local community, media,
governments, regulators, NGOs, volunteers, industry associations, competitors and others. Just as the quality of customer/supplier relationships will have an impact on the immediate and long-term success of an organisation (Cuganesan, Briers and Chua, 1999), so too the relationships with other internal and external stakeholders can also determine the success of an organisation.

Hon and Grunig (1999) further define their two nominated types of relationships. Their definition of an exchange relationship is similar to Clark and Mills (1979) in that it continues to focus on the reciprocal nature of this type of relationship, usually determined by benefits of equal value. Their definition of communal relationships focuses on an organisation’s social responsibility, noting that an organisation may get nothing in return from the relationship, but may add value to the society from which it derives its success.

Hon and Grunig (1999) note that a positive communal relationship ‘greatly reduces the likelihood of negative behaviours from stakeholders – litigation, strikes, boycotts, negative publicity, and the like’ (p21). While these communal relationships do not have such a clear cause-and-effect as exchange relationships, developing positive communal relationships is none-the-less of equal importance.

While it is plausible that communal relationships can have direct and indirect commercial value and contribute to the stability and long-term profitability of the company, the value from good communal relationships could be best
defined as the stakeholders giving the organisation their licence or consent to operate (Grunig and Grunig, 2000). Murphy (1991) argues that organisations are seldom purely philanthropic as they rarely sacrifice their own interests entirely. This supports the notion that there is usually some long-term benefit for the organisation in developing and maintaining strong communal OPRs.

In an exchange relationship, the relationship is based on equality in economic terms; however, in a communal relationship it would appear that this requirement does not always exist (Huang, 2001). In particular, Grunig and Grunig (2000) differentiate between exchange and communal OPRs by implying that an exchange relationship is primarily the function of marketing communications, while a communal relationship is the primary responsibility of the public relations practitioner.

In summary, there are appear to be two distinct types of relationships - exchange and communal. Within these two types, the quality can vary, as highlighted by Lendrum (2000), Hung (2005) and Rawlins (2006) based on a range of different factors.

This research will focus on communal relationships. It is likely that the relationships of interviewees and the relationships of those receiving the survey will be different with the various Councils, and will vary across the range referred to in the literature review.
3.4 The role of the public relations practitioner in managing communal relationships.

A key question in understanding the relevance of this research is to review current thinking in relation to the role of the public relations practitioner.

According to Wahlstrom (1992) communication exists for one purpose – to influence human behaviour. This influence is applied to help change an individual’s beliefs and attitudes (Sedgwick, 1974).

Valin (2004) suggests that public relations is the management, through communication, of perceptions and strategic relationships between an organisation and its internal and external stakeholders, for mutual benefit and a greater social order. This research questions if communication is the best way to influence an OPR.

Toth (2000) presents a model of public relations that refers to it as an interpersonal communication process that results in the building of relationships with core publics. This view is also shared by Center and Jackson (1995) who support the central role of relationship building and maintenance in public relations.

Cutlip, Center and Broom (1994) define public relations as ‘the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and the publics on whom its success or failure
depends’ (p1). Ehling (1992) believes that a shift from influencing opinion to relationship management is an important change in the primary role of public relations. This emerging focus poses some inherent problems for the public relations profession, as Hon and Grunig (1999; p12) note:

Many practitioners and scholars believe that the fundamental goal of public relations is building relationships with an organisation’s key constituencies. Yet, most public relations evaluation has focused on measuring the outputs and outcomes of public relations programs, not on measuring relationships.

Back in 1987, Pavlik noted that no public relations research had defined a unit of measurement for relationships or used the relationship as the unit of analysis. Duck (1986) suggested that it would be difficult to assess or measure an OPR because a relationship was subjective rather than objective. He also noted that a relationship should not be regarded as having a permanent state because it constantly changes.

Much earlier, Sedgwick (1974; p10) attempted to formalise the relationship between communication and behaviour by using the following formulas:

\[ P = f \left( \frac{B+A}{V} \right) \]

and

\[ BE = f \left( \frac{P}{N} \right) \leftarrow (FR + PE + PS + FE) \]

The following definitions help to give understanding to these equations:

*Philosophy* (P) is a function of *beliefs* (B) and *attitudes* (A) as modified by *values* (V). *Behaviour* (BE) is a function of *philosophy* as modified by *needs* (N) as affected by a *frame of reference* (FR), *past experience* (PE), *the present situation* (PS) and *future expectations* (FE) (Sedgwick, 1974; p9).
While this formula showed a correlation between the different elements of philosophy and behaviour, it did not serve as a formula to accurately quantify and determine the status of a relationship. Sedgwick attempted to deconstruct the impact of communication and behaviour on a relationship, but did not try to deconstruct a relationship into its different, individual components.

The literature reviewed (Ehling, 1992; Cutlip, Center and Broom, 1994; et al) provides sufficient evidence and research to suggest that the role of public relations is shifting from having a primary focus on communication to focusing on managing the OPRs that are likely to affect the organisation’s ability to achieve its overall goals. The literature demonstrates that communication only exists for one purpose, which is to influence behaviour and serves no other purpose. The literature validates that there may be other more effective ways of achieving this outcome.

Bruning and Larnbe (2002) state that the focus of public relations should be on communicating with the intent to both transferring content and also to create a better relationship between the organisation and its publics.

While the focus of the profession may have changed, the researcher believes that the tactics remain firmly entrenched in the communication arena, as noted by Bruning and Larnbe (2002) rather than encompassing other relationship management tactics.
3.5 Models of measuring relationships

Hung (2005) understood the complexities of relationship measurement and the challenges that it posed the profession.

> Relationship management cannot be measured by measuring the relationship outcomes. There are a various other factors that define the quality of the relationship between and organisation and its publics (Hung, 2005; p462).

As campaigns designed to influence behaviour are often long-term, Hon and Grunig (1999) believed that public relations professionals needed a way to measure relationships so they could track short-term changes rather than needing to wait for a demonstration of the required behaviour, which may take many years to eventuate.

Hon and Grunig (1999) developed a tool to measure the perception of the relationship, but not the relationship itself.

They developed a questionnaire that asks respondents to use a 1- 9 scale to indicate the degree to which they agree or disagree with 46 statements that apply to the relationship. These statements were grouped into six key components of a relationship.

The following are examples of statements included in the six themes of Hon and Grunig’s survey:

**Control mutuality**
1. This organization and people like me are attentive to what each other say.
**Satisfaction**
2. Both the organization and people like me benefit from the relationship.

**Commitment**
3. There is a lasting bond between this organization and people like me.

**Trust**
7. Sound principles seem to guide this organization’s behaviour (Hon and Grunig, 1999; p28 – 29).

To calculate the results of their survey, the scores for each statement of the 46 statements are averaged so overall ‘mean’ scores can be calculated for each of the six components.

The methodology was tested with a sample of 200 recipients and the results provided quantifiable evidence of the public’s perception of five well-known American organisations.

The organisations used in the research were corporations (General Electric and Microsoft), NGOs (National Rifle Association – NRA - and Red Cross) and the government’s Social Security Administration.

Not surprisingly, the Red Cross achieved the highest scores across all categories, with the exception of the exchange component where the NRA ranked the highest, followed closely by Microsoft and General Electric.

The ranking scale used by Hon and Grunig (1999) asked respondents to rank the level of satisfaction with the statement in the survey as it applied to
the organisation. The respondents were not asked to rank the importance of the statement as it applied to the relationship that they had with each organisation, a distinction that is important for this particular research.

Hon and Grunig (1999) suggest that research needs to develop measures of a relationship in addition to their work, which provides an indication of how the relationship is perceived. It is the goal of this research to fill that gap and produce measures that map the relationship:

> Researchers also need to move forward to develop measures of the relationship itself. Those measures would allow public relations practitioners to observe and measure relationships in ways that might not be captured by measuring perception of the relationships alone (Hon and Grunig, 1999; p38).

Work by Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis and Cesaria (2000) for the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) Research Foundation resulted in the publication of a tool to measure organisational trust – a much narrower subject than a relationship in its totality.

The Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis and Cesaria (2000) model used a similar format to Hon and Grunig (1999), using a questionnaire-based survey to ask recipients to allocate a numerical score to a statement as they saw it being appropriate or relevant to their relationship with a particular organisation.

The Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis and Cesaria (2000) model included 29 questions and used a 1 – 5 ranking scale.
Like Hon and Grunig (1999), Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis and Cesaria (2000) only asked respondents to rank the satisfaction of each statement. They did not ask the respondents to rank how important the statement was to them. Therefore, the importance of each statement could not be considered in assessing the final scores. Doing so may have improved the validity and accuracy of the models.

Bruning and Ledingham (1999) conducted research to develop an OPR scale and to determine the relationship dimensions that operate within OPRs. They adopted a similar approach to the previous two models in that they conducted a survey with 27 questions that focused on satisfaction, expectations and communication. Of the 27, six questions dealt with the demographics of the participants giving the researcher the ability to drill down for answers by sub-group. During a phone interview, the participants were asked to score each question using a 1 – 10 scale, with 1 indicating they strongly disagree and 10 being in strong agreement.

Bruning and Ledingham (1999) believe that any tool used to measure relationships should incorporate many components of an OPR rather than using a single component, such as trust, to assess the status of the relationship. Given that various researchers have established that relationships are inherently complex, it would seem obvious that no single component is going to be able to evaluate a relationship in its entirety.
3.6 Components of OPRs

Because Bruning and Ledingham (1999) believed that a relationship measurement tool should incorporate many components of an OPR, it was important to determine what components of an OPR had been identified by other researchers. This section of the literature review looks at these components. The findings have been summarised in Table 1 on page 42. Table 4 on page 90 also lists the components that were identified in this section and cross-references the components to the interview results and the surveys that were conducted for this research.

Huang (2001) defines components of an OPR as trust, commitment, a rightful power to influence and satisfaction with each other and the outcome. Huang (2001) built on the research of psychology and interpersonal relationships to identify four indicators that can be used to assess the quality of an OPR. These included:

**Control mutuality** – The degree to which parties agree on who has the rightful power to influence the other. Although some imbalance is natural, stable relationships require that organisations and publics each have some control over the other.

**Trust** – One party’s level of confidence in, and willingness to, open oneself to the other party. There are three dimensions to trust:

i. **integrity** - the belief that an organisation is fair and just;

ii. **dependability** - the belief that an organisation will do what it says it will do; and

iii. **competence** - the belief that an organisation has the ability to do what it says it will do.

**Satisfaction** – The extent to which each party feels favourably towards the other because positive expectations about the relationship are reinforced. A satisfying relationship is one in which the benefits outweigh the costs.
**Commitment** – The extent to which each party believes and feels that the relationship is worth spending energy to maintain and promote. Two dimensions of commitment are (a) continuance commitment, which refers to a certain line of action, and (b) affective commitment, which is an emotional orientation (Huang, 2001).

Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis and Cesaria (2000) focused their research on the trust component of an employee/employer relationship and developed a model for measuring organisational trust. They refer to internal trust as an organisation’s social capital and a predictor of its effectiveness. Their research proved that an organisation with a higher level of internal culture of trust outperforms those with lower levels. Their definition of organisational trust is:

The organisation’s willingness, based upon its culture and communication behaviours in relationships and transactions, to be vulnerable based on the belief that another individual, group or organisation is competent, open and honest, concerned, reliable and identified with common goals, norms and values (Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis and Cesaria, 2000; p4).

Work by Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis and Cesaria (2000) for the IABC Research Foundation, resulted in the publication of a tool to measure organisational trust.

Their model focused on five factors:

1. Competence (co-workers’ and leader effectiveness)
2. Openness and honesty (amount of accuracy and sincerity of shared information)
3. Concern for employees (exhibition of empathy, tolerance and safety)
4. Reliability (consistent and dependable actions)
5. Identification (sharing common goals, values and beliefs) (Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis and Cesaria, 2000; p1).
Hon and Grunig (1999) allege that the perception of a relationship can be measured by focusing on the following six key components of a relationship:

1. Control mutuality
2. Trust
3. Satisfaction
4. Commitment
5. Exchange relationship

Hon and Grunig (1999) believe that exchange relationships never develop the same level of trust as communal relationships although they do note that mutually beneficial exchange relationships can build trust and other positive characteristics in the long-term.

This view is contrary to Lendrum (2000) who believes that exchange relationships at the partnering level need to have extremely high levels of trust due to the exchange of sensitive, confidential information.

Research by Grunig, Grunig and Ehling (1992) highlighted the components of an OPR as reciprocity, trust, mutual legitimacy, openness, mutual satisfaction and mutual understanding. Similarly, research by Kelly (1998) identified four components of a relationship. These are reciprocity, responsibility, reporting and relationship nurturing. Likewise, Bruning and Ledingham (1999) identified five characteristics being trust, openness, involvement, investment and commitment. Lendrum’s (2000) characteristics of a successful supplier relationship included commitment, equity, trust, mutual goals/objectives, implementation and timely communication and responsiveness.
It is apparent that the components used by all of the above researchers are very similar. Naturally, some may use a different name for a particular component, however, they all essentially cover the same topics. For this thesis, the components identified in the literature review have been grouped into three themes, which allow the components to be evaluated more easily. These themes are communication (type and regularity of communication), governance (organisational behaviour) and value (benefits to stakeholders).

The components fit into these themes:

- Communication – this refers to the symmetrical two-way communication referred to by Grunig and others;
- Governance – refers to the way an organisation treats an external group with whom they may wish to have a relationship. Components such as respect, trustworthiness and honesty fit into this theme; and
- Value – referring to benefits that exist to either party in having a relationship with the other.

In an exchange relationship, value has been shown to be the most important factor in maintaining an OPR. Lendrum has shown value to be the main motivator in a relationship and this is reinforced by Hon and Grunig (1999) who assert that the most productive relationships are those that provide benefits to both parties in the relationship. Supporting the concept of a value proposition in an exchange relationship model, Cuganesan, Briers and Chua (1999) believed that an organisation’s strategies define how it will create value for its customers. The concept of a value proposition is also
referred to as the consequences of the relationship (Hon and Grunig) and benefits of the relationship (Cutlip, Center and Broom, 1985).

In relation to adding value, the concept is quite simple in an exchange relationship. However, stakeholders that fit into the communal relationship category pose a more interesting challenge because the value propositions that are important to them will vary.

Egan and Gerard’s (1993) theory of a value proposition for both profit and not-for-profit organisations supports the belief that a value proposition exists within communal relationships. However, the value may not be expressed in purely monetary terms:

Well-run businesses and institutions create wealth for the society in which they operate. While for-profit businesses create material wealth, not-for-profit and human services institutions create human capital or wealth. Counselling the troubled and helping them manage problems in living more effectively, creating learning opportunities for young and old alike, helping children grow and develop, healing the sick, providing stability and a sense of belonging through the formation of a religious community – all these activities create human capital, human wealth (value). Furthermore, since the best for-profit companies tend to develop or leverage their human assets in the pursuit of financial goals, they benefit society by creating both material and human wealth (Egan and Gerard, 1993; p9).

This research aims to clarify the importance of value in a communal relationship against the other components of communication and governance. Table 1 summarises the components identified in the literature, provides a definition and categorises them according to the theme (communication, governance and value) to which this research believes they
belong. It should be noted that some components fit into more than one theme.
Table 1 - The components of an organisation-public relationship that were identified in the literature review.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components identified in the literature review</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility</td>
<td>The degree to which both parties are prepared to make themselves accessible to the other.</td>
<td>Communication Governance</td>
<td>Grunig and Huang (2000) Bruning and Ledingham (1999)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>The appropriateness of the communication in terms of understanding, frequency, balance and mode.</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Lendrum (2000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>The skill levels of an organisation to be able to deliver on what it has promised.</td>
<td>Governance</td>
<td>Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis and Cesaria (2000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern</td>
<td>The level of concern that is displayed for others by the organisation.</td>
<td>Value Governance</td>
<td>Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis and Cesaria (2000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control mutuality</td>
<td>The degree to which the decision-making is shared.</td>
<td>Governance</td>
<td>Huang (2001) Hon and Grunig (1999)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity</td>
<td>Similar to control mutuality in the decision-making process but also extended to which the stakeholders are treated with respect (as an equal).</td>
<td>Governance</td>
<td>Lendrum (2000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honesty</td>
<td>The accuracy of the information that is shared by the organisation.</td>
<td>Governance Communication</td>
<td>Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis and Cesaria (2000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification</td>
<td>The degree to which the parties are prepared to be identified as being party to the relationship.</td>
<td>Governance Communication Value</td>
<td>Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis and Cesaria (2000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Components identified in the literature review</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment</td>
<td>The degree to which both parties are prepared to invest in the relationship.</td>
<td>Governance</td>
<td>Bruning and Ledingham (1999)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement</td>
<td>The level of involvement stakeholders have in an organisation’s decision-making process.</td>
<td>Communication Governance</td>
<td>Bruning and Ledingham (1999)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutual legitimacy</td>
<td>The legitimacy that each party has to have a relationship with each other.</td>
<td>Governance</td>
<td>Grunig, Grunig and Ehling (1992)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutual satisfaction</td>
<td>The level to which both parties are satisfied with the relationship.</td>
<td>Communication Governance</td>
<td>Grunig, Grunig and Ehling (1992)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutual understanding</td>
<td>The degree to which each party understands the position, needs and wants of the other.</td>
<td>Communication Governance</td>
<td>Grunig, Grunig and Ehling (1992)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>The transparency of an organisation in the way it shares information with its communal stakeholders.</td>
<td>Communication Governance</td>
<td>Grunig, Grunig and Ehling (1992)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reciprocity</td>
<td>The degree to which the components of the relationship are enforced by each party.</td>
<td>Governance</td>
<td>Kelly (1998)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship nurturing</td>
<td>The degree to which the organisation tries to understand the dynamics of the relationship and tries to nurture its development.</td>
<td>Communication Governance</td>
<td>Kelly (1998)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>Related to trust – The organisation will deliver on its promises.</td>
<td>Governance</td>
<td>Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis and Cesaria (2000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporting</td>
<td>The level of accountability that each party shows to the other in relation to reporting on the agreed outcomes or actions.</td>
<td>Communication Governance</td>
<td>Kelly (1998)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>The degree to which both parties accept responsibility for the agreed outcomes of the relationship.</td>
<td>Governance</td>
<td>Kelly (1998)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Components identified in the literature review</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>The degree to which both parties are satisfied with the outcomes and status of the relationship.</td>
<td>Governance Value</td>
<td>Huang (2001) Hon and Grunig (1999)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The literature review has answered two of the key subsidiary questions that this research seeks to answer.

i.  What are the types of OPRs?

