

SURVEY REPORT

Bullying, Harassment & Intimidation in NSW Local Government

January 2024



**AUSTRALIAN LOCAL
GOVERNMENT WOMEN'S
ASSOCIATION**
NEW SOUTH WALES BRANCH

INTRODUCTION

The Australian Local Government Women's Association (ALGWA) survey on bullying, harassment, including sexual harassment, and intimidation within NSW Local Government (LG), was initiated by the ALGWA NSW Board.

The Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW sets the minimum standards of conduct for council officials (staff & councillors). This report details the results of a survey for NSW female councillors to determine the minimum standards are being met by all councils. This survey was sent to all female elected councillors and former Local Government female councillors.

CONTENTS

PART 1 - GENERAL INFORMATION	3
PART 2 - PRE ELECTION	4
PART 3 - ELECTED COUNCILLOR	11
PART 4 - NATURE OF BULLYING, HARASSMENT AND INTIMIDATION	42
PART 5 - KNOWLEDGE AND CONFIDENCE IN REPORTING	54
PART 6 - GOVERNANCE AND POLICIES	58
PART 7 - ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	63



**AUSTRALIAN LOCAL
GOVERNMENT WOMEN'S
ASSOCIATION**
NEW SOUTH WALES BRANCH



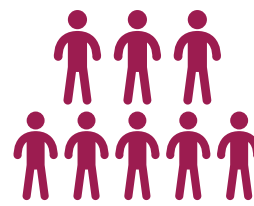
Report Title: Survey Report: Bullying, Harassment and Intimidation in NSW Local Government
Client: Australian Local Government Women's Association NSW Branch
Version: Final
Date: January 2024

Part 1: General Information

In November 2023, the Australian Local Government Women's Association (ALGWA) NSW Branch launched a survey for all current and former female councillors in New South Wales.

The confidential survey of bullying, harassment and intimidation in NSW Local Government was sent to all serving female councillors and all local governments in NSW. It sought feedback regarding incidents of bullying, harassment and intimidation during the election, induction and also the council term. A copy of the ALGWA NSW survey can be found at Appendix 1.

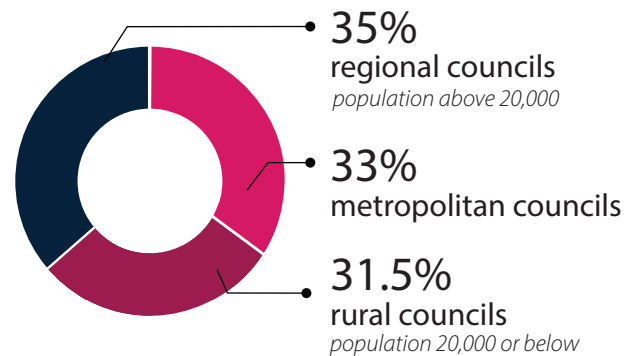
This report details the findings and comments provided by respondents. The comments of respondents included in this report are unedited, with exception to comments which have listed an individual's name. For privacy reasons, these names have been redacted.



139
respondents

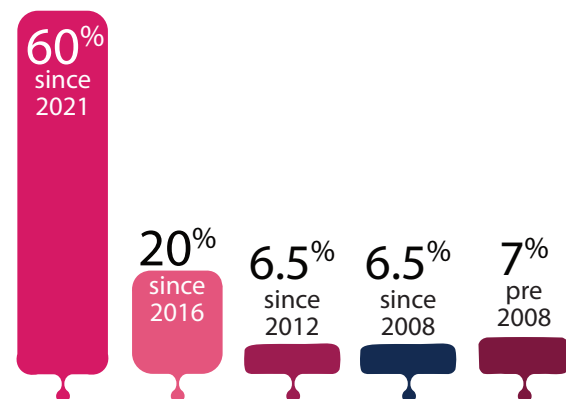
28%
of councillors
completed the
survey

Location of respondents



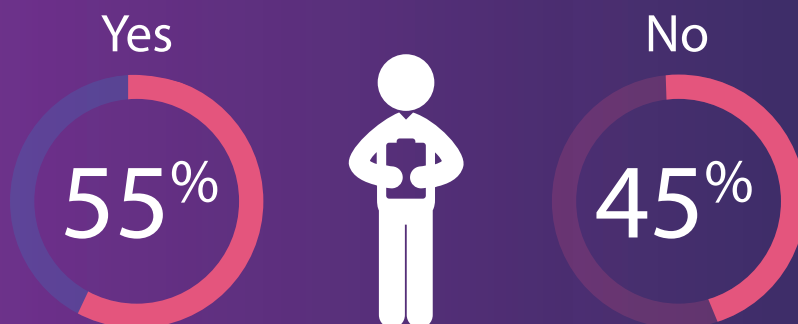
0.5% of responses stated none of the above.

Length of service



Part 2: Pre-election

Q3. Did you experience bullying, harassment, or intimidation during the election process?



“
Bullying and harassment was from a female candidate
”

Of the 139 respondents, 71 people indicated they experienced bullying, harassment and / or intimidation during the election process. Respondents identified the following sources:

1. Other candidates;
2. Supporters and volunteers of other candidates; and
3. Members of the public. This includes via social media, in-person and letters / emails. Respondents also reported destruction and vandalism of election material.

Responses

From other candidate and their supporters

Verbal abuse from volunteers of opposing candidates

I was part of a party. There was a former councillor register to lobby against this particular party. The online abuse and bullying was unheard of. Flyers were developed to everyone in the LGA with crosses though the candidates faces about how bad we are. My family members got these flyers. It was very distressing for not only myself and the party but for our family members

Comments on social media from members of the public, one that intimated an act of physical violence towards me

Community member and own party

I have at the past 3 elections. Mainly from fellow candidates or their specific followers

Great encouragement from community to run

There were a number of intimidating people on the campaign trail

Received just one email from another candidate questioning my ability to make my own decisions if elected. I replied that I was very capable of making informed, independent decisions without being influenced by anyone and didn't receive any further emails. There was some later bullying on a Facebook post which was called out by someone else in the post. No action was required and there has been no further contact

Yes I was shouted at from moving vehicles - I think this was a result of focus that is placed on me on social media

Liberal booth workers intentionally targeted women voters demanding they vote for their candidate and on exit of women voters demand they tell them who they voted for. They also bullied and intimidated female booth workers

Online/ social media attacks

Comment made that I was sleeping with the person that I was running on a ticket with

Abused verbally and discriminated against by making false claims against me

An incumbent Councillor said I had better be careful and watch myself in an intimidating manner

I treat all people equally. Bullying and harassment was from a female candidate. Racist comments were from a male Asian candidate

Making comments of a personal nature, implied threats, condescending comments about likely election results by existing male councillors and their supporters when these people didn't even come up to my kneecaps supporter

There were robust discussions regarding political opinions

Most/all councillors stand as independents so we do not have the additional issues around political parties

From fellow would-be Councillor

Aggressive and intimidating female independent

While I experienced several instances of very rude behaviour by voters, and some by volunteers for other candidates, each was a one-off instance rather than the 'repeated' behaviour in the description given

My character was assassinated at various polling booths - corruption, skimming money from grants, ward stacking - none of which was true. The other candidates were unnecessarily rude and belligerent

I called out a volunteer from another independent for moving the A Frame of the Labor candidate (moving A Frames after a certain time was against the Covid rules). This volunteer went on to make vile abusive and misogynistic comments to me. Calling me fat in front of the line of people queuing to vote. I was not phased, but one-two days later I was at a quieter booth with this same volunteer and he was trying to intimidate me and make comments about my place of work (that he'd obviously looked up on LinkedIn) and started making statements that I was going to lose a huge amount of business (at his doing). On the last day of the election campaign when we were taking out A Frames home, there was as a dead rat stuffed into the corner of our A Frame

Rumors were started by opposition parties that I was party affiliated (which I'm not), that I didn't really live in the area (which I do) and a whispering campaign was started by stalwarts who were opposed to anyone who hadn't lived in the area for a number of generations

Frequently abused on line. I had 1 guy put his arms around me & told me how cute I was. I had to push him away

A male candidate stood over me and called me a liar. A state member got his party members to stand in front of me and block me from talking to candidates

Distribution of material containing misinformation

From a woman who was running for Council

Female to female and supporters

Opposition parties who had already been in for a term and concerned at losing power

A male candidate - posturing in front of me and making insulting and critical comments

Intimidation from a male candidate

Major political parties

I preferenced all women on my "How to Vote" and received derogatory comments about women. People also made offensive comments about my support for First Nations peoples and refugees

Community member inline with a candidate

Other candidates trying to pursue me to join a group before official "election" period. Individuals telling me how to vote once I'm elected. Speaking down on my as a younger female. There was also bullying from community member towards others as well. Most candidates were friendly

From fellow councillors

Most definitely as well as being discriminated against attending a community talk night because I chose to not partake in experimental jobs

At pre poll by another political party

From people working for other candidates

Received a letter from Male Mayor outlining HIS expectations of newly elected Councillors. I was elected to an all-male Council in a Bye Election in December 2017

It was not repeated behaviour but I did experience these as one offs from one long term male Councillor and the wife of another male councillor

Numerous examples of harassment from members of the public

My increased profile during the election process contributed to a man I knew becoming fixated with me. I had to report him to the police. He decided I had told everyone that he was a sexual predator (I hadn't)

My children and I were threatened

At pre poll by another political party

Opposition candidates verbally attacked me with unfounded claims during their speeches to the precinct groups in a town hall style meeting. As I had already spoken I had no opportunity to rebut these claims

Q4. During the election process, did you feel comfortable to advertise your residential address?