The literature review has established that there are two key types of OPRs, communal and exchange (Hon and Grunig, 1999) and that there can be different types of communal and exchange relationships. Rawlins (2006) classified communal relationships into four different types. Lendrum (2000) displayed a continuum of exchange relationships.

ii. What are the components of an OPR?
The literature review has found 25 components that exist within an OPR. These have been outlined in Table 1 in this chapter.

These findings will be important in finding an answer to the primary question of this research – What components of a communal relationship can be used to more accurately reflect the status of the relationship that exists between an organisation and its publics?
4. Research Methodology

This chapter contains an overview of the methodology (Section 4.1) and then a detailed description of the methods used in Stages 1, 2 and 3 of the research (Sections 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4).

4.1 Overview of the methodology

This research aims to answer the question – What components of a communal relationship can be defined to more accurately reflect the status of the relationship that exists between an organisation and its publics?

The literature review highlighted the need for researchers ‘to develop measures of the relationship itself’ (Hon and Grunig, 1999: p38). Developing such a measure would assist the profession to both undertake its work more effectively and quantify the results of its campaigns to senior managers.

This research focuses on the communal relationships that local governments have with their residents and ratepayers. The local government sector was selected for this research because each local government provides a range of services to its community across infrastructure, social services, economic development, planning and community capacity building.
All local governments have a communal relationship with their community. While it could be argued that this relationship is partly an exchange relationship due to the payment of rates and other fees, the level of money paid by an individual is not directly related to an exchange of a single service, rather, it covers a multitude of services that the ratepayer may or may not use. In addition, the payment of rates is compulsory, rather than optional as it is in an exchange relationship.

This research, conducted in three different local government areas, used both qualitative and quantitative methods to try to answer the research question.

The qualitative research, consisting of 35 face-to-face interviews with employees and community group representatives from the three local government areas, aimed to explore the different components that were present within the OPRs.

Each interview lasted for approximately 45 minutes, the majority of which was spent talking about the relationship, including the good and bad parts and things the participant would like to change or keep. (See Appendix 1 for interview questions.)

The interviews were carried out in the workplace of the employees or in a venue where the community group representative felt relaxed and at ease.
The majority of the interviews with the community representatives were conducted in their homes, however, some were conducted at the clubhouse of the community group (e.g. surf-life saving clubs).

Community representatives were initially contacted by the Council to ensure that they felt comfortable participating. On arrival, the researcher presented the participant with a letter of introduction provided by the Council to validate the authenticity of the researcher.

The interviews were recorded (with permission), transcribed and reviewed. The transcripts identified the relationship components that were common in the relationships across the three different local government areas.

Having identified the components that were present in the relationships between the Councils and the community, the research used quantitative methods to collect numerical data relating to each of the components. To achieve this a survey was developed that contained 34 statements, each statement categorised as relevant to either the communication, governance or value theme as described in Table 4 on page 85.

Recipients were asked to respond to each statement by ranking it from 1 to 9 based on the level of importance to them and also from 1 to 9 based on the level of satisfaction. They were also asked to rank the overall relationship on a 1 to 9 scale and this became the benchmark score against
which the accuracy of those formulas developed to quantify the relationship were measured (see Appendix 3).

The surveys were mailed to participants who were randomly selected from the Council’s ratepayer database, in a Council labelled envelope, with a reply paid envelope included. The survey was mailed to 1000 participants in Council A’s area. This resulted in 254 surveys being returned. Because of the high response rate, the sample size was reduced to 500 for Council B and C. A similar response rate was experienced with the sample selected for Council B and C.

In total, 465 completed surveys were received and entered into a database. This quantitative data was then analysed to determine if the OPRs could be accurately measured.

Six formulas were developed to analyse the data. Two are single-dimensional formulas analysing only satisfaction scores and four are two-dimensional formulas analysing both satisfaction and importance. Previous research has only ever considered satisfaction; however, this research explored the relevance of including importance as well. Finally, the two-dimensional formulas used two approaches to calculate the relationship score in order to determine the most accurate method of quantifying the relationship.
4.2 Stage 1 Methods

Miles and Huberman (1994) claimed that one of the benefits of using qualitative research methods, in a natural setting, is that the researcher has an ability to be close to the participants, enabling the researcher to gain a better understanding of complex issues. Miles and Huberman believe that interviews are well suited to studies on relationships, providing the researcher with opportunities to explore the ‘how and why’ of a relationship. Their research supports the use of qualitative interviews as part of this project. This view is supported by Bedford (2007) who believes that interviews result in a rich source of data collection and are often used for anthropological styles of interviews similar to that used for this research project.

4.2.1 Defining the interview questions

Thirty five interviews were conducted for this research. A standard set of questions were asked during each interview (see Appendix 1 for the structure of the interviews). The aim of the interviews was to determine which of the components of an OPR identified in the literature review were present in communal relationships between the Council and its community.
4.2.2 Interview participants

Three local governments were selected to participate in this research. They were selected due to the different relationships that each Council was expected to have with its constituents. The three Councils represented different geographic areas.

**Council A**  
Suburban New South Wales.

**Council B**  
Interface Victoria (interface meaning it contained both rural properties and suburban dwellings that were part of metropolitan Melbourne).

**Council C**  
Regional Victoria.

In addition to representing different geographic groups, the management style of the Councils was also different which could potentially affect the scores. The management styles of each Council, as determined by the researcher, were:

**Council A**  
The elected representatives had been dismissed by the NSW government 18 months prior to the research being conducted due to the failure of the organisation to operate and govern effectively. At the time of the research, the Council was being run by a CEO with an Administrator acting as the representative of the people.

**Council B**  
This Council was run by a CEO and 11 elected representatives. The CEO and the Councillors had
adopted a ‘consensus’ model of management that facilitated the highest level of community engagement of the selected Councils.

**Council C**

This Council was operated by a CEO and 11 elected representatives. There was no distinctive management style.

The selection criteria for the Council employees were determined by their position, which reflected the extent to which they interacted with the community. All or some of the people in the following positions were interviewed at each Council:

- Mayor or Administrator (elected representative not an employee)
- CEO or General Manager
- Directors
- Managers
- Public relations or communication officers
- Community liaison officers
- Rangers
- Customer service officers

They were selected based on the level of interaction that they had with the community. Each CEO was interviewed because they determined the consultation and communication policy that each Council adopted.

The external stakeholders were randomly chosen from the people or groups that had been nominated by the Council staff. During the interviews, the Council employees and elected representatives were asked to identify community members and community groups with whom they felt that
Council had a relationship. They were not told that these people would also be interviewed as part of the research.

From this list, people were selected by the researcher at random to be interviewed. All the names that were mentioned by the Council employees or elected representatives were placed in a bowl and were drawn out by the researcher. The names of the interviewees have not been included for confidentiality reasons, however, the titles of the participants have been included in Appendix 2.

In addition to interviews, an audit was conducted of each Council’s communication activities to identify if there were any marked differences that may affect the results of the survey. In essence, the audit aimed to identify if any of the three Councils had a more extensive communication or consultation program than the others. It looked at the main forms of communication that the Councils used to manage their relationship with the local community.
4.3 Stage 2 Methods

The Delphi survey technique was used for this research, as it is a technique recommended (Bedford, 2007) where the research is looking to achieve a group consensus. For this research, the idea is to reach a group consensus about the quality of the relationship that existed between each Council and their communities. It was important for each individual to express their opinion without being influenced by other members of the community.

4.3.1 Developing the survey

The format for the survey was consistent with other recognised models of evaluating perceptions of relationships (Hon and Grunig, 1999 and Bruning and Ledingham, 1998) or components of relationships such as trust (Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis and Cesaria, 2000). However, it differed from the other models as it asked the recipient to not only rank the level of satisfaction of a particular statement but also the level of importance. This thesis refers to this approach as a two-dimensional approach, as opposed to a one-dimensional approach used by Hon and Grunig (1999) and Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis and Cesaria (2000).

The two-dimensional approach was used because it gave the research a greater depth and allowed a greater breadth of analysis than that offered by a one-dimensional approach.

For example, the importance of different statements may differ between different people. If a recipient ranks the importance of a statement as a 6
out of 9 and satisfaction as a 6 out of 9, then the respondent may be quite satisfied with the relationship as it is delivering against the respondents’ expectations. But, if the importance score is 8 out of 9 and the satisfaction score is 4 out of 9 then this is indicative that the relationship is not meeting expectations and the overall score of the relationship is likely to be low. A one-dimensional model does not allow the results to be analysed with this degree of flexibility or depth.

In relation to the statements or components that were included in the survey, Bruning and Ledingham (1999) referred to the need for a tool to include a large number of the components if it was to be reliable. After reviewing the transcripts of the interviews, 23 of the 25 relationship components from the literature review were identified. These were developed into 34 statements that were incorporated into the main body of the survey. These statements could be grouped into three main themes - communication, governance and value, as seen is Table 2 below.

**Table 2. The survey statements and their segmentation into communication, governance and value themes.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Council should provide me with all the information it has about a particular issue if I am being asked to comment on the issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>It is important that Council responds to my phone calls, letters and emails in a timely manner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Council should tell the community if it has made a mistake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>It is important that Council listens to my views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Council should provide me with information about its services and facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>It is important that Council tells us what we can expect from them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Council should communicate with me directly (via a Council newsletter) on a regular basis (every two months)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>It is important that Council is trustworthy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Council should be honest in its communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Council staff should treat people with respect and at all times be polite and courteous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>It is important that Council consults widely with the community in the development of these planning policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>It is important that Council does not over-promise and under-deliver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>It is important for Council to be transparent in its decision-making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Council needs to treat all people equally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>It is important that Council makes its decisions in the best interest of the community, even though they may be controversial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>It is important that Council has a long-term vision for the community that reflects community views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Council should listen to, not be swayed by, the interests of a particular group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Council should be able to manage conflicting demands from the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>It is important that Council demonstrates that they have taken my view into consideration in their decision-making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>It is important for Council to represent all sectors of our community fairly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>It is important that Council demonstrates that they have tried to understand my views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Council should provide strong leadership for the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>It is important to recognise the traditional owners of the land and celebrate their culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Council needs to protect our natural assets such as parks and beaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Council should provide good value for money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>It is important that Council has appropriate planning policies in place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Council should keep our public spaces clean and tidy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Council needs to provide a safe environment for us to live in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Council should support other organisations that provide a valuable community service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Council should provide a forum through which people can resolve issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>It is important for Council to support those in the community that are less fortunate or have experienced hardship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Council should represent local residents at State and Federal Government levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Council should organise and promote events of cultural significance or that contribute to Xx being a great place to live</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Council should work at strengthening the social fabric of our community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The relationship components that the 34 statements relate to have been shown in Table 4 (see page 85).
Using a two-dimensional approach (asking respondents to rank importance and satisfaction) and including 23 relationship components allows the researcher to get a much more robust picture of the relationship.

### 4.3.2 The survey

In the survey, respondents were asked to rank each of the 34 statements twice. The first ranking asked participants to score the importance of each statement from 1 – 9, with one being of little importance and 9 being very important, as it related to their relationship with the Council. Respondents were also asked to rate their satisfaction with Council’s performance in delivering the outcome described by the statement using the same scale of 1 – 9, with 1 indicating a low level of satisfaction and 9 being high (see Appendix 3 for the full survey). The higher the score, the greater the level of importance and the level of satisfaction.

In addition, the survey, in a single question, asked respondents to rank their overall satisfaction with the relationship. The response to this question was then used as the relationship benchmark score. This was the score against which any measure or formula was benchmarked for accuracy. The researcher could find no literature that validates this method of accurately assessing the relationship score and recommends that further research is undertaken to see if there is a more reliable way to measure a relationship and thus be a benchmark score for testing methods of quantifying relationships.
The survey included a number of filters that allowed the researcher to segment the results into different groups such as postcodes, age groups, sex, duration living in the municipality and many more. While this was not used during this research, it is an important feature of the method as it allows the Council to analyse the data by specific sub-grouping.

4.3.3 Selection of survey recipients

The 2000 survey recipients were selected using the 1-in-k systematic sampling method with a random start (Sekaran, 2000; Bedford 2007). The participants were selected at random from the rates databases of the Councils. The selection process simply divided the number of participants on the database by the number of surveys required. So if there were 70,000 on the database and there were 1000 surveys to be distributed, a survey was sent to every 70th person on the database. The starting point on the database was selected by putting the numbers 1 – 100 in a bowl and selecting three numbers from the bowl. The following starting number was selected for each of the Councils:

- Council A 17
- Council B 54
- Council C 3

This indicated the first person to be selected and determined the starting point for the remaining participants that were selected, i.e. based on the
example above, for Council A, the first person was 17\textsuperscript{th} on the database, the second 87\textsuperscript{th}, the third was 157\textsuperscript{th} and so on.

The number of surveys for each sample size was:

- 1000 for Council A
- 500 for Council B
- 500 for Council C.

After a response rate of more than 25 per cent for Council A, it was decided that a sample size of 500 for the other two Councils would provide a representative sample that would generate sufficient responses to conduct the quantitative analysis. The surveys were sent in a Council-labelled envelope with a pre-paid response envelope and when the completed surveys were returned, the data was entered for analysis.
4.4 Stage 3 Method – the formulas used to analyse the quantitative data

The aim of this research is to develop a method of identifying and using the components of an OPR that can be reliably and accurately used to reflect the status of the relationship. Six formulas have been developed and tested on the data from the quantitative survey and the results of the formulas have been measured against the average benchmark relationship score (RBS). The relationship benchmark score is determined by the respondents’ answer to Section 2 of the survey (see below).

2. Using the scale below please rate the following item. If you don’t know write zero.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Poor</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Neither Good nor Poor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your relationship with XX Council</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This section provides a description of the six formulas that were tested. The first two are one-dimensional formulas (formulas that use only the satisfaction score) and the remaining four are two-dimensional formulas (formulas that use the satisfaction and importance scores).
4.4.1 Description of single and two-dimensional formulas

**One-dimensional formulas**

Single-dimension formulas use only the satisfaction scores and do not make any allowances for the relative importance of that statement to the respondent. The calculation is a simple sum average of all satisfaction scores. The single-dimension formula was used by Hon and Grunig (1999) and Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis and Cesaria (2000) and Bruning and Ledingham (1999).

**Two-dimensional formulas**

A two-dimensional formula uses two scores, importance and satisfaction, to calculate a weighted-satisfaction score. This weighted-satisfaction score is then used to calculate the final relationship score.

The method used to calculate the weighted-satisfaction score is to divide the satisfaction score by the importance score and multiply by the scale (in this case 9).

\[
\text{Satisfaction/Importance} \times 9 = \text{Weighted-satisfaction}
\]

A weighted-satisfaction score will increase the accuracy of a model that quantifies a relationship because it takes into account the relative importance of each statement. It assumes that if the weighted-satisfaction scores are more accurate then the final relationship score will also be more
accurate. The theory behind a two-dimensional formula is that it allows the recipient to score their level of satisfaction against the level of importance and therefore provides insight into the satisfaction score.

The example below demonstrates the difference in result that can occur using the weighted, two-dimensional approach allowing the public relations practitioner to conclude that an otherwise poor satisfaction result is really not an area in need of focus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Imp.</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Sat.</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Gap</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Council should communicate with me directly (via a Council newsletter)</td>
<td>5.95</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>5.09</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on a regular basis (every two months)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Using the formula above in this example the weighted-satisfaction score would be:

\[ \frac{5.09}{5.95} \times 9 = 7.70 \]

The difference between the one-dimensional satisfaction score of 5.09 and the weighted two-dimensional score of 7.70 is a differential of 29 per cent (2.61/9) which is a much higher variance. It shows that although the satisfaction score of 5.09 is relatively low, the respondents are relatively happy with the Council’s performance in this area because the issue is not particularly important to them. Calculating the relationship score based on satisfaction alone (Formulas 1-2) does not allow the relationship score to be weighted this way.
Only by reviewing the score in the context of its importance, relative to other areas, does the satisfaction score reveal its true meaning and give a deeper insight into the status of the relationship and where an organisation should focus its efforts to improve it.
4.4.2 Description of the formulas

**Formula 1 – A one-dimensional formula using the sum average of all the satisfaction scores**

The previous surveys produced by Hon and Grunig, Shockley et al. use a one-dimensional approach by asking respondents to rank certain statements according to their level of satisfaction.

The quantitative data collected for this research has asked respondents to numerically rank their level of satisfaction for each of the 34 statements. The one-dimensional formula totals the sum of these 34 scores and divides them by 34 to get the relationship score (R).

\[
\text{Relationship (R)} = \frac{\text{sum (satisfaction scores)}}{\text{number of statements}}
\]

**Formula 2 – A one-dimensional formula using the summary of the satisfaction scores for the statements grouped in the themes – Communication (C), Governance (G) and Value (V)**

Formula 2 segments the 34 statements into three themes – Communication (C), Governance (G) and Value (V). The allocation of the statement into the themes is shown in Table 2. These categorisations of the statements into communication, governance and value are used in this formula and for formulas 5 and 6. There are 7 communication statements, 16 governance statements and 11 value statements.

The Relationship (R) score is calculated by getting an average satisfaction score for all the statements in the Communication (C), Governance (G) and
Value (V) theme. The three scores are then added together and divided by 3 to get a final R score out of 9.

Relationship (R) = \( \frac{\text{sum (communication scores} - \text{C})/\text{number of communication statements} + \text{sum (governance scores} - \text{G})/\text{number of governance statements} + \text{sum (value scores} - \text{V})/\text{number of value statements}}{3} \).

**Formula 3 - 6 - Two-dimensional formulas using the importance score to give a weighting to the satisfaction score**

Formulas 3 – 6 use a more in-depth method to calculate the final relationship score. By using not only the satisfaction score but also the importance score for each statement, a weighted-satisfaction score is developed and this is then used to develop the final relationship score.

The weighted-satisfaction score is calculated using the following formula:

\[
\text{Weighted-satisfaction score (WS)} = \frac{\text{Satisfaction}}{\text{Importance}} \times 9
\]

Formulas 3 – 6 calculate the relationship score using two different methods. The first method calculates a weighted-satisfaction score (WS) for each statement using the calculus above. The relationship score is then calculated by averaging the weighted-satisfaction scores for all the statements. This is described as ‘horizontal then vertical’ because the first calculations are across (horizontal) the page and the second is down (vertical) the page.
Relationship score \( R \) = sum (weighted-satisfaction scores (WS))/ number of statements

**Diagram 2. Horizontal then vertical method**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Council A</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Imp.</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Sat.</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Gap</th>
<th>Weighted-satisfaction score for each statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is important for Council to be transparent in its decision-making</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.47</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>4.51</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>4.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council should communicate with me directly (via a Council newsletter) on a regular basis (every two months)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>5.95</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5.09</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>7.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second method uses the opposite approach. It first calculates down (vertical) the page to get an average importance and an average satisfaction score. Then it calculates across the page (horizontal) using the weighted-satisfaction formula to get a weighted relationship score.

Relationship score = (average satisfaction for all statements /average importance for all statements)/9
Diagram 3. Vertical then horizontal method

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Council A</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Imp.</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Sat.</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Gap</th>
<th>Relationship score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is important for Council to be transparent in its decision-making</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.47</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>4.51</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council should communicate with me directly (via a Council newsletter)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>5.95</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5.09</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship score is the weighted satisfaction score using the average importance and the average satisfaction</td>
<td>(8.47+5.95)/2 = 7.21</td>
<td></td>
<td>(4.51+5.09)/2 = 4.80</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.99</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.21</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Horizontal calculation second

Formula 3 – Weighted-satisfaction scores for all individual statements averaged (horizontal then vertical)

Formula 3 takes the satisfaction score for each of the 34 statements, divides it by that statement’s importance score and then multiplies the result by 9 to give the statement a weighted-satisfaction score. The weighted-satisfaction score for each of the 34 statements are then added together and divided by 34 to get the average. This average score becomes the final Relationship (R) score to be compared to the benchmark relationship score (RBS).

Formula 4 – Average of all the importance and satisfaction scores (vertical then horizontal)

Formula four is calculated by adding all the importance scores for the 34 statements and then dividing by 34 to get an average importance score.
The same is done for the satisfaction scores to get an average satisfaction score. The average satisfaction score is divided by the average importance score and the result is multiplied by 9 to find the final weighted relationship score (same as the formula for the weighted relationship score described earlier).

**Formula 5 - Segmenting the results into the themes value, communication and governance (vertical then horizontal).**

Formula 5 breaks the 34 statements into Communication (C), Governance (G) and Value (V) as outlined in Formula 2.

Average satisfaction and importance scores are calculated for each of the three themes, communication, governance and value. The average satisfaction score of each theme is divided by the average importance score for that theme and the result is multiplied by 9 to give each theme a score out of 9. The Value (V), Governance (G) and Communication (C) scores, all out of 9, are then added together and then divided by 3 to reach the Relationship (R) score.

**Formula 6 – Segmenting the results into the themes value, communication and governance (horizontal then vertical).**

This formula is a hybrid of Formula 5 (using communication, governance and value as the three themes) and Formula 3 (taking the satisfaction score for each of the statements, dividing it by the importance score and then multiplying the result by 9 to give each statement a weighted-satisfaction score).
Applying this principle in Formula 6 means the weighted-satisfaction scores for each of the statements in the Value theme are added together and divided by the number of value statements (11) to get the total V score. The weighted-satisfaction scores for each of the statements in the Communication theme are added together and divided by the number of communication statements (7) to get the total C score. The total scores for each of the statements in the Governance theme are added together and divided by the total number of governance statements (16) to get the total G score. The total V, G and C scores are added together and divided by 3 to become the final Relationship (R) score used to quantify the relationship.

4.5 Methodology summary

The methodology used in this research was sequential. The interviews were used to identify relationship components that were present in the relationship that the Councils had with their community. The components that were identified were translated into 34 statements that were included in a quantitative survey. The survey asked respondents to rank the importance and satisfaction of each of these statements, as well as asking them to rank the satisfaction of the relationship.

Six formulas were developed to analyse the data to see which was more accurate in delivering an outcome or quantitative score that matched the
score that recipients had given when asked to rank their satisfaction of the relationship that they had with the Council.

The next section contains the results of each stage of the methodology.
5. Research results, analysis and recommendations

This chapter includes the research results, the analysis of the results and the recommendations relating to how the research could be improved. It covers the research conducted in Stages 1, 2 and 3.

5.1 Stage 1

5.1.1 Stage 1 research results

For this research, 35 interviews were conducted with the participants described in methodology. The use of face to face interviews produced an excellent source of data that could be used as a basis for the questionnaire. The results of the interviews are as follows:

Section i – Introduction (5 minutes)

The interviews started with the following three contextual questions to clarify the person’s position within the organisation and the level of interaction they had with the Council or community.

1. What is your role in (Council or the community group)?
2. In your current position within Council/community group, what interaction do you have with the Council/community? Explore all
aspects of the person’s duties that require interaction with (external stakeholders or Council)

3. Which individuals (within Council for the community and/or groups of stakeholders for Council employees) do you deal with?

The results of this section have not been included as they provide no detail that has been used in the findings. However, it should be noted that the community participants were selected at random from the people mentioned in response to Question 3.

Section ii – Identification of communication and relationship management methods (10 minutes)

The following two questions tried to identify the methods the Councils used to engage with the community or vice versa;

4. What processes do you use to communicate and interact with (each identified stakeholder or stakeholder group or Council)?

5. (Council employees only) Are there any particular management strategies or plans you use in stakeholder management?

Table 3 (p77) highlights some of the communication techniques identified during the interviews. In addition to the interviews, an audit of the communication tools used by each Council was undertaken. It was not meant to be an audit that reviewed content, readability and the reach of the
tool. It was undertaken to identify the means of communication each
Council used and to see if there were marked differences in the approach
taken by each Council. The results of the audit have been shown in Table 3.

Table 3. The communication methods used by the Councils

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Council A</th>
<th>Council B</th>
<th>Council C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advertisements in the local paper</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brochures</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community newsletters</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community planning forums</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation manual</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council reports</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus groups</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letters</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management committees</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media releases</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submissions</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surveys</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Websites</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth forums</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The communication and consultation material and methods were similar. The only marked difference was that Council A did not have a community newsletter that was distributed to residents on a regular basis. Instead, they relied on a weekly advertisement in the local paper. Council C had only recently implemented this activity and Council B had been issuing a quarterly newsletter for five years.

Section iii – Status of the relationship (30 - 45 minutes)

Questions 6 – 12 were the focus of the interview.

6. How would you describe Council’s relationship with the community?

7. If I mention these words – trust, value, communication, what do you think of in terms of the relationship with the community/Council? How do you feel Council treats the community?

8. What are the benefits that the Council provides the community?

9. In what other ways do you think Council supports the community?

10. What are the good/strong parts of the relationship?

11. What are the bad/weak parts of the relationship?

12. What do you think are the major issues that the (community has with the Council or visa versa)?

The aim of the interviews was to identify the components of a relationship that participants felt were present in their relationship with the Councils, specifically in relation to governance, communication and the value proposition that they expect from it.

The analysis of the participants’ responses to question 6 to 12 identified a number of components that the participants, both Council employees and community representatives, believed were important if the Council and
community were to have a good relationship. The following section summarises the components that were identified in the transcripts. Additional quotes from the transcripts relating to this section have been included in Appendix 4.

Summary of the responses to Question 6 – How would you describe Council’s relationship with the community?

Many of the participants used the words ‘good’ or ‘bad’ as the main descriptors of the relationship.

Participant 016

‘From our point of view we have a good relationship but if you ask the community about Council as a whole, and threw us all in there, I would suggest that most of them don’t have a very high view of Council.’

To try to quantify this response, the term ‘very’ was also used. The other qualifying response of interest was the term ‘improving’, highlighting that the status of a relationship is not static but exists on a continuum of very good to very bad. This supports Rawlin’s (2006) position that the status of a relationship changes over time in response to changing circumstances.

Participant 004

‘Think it needs a lot more opportunities for the community to have their say. Public Forum, which is something we put on before Council meetings these days has given every punter in the community the opportunity to come in, make a statement, ask a question, and that has opened the door.’

Participant 024

‘I don’t think we have much of a relationship because there is no necessity for it.’

When asked to explain why they accorded the relationship a certain status, participants would focus of the components on the relationship that caused them to think that it was good or bad.
Participant 023

‘Over the years we have had a very good relationship with Council and I have been involved down here for about 30 years. We have always been able to get things done, mainly because we had Councillors who were inclined.’
The components that were mentioned in response to this question were as follows:

- Poor consultation
- Poor provision of information
- Lack of trust
- Not listening and responding to what had been said
- Not managing expectations
- Providing an opportunity to be heard
- Failure to provide fair and equitable treatment of all
- Leadership qualities
- Lack of honesty and transparency
- Lack of clarity in the decision-making process (explaining why a decision was made)
- Not balancing the conflicting needs or wants of different sectors in the community.
Summary of the responses to Question 7 – If I mention these words – trust, value, communication, what do you think of in terms of the relationship with the community/Council?

The answers that participants gave to this question were similar to the answers to Question 6.

**Participant 001**

‘Part of the problem is that we are not very good at explaining why we have made a decision.’

**Participant 002**

‘So you must treat people with respect, allow them to finish talking before you start talking.’

**Participant 009**

‘I mean really giving them the service that they want and for that we really have to research what people want. There is no good assuming that we know what they want. What we think they want and what they actually want are two different things.’

The additional components were as follows:

- Two-way communication
- Responsiveness
- Respect
- Efficiency (better use of money)
- Surprises (finding out what was going on from an indirect source or without prior warning)
- Control mutuality
- Poor understanding of community wants and needs.

An interesting finding discussed later is that the majority of the responses to this question related to governance rather than communication and value.
It should be noted that the wording of this question may have primed the respondent. However, the results of this question are similar to the responses to Question 6 which would seem to indicate that the wording of the question did not unduly impact on the results.
Summary of the responses to Questions 8 – What are the benefits that the Council provides the community? and Question 9 – In what other ways do you think Council supports the community?

The responses for these two questions have been grouped into this section due to the similarity of the responses.

The responses to Questions 8 and 9 gave an insight into the value proposition that the participants expect from the relationship they have with Council. These include services such as meals-on-wheels, childcare or community events. Every ratepayer contributes to these services although they may not use them. However, if they did not exist, the communal quality of life would be impacted.

**Participant 003**

‘We value our **special beach and bush environment**.’

**Participant 014**

‘I suppose it is **community leadership**. That is a nice mission statement kind of word to use.’

**Participant 019**

‘It is **providing lots of facilities for older people and supporting organisations for older people**. I belong to Forest Computer Pals for Seniors.’

The value propositions that the participants mentioned include:

- A better urban environment
- Protection and maintenance of environmental assets and parks
- Local representation at a state and federal level
- Provision of cultural and other events
- Library services
- Collection of rubbish and vouchers to the tip
• Maintenance of roads and other infrastructure
• Provision of services to needy community members (meals-on-wheels, childcare and other support services)
• Supporting organisations that assist other community members
• Provision of sporting facilities
• Managing the competing interests in the community and making decisions in the best interest of the entire community
• Being an arbitrator or independent umpire to resolve community disputes
• Economic development
• Planning for the future.

The value propositions articulated in response to this question relate to the benefit that they provide to the individual. Each individual had different priorities and outcomes that they expected from the relationship. A case in point is that only one participant referred to the recognition of indigenous people as a key value that Council provides the community. This response is based on the person’s individual priorities and mindset. A statement related to this issue was recorded in the survey to determine if the general populace felt that this value proposition was important. The results show that this area was one of the least important of the 34 statements. However, there were some other value propositions that were considered very important, such as taking care of the natural environment.

This research does not distinguish the benefits that are derived from the relationship as being separate from the relationship. The researcher
believes that the value that is derived from the relationship is connected to the status of the relationship at that particular point in time. If all the other components remain the same but the value changes, then it is anticipated that the nature of the relationship will change.
Summary of the responses to Question 10 – What are the good parts of the relationship (the ones you would want to keep)?

There seems to be a noticeable absence in the quantum of components that people mentioned in relation to this question.

Participant 005

‘The positive parts are that we have at least recognised that we have a bad relationship with the community and we need to do something about it.’

The responses can be summarised as follows:

- Recognition that the relationship has been poor and needs to improve
- The fact that it is improving
- There appears to be good intent to improve it
- Reasonable local representation
- The personal relationships that exist between individuals within Council and community members.

The relatively low quantity and content of the responses to this question could indicate that the relationships being researched are not likely to receive a particularly high relationship score.
Summary of the responses to Question 11 – What are the bad/weak parts of the relationship (the ones that you would want to change)?

An interesting finding from the responses to this question was the negative sentiment that was identified or revealed by the Council employees towards the community and some community groups.

Participant 005

‘There is still that perception that the community is a pain in the neck.’

Participant 014

‘The negatives are a lack of open and frank communication.’

The negative sentiment appeared in two forms. The first related to a reluctance of some staff members to develop a relationship with the community.

The second negative sentiment related to the self-interest of some of the clubs and community groups. Some employees from Council A felt that a few clubs, particularly the surf clubs, put their own interest ahead others that may have a greater need.

In Council B, the negativity was directed to community groups that adopted a Not In My Back Yard (NIMBY) approach to issues. One such issue was a skateboarding park that some of the local residents were opposed to and the Council employees felt that the rationale behind the opposition was based on emotion not fact.
The responses to this question included:

- Not managing community expectations
- Inconsistency in the approach to dealing with the community
- Not getting value for money
- Council staff not wanting to have a relationship with the community
- The self-interest of some community groups
- Poor communication
- Failure to identify what the community wants or needs
- Poor customer service and response times
- Poor provision of services to some sectors of the community
- Lack of feedback to people who have made a contribution
- Lack of openness and transparency.
Summary of the responses to Question 12 – What do you think are the major issues that the (community has with the Council or vice versa)?

In the interviews, the answers to this question related to issues running in the media that related to the Council. It was usually a topical issue such as a skate park, strategic resource plan, the location of a new hospital or sports ground or major developments in the municipality. The answers were not specific to the status of the relationship between the community and the Council, although the decisions made in relation to the issues were likely to have a major impact on the relationship. For example, if a person has a development approved next to his house that he perceives will have a negative impact on his amenity, this is likely to sour his relationship with Council, unless he understands the context and reasons for this decision.
5.1.2 Summary of the qualitative research results

During the interviews a number of components were mentioned, all of which had been identified in the literature review. These components can be categorised into the three themes; communication, governance and value. The components that fit into each theme have been described below.

**Communication**

The components identified in the communication theme highlighted the need for the organisations to improve the way they communicated the decision-making process rather than the way they let their stakeholders know what services they provide. These included:

- Poor consultation
- Poor provision of information
- Listening and responding to what had been said
- Providing an opportunity to be heard
- Clarity in the decision-making process (explaining why a decision was made)
- Two-way communication
- Poor communication.
Governance

The majority of the components fell into the governance theme, dealing with the way the organisation behaved when it was dealing with its external stakeholders. These included:

- Lack of trust
- Managing expectations
- Fair and equitable treatment of all
- Leadership qualities
- Honesty
- Transparency
- Balancing the conflicting needs or wants of different sectors in the community
- Responsiveness
- Respect
- Surprises (finding out what was going on from an indirect source or without prior warning)
- Control mutuality
- Poor understanding of community wants and needs
- Managing the competing interests in the community
- Making decisions in the best interest of the entire community.

Value Proposition

The third theme, value, describes the tangible benefits that the stakeholders believe they derive from the relationship. The value
proposition depends of the perspective and needs of the individual. The value propositions that were mentioned included:

- Efficiency (better use of money)
- A better urban environment
- Protection and maintenance of environmental assets and parks
- Local representation at a state and federal level
- Provision of cultural and other events
- Library services
- Collection of rubbish and vouchers to the tip
- Maintenance of roads and other infrastructure
- Provision of services to needy community members (meals-on-wheels, childcare and other support services)
- Supporting organisations that assist other community members
- Provision of sporting facilities
- Planning for the future
- Being an arbitrator or independent umpire to resolve community disputes.

The interviews showed that a number of components mentioned related to the relationship between the community and the Council. This answers one of the key subsidiary questions of this research which is – What are the components of an OPR? While the literature review identified them, the interviews validated that they were present in the relationships that this research was examining.
The results of the interviews confirm that the grouping of the components into three themes is appropriate. The findings show that people are concerned with the way they are treated (governance), what they get from the relationship or how they benefit (value) and how the receive information and how their feedback or communication is received (communication).