8% of respondents chose to skip this question

“
Being a survivor of domestic violence it caused me much anxiety
”

Of the 139 respondents, respondents identified the following main concerns with providing their residential address:

1. Breach of privacy;
2. Vulnerability of self and family; and
3. Property damage.

Responses

Happy to have suburb. Prefer not to have exact street address

I value my privacy, pay yearly for a post office box and rarely share my residential address

I did not advertise my residential address during the election process

Had someone obsessing over me

As a woman, it's never comfortable to have the public know where you live, there have been far too many of us harassed

People know where you live in a rural town

This is a privacy matter and not necessarily about fear of being bullied

It's important to have our residential address private

I indicated the suburb I lived in but felt reluctant to publish my address

This made me extremely uncomfortable and I saw it as a threat to my personal safety

It should not be mandatory to have your personal or residential address - a PO Box should be enough

Due to my business it is displayed anyway but I felt more heat was on me and after being elected I had to place security cameras around the whole house due to the bullying

I used another persons address for authorised by. I have three young children

I didn't feel comfortable and now some of the recent actions of protesters make me wonder if one day they will turn up and damage my home or threaten me

I think it is irresponsible of the electoral commission to require the publication of residential addresses. This is placing us at significant risk

As a female I was concerned about having to place my address and invite angry men to abuse me and my family

If I want to become a public figure in a small town, people will know where I live, like it or not!

Over many years of engagement in sport, volunteer work etc, I have always let my residential address be known - so would not step back from that

In a small rural community everyone knows where everyone lives anyway

As a foster parent, I really am not supposed to reveal my address

Deliberately used a friends business address and sourced a separate mobile number

Always have it is on the corflute but also I had a small business near my home and residents in the immediate area knew where I lived

We should never have to put out our residential address. In a smaller community many people know where you live but it is becoming dangerous for people who end up being mayor and in the spotlight if any big/controversial issues arise

N/A RAN ON A TICKET

Not at all, but it was a requirement. I have previously been threatened and followed but I had no choice but to include it

I have not felt bullied through the election process

Small town, everyone knows where you live

I never use my private address

Not necessary as we had a central address

I felt vulnerable having to put my residential address for all to see

I represent a progressive party but live in an area known for its conservatism. I was concerned about the potential for harassment at home

The allegations made by other candidates which some people believed, could have resulted in further harassing behaviour

I had comments on social media which described my residence and what was happening on various days. It was a clear attempt at intimidation

Corflutes stolen. Last thing I wanted was to be harassed at home

We put security cameras at our house. I wasn't concerned with residents. Moreso the local member

I did advertise it and had someone attend my home

I had heard from other Councillors that rubbish had been thrown into their front yard and abuse yelled at them as someone drove past their house

My community knew me well before the election

I currently have NSW Police AVO to protect me from a former Labor volunteer who has spent the past two years threatening and harassing me

I have experienced domestic violence and stalking in the past and this made me feel very uncomfortable

Not one bit! Everyone (especially outside my local community) knowing my personal home address and that is not ok

People then visit you at your home to raise their issues

Being a survivor of domestic violence it caused me much anxiety

Only because I live in a relatively isolated rural area.

I understand some people may feel that their place of residence should be excluded and I agree but the AEC and the Council Administration should know for eligibility and conflict of interests and so on. In rural NSW we haven't the luxury of anonymity but that shouldn't be the rule, it's the exception

Absolutely not. I was afraid that the man harassing me would find my address from the electoral commission and come to my house

Further comments in relation to Bullying Harassment, and Intimidation witnessed or experienced in the pre-election stage

Our council area has a number of nasty community members who particularly target female candidates and elected members

I felt intimidated and continually watched photographed and ignored

I experience bullying from within my own party especially at local branch meetings. Members are often disrespectful, highly critical of elected councillors, and show no tolerance of a differing or more informed view point. Often the chair does not have the skills to preside over the meeting and to show leadership in stamping out bullying behaviours

There should be no need to register to lobby against people. This is local government. This is meant to be a collective of community minded people. To only being running for local government to support your own promotion in climbing up the government racks is selfish. Aren't we at a time where we want to support women to keep running for council? There must be more done towards punishment when it comes to vexatious codes of conduct

Two attempted break and enter incidents on my house during election campaign

False allegations repeatedly published about me on social media by another candidate that undermined my integrity and reputation

The harassment continued from the community member. Ended up having to go to court 8 times to ensure a APVO was upheld

People are less likely to risk being called out than they were 20 years ago

There were comments on social media regarding my appearance

I did not experience bullying harassment or intimidation as defined, plenty of obnoxious and rude behaviour but it seems elections can bring out the worst in some people

Attempts to smear my name by one individual who had previously attempted to harass the female state and federal members

Everything from defamatory comments, vandalising election signs, whispering campaigns across the community to an secret organised meeting to try to work out how to ensure that I was not elected

Whilst I felt comfortable during the campaign period, I was extremely uncomfortable having to declare my physical address as I have 2 children under 12 and publicly exposing myself to 25+ thousand people that I don't know and the choice of not disclosing my residence being taken away from me made me feel extremely exposed and put my entire family on edge/alert to not answer the door if someone comes knocking (which is a very foreign request in what I would consider a small country town)

A male candidate engaged in gas lighting activities with me as a way of establishing his position over me. It was difficult to find anyone who could see it for what it was rather than just an "Oh this is a matter between him and her"

There were various people who were quite aggressive about handing out, and party politics (I am in a party)

The electoral commission set several difficult rules, e.g. no corflutes to be moved from 7am to 6pm. No action was ever taken against candidates who flouted the rules, even if they were reported to the Electoral Commission

Mostly positive experience, people were pleased to see women standing for council

I experienced a lot of online bullying and harassment

The general public yelling insults generally. It wasn't gender based more targeted at differences in political opinion

Just rude comments in a loud voice so I could hear - with an occasional remark relating to gender

I seem to have my own troll, who uses email and social media to attack me. I stood up to him once for his bullying behaviour towards another councillor, so he redirected his attention to me

Lobbying by individuals against me. Telling people not to vote for me because I can't be controlled

I also had what could be considered a life threat

A Councillor told one of my volunteers that he was going to beat him up if he was still there after 5pm. This councillor also pushed a female volunteer with his belly

Further comments in relation to Bullying Harassment, and Intimidation witnessed or experienced in the pre-election stage

At pre-poll, I had screaming at me from a female candidate (Asian) telling me I should not live in the area if I didn't speak either of the two Asian languages of our now main current residential culture (I have lived in my suburb my whole life). Additionally, 'racism' is only implied to be 'one way traffic' - only from 'Aussies' - that is not the case. I am not a social media person, but a very inappropriate and outrightly lying and defamatory material was placed on FB and a website by an Asian male candidate implying I and my team were racist. This male candidate commenced aspects at the pre-poll giving misleading info and in a manner of doing so that was culturally driven, and then additionally turned around discussion with my colleague (which was a private discussion (not public) and was not racist). This candidate then posted that he was in a racist environment - being victimised (which he wasn't). He had also made comments to my colleague that were racist towards 'Aussies'. This candidate started the problem by his own doing (by his process and misleading information), and then put outright lies and defamatory content in the social and web environments. This is harassment to all the candidates who were doing the right thing. Pre-poll should be a 'level playing field'

Supporter of another candidate spread mis-information during the campaign period and issues were experienced with another candidate who was adversarily and tried to provoke other candidates into lashing out

I had forgotten of this "over enthusiastic" helper who was really unbelievable in her aggression in my 7 elections this was the worst behaviour I had witnessed this helper was banned from a couple of booths but that is up to the candidate to control their helpers

I have been experienced sexual harassment by a large number of elected representatives, and gendered questioning by the media in the lead up to elections

The attempted put downs were pathetic!

For someone doing something they have never done before, previous elected member rerunning, were extremely rude. They tried to intimidate me, with rules that they were not following. Instead of helping a fellow member of the community I was treated like rubbish

Pre-polling should be shorter period. Surely online voting will become common place in near future

All parties were respectful except for one individual and her team

I can say, with absolute certainty, that this was one of the worst elections in over a decade. When people lie and cheat to get elected, surely they are unsuitable to hold political office? During pre-poll, it was relatively calm but on election day, it was absurdly hostile. Some of those handing out HTVs were intimidating people to elect their preferred candidates. One of the candidates running against me tried to intimidate me through aggressive behaviour, to no avail. The people handing out my HTVs reported similar experiences at different polling stations. This behaviour was witnessed and reported and no action was taken. The covid rules were also violated. When you have a truncated term, you are scraping the bottom of the barrel for candidates in rural areas and that's what we got. Councillors who believe that they are lobbyists to Council, rude, ignorant, belligerent and bullying to the point where I have to escort two Councillors to and from their vehicles before and after meetings

I remember 1 woman screaming at me on election day because she hadn't received one of my flyers in her mailbox

Definitely intimidated I was reported for walking out of my office at town hall where the voting was taking place. There was no back door so I had to.... Feeling of being watched and photographed very uneasy. Uncomfortable People in the town square with a loudspeaker for 3 weeks just before the election denegrating myself as mayor our council and staff before the election .. My husband was physically attacked it went to court...so very stressful and I believe intentional. This is just a few examples. As a green in a national party electorate I cannot count the amount of times I have been intimidated and undermined as a Women the same

I did witness bullying at prepoll towards other candidates

I had raised my concerns with the OLG. Confidential information about my children that were shared only in the anti-discrimination mediation with the council was released in an anonymous letter that was distributed to people's homes including my home