Table 4 (below) cross-references the themes identified in the literature review with the results from the interviews. It also shows the related questions that were used in the survey. This table has been included to show the evolution of the research from the literature review, through the interviews to the development of the survey which was used to gather quantitative data.
Table 4. Themes identified in the literature review cross referenced with the themes identified and comments in the interviews and the statements in the survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship components identified in the literature review</th>
<th>How the components presented themselves in the interviews</th>
<th>Supporting comments from the interviews</th>
<th>Statements included in the survey</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Accessibility                                               | Listening and responding to what had been said. Providing an opportunity to be heard. Responsiveness. | • ‘How quickly we respond to letters and things’  
• ‘They just want to get good service quickly in an expedient way’  
• ‘I think our response times are excellent’  
• ‘Another concern is Council’s response time’  
• ‘In terms of how quickly we turn around applications, how we contact them, how we keep them informed’ | • It is important that Council responds to my phone calls, letters and emails in a timely manner | Communication |
| Commitment/Investment | Poor consultation. Poor understanding of community wants and needs. | • ‘Prepared to listen to people and what they have to say’  
• ‘You know that he is listening’  
• ‘We want to know that we are getting a fair hearing’  
• ‘People felt that they had been listened to but their concerns were still not addressed’ | • It is important that Council listens to my views  
• It is important that Council demonstrates that they have tried to understand my views | Communication  
Governance |
| Communications                                               | Two-way communication. Poor communication. | • ‘We aren’t providing the level of information’  
• ‘We provide a lot of information through the website and libraries and Council reports’  
• ‘We attempt to educate our residents as much as we can’ | • Council should communicate with me directly (via a Council newsletter) on a regular basis (every two months)  
• Council should provide me with information about its services and facilities | Communication  
Communication |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship components identified in the literature review</th>
<th>How the components presented themselves in the interviews</th>
<th>Supporting comments from the interviews</th>
<th>Statements included in the survey</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Competence                                                 | Leadership qualities.                                    | • 'It's about moving beyond a series of adversarial relationships because Council can have an adversarial relationship with its community – community can have adversarial relationships for example, pro versus anti development. There are a whole series of potentially adversarial relationships. The challenge is to create a different paradigm where you shift the ground completely'  
• 'I think that it is absolutely critical that Councils provide leadership'  
• 'There is a lack of leadership coming from Council'  
• 'We have our own (community) leadership program running at the moment'   | • Council should be able to manage conflicting demands from the community  
• Council should provide strong leadership for the community | Governance |
| Concern                                                    | Fair and equitable treatment of all.                     | • 'Support a lot of service based groups'  
• 'Meals-on-wheels and youth week'  
• 'Supporting the social structure'  
• 'If you are a single mum and have no support, sooner or later you will end up talking to community services in Council'  
• 'It is providing lots of facilities for older people and supporting organisations for older people'  
• 'Providing child care'  
• 'It's important that we respect the indigenous people in our community'  | • Council should support other organisations that provide a valuable community service  
• It is important for Council to support those in the community that are less fortunate or have experienced hardship  
• It is important to recognise the traditional owners of the land and celebrate their culture | Value  
Governance |
| Control mutuality/Involvement                              | Control mutuality.                                       | • 'I am sure people don’t think they are being consulted adequately'  
• 'In particular our planning and assessment area. We are also listening to people and that has been documented'  
• 'He has explained all the different views that he has been tossing up'  
• 'When we ask people for their feedback they want to be followed up and know what happened with my information'  
• 'Needs to be a lot more opportunities for people to have their say'  | • It is important that Council consults widely with the community in the development of planning policies  
• It is important that Council demonstrates that they have taken my view into consideration in their decision-making | Governance  
Governance |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship components identified in the literature review</th>
<th>How the components presented themselves in the interviews</th>
<th>Supporting comments from the interviews</th>
<th>Statements included in the survey</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Equity                                                     | Balancing the conflicting needs or wants of different sectors in the community. Managing the competing interests in the community. | • ‘The surf clubs have very strong links to this organisation and have been able to profit from it’  
• ‘I still think we are inconsistent in our approach to consultation and dealing with the community’  
• ‘I get concerned when I hear views expressed from senior management to almost massage these people’  
• ‘It means that other people have a door to decision-making that other people are denied in the community. That is an unfair and inequitable situation’ | • Council needs to treat all people equally | • Governance |
| Honesty                                                    | Honest and transparency.                               | • ‘I guess greater openness and discussion’  
• ‘People like to believe that we are honest and trustworthy’  
• ‘Let’s tell the truth. We have to be truthful’ | • Council should tell the community if it has made a mistake  
• Council should be honest in its communication | • Communication  
• Governance |
| Integrity                                                  | Making decisions in the best interest of the entire community. | • ‘We have always been able to get things done because we had Councillors who were inclined’  
• ‘The surf clubs have very strong links to this organisation and have been able to profit from it’ | • It is important for Council to represent all sectors of our community fairly | • Governance |
| Mutual legitimacy                                          | Respect.                                              | • ‘You must treat people with respect’ | • Council staff should treat people with respect and at all times be polite and courteous | • Governance |
| Mutual satisfaction/ Satisfaction                          |                                                       | • ‘There was a lot of misperception’  
• ‘Some GMs that weren’t particularly open or honest would say one thing and 3 years later they hadn’t delivered on it, rather than saying no we can’t do it’  
• ‘The major issue now is the delivery of some projects’  
• ‘I suppose historically there have been commitments given that haven’t eventuated’ | • It is important that Council does not over-promise and under-deliver | • Governance |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship components identified in the literature review</th>
<th>How the components presented themselves in the interviews</th>
<th>Supporting comments from the interviews</th>
<th>Statements included in the survey</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>Provision of information.</td>
<td>• ‘The whole issue began through us kind of finding out things that were going on rather than them being communicated to us’&lt;br&gt;• ‘If we are going to discuss an issue, Council needs to share its information with us so we can have proper discussion’&lt;br&gt;• ‘Be fair and open’</td>
<td>• Council should provide me with all the information it has about a particular issue if I am being asked to comment on the issue</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship nurturing</td>
<td>• ‘And trying to do some social and community building’&lt;br&gt;• 'We help increase and strengthen the social fabric of XXX'</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Council should work at strengthening the social fabric of our community</td>
<td>Value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>Fair and equitable treatment of all.</td>
<td>• ‘To know that the decisions that will be made will be made for the right reasons and not because of someone’s interest’&lt;br&gt;• ‘It’s whether or not you are listening to a small group who are the ones who shout the loudest’&lt;br&gt;• ‘The squeaky wheel gets the oil’&lt;br&gt;• ‘To be prepared to make unpopular decisions if the reasons for making them are right’</td>
<td>• Council should listen to, not be swayed by, the interests of a particular group&lt;br&gt;• It is important that Council makes its decisions in the best interest of the community, even though they may be controversial</td>
<td>Governance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporting</td>
<td>Surprises (finding out what was going on from an indirect source or without prior warning).</td>
<td>• ‘There was a lot of misperception’&lt;br&gt;• ‘The first step is understanding community needs and expectations’&lt;br&gt;• ‘There is very poor understanding in the community of what we are trying to deliver’&lt;br&gt;• ‘What we can and can’t do for them has never really been clearly communicated’</td>
<td>• It is important that Council tells us what we can expect from them</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>Local representation at a state and federal level.</td>
<td>• ‘Represent the community in the bigger scheme of things at the regional and state level’&lt;br&gt;• ‘I think we provide effective local representation’</td>
<td>• Council should represent local residents at State and Federal Government levels</td>
<td>Value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing common goals</td>
<td>• ‘What we do is manage the present and plan for the future’</td>
<td></td>
<td>• It is important that Council has a long-term vision for the community that reflects community views</td>
<td>Governance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship components identified in the literature review</td>
<td>How the components presented themselves in the interviews</td>
<td>Supporting comments from the interviews</td>
<td>Statements included in the survey</td>
<td>Theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Trust                                                         | Lack of trust.                                           | • ‘The customer service area has endeavoured to try and make ourselves transparent in our workings with the community’  
• ‘He has explained his reasons for making a decision’  
• ‘We are not very good at explaining why we have made a decision’  
• ‘We don’t adequately document it and explain how the decision was reached’  
• ‘Council were dismissed to make our processes open and transparent’  
• You understand his reasons for making the decisions’  
• ‘Very mixed trust’  
• ‘The bottom line is that there is a lot of trust to be built back’  
• ‘What I am seeing now is there is a degree of trust being built up’  
• ‘People like to believe that we are honest and trustworthy’ | • It is important for Council to be transparent in its decision-making  
• It is important that Council is trustworthy | • Governance  
• Governance |
| Value                                                         | A range of value propositions  
Efficiency (better use of money)                                | • You will always have someone who values the beach environment’  
• ‘Beaches, better river planning etc’  
• ‘We value our special beaches and bush environment’  
• ‘We have to pay to get the beaches cleaned’  
• ‘I think that environmental issues are quite big at the moment’  
• ‘Potentially a better urban environment for us to live in’  
• ‘I expect Council to provide a quality of life to all of us here’  
• ‘Better public open spaces’  
• ‘Different events’  
• ‘Youth events, our cultural events’  
• ‘Our community events are very good and provide us with a lot of goodwill’ | • Council needs to protect our natural assets such as parks and beaches.  
• Council needs to provide a safe environment for us to live in  
• Council should keep our public spaces clean and tidy  
• Council should organise and promote events of cultural significance or that contribute to XX being a great place to live | • Value  
• Value  
• Value |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship components identified in the literature review</th>
<th>How the components presented themselves in the interviews</th>
<th>Supporting comments from the interviews</th>
<th>Statements included in the survey</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Value (cont)                                                 | • ‘Every punter in the community has the opportunity to come in and make a statement’  
• ‘It about moving beyond an adversarial relationship’  
• ‘I suppose they come to Council looking for Council to be the arbitrator of a lot of issues’  
• ‘Our community thinks that Council could be a bit more efficient’  
• ‘Therefore serve the community better and use their money better’  
• ‘People do want to see what they are getting for their rates’ | • Council should provide a forum through which people can resolve issues  
• Council should provide good value for money | • Value  
• Value |
| Relates to different projects and developments mentioned in the interviews in response to question 12 | • It is important that Council has appropriate planning policies in place | • Value |
5.1.3 Analysis of stage 1 research results

a. **Number of components identified**

The interview transcripts reveal that all but two of the components of an OPR identified in the literature review could be clearly identified in the relationships between the Councils and their communities. The two missing components that were identified in the literature review, and were not referred to during the interview questions, were identification and involvement.

In some instances, the components were identified through their absence. Comments such as ‘Let’s tell the truth’ and ‘We have to be truthful’ would indicate that the while the component ‘honesty’ may not be present at the moment, it is still an important component of a positive relationship.

The models used by Hon and Grunig (1999), Bruning and Ledingham (1999) and Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis and Cesaria (2000) to quantify OPRs or components of OPRs used limited numbers of components. The findings of this survey highlight that 23 components were found in the relationships being researched. Bruning and Ledingham (2000) advocated that any method of quantifying relationships should use as many components as possible.
b. **Predominant themes**

   In reviewing the transcripts to identify common components, what emerged, and has been referred to in section 5.1.2, is the number of components that fell into the governance and value themes rather than communication. The importance of the governance model of an organisation, dictating the culture of an organisation or the way that the employees behave toward external stakeholders, was recognised by Council employees as well as community members.

c. **Comparison of the stakeholder management practices**

   The interviews revealed that the stakeholder management techniques used by the three Councils were similar (See Table 3, p70). This finding was confirmed by the audit of the communication methods that were employed by each Council which showed the only key differences in the communication practices was that Council A did not have a newsletter that it distributed to its residents and ratepayers on a regular basis.

d. **Evidence that a relationships changes over time**

   Rawlins (2006) believes that organisation-public relationships are situational and can change over time as circumstances within the relationship change. The interview results confirm this theory as the interviewees, especially those from Council A, mention that the relationship was improving.

   The changing circumstances relating to Council A refer to the sacking of the Councillors and the appointment of an administrator. This resulted in
changes in the culture of the organisation and its relationships with key stakeholders. It should be noted that the changes were not always positive. Some of the community groups, specifically the surf clubs in Council A’s municipality, felt that the relationship had deteriorated. The circumstance that had changed in this instance was that the value proposition the clubs derived from the Council had reduced as the administrator had tried to adopt a more equitable approach.
5.1.4 Recommendations relating to the qualitative research

The following recommendations relate to the methodology of the qualitative research and how it could be improved.

a. Interview questions

The interview questions could have been written and structured slightly differently in order to improve the outcomes. Some of the recommended changes were made during Stage 1 to improve the quality of the data collected during the latter interviews.

Question 7.

Rather than include the words ‘trust, value and communication’ in the one question, they were separated and asked as three different questions.

Also, the word ‘trust’ may have been too specific and may not have encompassed the full spectrum of components that the governance theme covers. It may have been more appropriate to ask a question about the way the Councils behave or the culture of the organisation.

Question 10

The responses to Question 10 were quite limited. It may have produced better results if the interviewer spent more time exploring the parts of the relationship that were worth keeping. An alternative or subsequent question to ask could have been ‘Can you tell me a time when Council treated you in a way that you liked?’
Question 11

In hindsight, using the term ‘bad or weak parts’ was the wrong phrase to use for this question. From about the 10th interview on, I changed the question to ‘What would you change to improve the relationship?’ This changed the focus on the participant’s answer. The responses in the first 10 interviews reinforces the position that the phrase may have been difficult for people to respond to and rephrasing it made it easier to understand.

Question 12

The response given to Question 12 focused on issues that seemed to be running in the media at the time rather than issues with the relationship. A rewording of this question to ‘What do you think are the major issues that the community has in its relationship with Council (and vice versa)?’ would have provided more valuable responses.

b. Quantifying the qualitative data

It may have been a useful exercise to undertake a content analysis of the transcripts from the interviews. This process would have revealed exactly how many times certain components were mentioned and by how many of the participants. This detailed level of analysis was not completed, as it was felt that the results, while interesting in their own right, would not have made a major contribution in answering the research question.
5.2 Stage 2

5.2.1 Stage 2 research results

Of the 2000 surveys distributed, 465 were completed and sent back, representing an overall response rate of 23 per cent. The surveys were broken into two sections. Section 1 contained 34 questions developed from the qualitative analysis and Section 2 asked the respondent to rank the overall relationship in a single question.

Respondents who indicated they were suppliers or contractors to Council were excluded. It was felt that respondents who fitted into either of these categories were more likely to have an exchange relationship with Council and their results could skew the overall survey results, which were looking at communal relationships, not exchange relationships.

Table 5. Surveys distributed and collected for each Council

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Council A</th>
<th>Council B</th>
<th>Council C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of surveys distributed</strong></td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of surveys received back – G1</strong></td>
<td>254</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Response rate</strong></td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No. of surveys from contractors or employees</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No. of surveys used in the analysis</strong></td>
<td>252</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The researcher acknowledges that the sample sizes do not represent an accuracy of 95 per cent probability. The confidence interval for the smallest
sample size (78) is 11.09 and the confidence interval for the largest sample size (252) is 6.16 based on the populations of the Councils.

The survey results for each Council have been included in Appendix 5. The combined results from all survey respondents have been combined into Table 6 below. The statements have been ranked in order of importance and have been colour-coded by theme.

Table 6. The combined survey results from all the recipients.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Imp.</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Sat.</th>
<th>Gap</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Council should be honest in its communication</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8.76</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5.37</td>
<td>3.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>It is important that Council is trustworthy</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8.74</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5.26</td>
<td>3.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Council should provide good value for money</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.59</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5.16</td>
<td>3.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Council staff should treat people with respect and at all times be polite and courteous</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.58</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.29</td>
<td>2.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>It is important that Council has appropriate planning policies in place</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8.56</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Council should keep our public spaces clean and tidy</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8.53</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.30</td>
<td>2.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Council needs to protect our natural assets such as parks and beaches</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8.51</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.16</td>
<td>2.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>It is important that Council consults widely with the community in the development of these planning policies</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8.51</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>3.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>It is important that Council does not over-promise and under-deliver</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.48</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4.89</td>
<td>3.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Council needs to treat all people equally</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.41</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.53</td>
<td>2.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>It is important for Council to be transparent in its decision-making</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8.34</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>3.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>It is important that Council responds to my phone calls, letters and emails in a timely manner</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8.34</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.58</td>
<td>2.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Council should provide me with all the information it has about a particular issue if I am being asked to comment on the issue</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8.33</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.58</td>
<td>2.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>It is important that Council makes its decisions in the best interest of the community, even though they may be controversial</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8.32</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td>3.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>It is important that Council listens to my views</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8.31</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5.06</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>It is important for Council to represent all sectors of our community fairly</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8.28</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5.48</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>It is important that Council has a long-term vision for the community that reflects community views</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8.26</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5.24</td>
<td>3.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Council should tell the community if it has made a mistake</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8.22</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>3.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Council needs to provide a safe environment for us to live in</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8.20</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.19</td>
<td>2.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Council should listen to, not be swayed by, the interests of a particular group</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8.19</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>3.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>It is important that Council demonstrates that they have tried to understand my views</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>8.16</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>4.98</td>
<td>3.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Council should be able to manage conflicting demands from the community</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>8.15</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5.11</td>
<td>3.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Council should provide me with information about its services and facilities</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8.11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.39</td>
<td>1.72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7 shows the survey’s Section 2 results for each Council. This shows the relationship benchmark score (RBS) against which the accuracy of the formulas are measured.

Table 7. The relationship benchmark scores for each Council

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Council</th>
<th>Benchmark RBS from Section 2 of survey</th>
<th>Expressed as a score out of 100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Council A</td>
<td>5.86/9</td>
<td>65.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council B</td>
<td>6.00/9</td>
<td>66.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council C</td>
<td>5.77/9</td>
<td>64.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>5.88/9</td>
<td>65.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 8, below, show the results of the different themes for each Council. It shows the average importance score for the components in each theme and the average satisfaction score for the same.

Table 8. The survey results analysed by the different themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Council</th>
<th>Governance</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Communication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Imp</td>
<td>Sat</td>
<td>Imp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council A</td>
<td>8.22</td>
<td>4.95</td>
<td>7.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council B</td>
<td>8.21</td>
<td>5.45</td>
<td>8.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council C</td>
<td>8.15</td>
<td>5.16</td>
<td>7.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>8.19</td>
<td>5.19</td>
<td>7.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2.2 Analysis of stage 2 research results

a. Relevance of the relationship scores

The quantitative research results showed that the relationship scores, as measured by the benchmark relationship score (RBS) from Section 2 of the survey were between 5.77 and 6.0 out of 9 or between 64.11 and 66.67 per cent. These figures are shown in Table 7.

At this stage, there is no way of telling whether a difference of 2.56 per cent (between the lowest and highest score in Table 7) is significant or if these relationship scores demonstrate industry best practice or a mediocre performance. Further research is required in the local government sector to see if an industry average or industry benchmark score can be developed.
The aim of an industry benchmark study would be to determine what the average relationship score is for local governments across a state or country. In addition, further research could identify the Councils with the top relationship scores and research their culture, service delivery and communication to see if there are any common factors that result in the higher than average relationship scores.

The management style of Council B was that of a consensus approach that involved more consultation with the community. This Council scored the highest satisfaction scores across the three themes. However, there is still room for improvement, based on the gap between the satisfaction scores and the importance scores, as seen in Tables 6, 8 and 9. Reinforcing this view are the findings of the qualitative research, specifically Question 10 that asks participants to talk about the good parts of the relationship; very little was said.

b. Analysis of the different themes
Although the formulas that segmented the components into the themes communication, governance and value were not as accurate as the formulas that made the calculations based on the average of all statements, the importance ranking in Tables 6 and 8 highlight some interesting findings for the public relations profession.
Table 6 shows that of the top 10 most important statements do not include any components in the communication theme. All of the top 10 statements fit into the governance and value themes.

The two highest-ranking components in terms of importance relate to honesty and trust. Both of these components fit into the governance theme, relating to the behavioural culture of an organisation. Out of the top 10, six of the components or statements were from the governance theme and four were from the value theme. Table 8 shows that the governance theme consistently ranks highest in terms of importance and lowest in terms of satisfaction. The table also shows that the value theme consistently ranks highest in terms of satisfaction, with the communication theme in the middle.

Looking at the difference between the importance and satisfaction scores, a similar pattern emerges. The 10 statements with the largest gap are shown in Table 9.
Table 9. Statements with the largest gaps between importance and satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Total all responses</th>
<th>Imp.</th>
<th>Sat.</th>
<th>GAP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Council should tell the community if it has made a mistake</td>
<td>8.22</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important that Council does not over-promise and under-deliver</td>
<td>8.48</td>
<td>4.89</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important for Council to be transparent in its decision-making</td>
<td>8.34</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important that Council is trustworthy</td>
<td>8.74</td>
<td>5.26</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council should provide good value for money</td>
<td>8.59</td>
<td>5.16</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council should listen to, not be swayed by, the interests of a particular group</td>
<td>8.19</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council should be honest in its communication</td>
<td>8.76</td>
<td>5.37</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important that Council consults widely with the community in the development of these planning policies</td>
<td>8.51</td>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important that Council makes its decisions in the best interest of the community, even though they may be controversial</td>
<td>8.32</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important that Council listens to my views</td>
<td>8.31</td>
<td>5.06</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Both the two communication statements, while involving communication, also refer to the way an organisation behaves and could have been classified in the governance theme.

If we look at the statements in Table 6 that have the lowest gap, they are dominated by the value theme. This is an interesting finding because of the people responsible for the delivery of the statements in the value theme. In analysing who is responsible for each statement, we see that it is senior
management and the elected representatives who carry primary responsibility for the governance theme and it is the mid-level managers and below who are responsible for the statements in the value theme. Often the senior managers seek assistance from public relations professionals to improve the reputation of the organisation, without realising they are the ones who are responsible for creating it.

Why is this significant to the public relations profession? Communication is considered the main tool of our profession. Yet if we accept that one of the primary functions is to manage the OPRs, the results of the research indicate that communication may not be the most effective method of doing this. It appears that communal OPRs are influenced more by the way an organisation behaves and the value it provides the community, rather than its ability to communicate effectively. Having made this statement, it is important to clarify that effective communication is essential to the relationship, but the research tells us that it may not be the most important element in maintaining a healthy relationship.

Taking this into consideration, it is apparent that public relations professionals may need to broaden the scope of their work if they are to become more effective in managing communal OPRs. Based on this research, the focus of the public relations profession needs to be broadened to encompass internal factors such as influencing the organisational culture that determines the way an organisation behaves and working across the organisation to try to improve the value proposition that the organisation can offer to external stakeholders.
c. Communication scores

A point of interest worth mentioning is the scores for the communication themes. The lowest scoring Council is Council A (see Table 8) with a satisfaction score of 5.17. The communication audit identified that this is the only Council that did not issue a newsletter directly to residents and ratepayers on a regular basis. Council B had been undertaking this practice for about 5 years and had a satisfaction score of 5.7. Council C had only recently started and had issued two newsletters and had a satisfaction score of 5.38.

This result indicates that while not the most important theme, effective communication is non-the-less essential in maintaining relationships. The results seem to indicate that where a newsletter was used, by Councils B and C, relationship score improved.

d. Response rates

The response rates for this survey were more than 23 per cent, higher than for a normal mail survey. The research does not provide any factual evidence to suggest why the rate was so high. Perhaps the survey gave people who were unhappy with their relationship an opportunity to voice their opinion. This is an area that could be the focus of further research.

Council B’s sample delivered the lowest response rate (16 %). This Council adopted a consultative of ‘consensus’ management approach and achieved the highest relationship score. There is no researched explanation as to why
this sample resulted in a lower response rate or a higher relationship score. This could also be the subject of further research.

5.2.3 Recommendations relating to the stage 2 research

The following recommendations relate to the methodology for the stage 2 research and how it could be improved.

a. Survey techniques used to collect the data

This research used a printed survey, sent randomly to 2000 recipients with a reply-paid, self-addressed envelope, as the only means of collecting the quantitative data. Bruning and Ledingham (2000) used 400 telephone surveys to collect similar information.

In comparing the two methods, there are advantages and disadvantages of both. Perhaps the two key differences relate to cost and representative sampling. In relation to the first issue, cost, mail sampling is a fraction of the cost of phone sampling. The relative cost comparison is that the mail survey, complete with data entry, costs approximately $3 per response whereas a telephone survey, taking approximately 10 – 15 minutes (as would be the case for this survey) would cost $10 - $20 per survey.

However, one of the benefits of the telephone survey technique is the ability to be more selective in choosing the participants. A telephone survey would enable a sample that is more closely aligned to the demographics of the
Council than would be the case in a mail survey. For instance, very few young people completed the mail survey, accounting for only 1.2 per cent of the responses, where as demographically, they represent a much higher proportion of the population.

b. Length of the survey
Initially, it was thought that the length of the survey was a problem. However, an average response rate of more than 23 per cent was surprising and would indicate that this is not a critical factor for future research.

c. Classification of statements into different themes
While some of the statements fitted easily into one theme or another, there were some that were more difficult to classify. For example, most of the statements that were in the value theme were easy to classify, however, some in the communication theme could also have been classified in the governance theme. An example is the statement ‘Council should tell the community if it has made a mistake’. This statement was classified in the communication theme because the verb was ‘to tell’. However, the statement also fits into the governance theme because it focuses on the component of honesty.

The impact of the classifications is more important for the formula calculations than for the analysis of the quantitative data in its own right.
5.3 Stage 3

5.3.1 Results of the different formulas

Table 10 shows the results of the six formulas applied to the quantitative data for the three Councils. In addition, it also shows the percentage difference that the formula score (R) is from the relationship benchmark score (RBS). The percentage difference is calculated by the difference between the relationship benchmark score (RBS) and the formula score (R), then dividing this by 9 and multiplying by 100 to make a percentage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Council A</th>
<th>Council B</th>
<th>Council C</th>
<th>Average Council A+B+C/3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Benchmark RBS from Section 2 of survey</td>
<td>Benchmark RBS from Section 2 of survey</td>
<td>Benchmark RBS from Section 2 of survey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R from formula 1</td>
<td>5.15</td>
<td>5.59</td>
<td>5.33</td>
<td>5.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage difference from RBS</td>
<td>7.89</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>4.89</td>
<td>5.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R from formula 2</td>
<td>5.22</td>
<td>5.63</td>
<td>5.39</td>
<td>5.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage difference from RBS</td>
<td>7.11</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>5.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R from formula 3</td>
<td>5.81</td>
<td>6.20</td>
<td>6.03</td>
<td>6.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage difference from RBS</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>1.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R from formula 4</td>
<td>5.76</td>
<td>6.19</td>
<td>5.98</td>
<td>5.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage difference from RBS</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>1.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R from formula 5</td>
<td>5.83</td>
<td>6.24</td>
<td>6.04</td>
<td>6.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage difference from RBS</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R from formula 6</td>
<td>5.88</td>
<td>6.25</td>
<td>6.09</td>
<td>6.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage difference from RBS</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>2.37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.3.2 Analysis of the Stage 3 research results

The numerical findings in this section are rounded to two decimal points. However, it is important to note that the researcher does not believe this to be a true measure of the accuracy of the formulas. As stated earlier, there are a number of flaws in this level of accuracy. The first is the sample size, which, due to its relatively small size, means that a greater variance should be allowed, if it to be assumed that the score is truly reflective of the views of the broader community.

Secondly, this research has found no other research to verify that the method of determining the relationship benchmark score (RBS) against which the formulas were assessed, is accurate.

While the accuracy of the scores could be less than stated, a comparative analysis of the different formulas could best be achieved by rounding the numbers to two decimal points.

a. Overall results from all the formulas

All the formulas delivered an average accuracy, when measured against the benchmark score of between ± 1.85 and 5.78 per cent. Perhaps the most important observation is that the scores from the two-dimensional formulas provide a greater level of accuracy than the scores from the one-
dimensional formulas. This finding is consistent across the three Council samples, as shown in Tables 10 and 11.

In the one-dimensional formulas, the average percentage difference from the benchmark score was ± 5.15 – 5.78 per cent and the standard deviation range was 1.7 – 1.83. However, in the two-dimensional formulas the average percentage differences from the benchmark score was ± 1.85 – 2.37 per cent and the standard deviation range was 0.65 – 1.46. These results are highlighted in Table 11 below.

Table 11. The average percentage difference between the formulas (R) and the benchmark (RBS).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>One-dimensional</th>
<th>Avg % difference between R and RBS</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.78</td>
<td>1.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.15</td>
<td>1.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-dimensional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>1.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is enough evidence to suggest that any tool used to quantify the status of a relationship should adopt a two-dimensional approach.
Of the two-dimensional formulas, Table 10 shows that Formula 5 produced the best result in Council A with a relationship score that was only ± 0.33 per cent different from the benchmark relationship score. However, Formula 4 produced the best result in the Council B and C samples with scores of ±2.11 and ± 2.33 respectively.

The average of the three sample sizes, rather than the individual scores, shows Formula 4 produced the best results overall with an accuracy that has an average difference from the benchmark score of ± 1.85 per cent, with the lowest standard deviation of 0.65. The average difference of the relationship score for Formula 3 was slightly higher at ± 1.89 per cent but the standard deviation was higher at 1.20.

b. Vertical then horizontal approach and horizontal then vertical

The two-dimensional formulas were divided into those that used the vertical then horizontal method of calculation, Formulas 3 and 6, and those that used the horizontal then vertical, Formulas 4 and 5. The methodology used for these formulas has been described in Section 4.

Table 12 compares the two methods and shows that Formulas 4 and 5, which use the vertical then horizontal approach are more accurate than the horizontal then vertical approach, both for accuracy score and the standard deviation.
Table 12. A comparison of the vertical then horizontal approach and the horizontal then vertical approach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Average percentage difference of R score from RBS for Councils A+B+C</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vertical then horizontal</td>
<td>Formulas 4 + 5</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horizontal then vertical</td>
<td>Formulas 3 + 6</td>
<td>1.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**c. Themes versus grouped calculations**

When the results were grouped into the three themes of value, communication and governance versus when the calculus was done as a whole sample, the results show that the accuracy is reduced. Table 13 shows this finding is true for the average percentage difference as well as the standard deviation.

Table 13: Themed Groupings vs. No grouping

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Average percentage difference of R score from RBS for Councils A+B+C</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not grouped into themes</td>
<td>Formulas 3 + 4</td>
<td>1.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grouped into the G,V and C themes</td>
<td>Formulas 5 + 6</td>
<td>1.82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This would indicate that a relationship score is more accurate when the components being measured are combined than when they are segmented into the themes used for this research.

For the purpose of the accuracy of the relationship score there is no need to group the components scores into themes. However, the public relations practitioner may still find benefit in dissecting the component results into these themes in order to understand more clearly which areas are of most concern to stakeholders. Segmenting the results into the themes (Table 8) gives an indication of the gap between the level of importance of each theme and the level of satisfaction.

d. **Comparisons of all the different formula types**

Looking at the accuracy of the different formula types, a clear hierarchy appears.

The hierarchy from *most accurate* to *least accurate* is as follows:

- Two-dimensional is more accurate than one-dimensional;
- Non-grouping is more accurate than scores grouped by themes;
- Vertical then horizontal is more accurate than horizontal then vertical.

e. **The standard deviation of the relationship scores**

According to Niles (2007), standard deviation is a statistic that measures how tightly all the various results are clustered around the mean in a set of
data. When the examples are tightly bunched together and the bell-shaped curve is steep, the standard deviation is small as shown in Diagram 4. When the examples are spread apart and the bell curve is relatively flat, there is a relatively large standard deviation.

**Diagram 4. A Standard Deviation Bell Curve**

![Standard Deviation Bell Curve](image)

Table 11 (p115) shows the standard deviations for each formula. A lower standard deviation indicates that the mean or average is indicative of the majority of answers and is therefore more accurate. The standard deviations for the one-dimensional formulas are consistently higher, indicating that the results are more spread out across the sample. Of the two-dimensional formulas, the standard deviation for Formula 4, at 0.65, is better than the other formulas. Once again, this points to Formula 4 as being the most accurate.

**f. Appropriate sample sizes to produce accurate results**

How did sample size affect accuracy? The following table shows the difference in accuracy of all the formulas over the three selected Councils.
Table 14: Questionnaire sample size vs. relationship score accuracy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Council A</th>
<th>Council B</th>
<th>Council C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sample Size</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average % difference between the one-dimensional R score vs. RBS</td>
<td>7.5 %</td>
<td>4.34 %</td>
<td>4.56 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average % difference between the two-dimensional R score vs. RBS</td>
<td>0.7 %</td>
<td>2.45 %</td>
<td>2.95 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The accuracy of the results does not seem to have a direct correlation to the sample size. Table 14 shows that despite Council A having a larger sample size, the average one-dimensional result shows a low level of accuracy (± 7.5%) whereas the two-dimensional result is extremely accurate (± 0.7%). In contrast Council B’s average single dimensional relationship score is the most accurate of the three Councils at ± 4.34% yet its two-dimensional average relationship score is ± 2.45%.

Further research needs to be carried out to determine which sample size consistently delivers the most accurate formula. This research could be conducted using the data collected for this research by selecting and testing smaller randomly selected samples from the existing data. A key question that needs to be addressed in further research is the minimum and optimum sample size that can provide an accurate relationship score.
g. Multi-dimensional approach

All of the formulas used a multi-dimensional approach to the components and, as Bruning and Ledingham (1999) surmised, the researcher believes this contributed to the accuracy of the results. This research used 23 components and was able to gain a broad spectrum of attitude towards the relationship.
5.3.3 Recommendations relating to the use of the formulas

a. Sample size

The research conducted for this thesis has been limited to three samples and in two cases, relatively small sample sizes. Further research is required to further validate the tool and determine what constitutes a sample size that will deliver a relationship score that is within the most acceptable level of accuracy.

Determining what is an appropriate sample size is quite critical if the results are to be analysed in more depth. For instance, would the formula work if applied to much smaller sub-group, such as people over 65 years in a certain postcode or those who are part of a specific community group? How accurate will the formula be for sample sizes such as these?

b. Exchange relationships

While this research has been applied to communal relationships, further research could be undertaken to see if it could also be applied to internal and external exchange relationships.

In an exchange relationship, it is possible that the V component of the relationship will be more important than the C and G. Such a hypothesis would need to be tested in further research.
c. Classification of statements

As mentioned in Section 5.2.3, the classification of some of the statements could have been altered. While this would not have affected Formulas 1, 3 and 4, it may have had some impact on the remaining three formulas that used a segmented approach.

Further research could be conducted on Formulas 2, 5 and 6 where some of the communication statements could be reclassified as governance statements.
6. Conclusions

This research aimed to answering the following question:

What components of a communal relationship can be defined to more accurately reflect the status of the relationship that exists between an organisation and its publics?

To answer this question, a number of subsidiary questions were also examined. These included:

1. What are the types of OPRs and how are they measured?
2. What are the components of an OPR?
3. Which components of an OPR are the most important in accurately reflecting the status of the relationship?

The literature review revealed and confirmed that an organisation could not successfully exist in isolation. It needs to interact with a broad range of internal and external stakeholders if it is to be successful.

OPRs identified in the literature review fit into two broad categories, being exchange and communal OPRs, answering, in part, the first subsidiary question – What are the types of OPRs?

The literature review also revealed three models that had been developed to measure perceptions of relationships or to measure parts or components of
them (such as trust). These models had been developed by Hon and Grunig (1999), Bruning and Ledingham (1999) and Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis and Cesaria (2000). The three models all used a one-dimensional approach, meaning that they only rely on the respondent’s satisfaction scores in their calculations. The measurement tool developed by Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis and Cesaria (2000) focused only on measuring one part of an OPR - trust. It should be noted that Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis and Cesaria did not present their tool as a relationship measurement device, highlighting that it was designed specifically to measure organisational trust.

This answered the second part of the first subsidiary question, which wanted to determine how OPRs are currently measured.

Bruning and Ledingham (1999) believed that any tool to measure a relationship should incorporate multiple components if it is to accurately reflect that status of the relationship. To this end, the literature review found that 25 components of an OPR had been identified, answering the second subsidiary question, which was: What are the components of an OPR?