Cr xxxxx was the worst player election campaign I've ever seen. I've been a resident for in excess of 40 years and have worked in local government for more than 20 years

Further comments in relation to Bullying Harassment, and Intimidation witnessed or experienced in the pre-election stage

Banners torn and ripped down. Corflutes removed

I had a lot of bullying harassment and intimidation from woman and the community as I was running as an independent. The other political parties Liberal & Labor were very supportive

Comes in a variety of ways but social media abuse was feral

Rude comments

It was male candidate who had taken a dislike to me during the campaign. I felt he may was 'worried' that I would steal some of his votes. I had witnessed angry outburst from him in public forums on a couple of occasions, and he had been censured for sending lurid text in the past. So I was very wary of him

Signs and posters damaged and defaced

At my pre-election polling booth the bullying was so bad that the officer in charge ended up with two formal complaints from the community against my opponents. The staff have advised since then that they had never seen anything so bad in the many elections they had worked on

During the last election campaign I was targeted on two large social media groups, consistently and for a long period of time. I was singled out over and above other councillors that were running for election, given negative nicknames and misrepresented. Both groups are administered by a Councillor who was subsequently elected in the most recent election

The "politics" of candidates criticising others at a personal level (instead of at a factual level) and including their family members is not something that should happen. Events like a "meet the candidate" night should be monitored more closely and those who display bullying techniques should be ineligible to continue to run

I braced for hate from the right and from men and it mostly came from the left and from other women

Our information posters were shredded at night. One lady spat on me at the polling booth and verbal comments from opposing parties

The verbal attacks, bullying and intimidation were used by my opposition on a daily basis

A couple of councillors one now the mayor very judgemental and arrogant, made me feel uncomfortable

Opposition candidates verbally attacked me with unfounded claims during their speeches to the precinct groups in a town hall style meeting. As I had already spoken I had no opportunity to rebut these claims

General false rumour mongering from supporters of other candidates trying to minimise my chances of being elected including commentary that women are too emotional to make hard decisions

A former political party member decided I had "told everyone he was a sexual predator". I had nothing to do with this situation. Myself and other women candidates in the area received phone calls and harassment online from this individual. He was experiencing a mental health crisis and called me, leaving voicemails blaming me for his mental health issues. He was also posting about me online. I made police reports but detectives told me they couldn't/wouldn't do anything because there wasn't any evidence he would show up in person

Part 3: Elected Councillor

Q6. In your first term as an elected councillor, do/did you feel you were supported by fellow councillors, and senior council staff members?



14% of respondents chose to skip this question

“
It was very much a sink or swim situation
”

A large majority of respondents reported feeling supported by fellow councillors and senior council staff members.

Those who did not feel supported reported the following common areas of concern:

1. Feeling ostracised and excluded;
2. There was a lack of guidance by re-elected councillors and senior staff; and
3. Difficulties experienced when a councillor feels a lack of support or bullying from the Mayor and / or General Manager.

Responses

I did not feel supported by the general manager

No, but compared to now I guess it was more support than I thought at the time

Mostly supported however I was ok with the diversity in views and at times I was the only voter for a motion.

Yes but this has changed

Fabulous induction package

Senior staff were dismissive, rude, intimidating if we did not agree with their perspective. Other Councillors were fantastic, supportive and kind

By council staff and 3 other elected councillors. The other councillors I was bullied by and insulted via email, in council meeting few times and social media

Not all the time. I feel agism. I do not feel that Council does enough to reduce our risk of harm from members of the public. I have had to deal with matter myself eg: block misogynists on social media and council email, and not attend function due to risk of harm from two men

Boys Political Party Club

All staff were under stress from bullying tactics by experienced councillors

General Manager and Mayor engaged in bullying

Senior Council staff and independent councillors were supportive. Our Council meetings started off as hostile and continue to be so. This culture is led by the Labor Mayor and perpetrated by some Labor councillors

Staff were professional. Some past Councillors were condescending. Others were helpful

At times, but I do believe the senior management team are only for themselves at the end of the day and protecting their back sides

Other councillors seem to have access to more information than I do

I was bullied and intimidated in front of the male councillors by the Mayor. He accused me of going against his orders regarding attending a meeting. The situation was that there was an important meeting about the disruptive behaviour of youth in the town. I was asked to attend by the Aboriginal Elders as I was the Councillor for Youth. I was told by the Mayor that my role was for the good kids, not the bad.

Overall, yes - though not completely by any means. A lot of aspects were covered, however, a better structure could be in place for an induction.

I asked for information I was entitled to see and it was refused

Misinformation in regards to travel reimbursements was given initially. At times I felt that Councillors were pushed in decision making for a predetermined outcome

A councillor and Members of the public targeted me and my 'agenda' in council meetings and public forum and there was no reproach from staff or other councillors and no follow up to false allegations and cruel comments they made in the council chamber

This was 1995 and the makeup of Council different was so different it was basically a Gentlemen's Club polite to all not like some today

There were a couple of exceptions; the most serious instance involved the Mayor, another Councillor and a couple of Council staff

Training was extremely basic, you can't attend everything as you still have to work. Others could miss it, but I was made fun of if I couldn't attend 1 training session. I was told my dog was poisoned instead of a family member. Told I was a puppet and not to listen to the only person who was helping me understand what was happening. The list goes on and is all written down.

We had to ask a lot of questions and remind staff that we elected officials, not members of the public

Yes but they weren't fully equipped to deal with the harassment

I was bullied from day one

Supported by staff yes by other councillors no. As I wasn't politically aligned

Ostracized because I had an opinion.

The only other female councillor bullied, harassed and intimidated me for my first term years. It was nasty and I did not receive any help or advice from my male councillors or staff. I experienced very little inclusion

Councillors - Yes, Senior staff - No

Mostly it feels like an us and them situation between senior staff and councillors, there is a lot of information that is filtered in reports. Local govt staff are experts at the "snow job" on councillors

The staff were good, we had a thorough induction process and most Councillors had trust in the Senior Executive. They understood their job.

The mayor at the time was condescending, rude and a misogynist

Having said that the GM lied to me in my first Council Mtg. I will never forget

The general manager was absolutely horrid and have a records where she wouldn't assist with motions. Minutes were taking hours filled with frivolous motions before the serious motions were discussed and we would be too tired to argue against them. I had fake emails making complaints about me and report me to ICAC.

There is one Councillor who I feel bullies and intimidates me

No, not longer term councillors

Bullying has occurred from some previously existing councillors

In some was yes, and by some fellow councillors - not all. There was a clear procedure for welcoming Councils run by the staff, which was good, if not a bit rote.

Information is will fully withheld by senior staff

Supported by Councillors yes but not as much by senior staff, some of whom I felt did not take me seriously (as a younger woman and even though I am Deputy Mayor)

During first term everything was ok, however, change of Councillors has seen major bullying and harassment where the code of conduct does not cover. Most harassment comes from female councillors

Inductions, access to the GM, and welcome by other councillors was good

I have to admit my council have been very supportive of any issue I have had

Yes, supported by some staff but not by other councillors. It was very much a sink or swim situation

Felt ignored by the mayor and GM. There was no team building. Sexist language was rife. Women were invisible!

I felt supported by senior council staff and majority of fellow councillors. However there was a few councillors who tried to intimidate me and bullied me when I did not vote the way they wanted. Text messages saying they would not work with me as I voted "X" for mayor is an example of this. Continuously talked down to by "older" men from the "old school" of government from the same councillors has occurred since election to current

Council senior staff are excellent and supportive, some councillors intimidate fellow councillors

I felt accepted and supported by directors and some staff, a couple of councillors yes, but shutdown yelled at and gestures of anger and clenched fists and angry expressions by the mayor

I have been physically assaulted and then accused of the assault whilst at an official function representing council which was invitation only and the assaulting community member was trespassing. Given poor advice from CEO and had seek my own legal advice. No support from council and i felt extremely isolated

I was supported by 3 of 7 councillors and continually reported and bullied by 2 other councillors who had both been previous Mayors. and the general manager, who made complaints against me

I entered a very male dominated Council and received no support from councillors initially but did receive excellent support from senior staff and managers who were all male at that time

Two females were elected to Council in a Bye Election, neither of us were supported appropriately

We had a broad introduction but very little detail

That all changed when I became Mayor. Since becoming Mayor I have lost support from the GM and one Exec Officer, two fellow Councillors and one of the Councillors (the former Mayor) husband uses Facebook to slander and gossip utilising reputation damage

My fellow councillors and the senior staff have been extremely supportive

Not included in many situations. Yelled at speaking over the top of me on a regular basis

Senior council staff yes fellow councillors also in their first term yes, returning councillors ... absolutely not

Q7. Do you feel any information/details were neglected at your induction?



15% of respondents chose to skip this question

“
More work was required to teach new and old councillors the expected level of behaviour

”

In total, 45 respondents believe their councillor induction did not provide the information and details required for their role. Longer term councillors indicate the induction process has improved over the past 20 years.

Respondents called for more support in the following areas:

1. Handling bullying, harassment, slander, confrontation and physical intimidation;
2. Managing social media and the negative aspects of social media users;
3. Understanding of the councillors' roles including rights and responsibilities.