Having identified the components in the literature review, the interviews conducted in Stage 1 aimed to validate that these components existed in the communal relationships that existed between the councils and their communities. To achieve this, 35 interviews were carried out with employees of three local governments and members of the community with whom the council employees had a relationship.
The interviews examined the components of the relationship by asking each interviewee 12 questions. Interviewee comments were cross-referenced against the components identified in the literature review. There was a strong correlation between components in their comments and the components identified in the literature review. This indicated that these components of an OPR were present in the relationships that were to be studied.

Having found that the components were present in the OPRs that existed between the three local governments and the community, the next step was to develop a survey that would allow the respondents to rank each of the components according to their level of importance and satisfaction. By completing the survey, respondents were scoring each of the deconstructed parts of the relationship. To do this the components were translated into statements that could be included in the survey. The statements reflected what interviewees had said during the interviews. This is shown in Table 4.

The score given in the survey represents the respondents’ assessment of the relationship that they currently have with their Council. It is a subjective assessment based on how they perceive the situation. The answer to this question became the benchmark relationship score (RBS). As the researcher could not find any literature that validates that this is an accurate method of assessing the status of a relationship, it is acknowledged that further research needs to be done in this area.
The benchmark relationship score produced a numerical figure that represented the status of the relationship at a specific period in time, noting that there could be multiple factors that could impact this score at that particular point in time. The score could change over time as circumstances changed. Therefore, the benchmark relationship score serves only a limited purpose. If the community considers the relationship to be positive or negative, and ranks it accordingly, then attention should focus on the factors that may have contributed to this result. This can be achieved analysing the scores of the individual components of the relationship.

Section three of the survey asked respondents to give details about themselves such their age; sex; duration in the area; and whether or not they were members of a community group, a Council advisory board or management committee. These questions could be used as filters that allow the researcher to analyse the data by segmenting the respondents into hundreds of sub-groups. However, further research is required to determine what sample size is needed to ensure an acceptable level of accuracy.

Three survey samples completed with 1000 randomly distributed in Council A and 500 each in Councils B and C produced a response rate averaging 23 per cent across the three samples. The data was entered into an Excel spreadsheet and then segmented for analysis. The surveys from contractors and employees were excluded as it was felt that this could influence the results as they were exchange OPRs, not communal.
Six formulas were developed to test the survey results. The aim was to develop a formula that when applied to the data from Section One of the survey, would result in the same score - or as close as possible to - the Relationship Benchmark Score from Section Two.

The formulas were broken into two groups; those that used a one-dimensional model and those that used a two-dimensional model. The one-dimensional model used only the satisfaction scores to calculate the relationship score. The two-dimensional model used a weighting approach, where the relationship scores were calculated using both the importance scores and the satisfaction scores. The level of accuracy of each formula was measured by how closely its relationship score accurately reflected the Benchmark Relationship Score (RBS) that respondents gave in their answer to the statement in Section 2 of the survey.

All the formulas delivered a relationship score that was accurate to within ±7.89 per cent of the Benchmark Relationship Score (RBS). Within this range, the most accurate one-dimensional formula delivered a variance of ±4.11 for a single sample and ±5.15 when averaged across the three Councils.

The two-dimensional formulas were more accurate. All formulas, for individual samples and for the averages of each formula, delivered an accuracy of ±3.56 per cent or better. The most accurate two-dimensional formula delivered an accuracy of ±1.85 per cent when averaged across the three Councils. This was Formula 4. The calculus for Formula 4 was:
Formula 4 – Average of all the importance and satisfaction scores (vertical then horizontal):
Formula 4 is calculated by adding all the importance scores for the 34 statements and then dividing by 34 to get an average importance score. The same is done for the satisfaction scores to get an average satisfaction score.

The average satisfaction score is divided by the average importance score and the result is multiplied by 9 to find the final Relationship (R) score.

The results demonstrate that the two-dimensional formulas are more accurate than the formulas that look only at the satisfaction scores (one-dimensional). Importantly, Hon and Grunig (1999), Bruning and Ledingham (1999) and Shockley-Zalabak, and Ellis and Cesaria developed methods of measuring the perceptions of relationships or parts of relationships using only one-dimensional approaches, which this research found to be the least accurate approach. This leads into the answer as to what is the most reliable way to more accurately quantify an organisation public relationship.

This research produced a model that can be used to more accurately reflect the status of an OPR. While only based on three samples and limited sample sizes, the methodology appears to be consistent and reliable in the results that it produces.

The methodology of the approach used to develop this model consisted of three stages. Firstly, the components of the relationship being studied were identified through a series of in-depth interviews. The belief is that the more components that can be incorporated into the survey, the more accurate the survey is likely to be in reflecting the status of the relationship.
Secondly, the interview results were translated into a series of statements that reflected the components identified in the interviews; these statements were included in a survey. The survey allowed the respondent to make two-dimensional assessments of the statements, meaning that respondents ranked statements according to both the level of satisfaction and the level of importance. This is different from the other tools that have been developed in previous research. Finally, Formula 4 was applied to the survey results and determined the relationship score. Formula 4 used a two-dimensional, non-segmented, vertical then horizontal approach.

The research has found that this is a more reliable way to accurately reflect the status of a communal organisational-public relationship.

In addition, the research has confirmed the importance of the components in the governance and value themes to a relationship, which has an impact for the public relations profession, traditionally operating in the communication area. One of the subsidiary questions that this research set out to answer was: What components of an OPR are the most important in accurately reflecting the status of the relationship? While this research showed that honesty, trustworthiness and value ranked as the three most important components, further research needs to be done to confirm these findings.

The research methodology also allows the public relations practitioner or an organisation to undertake an in-depth diagnostic analysis of a relationship to determine its strengths and weaknesses. By analysing the results, public relations professionals can see what is important to different people or
groups, and how satisfied they are with different aspects of the relationship. By including a number of filters in the survey, the results can be analysed by many sub-groups. While the accuracy of a sub-group score may not be as accurate as the total due to the smaller sample size being analysed, the results will nonetheless reveal vital clues that will allow an organisation to improve its relationship with stakeholders.

From the results, an organisation will be able to see which components of the relationship are important to different stakeholders at a particular point in time, and which are ranking higher and lower in terms of importance and satisfaction. The themes can be analysed to see the strengths and weaknesses that lie in the communication methods, the governance model or the value proposition that the organisation provides to its communal stakeholders.

If the status of the relationship was ranked relatively highly, then one would expect to find that the satisfaction of the most important components would be high, or at least match the importance scores. However, if the satisfaction was low for the components that are important to people, then one would expect the relationship score to be relatively low.

What constitutes a high or low relationship score, i.e. one that represents best or worst practice in stakeholder management, still needs to be determined by further research. When this occurs, industries can use the methodology to set benchmark standards for their members. For instance, local governments could set 64 per cent as the industry standard that all
councils are expected to achieve. Any industry where communal relationships are important, such as local government and mining, can set their own industry standard and use the methodology to determine the performance of each of the industry members. If research is carried out over subsequent years, increasing or decreasing scores can be tracked.

The findings of this research present an exciting opportunity for the public relations profession. If an organisation identifies the need for the public relations professional to be the relationship manager and the task is to improve its relationships, then the job specification of the public relations person will need to broaden significantly from what it is today. This research has shown that many aspects of an organisation’s activity are important to communal OPRs. Every person interfacing with these stakeholders and the people responsible for setting the corporate culture that employees are expected to operate within will need the input of the public relations professional. Everyone within the organisation will need to understand that the way they behave will have an impact on the reputation of the company and potentially on its bottom line performance.

Another implication for the profession is that public relations educators could review their curriculum to ensure that the teachings include information about public relations professionals acting as relationship managers.

In summary, this project has answered the primary research question and the three subsidiary questions. The research has determined a reliable way to quantify the relationship between an organisation and its publics and it
has established the types of OPRs, the components of them and which ones are the most important. While this research focused on communal relationships, further research is recommended to see if it can be applied to exchange relationships as well.

The methodology of determining the relationship benchmark score, however, needs further investigation and could be the primary focus of additional research.

The research has highlighted a question for the public relations profession - and public relations educators - to answer. The question is this: Is the current scope of the public relations profession broad enough to adequately address the increasing need for them to act as relationship managers?

_A final note:_ As a senior public relations practitioner, I find the results of this project challenging and exciting. For me, while I thought that this project would be the end of a journey, the findings are the start of change that I believe will have major benefits for and impacts upon the profession. Who knows; by undertaking a transition to relationship managers rather than communicators, the profession may be able to move beyond its reputation of ‘spin doctors’ to become doctors of organisational health.
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Rawlins, Brad L., Kenneth D. Plowman, and Elizabeth Stohlton: *A Comprehensive Approach to Prioritising Stakeholders: A Synthesis of Stakeholder and Public Relations Literature on Identifying and Prioritising Stakeholders for Strategic Management*

Rayburn, Jay, and Vincent Hazelton: *The Independent Practitioner of Public Relations: A Profile of Practice Issues and Business Models*


Yang, Sung-Un, and James E. Grunig: Toward a Valid Measure of Reputation: Organisational Reputation Based on Cognitive Representations
Appendix 1 – Structure and questions for the qualitative interviews

Section i – Introduction (5 minutes)

The interviews started with a statement of introduction that explained the purpose of the research and some background about the researcher. This was followed by some contextual questions to clarify the person’s position within the organisation and the level of interaction that they had with the Council or community.

1. What is your role in (Council or the community group)?

2. In your current position within Council/community group, what interaction do you have with the Council/community? Explore all aspects of the person’s duties that require interaction with (external stakeholders or Council)

3. Which individuals (within Council or the community and/or groups of stakeholders for Council employees) do you deal with?

Section ii – Identification of communication and relationship management methods (10 minutes)
The following two questions tried to identify the methods the Councils used to engage with the community or vice versa. The results of these questions have been discussed in the following chapter titled ‘Communication and relationship management methods’.

4. What processes do you use to communicate and interact with (each identified stakeholder or stakeholder group or Council)?

5. (Council employees only) Are there any particular management strategies or plans you use in stakeholder management?

Section iii – Status of the relationship (30 - 45 minutes)

Questions 6 – 12 were the main focus of the interview. The answers to these questions were explored in-depth to try to gain a better understanding of the components that the interviewees mention as being important to the status of the relationship.

6. How would you describe Council’s relationship with the community?

7. If I mention these words – trust, value, communication, what do you think of in terms of the relationship with the community/Council? How do you feel Council treats the community?

8. What are the benefits that the Council provides the community?
9. In what other ways do you think Council supports the community?

10. What are the good/strong parts of the relationship?

11. What are the bad/weak parts of the relationship?

12. What do you think are the major issues that the (community has with the Council or visa versa)?
**Appendix 2 – The title of the interview participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant ID</th>
<th>Title and Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>000</td>
<td>Business Operations Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>001</td>
<td>Team Leader, Corporate Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>002</td>
<td>Team Leader, Sustainability Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>003</td>
<td>Community and Cultural Services Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>004</td>
<td>Parks and Gardens Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>005</td>
<td>Compliance Services Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>006</td>
<td>Strategy and Policy Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>007</td>
<td>Assessment Support Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>008</td>
<td>Strategic Planning Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>009</td>
<td>Communications Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>010</td>
<td>Team Leader, Information and Cultural Services Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>011</td>
<td>Customer Service Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>012</td>
<td>Team Leader, Customer Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>013</td>
<td>Governance Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>014</td>
<td>Resident (Committee member)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>015</td>
<td>Vice-President, Chamber of Commerce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>016</td>
<td>Parks and Gardens Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>017</td>
<td>Resident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>018</td>
<td>President, Chamber of Commerce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>019</td>
<td>Resident (Committee member)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>020</td>
<td>Resident (Committee member)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>021</td>
<td>Environmental Services Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>022</td>
<td>Resident (Committee member)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>023</td>
<td>Resident (Committee member)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 024</td>
<td>Youth Forum Committee Members</td>
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<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 025</td>
<td>Communications Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 026</td>
<td>By-Laws Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 027</td>
<td>Customer Service Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 028</td>
<td>Customer Service Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 029</td>
<td>Resident (Committee member)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 030</td>
<td>CEO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 031</td>
<td>Mayor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 032</td>
<td>Community Relations Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 033</td>
<td>Customer Service Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 034</td>
<td>CEO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3 – The survey used for the quantitative research results

XX Community Relations Survey

XX Council is assisting an RMIT Masters student undertake a community relations survey. This questionnaire is designed to determine what you think is important in relation to Council’s behaviour and performance.

First we would like you to tell us how important you judge various aspects of the Council’s behaviour and activities to be. Then we would like you to rank Council’s performance for each of them. So there are two parts, first is to rank how important the statement is to you and the second is to rank Council’s performance for each of them. Below are some statements about these subjects.

We have randomly selected 500 participants from our database to receive this data. You are one of the people who have been selected. Please complete this survey and send it back to us in the reply paid envelope provided. If you have any questions in relation to the survey please contact David Hawkins on 03 8317 0111 or XX at XX Council on XX.

1. Please use the scales below and write two numbers in the boxes next to each statement. If you don’t know, write zero [0].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Unimportant</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>↑</td>
<td>Neither Important nor Unimportant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Dissatisfied</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>Very Satisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>↑</td>
<td>Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

STATMENTS INCLUDED IN THE SURVEY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Imp.</th>
<th>Sat.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Council needs to protect our natural assets such as parks and beaches</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Council needs to provide a safe environment for us to live in</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Council needs to treat all people equally</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Council should be able to manage conflicting demands from the community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Council should be honest in its communication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Council should communicate with me directly (via a Council newsletter) on a regular basis (every two months)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Council should keep our public spaces clean and tidy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Council should listen to, not be swayed by, the interests of a particular group</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Council should organise and promote events of cultural significance or that contribute to xx being a great place to live</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Council should provide a forum through which people can resolve issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Council should provide good value for money</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Council should provide me with all the information it has about a particular issue if I am being asked to comment on the issue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Council should provide me with information about its services and facilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Following the 34 statements, the survey asked the respondent to rate their overall relationship with the Council.

2. Using the scale below please rate the following item. If you don’t know write zero.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Very Poor</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

This response to this statement ‘Your relationship with XX Council’ is the relationship benchmark (RBS) score against which the formulas that were developed to quantify the relationship were cross-referenced. The closer the formula came to this benchmark score, the more accurate the formula was considered to be.
An additional 13 demographic and classification questions (filters) were also included in the survey. These were:

**Please circle one number for each item.**

3. I understand Council’s role in relation to providing services, facilities and leadership to the community.
   
   YES | 1  
   ----|----
   NO  | 2  

4. I understand that Council needs to take State and Federal government’s policy into consideration when making its decisions.
   
   YES | 1  
   ----|----
   NO  | 2  

5. Are you a member of one or more community groups?
   
   YES | 1  
   ----|----
   NO  | 2  

If YES, please specify:

6. Are you an employee of XX Council?
   
   YES | 1  
   ----|----
   NO  | 2  

7. Are you a supplier or contractor to XX Council?
   
   YES | 1  
   ----|----
   NO  | 2  

8. Have you attended any of the following associated with XX Council?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Council Meeting</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic planning meeting</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community meeting</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management planning policy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any other Council meeting</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. Are you on any of Council’s Advisory or Management Committees?
   
   YES | 1  
   ----|----
   NO  | 2  

10. How long have you lived in XX Council?
    
    I don’t live in XX  | 1
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than one year</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 years</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5 years</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 10 years</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. **Your age group**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15-19 years</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24 years</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34 years</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44 years</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54 years</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64 years</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 65 years</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. **Your lifestyle category**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lifestyle Category</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Young single</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mature family – youngest [at home] 15+</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young couple no children</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mature couple, no children at home</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young family – youngest under 6 years</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mature couple no children</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle family - youngest 6-15</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mature single</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13. **Your occupational status**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupational Status</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own business</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Duties</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
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14. **Your postcode**

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Appendix 4 – Quotes from the interviews

4. What processes do you use to communicate and interact with
   (each identified stakeholder or stakeholder group or Council)?

   and

5. (Council employees only) Are there any particular management
   strategies or plans you use in stakeholder management?

Participant 001

We held a number of information stalls at shopping centres and we also had a day
where people came along and we set up a room with all the 7 themes on display
and people could walk around and talk to the individuals about specific issues.

Participant 002

We will develop focus groups for those target groups. Some of that consultation has
already occurred in that it fitted in with some existing projects that the community
and cultural services area were doing around disability and aged services.

Participant 003

We then had the security company at the round table with the police, the drug
squad, the bike squad, xx Youth Council, my Council, our youth Councillors and we
just worked it out and clarified...

Participant 004

Community survey

Participant 006

The problem with consultation with local government is you tend to only hear from
the 50 to 100 people are always in your ear and people imagine that that is
consultation. Unless you have a process to broaden that out and specifically identify
those other groups that need to be talked to, you don’t tend to do it.

We generally letter box within a kilometre of the park to let people know that the
plan of management was coming up.

Participant 007

Mediation is one of the techniques we use.

Participant 008
We have found that presenting information in pictures and displays and so forth is the best way to do it. If you write a report that is an inch thick no one will read it. If you describe something in words, then the person reading could create a different picture as to what that thing might be.

I think one of the best things that I have seen is at the Council meetings now we have this thing called the Public Forum where any Joe Punter can get up and ask a question of the Administrator.

**Participant 025**

A website.

We have regular advertising in the newspapers, media releases through the papers and other media outlets. We have letters, telephone calls, face to face; we have the Shire wide newsletter now. The first one was in April and the second one came out in July.

Yes we have ward meetings of all our different committees, section 86 committees of which we have 46.
6. How would you describe Council’s relationship with the community?

Participant 000

I am sure people don’t think they are being consulted adequately. But then on their particular view I don’t think we are necessarily good at communicating.

Participant 001

At the moment I would have to say it’s improving….Around the time before the administrators started a lot of the interactions showed people were quite frustrated and weren’t necessarily getting a positive response in terms of their request. They were quite negative to Council.

We weren’t providing the level of information.

Participant 002

That is a difficult question as there is no one community so what that question tries to do is amalgamate our relationship with a range of communities. ... I think a lot of what Council was held to account for in the public inquiry process and there was a lot of misperception. A lot of it was perception.

Participant 003

.. very mixed trust, very mixed feelings. In fact in terms of stakeholder management, poor because there was a philosophy of beat 4 any time.

It’s almost like cathartic that those people are engaged in a way that they feel that someone …they are having there say. Whether someone is listening and responding

Participant 004

Think it needs a lot more opportunities for the community to have their say. Public Forum, which is something we put on before Council meetings these days has given every punter in the community the opportunity to come in, make a statement, ask a question, and that has opened the door.

Participant 005

Love hate.

Participant 008

I think some of things that we need to change are that we need to be able to get to a wider cross section of our residents.

It is kind of an educational issue more than a problem because we attempt to educate our residents as much as we can. We have ads in the paper, we do consultation, we run... XX we set up a little stand to put our strategic plan and
that was a real bit of a watershed for consultation for us because we understood that the majority of people who were just shopping there and just wondered over and asked what we were doing and they had a beef. The neighbour has a barking dog, the garbage stays out for 2 weeks. They were really minor type issues and we were talking about where things will happen in the future and they would say 'I don't care as long as it doesn't affect me'. You try and get them involved but sometimes it's difficult.

**Participant 009**

Well I think when we are communicating our policies, our budgets, our strategic planning...our big picture stuff we need to get it out there as far as we can to the widest possible section of the community. I guess it is down to me to try to make that happen. But there are particular interest groups in Xx, who historically have had very strong backing by previous Councillors and here I am really thinking of, as an example the surf clubs, who really have the jump ahead of everyone else in terms of treatment, communication of policies they might get to hear things before every body else. It is hard to evaluate but it is really anecdotal kind of evidence. But the surf clubs historically have very strong links to this organisation and have been able to profit from it.

Parts I would like to change would be the customer service outlook. Some staff attitudes are quite poor towards the public.

**Participant 010**

... service advocacy.

A core for the community rather than scattering the community in an unplanned way that I think is absolutely critical that Councils provide leadership and that they attract the quality of staff to be able to do that.

**Participant 011 and 012**

The customer service area has endeavoured to try and make ourselves more transparent in our workings with the community. We still find frustration at many levels throughout Council. We are prepared to open up and be a provider of the service to the community but we are getting blocked at other levels.

**Participant 014**

It was a difficult time. I suppose the relationship we had with them was coloured with the fact that the majority was going against what we were lobbying for and that colours the way you feel about it.

I suppose he explains the ... we understand that one of the difficulties at any level of government must be the fact that you have a million different arguments for and against every decision that you are going to make. No matter what you decide, it is going to be unpopular with a lot of people. I think that what the previous Council would do is that they would go in there and put their hands up in the air and you couldn't see the logic behind what they were doing. They would respond like politicians when you would ask them, they wouldn't explain what the opposing view was. They would just abuse you for having the view that you have got. Where as I have had many conversations with Dick and he has explained all the different views that he has been tossing up. Where he has thought about... and he has explained his reasons for making the
decisions that he has made. Again I say that in doing that he hasn’t made any
decisions that effect what we are on about around here that we haven’t agreed
with. That makes it so much easier to feel supported when things are going your
way.

Participant 016

From our point of view we have a good relationship but if you ask the
community about Council as a whole, and threw us all in there, I would suggest
that most of them don’t have a very high view of Council.

Not exceptionally well but I also think that the general public don’t give a rats
as a whole. We are 139,000 people and all but 138,000 don’t particularly care
unless their garbage is not picked up.

They have expectations that we will do certain things but we aren’t funded to
do all those things. They have issues with it. They understand but they are not
necessarily accepting of it. They see their issue as the most important thing. I
think more around that we don’t do a lot of things that they would like us
to do.

Participant 021

The bottom line is there is a lot of trust to be built back. Yes we have made
some good head ways in the past 18 months to build that back.

Participant 022

When you look at the number of joint partnerships that we have or funding
or sponsorship or even the internal stuff, we seem to have good relationships
and good results. And then the difficult external individual community members
are actually pretty good with us.

Participant 023

Over the years we have had a very good relationship with Council and I have
been involved down here for about 30 years. We have always been able to
get things done, mainly because we had Councillors who were inclined.

Participant 024

I don’t think we have much of a relationship because there is no necessity for it.

Participant 025

We have generally got a very demanding community but that actually drives
staff forward.

We have a pretty good relationship. We get many thank you letters in for all
different units.

But I think that is the public perception that you see out and about when
people are talking to other people and what you read in the papers. What you
get one on one is actually more like a 9 and I suppose we aren’t getting that
third party buy-in publicly.
Participant 026

You build up relationships with other people in the community the longer you have done the job. I run into people that I have had dealings with and they get to know me and then you build up a working relationship.

Participant 030

Relationship is an interesting word to use in one sense. We have a noisy minority that are extremely difficult to satisfy.

Participant 032

I think a lot of the time people prefer to not have any contact with Council unless there is an issue and then the expectation is that Council is there.

Participant 34

The first step is what you just talked about – understanding community needs and expectations.

The second step is to translate that understanding into policies and strategies. Policies being the goal and strategies how you achieve them.

The third step is then the delivery of outcomes.

The fourth step is the communication process which then goes around the loop, closes that loop. You are constantly going around there.

The main game is the thinking process that ultimately produces a set of goals and means to their achievement which everybody shares commitment to.

It’s about moving beyond an adversarial relationship. It’s about moving beyond a series of adversarial relationships because Council can have an adversarial relationship with its community – community can have adversarial relationships for example, pro versus anti development. There are a whole series of potentially adversarial relationships. The challenge is to create a different paradigm where you shift the ground completely. We say we are committed to the notion of a sustainable peninsula. That means addressing social, economic and environmental factors that are joined that way. So, when you want to come and talk to us about ‘you’re in favour of..’ you have to tell us how that fits in with this vision we have. There’s no point having a go at us. We aren’t on the other team. We are in the middle so you tell us how what you are proposing sits against the background of what’s good for the whole community.
7. If I mention these words – trust, value, communication, what do you think of in terms of the relationship with the community/Council?

Participant 000

Glen Street, the current board structure up there wouldn’t have a trust in Council. That would probably be historic. Some people have a very long memory and it’s probably a fear of Council being too involved so therefore there is not necessarily good two-way communication.

Participant 001

On an individual basis it is probably where people have had established relationships with individuals that trust probably is carried all the way across but in other ones it hasn’t.

I think the community would always think that we should provide more. That is my perception and that is probably more of a case of I don’t think we manage their expectations well. I think that is where a lot of our problems come from – the fact that we don’t articulate to them the limitations of what we can do or alternatively provide them other options.

Part of the problem is that we are not very good at explaining why we have made a decision.

Participant 002

So we generally have a slide that we put up in a community meeting that says how everybody should be treated. So you must treat people with respect, allow them to finish talking before you start talking.

Some areas see it as a value adding exercise and quite prepared to listen to people and what they have to say.

I think our community, like any community, thinks that Council could be a bit more efficient. Particularly in regard to basic things like how well our toilets are maintained in open space, how quickly we respond to letters and so forth. That is an area where our value is not perceived as being good.

I think one of the things in the communication area was that people felt they were listened to but that their concerns were still not addressed. There was plenty of opportunity to say don’t put this there, put it over there but then they felt that Council still didn’t listen to those views.

I think some of the times we may have that dialogue but we don’t adequately document it and explain how the decision was reached. So that is probably an area we can improve on.
Participant 003
What I am seeing now is there is a degree of trust being built up by the administrator using communication and engagement and involvement.

Participant 004
If we have an understanding, we are not trying to sell things, but we are trying to promote ourselves and market ourselves and therefore serve the community better and use their money better.

Participant 005
Some people are quite happy to ring up and wait 3 months for something to be done but others will ring up and expect something to be done that day.

... some people have the perception that Council can solve all their problems and solve all their personal problems. Other people will never ring Council in their life and yet will benefit from Council in that we improve the footpaths, food inspections etc. But they would never complain to Council but they still get the outcome. Where as I think managing the expectations of complainants is very difficult and the way to do it is to clearly explain to them at the time that they are contacting you – as a stakeholder or whatever they are - as to what we can and can’t do for them has never been clearly communicated in the past.

Participant 007
One of the criticisms from the stakeholders is that they had heard nothing from us for 6 weeks and then you come back to them and there is a problem. Why didn’t you tell me at the beginning of the process? So again, that is a way to try and manage expectations to tell them up front that they have missed information that they need to provide.

The difficult part as well, is a lot of the questions the community is asking, they don’t understand what they are asking. So even when you fix their issue or resolve it for them, they don’t even realise that you have resolved it. Because this division hasn’t communicated with the community as well as we should have. There is a lot of confusion out there.

Participant 008
I think it is very positive. We have embarked on a lot of key steps since the Council were dismissed to make our processes open and transparent. I think that... I run the philosophy that residents can phone me up and ask me questions and I am not going to hide between the wall of bureaucracy and anything like that. I always try and assist people when they need it. Having said that, I am also not afraid to have an argument with someone if they put up an untenable argument or something that might need to be addressed.

We provide a lot of information through website and libraries and Council reports that assist in understanding what my area is doing and what the planning policy unit does.
Participant 009

Customer service is a big one. And by customer service I don’t just mean picking up the phone with a smile in your voice and greeting people with a smile when they come through the door. I mean really giving them the service that they want and for that **we really have to research what people want**. There is no good assuming that we know what they want. What we think they want and what they actually want are 2 different things.

Participant 014

I tried to talk to the 9 Councillors, in the course of it; no matter how hard I tried I only ever got to speak to about 6 of them. There were 3 of them that **wouldn’t speak to us**, any of us and some that were positively hostile.

Certainly from a political level it has improved immeasurably because he is an individual that is **easy to talk to**. He shows both the clear mind and the strong heart. He has that all in one person which makes it very easy. You can explain your feelings to him, you know that **he is listening** to them and you **understand his reasons for making the decisions** that he makes.

But I understand his reasons. **He has explained it clearly**. I know the thousand other projects that he is trying to find money for as well.

I think that ... there was a sense that they had their own agendas and they had their own things going on. I use John Fisher Park as an example that the way that the whole issue began was through us kind of **finding out things that were going on rather than being communicated to us**.

So there was this real sense of that there was **some steering going on behind the scenes**.

I think that what **we want is to know that we are getting a fair hearing**. To know that the concerns that are being expressed are being given the necessary attention and weight that they deserve. **To know that the decisions that will be made will be made for all the right reasons and not because of someone’s interest**.

We had been consulting with Dick, Gary and Denise about the management committee for the park and they had come up with a draft and we had to-ed and fro-ed with it for a while. Then they put it on exhibition but what they had put on was the first draft without the edits. So **we had been talking to them for 6 months for no reason**. We rang them up and said how come.

We feel that after 5 years of frustration and on some people’s part, heart ache, we are now **getting a fair hearing** and common sense is prevailing.

I think that if the **open and frank communication** continues I will be very happy.

People tell me terrible stories about **ringing up and not getting anyone to return their call**.

Participant 015
I have got here at least 3 different visions from different eras in the Council. Each one we have been called in to consult with, to give our ideas, do we agree, what suggestions can we give to improve. **We have spent hours and hours at all these meetings and nothing seems to happen.** The meetings seem to just grind around into a round about.

**Participant 021**

Council has the role of service provider but it also has the role of lobbyist for this community.

**Good libraries, childcare** are ok to spend money on.

For me the major issues are about **rebuilding trust.** I think we have to **show by our actions that we are genuine.** That we aren’t just sitting back waiting for letters to come and for you to ring us up. That we are out there reaching out to the community, proactively and ahead of the game.

**Participant 022**

I think everyone thinks they live in the best area of Sydney and their value system might be very different to yours so you will always have someone who values the **beach environment** more, so might hassle my guys about the life guard service because that is their particular interest area.

Again I do think that **people do want to see what they are getting for their rates.**

**When we ask for their feedback they want to be followed up with and know what happened with my information.**

**Accountability.** For one its finances, services, people and the type of service we deliver. The **way we communicate.** The way we actually work with external stakeholders and community members. And how are we going to meet the needs and demands of the local community. They are all competing and we are never going to please everyone but how do we actually communicate that. **How do we manage their expectations?**

**Participant 024**

I guess really a greater **openness and discussion** and not just with ourselves but with other young people in the wider community.

**Be fair and open.** Sometimes we find when we go to Council that we just end up agreeing because we don’t really understand. Actually **give us the information and the facilities to have a discussion** openly without having someone dictating to them what they are saying.

**Participant 025**

I think that there isn’t a lot of trust in the organisation externally but that is just a **lack of trust in bureaucracy** full stop.

We have probably a bit of legacy of some GM’s that weren’t particularly open or would say **one thing and in 3 years they hadn’t delivered on it rather than saying no, we can’t do it.**
Leadership seems to be coming out a lot from that. There is a lack of leadership coming from Council.

Participant 026

I think if the Council is open about stuff that the community, whether it’s positive or negative, if it’s open it creates trust with the community. Council is open. The community thinks that the Council it’s a bureaucracy so it’s not open.

Participant 027 + 028

Let’s tell the truth. We have to be truthful and I say to people I will not keep coming back into this community... if it is not happening...

I really try to touch most subjects within 24 hours. Even if it’s just a phone call to say I got your message today, I can’t talk to you at the moment because I am in a meeting but I will talk to you in the morning. It’s as simple as that.

The major issue now is delivery of some projects. They have seen some rate hikes.

Participant 030

I think our response times in general are excellent. Things like our planners are doing 130 permits per planner per annum compared to Shepparton’s 56 per planner per annum.

I think that more one-on-one contact with Council staff that creates a positive outcome, albeit even if the answer is no, the experience has still been positive. I think the better off we will be accepted as an organization.

That is difficult because of the size and even though we attempt to treat people with equality...

Participant 031

Another concern is Council’s response time to when there is an issue there. Both from Councillors and staff. Like if someone from the community phones up they don’t necessarily want an instant response but they want to have that return phone call. There is nothing worse than you phone up and they don’t phone you up for 4 days.

The other thing is a lot of people also like to believe that we are honest and trustworthy and that we are going to act in the best interest of the community. And the old rule of thumb is you can’t please all the people all the time.

Participant 032

There is very poor understanding in the community of what we are trying to deliver.

I suppose historically there have been commitments given that haven’t eventuated. There have been examples of where decisions that were going to be made haven’t been made.
Participant 34

I think you have to include **respect with trust**. Not everyone is always going to agree.

In '99 we held a peninsula-wide forum and said "tell us what the big issues are?" Arising out of that there were five big issues and that was the basis of our policy making. Young people, was one of the big five. Protecting the Peninsula from suburbanisation was another. They have remained the big five except that we have varied them over time.

The next time that we wanted to consult with the community we held what we called **local action workshops**. We went to seventeen localities and spoke at that local level. We said ok, focus on XX. We said "here is what we did when we last spoke to the community at a whole of peninsula level. Here are the big five issues, here is what we are doing about them etc. Now tell us what is important to XX". So then we had a XX perspective.
8. What are the benefits that the Council provides the community?

and

9. In what other ways do you think Council supports the community?

The responses for these two questions have been grouped due to the similarity of the question and the responses

Participant 000

.. provision of the tip

Different events, networking opportunities. Potentially a better urban environment to live in.

Better public open spaces... Provision of sports fields ... Beaches, better river planning etc.

Participant 001

The benefits I see are that it provides it with services, in some cases services that other people wouldn’t provide.

I think we provide support to a lot of service based groups. Monetary and facilities eg SLSA.

Participant 002

I think we provide effective local representation. We are lobbying on behalf of the community to state and local government.

The other thing, and it might be services to a certain extent, is that we help increase and strengthen the social fabric of XXX.

... youth events, our cultural events, and libraries.

Participant 003

We value our special beach and bush environment.

Participant 005
In terms of how quickly we turn around our applications for our clients, how we contact them, how we keep them informed and things like that.

What I am aiming for is consistency.

**Participant 008**

... get my bin collected, go to the tip for free.

**Participant 009**

Meals on Wheels, youth week all that sort of stuff and people love us for that.

**Participant 010**

As you move into retirement and into aged house bound, those services, the public library then becomes their primary resource as a library.

There is this measure of goodwill towards that social capital that Council provides.

**Participant 011 and 012**

I think they expect quality for their dollar. Its money focused. They see that they are paying...

And Council provides so many wonderful services – we have one of the best recycling campaigns in Sydney and people aren’t aware of what they do to achieve that. It would be great to toot the horn for things like that as it would lift the profile of the staff and the whole Council.

A lot of times people will say ‘we have to pay for the beaches to get cleaned’...

**Even the parks and reserves and playing fields.** My kids are a bit older now and not using those things as much. All through the time they needed them they were there and all that sort of stuff.

The beaches with life guards and safety on the beaches.

I think that environmental issues are quite big in XX at the moment.

People like to know that all those things are being protected. Keep them safe for future generations and from development.

**Participant 013**

I have somewhere to go. If you are a single mum and you have no support, no family around you sooner or later you will end up talking to someone from community services in the Council who will steer you in the right direction. That might fall more into the service area.

I still think it’s the basics. Roads and rubbish.
Providing childcare and setting a benchmark for the private sector. Obviously ovals, sporting things, youth etc. Giving them the chance to play their guitars or go crazy, or have a dance concert.

And trying to do some social and community building. The ultimate is... maybe they should legislate that every street has a street party every year.

Supporting the social structure.

Participant 014

I suppose it is community leadership. That is a nice mission statement kind of word to use.

Participant 016

Our job is to deliver maintenance within the budget structure given to us. They appreciate that but obviously they aren't necessarily happy if they don't get what they are looking for. The last thing they want to hear is "no" and they do hear "no" quite frequently because we can't deliver the services that they are expecting because we don't have the funds available to us.

We do try and represent the community in the bigger scheme of things at the regional and state level.

I think that they would probably want their rates to be spent appropriately and for us to be financially accountable for what we do. To manage our infrastructure effectively for them and the future.