Responses

How to handle aggression & confrontation as separate to robust discussion

But subsequent indication in 2021/22 was much improved

Cultural responsive training for all staff and councillors

Given no information in regard to council's support for councillors bullied, harassed, slandered, defamed and physically assaulted

Not really it was just Those people didn't want me in my position as Deputy Mayor and then Mayor and did all they could to deter me

I was elected in 2004 and there was minimal induction. This has improved greatly over the years

We received no information about how to engage with issues ie get things fixed

It is a little overwhelming initially and every support from council and within your own party is needed and welcomed

Prior to running for Council I would have liked to advised to watch/read everything Local Government to gain better understanding of the functions of Councils

Yes, the opportunity to participate in studies to better my role were not near until later

Not enough emphasis on councillor roles

A very comprehensive process

The induction skipped over meeting practice

Complaints process about GM

More work was required to teach new and old councillors the expected level of behaviour towards staff and councillors

I didn't realise the omissions at the time. These insights were retrospective

This is a yes and no, because its more that some of the training should be re done after the first council meeting as it would make more sense

There was too much bureaucracy and unnecessary information provided and you had to understand the issues before hand

Zero induction

Simple things like wearing shoes with filled in toes for site inspections

We have been thoroughly cautioned at every opportunity on the code of conduct, the thing is now so weaponised that the legitimate rationale for having one has been lost

However, it was clear that there was an in and out group with one being given community based duties and information and the other completely frozen out

It was more that inaccurate information was provided by the GM to the councillors. The trainer was accurate but the GM would try to mislead especially with regards to special disclosures for our private home

There was a planned induction process, which was good - but extremely overwhelming (especially when you also have another job). But some items were overlooked e.g. taking us on a tour of council facilities, making clear the delegations for CEO, basic financial obligations of a Councillor, and planning laws.

The induction was led by the previous GM and he focused on team work and had us sign a team agreement. There was training on codes of conduct etc however there needed to be more on Governance and democracy as we are elected members. The LG NSW webinars were very helpful

Although it didn't prepare me for the the hostility and bullying shown to another female Councillor

I was unprepared for online bullies and unsure about how far I could go to protect myself

More misleading information from councillors

Complaint procedures, EAP and personal support

No attempt to address bias - unconscious or otherwise.
No inclusivity

Support available to Councillors in terms of rights and responsibilities in code of conduct complaints lodged against them

The information was provided. The lack of support from OLG however is the main issue. They seem to be a toothless tiger in the sense reported issue don't have outcomes as per a current workforce and councillors who have been in local government know this and so continue to exploit this

Full reports regarding the committees we selected, no past minutes or reviews to go on, kind of just had to pick it up and learn as you go

Staff did a great job

I was elected in 2004 and there was very little training. This has improved significantly over my twenty years on Council.

Since being elected I requested support/training to understand the financial reports being submitted and approved by Council. This request was not met until 2023. I was elected in December 2017

The notion of strategic vs operational

I do feel that there could have been much better inductions by the OLG. The sessions they offered were not very useful. I have really only learned about my role from briefings and from my fellow councillors

Q8. Do you feel the remuneration you receive is adequate?



14% of respondents chose to skip this question

“
It is a huge impediment to being able to do the job properly and does not reflect the gravity of the decision you need to make
”

In total, 95 of the 119 respondents to this question indicated the remuneration for councillors is not adequate. Several respondents stated they do not do the role for the remuneration.

Prevailing themes include:

1. The role requires 20-40 hours / week;
2. The level of remuneration is a deterrent for individuals who work full time;
3. There is a disparity between remuneration across LGAs, however, still a high level of responsibility for all councillors, regardless of their location;
4. In rural councils, Councillors may travel up to 3 hours one-way to attend a meeting;
5. The lowest level of remuneration reported is \$12,000 / year; and
6. Several respondents report they could earn a higher wage at McDonalds or local supermarket.

Responses

As Mayor I worked 7 days a week for remuneration of \$60,000 a year. This remuneration does not value time, skill and time given. Same for councillors remunerated \$20,000 a year, spending approx 30 hrs a week to do position well

I guess you get what you pay for

The remuneration is certainly not commensurate with the work involved nor the associated responsibility. It is a huge impediment to being able to do the job properly and does not reflect the gravity of the decision you need to make

If you are in full time employment you would struggle to fulfill your commitment to LG

But I don't do this for the money

It's adequate to make councillors feel that they are not an important part of the council

I am grateful that we now have superannuation. I do struggle to attend the LF Conferences as I need to take my annual leave to attend. I would like consideration to say 2 or 3 days of paid leave for attendance at conferences

Amalgamated council makes the job even bigger

Councillors should be paid fairly. To do the job need around 40 hrs per week

I do not perform this role because of the money. Those that do are in the wrong role

Absolutely not, it's a role that requires an average 20-30 hours a week, I earned more as a junior per hour, we have had an enormous workload and as a mother and primary carer, it is prohibitive to participate on Council for such a small remuneration. It excludes more diversity on council by having such a small remuneration and such a huge work load

No where near enough remuneration for the hours put in and always being accessible

Remuneration in rural areas should be increased, the responsibilities and commitments are the same as metro areas with a much greater land area. Being a councillor and the duties involved makes it more difficult to find other compatible employment. It is a very time consuming and the responsibility and associated accountability should be remunerated accordingly. There should also be an allowance for the Deputy Mayor as it involves extra duties.

It does not recognise the time involved

But Councilors are bullied and abused due to income and having to vote on this

\$22,000 no way. I work full time 40 hrs per week and am a councillor 20 hours per week. Decent remuneration would attract greater diversity of people willing to be Councillor than the cashed-up retirees that are on our Council

Councillors are basically available for contact 24/7

It's a joke

Councillors make important decisions for their communities but are at the coalface so have to manage not only paper workload but also emotional & psychological

Would earn more per hour working at McDonald's. Didn't put my hand up for mayor as i need to support my family and it's not nearly enough

Remuneration is so very very low. I take my responsibility as a Councillor extremely seriously. The remuneration does not recognise the skills and experience I bring to Governing Body. If local government wanted to attract better skilled and qualified 'board-level' Councillors, then remuneration should be offered

Seriously? \$13k a year for a job that consumes your life? It's impossible to do the job on that kind of money but the role is so time-consuming, it's impossible to find another job

Rural council remuneration is extremely low, the disparity between senior staff salaries and the remuneration to Councillors makes for a major power and respect imbalance

More than enough

Not for the hours, meetings, workshops etc.

Not by a long shot

There is a double standard for metro vrs rural councillors.

I lose significant amounts of pay when I work for council. I understand it's a community service, but it's difficult

It would be better if it was in line with the QLD remuneration

Plenty of hours each week

To do the job properly you need to spend a lot of hours. But then I did not come in for the money

Having admin help would be more beneficial

Definitely not. It is limiting who can be a Councillor

We attend meetings every Wednesday, read all business papers, meet with residents, make enquiries on behalf of residents and answer emails

Debatable. The workload is considerable but Council is short of funds and many in the community are struggling

It is a small council and Councillors receive \$1,085 a month. There is still a demanding workload and the Mayor asked us in the first year to forgo the superannuation to cut down on costs

I place this unanswered. If you genuinely engaged as a Councillor, I would say 'no'. I invest my time as a Councillor and spend my days as if it is a full-time job - in which case it is a 'no'. For many other Councillors (particularly members of major parties) who are 'show ponies' as they place photos on social media but actually don't stay at events, don't engage satisfactorily with people and just live on social media, I would say 'yes'

I have not put a claim in for reimbursement council payment costs associated with me attending conferences

It is a token amount that does not adequately remunerate for the time and level of work required to perform the role. Adequate remuneration would have allowed me to stay in the role for more than one term from a financial / work balance perspective

My ward has about 75,000 residents and after tax, i receive about \$20,000

I spend so many hours trying to keep up and across all of the information we need to process

This excludes so many women

Although this was not my reason for standing

I put a lot of hours in for the role and this is not recorded, nor is the minimal attendance some councillors get away with for the same remuneration

Was not asked to complete a Tax File form

Way too much there needs to be a methodology in regards to the work put in there are many examples of Councillors that just put their hand out and have never done any work

I have been laughed at and not taken seriously

All local government councillors should be paid a salary as are State and Federal members. Then local government would attract a broader range of representatives

Mostly. I feel that councillors should be required to attend briefings on the other fortnight but they are not

Totally inadequate. I ran my own business so I had to pay wages when I was doing Council work. Also I wrote-off my SUV car while doing community work as a councillor, but not council business. That cost me \$30,000 I didn't want to spend

I put a huge amount of time into my role as Councillor, and still feel that I should be doing more. The lack of proper recompense means that many members of the community are ruled out of ever putting up their hand to serve the community because they can't afford to give up their full-time jobs to take on the work of a Councillor

As Deputy Mayor I am remunerated no better than a standard Councillor and this does not reflect the extra work that I do. I Chair a large number of committees and attend more meetings than the average Councillor. It is a greater encumbrance on one's time

The workload that I have is a fulltime job

The hours and commitment is equal to a fulltime role

I consider it a community service and I could have earned more working for McDonalds

The expectation from some Councillors and the community is it's a Full Time job, it only pays 1/3 of my former salary

I do not earn enough money to justify the amount of time I spend working as a councillor. I also think the remuneration is extremely poor considering the level of scrutiny and harassment I am currently experiencing as a councillor. The harassment I am facing is affecting my ability to work at my job outside of council. If I did not have supportive colleagues on council and adequate emotional supports in place I would probably quit public life

Our council area covers nearly 3900kms. A single visit to one of our villages is usually a 4 hour round trip and about \$60 in fuel. To be effective, councillors should be a full time position and at least paid a living wage. At present what we're paid is about half of where the poverty line is set. I could make more money stacking shelves at the local supermarket. If you pay peanuts, you get monkeys

I take this role very seriously and the time needed to do the job well is not reflected in the pay. To be honest it should be double what we get because it truly is time consuming