Participant 017

I expect Council to provide a quality to the life in XX to all of us here. I think for example the library. I have never heard one complaint. It is also an information service. I also think the environment is a concern. I want them to maintain and really improve.

Participant 019

It is providing lots of facilities for older people and supporting organisations for older people. I belong to Forest Computer Pals for Seniors.

Participant 020

As an organisation I suppose they have been very supportive of us over the years. Like they own the building here and we get it rent free. They have provided us with the building although we do pay a small rent down there. Over the years they have supportive us well. We cover 3 local government areas and I think it is because we are physically located here that they do give us very strong support. We don't get anywhere near the support that we do from XX or XX.

Participant 025
The most obvious ones are roads, rates and rubbish – the services that are delivered. Increasingly, the environmental stewardship. Economic development support.

**Participant 027 + 028**

We have worked with them to get grants to put up rebound wall. Some of the grants are internal. But it is just teaching them through leadership programs and submission writing how to do it.

**Participant 030**

We have our own leadership program running at the moment. The main purpose of that is to give skills to community leaders.

I think we have spent a fortune on grading roads, and resealing roads and doing engineering stuff to the detriment of the people and it’s the people that complain not the roads.

I suppose by design that building up into that social capital within the community development, recreation officers, those items are of huge value to us as an organization within the community and we need to support those more.

**Participant 032**

I suppose they probably come to Council looking for Council to be the arbitrator of a lot of issues. So that we are in a lot of cases actually able to be the independent umpire on a few issues.

**Participant 34**

Another example is our infrastructure maintenance standards. You solve problems before they become dramas.

The text book answer is that we provide a large part of the infrastructure they need for their everyday life.

Then there is planning for the future. What we do is we manage the present and we plan for the future.

What you then seek to do is to help that community be a community to the extent that it wants to be.

The Council doesn’t presume to tell a community how it wants to live. It listens and watches and helps them make the journey they want to make.
10. **What are the good parts of the relationship (the ones you would want to keep)?**

**Participant 000**

There is a lot of **community consultation** done but whether or not it actually reaches into the community as much as it can I am not so sure. But then I am not actually sure that the community has time to participate.

From my perspective it’s **whether or not you are listening to a small group who are the ones who ‘shout the loudest’**. I’m not sure whether we do.

**Participant 001**

Having gone through the process that we have come to this point the fact that we can **recognise where we need to improve** and we can vocalise that to the community.

**Participant 002**

I think the good parts are that we are seen to be serious, in particularly in our **planning and assessment** area. We are also **listening to people** and that has been documented.

**Participant 004**

So you are **changing attitudes by the small actions** you are doing around the place. **Setting up advisory committees**, where these people are getting **reasonable representation**.

**Participant 005**

The positive parts are that we have at least **recognised that we have a bad relationship with the community and we need to do something about it.**

**Participant 016**

Council has got a true intent, I think, to be **open and consult and truly consult**. They do have that intention there. As a whole we do have the general community’s interest at heart. There is a lot of **good intent** in that process.

**Participant 022**

I think that the ability that **people feel that they can give you a call**. If they know of a certain person in Council, they will use that **personal relationship** whether you look after that area or not. They will ring you and ask you. I think that is quite nice.
11. What are the bad/weak parts of the relationship (the ones that you would want to change)?

Participant 001

I would have to say that we don’t try to manage community’s expectations. We don’t manage it very well. We agree too easily and it is individuals within the organisation, the squeaky wheel gets the oil.

Participant 002

I still think we are inconsistent in our approach to consultation and dealing with the community.

Participant 003

We do get some groups in there that just cannot put their own interest aside for the wider interest of the community. And they tend to be very negative towards the Council in that respect.

I don’t think there is commitment to it at a managerial level.

I get concerned when I hear views expressed from senior management to almost massage these people. Not necessarily to have a better planning or decision outcome but to manage our press better.

Participant 005

There is still that perception that the community is a pain in the neck.

Participant 009

There are historical relationships going on between the staff and people in the community that I don’t think are particularly healthy. There is one particular Director that has some very close links with some very powerful people in the community which is not necessarily healthy I believe.

It means that people perhaps have a door to decision-making that other people are denied in the community. That is an unfair and inequitable situation.

Participant 010

I don’t think we do enough for people with a disability.

Participant 011

People feel that they aren’t getting value for money.

Participant 014

The negatives are a lack of open and frank communication.
Participant 015
Closed mindedness. Hidden agendas.

Participant 020
The relationship would improve if we got more money.

Participant 021
For me the major issues are about rebuilding trust. I think we have to show by our actions that we are genuine.

Participant 016
The worst thing that I see is that we can be very inconsistent. You can be very open and honest and only go so far and pass the buck to someone else and they don’t want to be open and honest and it leaves them judging the whole organisation.

Participant 023
My whole issue is this consistent approach. I think that really has to change that while you say you can have pages of values and operating principles but until everyone works along those same principles we will continue to have this huge difference in opinion about how we relate to our external stakeholders and how they see us.

Participant 024
Be fair and open. Sometimes we find when we go to Council we just end up agreeing because we don’t really understand.

They don’t really give us any feedback on the things that we do.

Participant 029
The negatives are easily defined. The road network is in a poor condition.

Participant 032
Another concern is Council’s response time when there is an issue there. There is nothing worse than you phone up and they don’t phone you for up to four days.

Participant 033
I think that there is room for a lot more trust.
Appendix 5 – Quantitative research results

Tables 15 – 17 show the results of the survey for each sample. The following are the descriptions for each column:

Column 1 shows the Council, the sample size and the statements.
Column 2 (C2) shows the ranking of each statement according to its level of importance.
Column 3 (C3) shows the importance score out of 9 for each statement based on the average for that sample.
Column 4 (C4) shows the standard deviation of the scores for that sample size
Column 5 (C5) shows where the statement ranked according to the level of satisfaction against the other statements
Column 6 (C6) shows the satisfaction score out of 9 for each statement based on the average for that sample.
Column 7 (C7) shows the standard deviation of the scores for that sample size
Column 8 (C8) shows the gap between the level of importance and the level of satisfaction

Table 15: Results of Section 1 for Council A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column 1</th>
<th>C2</th>
<th>C3</th>
<th>C4</th>
<th>C5</th>
<th>C6</th>
<th>C7</th>
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<td>2.09</td>
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<tr>
<td>Council needs to protect our natural assets such as parks and beaches</td>
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<td>8.65</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.05</td>
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<tr>
<td>Council staff should treat people with respect and at all times be polite and courteous</td>
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<td>6.07</td>
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<tr>
<td>Council should provide good value for money</td>
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<td>8.57</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>1.88</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is important that Council has appropriate planning policies in place</td>
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<td>1.03</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>2.19</td>
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<td>Council A – (n=254)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council should keep our public spaces clean and tidy</td>
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<td>8.55</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.97</td>
<td>1.98</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is important that Council consults widely with the community in the development of these planning policies</td>
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<td>8.53</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>30</td>
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<td>It is important that Council does not over-promise and under-deliver</td>
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<td>It is important for Council to be transparent in its decision-making</td>
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<td>Council needs to treat all people equally</td>
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<td>2.94</td>
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<tr>
<td>Council needs to provide a safe environment for us to live in</td>
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<td>5.92</td>
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<tr>
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<td>4.69</td>
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<td>3.47</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is important for Council to represent all sectors of our community fairly</td>
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<td>8.15</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.45</td>
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<tr>
<td>Council should provide me with information about its services and facilities</td>
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<td>Council should provide strong leadership for the community</td>
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<td>Council should support other organisations that provide a valuable community service</td>
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<td>7.64</td>
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<td>5.61</td>
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<tr>
<td>Council should provide a forum through which people can resolve issues</td>
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<td>1.70</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5.13</td>
<td>1.77</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is important for Council to support those in the community that are less fortunate or have experienced hardship</td>
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<td>7.4</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5.35</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>2.05</td>
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<tr>
<td>Council should represent local residents at State and Federal Government levels</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>7.21</td>
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<td>SD</td>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>Sat.</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Gap</td>
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<td>Council should organise and promote events of cultural significance or</td>
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<td>1.91</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.62</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>1.53</td>
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<tr>
<td>that contribute to XX being a great place to live</td>
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<td>Council should work at strengthening the social fabric of our community</td>
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<td>It is important to recognise the traditional owners of the land and</td>
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<td>6.04</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.54</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>0.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>celebrate their culture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Council should communicate with me directly (via a Council newsletter)</td>
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<td>5.95</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5.09</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>0.86</td>
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<tr>
<td>(every two months)</td>
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**Section 2**

This is the benchmark relationship (RBS) score.

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<th></th>
<th>Sat</th>
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<tr>
<td>Your relationship with Council</td>
<td>5.86</td>
<td>1.77</td>
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</table>
# Section 1

## Table 16: Results of Section 1 for Council B

### Council B – (n=78)

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<th>Statements</th>
<th>Rank</th>
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<th>SD</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Sat.</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Gap</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Council should be honest in its communication</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8.72</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.90</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>2.82</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is important that Council has appropriate planning policies in place</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8.67</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5.74</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>2.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important that Council is trustworthy</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.64</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.87</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>2.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council needs to protect our natural assets such as parks and beaches</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.58</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.35</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>2.23</td>
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<tr>
<td>Council staff should treat people with respect and at all times be polite and courteous</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>6.46</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>2.11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Council should keep our public spaces clean and tidy</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8.55</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.62</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>1.93</td>
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<tr>
<td>Council should provide good value for money</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>1.19</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5.45</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>3.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important that Council consults widely with the community in the development of these planning policies</td>
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<td>8.51</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>3.15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Council needs to treat all people equally</td>
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<td>8.42</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5.47</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>2.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important that Council does not over-promise and under-deliver</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.38</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>4.90</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>3.49</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is important for Council to represent all sectors of our community fairly</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8.38</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5.86</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>2.53</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is important that Council responds to my phone calls, letters and emails in a timely manner</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8.34</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.87</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>2.47</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is important that Council listens to my views</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8.30</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>2.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important that Council has a long-term vision for the community that reflects community views</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8.29</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5.32</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>2.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council should provide me with all the information it has about a particular issue if I am being asked to comment on the issue</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8.26</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5.79</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>2.47</td>
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<tr>
<td>Council should be able to manage conflicting demands from the community</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8.24</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5.73</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>2.52</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is important that Council makes its decisions in the best interest of the community, even though they may be controversial</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8.23</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>5.05</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>3.18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Council should listen to, not be swayed by, the interests of a particular group</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8.23</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>4.91</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>3.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important for Council to be transparent in its decision making</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8.18</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5.03</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>3.15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Council should tell the community if it has made a mistake</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8.18</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>4.53</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>3.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council should provide me with information about its services and facilities</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>8.15</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.72</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>1.43</td>
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<td>Council needs to provide a safe environment for us to live in</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>8.14</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.40</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>1.74</td>
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<td>It is important that Council demonstrates that they have tried to understand my views</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8.12</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5.26</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>2.85</td>
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<td>It is important for Council to support those in the community that are less fortunate or have experienced hardship</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8.12</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5.31</td>
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### Council B – (n=78)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Imp.</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Sat.</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Gap</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Council should support other organisations that provide a valuable community service</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>8.01</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5.38</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>5.32</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is important that Council demonstrates that they have taken my view into consideration in their decision-making</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7.85</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>5.20</td>
<td>2.41</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council should provide a forum through which people can resolve issues</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>7.84</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>2.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council should organise and promote events of cultural significance or that contribute to Xx being a great place to live</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>7.78</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.14</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>1.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council should provide strong leadership for the community</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>7.74</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5.73</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>2.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council should work at strengthening the social fabric of our community</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>7.47</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5.44</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>2.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council should represent local residents at State and Federal Government levels</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>7.27</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>4.88</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>2.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council should communicate with me directly (via a Council newsletter) on a regular basis (every two months)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>7.27</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.18</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important to recognise the traditional owners of the land and celebrate their culture</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>6.81</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>5.10</td>
<td>2.11</td>
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### Section 2

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<tr>
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<td>Your relationship with Council</td>
<td>6.00</td>
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</table>

This is the benchmark relationship (RBS) score.
Table 17: Results of Section 1 for Council C

Section 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Council C – (n=133)</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Imp.</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Sat.</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Gap</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is important that Council is trustworthy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8.76</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5.28</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>3.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council should be honest in its communication</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8.75</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5.22</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>3.52</td>
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<tr>
<td>Council should provide good value for money</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.68</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>4.92</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>3.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council staff should treat people with respect and at all times be polite and courteous</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.60</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.32</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>2.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important that Council does not overpromise and underdeliver</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8.55</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>5.10</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>3.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council should keep our public spaces clean and tidy</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8.49</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.30</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>2.19</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is important that Council consults widely with the community in the development of these planning policies</td>
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<td>8.48</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5.34</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is important that Council has appropriate planning policies in place</td>
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<td>1.13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.63</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is important that Council listens to my views</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.40</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>4.81</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>3.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important for Council to be transparent in its decision-making</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.38</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4.82</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>3.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council needs to treat all people equally</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8.36</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.62</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is important that Council responds to my phone calls, letters and emails in a timely manner</td>
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<td>1.44</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5.44</td>
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<tr>
<td>Council should provide me with all the information it has about a particular issue if I am being asked to comment on the issue</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8.32</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.55</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>2.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council needs to protect our natural assets such as parks and beaches</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8.30</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.07</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>2.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important for Council to represent all sectors of our community fairly</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8.30</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>3.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important that Council makes its decisions in the best interest of the community, even though they may be controversial</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8.29</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4.99</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>3.30</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is important that Council demonstrates that they have tried to understand my views</td>
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<td>8.26</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>4.88</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>3.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council should tell the community if it has made a mistake</td>
<td>18</td>
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<td>34</td>
<td>4.46</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council needs to provide a safe environment for us to live in</td>
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<td>8.23</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.26</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.97</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is important that Council has a long-term vision for the community that reflects community views</td>
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<td>8.16</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5.44</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>2.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important that Council demonstrates that they have taken my view into consideration in their decision-making</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>8.07</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>4.62</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>3.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council should listen to, not be swayed by, the interests of a particular group</td>
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<td>4.90</td>
<td>2.24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Council should provide strong leadership for the community</td>
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<td>8.06</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5.27</td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td>2.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council should provide me with information about its services and facilities</td>
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<td>1.46</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.27</td>
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### Council C – (n=133)  
**Statement**  
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Imp.</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Sat.</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Gap</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>8.00</td>
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<td>5.24</td>
<td>2.07</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>7.99</td>
<td>1.37</td>
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<td>1.88</td>
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<td>5.26</td>
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<td>34</td>
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<td>2.47</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>0.54</td>
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</table>

### Results of section 2 for Council C

This is the benchmark relationship (RBS) score.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sat</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your relationship with Council</td>
<td>5.77</td>
<td>2.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 6 – Plain Language Statements

Social Performance Survey

Dear (insert recipient’s name)

My name is David Hawkins and I am undertaking a Masters of Arts at RMIT University, School of Applied Communication. The title of my research is ‘Quantifying relationships between an organisation and its publics’.

You have been specially selected to offer your opinion on how the Council communicates with you and the impact that this has on your relationship with (insert Council name)

The purpose of this research is to produce a formula that Councils can use to measure the relationship they have with their community. This formula has the potential to be an effective tool in measuring the social performance of an organisation.

This survey is part of a research project that is trying to measure (insert Council name)’s performance at providing value to its community. The outcome will be directed towards establishing ways that local governments can improve the service they provide their local community.

Participation is voluntary. Your contribution to this research is vital in order to achieve a valid outcome for the research project. The survey is being sent to 100 Council employees and 300 members of a community group. Could you please complete the attached questionnaire and send it back to the following address by XX/XX:

RMIT research survey
C/O Socom Pty Ltd
Level 2, 377 Lonsdale Street
Melbourne Vic 3000

The survey should take 10 - 15 minutes to complete. It will require you to respond to 34 questions as well as provide some personal information. The results of this research may be published but it will not identify specific names of groups or people.

If you have any questions relating to this research please contact David Hawkins on 03 8317 0111.

You can also contact my supervisor, Maggie Walsh, Program Coordinator Graduate Diploma in Public Relations, RMIT University, maggie.walsh@rmit.edu.au, tel 9925 3155

Yours faithfully

David Hawkins  FPRIA,
Master’s student
Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology.

Any complaints about your participation in this project may be directed to the Secretary, RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee, University Secretariat, RMIT, GPO Box 2476V, Melbourne, 3001. The telephone number is (03) 9925 1745.
Details of the complaints procedure are available from: www.rmit.edu.au/Council/hrec
Social Performance Interviews

Dear (insert recipient’s name)

My name is David Hawkins and I am undertaking a Masters of Arts at RMIT University, School of Applied Communication. The title of my research is ‘Quantifying relationships between an organisation and its publics’.

You have been specially selected to offer your opinion on how the Council communicates with you and the impact that this has on your relationship with (insert Council name).

The purpose of this research is to produce a formula that Councils can use to measure the relationship they have with their community. This formula has the potential to be an effective tool in measuring the social performance of an organisation.

The interview is part of a research project that is trying to measure (insert Council name)’s performance at providing value to its community. The outcome will be directed towards establishing ways that local governments can improve the service they provide their local community.

Participation is voluntary. Your contribution to this research is vital in order to achieve a valid outcome for the research project. The survey is being sent to 100 Council employees and 300 members of a community group. Could you please complete the attached questionnaire and send it back to the following address by XX/XX:

RMIT research survey
C/O Socom Pty Ltd
Level 2, 377 Lonsdale Street
Melbourne Vic 3000

The interview should take 45 minutes. During the interview I will be asking you a few questions about your relationship with (insert Council name). The results of this research may be published but it will not identify specific names of groups or people.

If you have any questions relating to this research please contact David Hawkins on 03 8317 0111.

You can also contact my supervisor, Maggie Walsh, Program Coordinator Graduate Diploma in Public Relations, RMIT University, maggie.walsh@rmit.edu.au, tel 9925 3155

Yours faithfully

David Hawkins  FPRIA,
Master’s student
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