Some weeks it is not enough if you have many functions to attend and fuel costs etc

The workload outweighs the remuneration

\$14,000 for a year is not even minimum wage for a part time employment. This is the main reason younger individuals can not run. Most of the councillor work full time along side Council duties. If remuneration was at a full time level, full time advocacy and time could be invested into our roles. I on average need 20 hours per week to complete the minimum that is required. If I wasn't working full time, I could easily do 40 plus hours in council elected duties, roles and responsibilities. This speaks even worse in the mayoral duty. Another issue is that rural LGA have larger km to travel compared to Sydney. For example; a shire of 13,000km square versus 16km square area. It could take 1.5 hours each way to attend a half hour meeting

You cannot sustain this job and juggling another job and parent responsibilities. It needs to be a full time paid role as that is what the community expects

We are in a council area of 76,000 residents so only receive \$20k fees which given the amount of work is grossly inadequate

Difficult to answer, it could be better

Certainly \$1000 a month is nowhere near adequate, some councillors may choose to stay home hide and do nothing but having 13 committees functions community events conferences political events and getting out and about in community takes time and does cost especially when you live 25 ks out of town, but its my elected role and as an elected official its my duty

\$1,000 p/m

My work life has suffered being a Councillor which has limited my warning capacity

Consistent and constant hard work that is underpaid

Not for the hours of work the role demands

Q9. Do you feel relevant resources and/or information is provided to attend meetings, photo opportunities, events or conferences?



“
Many photo opportunities are not provided to all Councillors
”

While close to three quarters of respondents feel relevant resources and / or information is provided, of the 36 comments, the following was reported:

1. Respondents stated they believe there is a political party bias to attending events and being provided with opportunities;
2. There was resounding feedback that councillors would like to be aware of these opportunities;
3. In total 22% report lack of resources including cases where councillors have purchased their own PPE as this was not provided by their council; and
4. Some councillors have also purchased their own IT equipment and funded their own attendance at local government conferences.

Responses

Often times the Mayor who is male will choose a male friend to assist with roles when he is unavailable

1. Funding and resources for conferences and training is very limited to councillors. 2. The mayor is also not keen on sharing the limelight on major announcements and councillors aren't always informed beforehand. This guarantees his reelection but means the other councillors remain unknown and need to work harder to lift their public profile

The Labor Mayor has multiple administrative staff. Councillors have shared staff. The Mayor controls the media and has media staff. Labor excludes Greens councillors from media coverage through their control of the Council media, including social media and monthly newsletter

The Mayor and major party withhold photo opportunities at times

Some further instruction/training and set up of material should have been undertaken by the Council at the outset. Also, many photo opportunities are not provided to all Councillors - often only the same Council majority political party colleagues, which I don't find acceptable

Partisan politics means as a non Liberal Councillor I am not invited or asked to attend particular events

I felt as that there wasn't enough information or training in chairing committees or being shown the ToRs

I have not be supported to attend one conference or training program this year

Staff try to control councillors by providing them with less info than is desirable for councillors to do a good job

I paid to attend the LGNSW conference in my first year. We were encouraged to not attend due to a shortage of funds and a move to withdraw membership of LGNSW was canvassed. The decision of myself and another councillor to attend was criticised in the local press

There isn't enough information or opportunities to discuss the projects, budget etc. The GM setup a Capital Advisory Committee, the Mayor, Dep Mayor, 1 councillor are on the committee. The information, presentations etc. should come to all councillors to make informed decisions. The minutes of the meetings are part of the Business papers and that's all the councillors have to go by and usually that committee have already made the decisions

As a person with a disability I do not attend many functions and I also do not drive at night and quite often venues and sites do not suit me as there are access and site issues for a Walker/wheelchair

Preferential treatment was afforded to some Councillors, dependent on affiliation with the GM

As deputy mayor information not shared with me by male mayor of opposite political party

Yes, presently with all new senior staff

We have been provided with an iPad, that's it. The Mayor provides information on meetings, photo opportunities etc where they can. Councillors are essentially forbidden from making site visits by the GM and heavily criticised when they do so

Previous Council terms, yes to all of the above. This Council term? Four out of nine Councillors are deliberately and maliciously being excluded from certain information. We are not invited to photo ops or events. The staff have consistently provided all of us with the necessary resources. The Mayor does not share information to anyone other than her allies which is counter productive to a working team

I supply everything myself with the exception of a council supplied ipad. It actually costs me money to be on council

I have been pleasantly surprised at the number of opportunities to learn & improve my skills

Some things are okay

I just had a complaint from a councillor and local member that I shouldn't be having a coffee with a business person

Needs improvement

Not always in a timely manner

The local staff are more than helpful

No vehicle provided

Information is withheld by senior staff even when requested

We are supplied a iPad only. Km are reimbursed but barely covers fuel expense. A personal phone is also required, which if a contact number is wanting to be provided it is a personal number. It is for this reason for my contact details I only lost our council office number or email address. If a councillor mobile phone was provided it would be easier for community to reach elected members

To a degree yes, some lacking things are requesting some events and told no, such as federal parliament, its a priority to mingle with state and federal politicians to advocate for community sometimes the mayor forgets to mention councillors in his mayoral column speaking only for himself

Opposition Councillors receive no assistance from Councils communications department and also often not invited to be included in photo opportunities

Generally yes, but no WHS/PPE is provided for site visits. I've had to purchase a hat, sturdyboots, sunscreen, hard hat, fluoro vest etc

Essential attachments are left off Council business papers and when this point is raised in Council meetings the GM states that he "Is Offended" that this is being discussed

I have no phone, no office and must share the EA with the GM and two other staff

It is not that the staff don't provide enough support, it's more that it's not always automatically given, I feel like I constantly have to think of what I need and email to ask for it. This can be difficult when you're time poor and inexperienced in your current role - sometimes I don't know that I will need something

This yes and no answer as a rural council to drive from one end of our council to the furthest end is 3 hrs one way. Councillors need time to be able to attend

No PPE provided

Resources and access to events needs improving. I have been issued with an iPad but would be more effective with a laptop. Our Mayor rarely opts in all Councillors to events making it difficult at times. I use my own vehicle at all times and receive no additional compensation other than the Councillor allowance

Q10. Would it be beneficial if all councillors were provided opportunities to represent their community by attending events, openings, etc?



13% of respondents chose to skip this question

“
We need greater support to attend our community events, including child care
”

The responses revealed more than half of surveyed councillors receive opportunities to attend events. Many cited their busy schedule does not always permit their attendance. Common feedback includes:

1. There is a bias towards certain councillors or party aligned councillors who receive these opportunities;
2. Access to childcare is a barrier for councillors with children to attend these events; and
3. Respondents desire equal opportunities to attend these events

Responses

I feel that all councillors on my term have been offered the chance to attend numerous events

Unsure. I get invitations to more events than I want to attend

We do

All our councillors have this available already

The cost should not always be met by the councillor

Many of these happen during the day, and due to the low remuneration for the role I have to have another job so this clashes with some event attendance. But the Mayor should be able to identify which events different councillors have capacity to attend and divide up the work

Equity would be good

Equal opportunities is the key. I get the crumbs when it suits the mayor not to attend

Yes, but it is up to the individual to attend

The opportunity to represent at event, openings is dominated by the Mayor, the Deputy (who was supported by the Mayor), and another Councillor who is being mentored by the Mayor

There is an attempt to control the engagement of councillors. Top down control is applied and participation constrained

All councillors are provided with the opportunity, however due to most having full time work, they are often unable to attend

It is important that Councillors attend so that we present a balanced view to the community.

This is not the current circumstances. Additionally, I believe at Council events any group photos should be inclusive of all Councillors who are in attendance. This is not always the case - it is frequently pushed that major party majority colleagues are only included.

As deputy mayor I shared the load with the mayor when he was unable to attend a community function. Additional councillor attendance at functions openings etc would simply create additional pressure on time commitment. In our council any councillor was welcome to attend functions of interest to them anyway

All councillors at my council are provided those opportunities - I'm not sure this question is achieving anything by popping up in this way

They are invited to most

All councillors are invited

This presently occurs

Already happens so no issue

This has always happened a strange question

That is usual

I am always invited to openings

All councillors in our LGA are already given the opportunity to represent our community by attending events, etc

Only some get the invite, or i get the invite at last minute

Mostly people can but choose not too. Some events/invitations are only extended to the mayor/deputy

Too many decisions are made by too few

Yes, absolutely, we need greater support to attend our community events, including child care for events that fall outside of regular work hours and we are still expected to attend as representatives of our local communities

Previously when I was Mayor, I specifically made sure everyone had such opportunities but now we have no opportunities.

All Councillors invited to most events. Rarely ever allowed to speak. If Labor Mayor not available to speak he will send a Labor Councillor from the other side of the LGA, not in the ward, rather than invite a non-Labor Councillor

We are not paid enough to attend the events we are invited to

Of course in a split council with a mayor who is essentially an autocrat this will never happen

Our current GM does

I do this all the time

Personally I believe the more the merrier. Greater connection between Councillors and the community should be encouraged

I think all councillors should be encouraged to engage more

I believe all councillors have the opportunity to attend events, however due to distance and full time work commitments (due to minimum remuneration) can not attend

Our Mayor and Deputy already share this adequately

Most definitely and many more broader events such as Ignsw which councillors didnt get an opportunity to attend

We are given ample opportunity to represent our community at events and openings

In my LGA councillors are often invited to events but most fail to attend

Often, State or Federal elected reps will come to town, however, only the Mayor and GM are made aware of these visits

I practice Teamwork and invite other Councillors to attend/represent, I feel this gives them an opportunity to be part of the positive side of the job. This isn't common practice apparently

Most councillors have full time jobs so attending might impact on their primary job

Depending on the event, some content knowledge would be useful. If allocated an event, Councillors need to turn up. By excluding others from attending events, we aren't covering all the events we should be attending or have a Council rep at

However I note that many councillors dont attend events even when they are invited and leave it to the mayor or deputy mayor

Yes. The opportunity to connect with the community you are elected to serve is vital

However there are some councillors who just go for the food and drinks

We are all invited to attend events etc.

Q11. Should it be mandatory for all councils in NSW to video record, as well as audio record, Council and Committee meetings?



13% of respondents chose to skip this question

“
It is an accurate record of the proceedings and the behaviour at the meetings

”

The vast majority of respondents indicated they were in favour of video and audio recordings of Council and Committee meetings. Many respondents stated they believed this was already in place in all councils, which is incorrect.

Key findings include:

1. Many respondents stated this was already taking place at their council;
2. There is concern that any additional requirements to record meetings would place financial impost on councils; and
3. Audio and video recordings may be a useful tool for deterring poor behaviour in meetings.

Responses

Our council webcasts all our council meetings

This is an old question surely it is done now in every meeting? I am surprised by this question

I'm unsure about this. I have concerns over privacy and the also over the use of recordings to instigate legal action. It has positives and negatives

Transparency and access are important foundation for public participation

And also ones in Confidential!

This is already done via streaming

This already is covered under current legislation

Increases access to information is always a good idea

And pre meeting briefing

Audio is adequate

A record is provided for any unacceptable behaviour

We have this already at our Council and it works well

Transparency is key to the community trusting their Local Council and elected members, not to mention the senior management staff

Definitely committees as well, as i was threatened at one, and nothing was done about it for 6 months & the outcome was pitiful

But when inappropriate behaviour is in evidence there should be consequences

It can be viewed by streaming

And it should be included of all recording. Frequently, when a Councillor goes a bit over the top (particularly when it's one from the Council's majority political party, the recording conveniently gets put on hold, or the sound goes down etc. It should be fair and equal for all - in order for people to actually see the performance of some

It is an accurate record of the proceedings and the behaviour at the meetings

I have failed to see the benefit of video recording. Audio recording gives the necessary record of proceedings. Video recording should remain optional

Council only

Yes for Council meetings. Committee no

Only Council meetings which is already mandatory a great resource especially after a very fiery meeting

Council meetings yes, committee meetings - not sure. I guess it depends what happens to it. Though our Council meetings are recorded and it makes no difference to the behaviour of some councillors

Absolutely include confidential as well to curb bad behaviour

Absolutely

We do

We already do this

Most are doing this now

My Council does this

Council meetings should be recorded. Requiring Committee meetings to be recorded may be abit of overkill

Other than in the interests of transparency, Code of Conduct issues often arise during meetings. Recordings provide an accurate record of what was said and by whom

Absolutely. This is a must. Our council currently only has the audio recordings, but they are not live and are only uploaded once reviewed by GM

It should also be extended to councillor workshops and any official meetings or gatherings of council. Councillors who exhibit poor behaviour often try display these tendencies in workshops and confidential sessions of council where they know it isn't being recorded so there is no accountability and transparency. They can tell whatever stories they like outside of council and there is no proof of their poor behaviour within council. When council meetings are recorded and available to the public, butter wouldn't melt in their mouths

It has been useful to demonstrate WHS and bullying issues

The additional cost could put a strain on some small Councils

I also think that recordings of briefings should be made, but not made available to the public

Our Council meetings have become rather informal. We should hold ourselves to a high standard and greater community access to Council boosts trust and transparency

Too costly for ratepayers, will all undertake an Oath

Council meetings yes, committee meetings no

Our council video record, should be a requirement

And they should live stream the meetings on social media

Our council has Webcast for years. I fully support it

I consider it a breach of privacy for councillors and members of the public who wish to address Council and I know that it deters some speakers

I think audio does not paint a clear enough picture of what's happening. Body language and posture play into whether someone is being intimidating and this must be recorded. Unfortunately I suspect many councils don't have the money to install such measures, they would need grants

Audio is enough, ideally the community should attend the meeting, if we do video AND audio the gallery will be even more empty and context and passion will not be experienced at all!!

Q12. Is adequate notification or notice of training information forwarded to councillors in relation to training and development opportunities?



13% of respondents chose to skip this question

“
There is no information on what would be the most helpful for new and experienced Councillors
”

The cost of attending training is considered an obstacle for many respondents and several highlighted the monetary restraints of their council's budget.

Key findings include:

1. Online training through LGNSW is beneficial; and
2. Councillors often find they need to seek out their own training opportunities and then obtain approval to attend.

Responses

There is little appetite for councillors to stray outside narrow boundaries but travel from a remote location is expensive and time consuming

There is very good training on the LG website

Particularly if working, sometimes more lead up time is needed

We are not forwarded information about training other than compulsory training or those organised by our council eg follow up media training. We have not developed PD plans in this council term despite my repeated requests for that. Nearly 2 years in to the term, we have yet to receive a minimum of cultural awareness training

I say this because i applied to do training, and got in trouble off my GM for not speaking to him first. I didnt know that was how it worked. I have filled out paper work 3 times for training i would like, and still they haven't organised it. The only training i have done is what i have made sure i tell them i want

Probably it has been left up to individual councillors - I certainly get information but it is not forwarded from staff

There is no information on what would be the most helpful for new and experienced Councillors. Visiting other Councils, eg metro, would give perspective not otherwise available

Common sense is more important for the job than training

We are directed to look things up on the OLG and LG NSW websites, and arrange anything we want to do

The current Mayor doesn't see this as her responsibility. LGNSW however, have been excellent in this area

Only the "preferred" councillors get training and development opportunities. The rest are treated like we don't exist and don't matter

I don't know you can be prepared for dealing with the cultural shock

Has not always been the case in the past

None is forwarded or given in house

However i see a failure of councillors not taking up training, its a constant learning curve, as well as being aware of legislative requirements and changes

Yes and no. However training is very expensive and rural councillors are disadvantaged in regard to travel and accommodation

Again, training would require me to take my annual leave days to attend, leaving me out of pocket. Very little info on training courses has been sent to me

But as I have to work as well as be a cr I do not have the time to take up these opportunities

No, I would have taken up the opportunities, had they been made clear earlier

We are required to seek out our own training and are not advised what budget is available during the term

Councillors should be offered the opportunity bring their skill base up to a standard required by a Councillor. Then within a designated timeframe, Councillors should demonstrate that they have the skills to serve their communities

But death by power point kills engagement, real life examples and team building needs to be included in every training. Councillors need to know that they can get to know one another and it's OK to not agree sometimes

Councillors have a responsibility to engage with their own learning opportunities

I only hear about the mandatory professional development organised by staff

A times i am unable to attend due to work commitments

It's a time to suit everyone, some councillors work full time, some are retired. Hard to find dates that suit everybody

We have had no training this year

Needs improvement

Have not had any training other than the induction. Feel the community spotlight is on, if too much money is used on Councillor expenses

Monetary restraints apply

Q13. Is there an adequate budget available for councillors' training and development needs?



13% of respondents chose to skip this question

“
Costs are usually expensive & though training is helpful, I often think it is a extra burden on ratepayers

”

While 67 respondents indicated there was adequate budget provision for training, several also highlighted the cost vs benefit of training.

Key findings include:

1. Training opportunities are often in metropolitan areas and the cost of attending training for rural and regional councillors can be prohibitive;
2. Attending training is an additional time commitment and many councillors lack the time to attend;
3. Public perception that councillors are at “junket” events when they are actually attending training; and
4. There is an unspoken pressure to not attend training opportunities to assist the council budget.

Responses

The problem is that most training opportunities require physical attendance at city based locations. For smaller councils the costs of travel accommodation and course fees are prohibitive

Just no time

There are so many matters to get across on Council, higher training budgets would support related training

I would prefer an increase in budget for that

I am always aware of how tight vthe budget is, and a bit be wary of training. Costs are usually expensive & though training is helpful, I often think it is a extra burden on ratepayers

If we felt it was inadequate we could increase the allocation in the budget

OLG should assist small Councils with access to training budget. Our Council revenue is \$47m (total), we have 1400 km of roads and 14% of our rates are paid to cost-shifting from the StateGov

Liberal Councillors voted and by their numbers passed a policy Councillors pay registration and accommodation to attend conferences. This is potentially discriminatory to women of other political parties to pay their own way

Because of cost cutting we feel bad to ask

Given that it comes out of council budget therefore rates it is always going to be considered in light of capacity to pay

What budget? We have a limited amount to spend and face severe financial constraints

There is a budget however the training and development is not promoted enough and should have a higher priority

This is somewhat flexible, pending the training that is both wanted and/or is necessary

I said once I was recommended by a trainer officer at LGNSW to do a course that other councillors were doing and I'm not sure if the remark back when I mentioned it was a joke as I was asked if I was paying for it I replied I guess I would be

However, the public do not like us to spend their money on councillor training and development

Yes but there is no encouragement to use it or to pursue training and professional development

A rural council will always struggle to be able to fund "extras" such as training and development of councillors. Our budget is not adequate to fund training for all councillors because the costs of training are, in my opinion, excessive. It is not the fault of the budget or those creating the budget. If training is to be mandated, then sufficient funds need to be provided to councils to cover the costs for that training

Well i wouldnt know, i didnt know till last month that i have a budget for training and still dont know how much it is?

Yes but there is an unspoken pressure not to attend courses when we have limited financial capacity

I would have benefited from going to more conferences and networking with other ladies

It should not be dictated by the GM, if a Councillor wants to 'bank' their annual training allowance to do a real in depth course so be it! Too tight of a hold on the reins by GMs

I have never been on any training that isn't free and organised by myself

The budget is adequate but access to training is limited in rural areas

With the increasing costs of airfares, accommodation and training courses, most council training budgets simply are not keeping pace with current inflationary trends.

Not enough budget to undertake the really good courses that are relevant to Council

Unsure what our budget is and if we have discretion as to how it is used

Any training for Local government is more expensive for most, state and federal government should provide this as rate payers shouldn't be burdened with this cost especially the "council inflation" training courses see

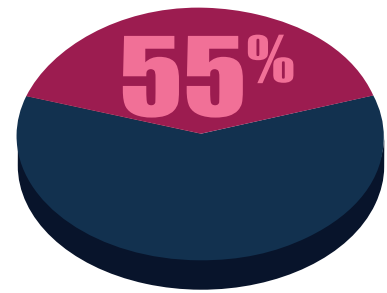
no should be more, I currently pay my own diploma of government to upgrade my knowledge and further my personal development

Most training is held in Sydney and the cost of flights accommodation and course fees are prohibitive for small rural and regional councils

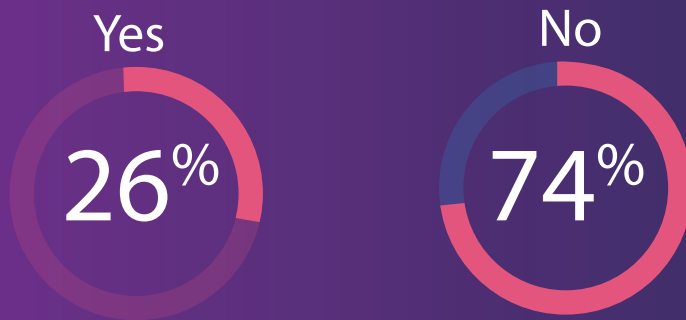
No formal/mandatory training is provided for Councillors. We have some Councillors on Council who have been there for 25+ years and they have no idea how to read the financial/audit reports

Q14. When you were first elected, how confident were you to speak up and ask questions regarding your role?

55% of respondents felt able to speak up



Q15. Are there any areas in your council workplace where you feel unsafe?



16% of respondents chose to skip this question

“
The chamber because the members of the public sit behind us during meetings
”

More than one quarter of respondents indicated there were areas in the council workplace where they felt unsafe. This includes:

1. Lack of feeling safe in the council chambers due to a toxic culture and the public gallery sitting behind councillors;
2. Meetings which finish after dark require councillors to use poorly lit carparks and utilise public transport which impacts on their sense of safety;
3. Councillors also reported feeling threatened or unsafe dealing with angry community members and / or fellow councillors.

Responses

The social media space is unsafe for many councillors and staff

Meeting and workshop spaces, particularly at times when controversial issues are in the public domain

We have night time meetings and I sometimes feel unsafe getting to my car in the dark, especially when there has been a controversial matter before Council and not everyone in the public gallery got the decision they wanted

I catch the train from the city to council. I then catch a bus home (often very late to my home). It's not ideal and I often have a 40 minute wait which makes for a long day

Council chambers during meetings is an unsafe and hostile meeting environment.

Not since the APVO was in place

In the Council Chamber, during the Council meetings and briefings. The culture is toxic

Late in the evening after a Council meeting the car park needs more lights

In the car park

At least not physically unsafe

When I'm called into the Mayor's office

Not applicable as a Councillor. Only attend meeting room

Unsafe requires more definition. When work relations are going badly, i feel unsafe at councillor briefings, but that is my heightened sense of threat in a hostile environment, not a physical threat in a car park at night

I was advised that having a cot in my office was prohibited, and was not consulted on meeting hours, times or other mandatory council events

Council if I am on my own after being threatened

Chamber, Meetings, Mayors office

Our parking lot does not have adequate lighting at night

In the Council meeting chambers due to the ongoing poor behaviour of some Councillors

And it's not just me. There are a number of councillors who won't enter the council chambers unless I escort them as they feel unsafe in the council environment. The mayor and her sycophants have created and work hard to maintain an unsafe work environment. Since the election in December 2021, our small council has had 8 formal codes of conduct submitted so far with more pending. Two have been upheld with the breaches being described as flagrant and serious despite councillors receiving two separate code of conduct training sessions. It not ignorance it's wilful disregard for code of practice and the penalties are basically non-existent and ineffective so it fails to serve as a deterrent and the bad behaviour continues unabated

Council chambers

I avoid being alone or meeting one on one with some Councillors

Not unsafe, bullied and shut down

Briefing sessions and council meetings

Our Council meetings are held at night and I often feel unsafe leaving the Chamber to get to my car

Some committee meetings which are dominated by very opinionated male councillors

Chambers

Car park is street parking which is dimly lit. We often finish late and in a small rural community with high crime levels I do feel unsafe walking to my car at night

For the past few months we have had extra security in our chamber during meetings due to conspiracy theorists re 15 minute cities, UN, etc

Meeting spaces. I am finding meetings with other councillors toxic. I am a progressive in a very conservative council and am subject to derogatory comments on a regular basis, including from the GM

Cr xxxx is intimidating and orchestrates demise within the community

GMs office when I'm out numbered 5 to 1

I feel somewhat unsafe in the council chamber, our council had a large contingent of angry people that show up at every meeting. I also feel unsafe in the car park. This is being addressed by staff and my fellow councillors, but I feel very upset that feeling this way is part of public life

My bullying and harassment is not physical

I am not competent in some areas and therefore I leave that to the more educated, and stick to areas i am more comfortable with

The chamber because the members of the public sit behind us during meetings

But I've had humiliating emails that's brought me near to tears

Wherever one of the councillors who have it out for me are. Even in meetings.

Q16. Have you experienced or witnessed bullying, harassment or intimidation when you have voiced your preferences for training, committee selections and/or conference interests?



14% of respondents chose to skip this question

“
Opportunities are given dependent on relationship with the GM
 ”

Less than half of survey respondents reported experiencing bullying, harassment or intimidation when voicing their preferences. Barriers councillors have encountered include:

1. Selection for committees is determined by a political party affiliation or relationships with senior staff;
2. Councillors have had their preferences ridiculed and dismissed; and
3. Reasons provided to councillors for their requests being denied include budget, events are not worthwhile; and training is not applicable to smaller councils.

“
A feeling of some selections being predetermined and people chosen to align closely with the mayor's agenda
 ”

Responses

This important area is not valued by our council and expectation from fellow councillors and community is that I will pay my own way

I have found that the political party affiliated councillors pick and choose who should be on committees or attend conferences and training and so their best to exclude independents

Said former councillor still has minions on current council. And still manages cause trouble between councillors

I was voted off two committees by Labor Councillors earlier this year in retaliation for making a comment in the media about Labor exploiting a loophole to elect a Councillor who does not live in our local government area

Yes to all of the above

Absolutely

Only once

A female colleague

There is a particular Councillor who is often intimidating, both in person, and via email

Not really bullying but a feeling of some selections being predetermined and people chosen to align closely with the mayor's agenda

Bullied by some male councillors as the chosen councillor to attend Canberra and intimidated to try to force me to stand down

Witnessed racism - casual and intended against female Councillors of colour refusing to accept racism occurs in our community

If bullying and harrasment includes 'exclusion,' then 'yes'. There is a small subset of Councillors who get on the committees and attend conferences, at the expense of others

Usually buddies get first preference to committee selection

Committee selections were made without consultation by the dominant group on council

The GM became aggressive and irrational and took requests to be a threat to his authority. His then apparently exhorted the Mayor to control his councillors

Last year the LGNSW state conference, the Mayor told us not to attend as it wasn't applicable to small councils and that it was too costly. I attended with another councillor and it was very worthwhile

It was a majority political party who only wished to fill all committees. This isn't fair across the Council

As stated in previous comments when I was asked if I was going to pay for the training if I was to undertake it I felt it was a smart remark to put me in my place

Opportunities are given dependent on relationship with the GM

Always told the others they are welcome too

This comes from politically aligned Councillor colleagues

You just have to watch our council meetings and you will see it, even the mayor bullies me

But people will comment with 'waste of time' etc about some conferences, inc LGNSW.

I was told my budget wasn't sufficient to attend conferences. This is a form of intimidation

ALGWA conferences and meetings are referred to as "junkets"

Especially as a parent not being able to be away for 3-5 days. Teams and zoom are excellent examples of how to alternatively attend

Shut down or dismissed to a LGNSW option that wasn't what I wanted so I didn't do anything about it

From female councillors

In meetings and at conferences being spoken over, spoken down to

Behaviour is more subtle than that, gaslighting, dismissal, exclusion are far more common tactics

I have seen one young Councillor being relentlessly bullied to the point that he will not enter the meeting without me. I have another Councillor who is constantly ridiculed and dismissed because she is deaf. I have been screamed at by the incumbant Mayor on more than one occasion. I have seen the GM's performance review weaponised against him. The staff are intimidated to the point where the relationship between the elected body and some Councillorshas been virtually destroyed (the staff are too professional to bite back but this only serves to convince those Councillors that what they are alleging must be true). I and other Councillors have been information blocked by the Mayor, bullied, harassed, intimidated and ridiculed endlessly at workshops. It has become an intolerably toxic, hostile environment to work in

I've been screamed at, talked over, told to shut up, laughed at, ridiculed and the list continues

I just submitted my first code of conduct last week

There is in this Current council a feeling of whatever I say is not important I get ignored

A motion to prevent Labor Councillors from attending NSW LGA Conference and voted off all Commmittees on casting vote

From councillors and constituents

Q17. Since you have become a councillor, are you aware of the litigation risks associated with being a serving councillor?



15% of respondents chose to skip this question

“
I think this should be front of mind and regularly reminded to councillors

”

The majority of respondents indicated they are aware of the litigation risks associated with being a serving councillor.

The following prevailing themes included:

1. Councillors would benefit from a refresher on this topic to ensure their knowledge is up to date; and
2. There are respondents who indicate they have received no information regarding this risk.

Responses

Only basic information. My experience highlights this needs to increased

This awareness and understanding has grown through the councillor term

To a degree but not entirely. It has never been spelled out by any professional person equipped to give such advice

Not really we may have brushed over it

Whilst I am aware I would have some gaps however would seek further information from the Governance team

In my case, the court case (which we won) would never have happened if the OLG had responded to formal complaints 10 months earlier

Would like more concise information about risks and also if we have any insurance coverage, support etc against litigation

I have been served a defamation action

Very concerning

However I would like to know more

Some yes, but do I need to pursue further information and detail

And these are becoming more relevant

Some, but have not been updated in this term, so not sure if there are changes

Especially when threatening conversations about being perceived of wrong doing and threatened it could involve a code of conduct no basis for this and just intimidation fir compliance s don't challenge the SLT

Not off the top of my head

There are no penalties for developers behind vexatious complaints

It is very scary to think I have to pay my expenses if a begruntded person makes accusations which I have to defend against

Particularly in regard to development / planning matters

Some, but have not been updated in this term, so not sure if there are changes

I'm aware that Council does not pay for any legal fees associated with defamation, slander or libel claims against the organisation or other Councillors. We also have financial reporting obligations and metrics to meet in terms of our financial compliance

I am a qualified solicitor

It was highlighted as part of a court ruling in a case I was also ridiculed because I took issues seriously when registration of the fleet vehicles were not done on time and 200 of vehicles spend the long weekend on the road not insured or registered

Yes, but I think this should be front of mind and regularly reminded to councillors

Very grey area. And costly to get your own personal advice

I am aware because i sought the information myself, many are not aware nor is there a manualthat states, your decisions can open you up to such

This has not been communicated to Councillors during my time as an elected representative of my community

But not fully ... it feels like the less we know the better it could be used by staff later as a scapegoat

It is like walking a tight rope determining what you can and can't say. I've already had to engage a solicitor for accusations made against me

Q18. Should free legal / financial re-imbursement and / or support be available to alleviate the need for councillors to cover their own legal expenses?



18% of respondents chose to skip this question

“
I have had to pay for legal expenses
”

Overwhelmingly, respondents agreed that councillors should be offered free legal / financial reimbursement and support.

Many respondents stated this should only be provided where a councillor has not acted dishonourably or dishonestly; or intentional misconduct has taken place.

Responses

Support definitely, it depends on the situation

But only where the legal action is not a result of the councillor's intentional misconduct

In my first year due to weaponizing of the Code of Conduct I spent \$42K myself fighting without any chance of compensation

Legal advice

I thought Councillors were covered by insurance

Legal expenses are complicated, and should at least be a minimum

As far as I know councils have to cover the legal costs of councillors doing their job. Our case was different, but we won and were awarded costs

Only if they were acting in the best interests of Council

Only if they have acted in good faith, not if they have acted dishonestly or dishonourably

Only if the victim

I've had to pay for legal expenses

Partially, yes - pending on what it is requested for

Only in certain cases

Only for Councillors who have initiated a code of conduct that was upheld

I need it for the way i am being treated, the GM doesn't help

I believe in Procedural fairness is not given when accused of wrongdoing and it becomes a daily stress trigger and it isolates you it's political in my council and they use emotional mindgames using a the word perception as an excuse to harass you

To some extent - needs some boundaries

A strange question as there has never been an issue with legal expenses if the Councillor is at fault the residents should not be expected to pay

When your actions are genuinely in the best interests of the existing and future communities and you are the subject of unwarranted, unreasonable and false allegations you should not have to pay to defend your good name

Definitely support

Would depend on the contested issue

If proven guilty of any charges, especially considering the paltry fee a rural Councillor receives

Depends on the issue. Council covers some issues but others should be at Councillor expense

I had to cover my own costs and represent myself against the NSW EC when I vote failed. How was that fair against the might of the NSW Govt lawyers?

Within reason. Councillors should be responsible for their own behaviour and comments

It is absurd that we are not afforded privilege yet can be attacked and bullied by those who do

In my experience I believe some councillors would abuse free legal advice if offered as they have already repeatedly shown that inclination

Legal support and training should be free for all councillors

But not in relation to political spats with other councillors

Our Council currently has a very tricky situation that requires legal advice, particularly around the protected disclosures (Whistle Blowers) Act

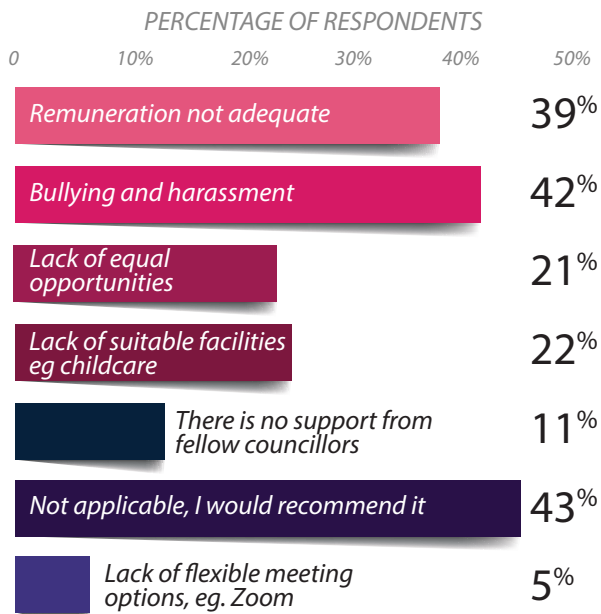
100% .. we don't put ourselves into these tight spots we are the scapegoat by cunning executives

We have a vexatious complainant as a councillor and she would run up massive legal cost

Those that bring the action or are subject to the action should cover their own costs to alleviate an abuse of the system. I mean how much do you want if it's free? This would just encourage frivolous and vexatious litigation. For some if it would just provide another avenue for abuse.

Q19. If you would not recommend another woman running for council, please outline why

17% of respondents chose to skip this question



Responses

But be aware that as a strong female representative she will be targeted by some male councillors and in our area some very nasty male community members

I ask women in my electorate to stand for council. With the abovementioned it is not easy. I don't get many women come up and say "I want to stand for Council"

I would also offer them my support

The unconscious gender bias

Hostile work environment, bullying from Mayor and other Councillors, undemocratic situation

I would recommend it but person needs to have adequate finances and support

I would always advise another woman to stand

I would encourage female Councillors to run to try to break the male dominated work environment, where I have experience terms such as being called "too emotional" or told that's just my "maternal instinct" when speaking on subjects

I would recommend women running for Council regardless of the challenges

With other information about the time commitment

You have to be very tough to withstand the constant criticism and it is very tiring. It's not worth it. You can't progress the things that you stood for.

I still encourage women to run as it's the best way to make change and break the stigma and biases. However, they should be aware of the challenges they will face

Late meetings, lack of mandatory budget for childcare (I have had to individually request this)

Social media takes up so much time responding to residents. Social media can be brutal

It's too political take the politics out of LG that not only relates to other councillors but senior staff this would make Council a better environment and also stop the boys club mentality

Respondents were asked to tick as many options which were applicable. The majority of respondents indicated they would recommend local government to other women.

The most common reason for not recommending local government:

1. Bullying and harassment, with respondents indicating they have received bullying from female councillors as well as male councillors.
2. Inadequate remuneration was also a barrier to recommending running for council to other women.

No support from the OLG to prevent major problems. Silly rules about Code of Conduct Complaints (e.g. non disclosure of findings) that prevent major issues from being dealt with

It's a big time commitment and low paid, and all my peers experience a big gender pay gap already. So taking on another low paid heavy workload role is difficult

As women move into public office I am hopeful that male genders ways of doing business will be tempered

There is a definite gender split on Council. The men, led by the Mayor, constantly try to shutdown the questions raised by female councillors and claim that they are talking too much and not getting to the point quickly enough. There has been a deliberate attempt by these male councillors to censure female councillors, for their comments and questions

Transparent and open contributions are not appreciated. It is a politicised space where difference is treated with suspicion. It is a long hard road to break down the sexist and misogynistic culture. Racist and sexist language is par for the course and remains unchallenged. It is highly offensive

It should be noted, there is a lot of bullying and nastiness from female Councillors, not solely male Councillors. Sometimes what you give is what you get back. I don't accept any bullying and harassment but, again, it should not be 'one way traffic', particularly if the female Councillor commences it

I have recommended other women to run for council however only those in a financial position to sacrifice work hours have been able to do so. There have been some exceptional women candidates who decided not to run once they knew what the time commitment and remuneration were because they could not financially afford to lose the equivalent time in paidwork

A diversity of people, cultures is required for effective councils

I would always recommend women run, but that support is provided

I will always recommend and explain you need broad shoulders and to stand firm

It's a boys club - they band together - blind to their own bad behaviour, and pretend to support equal opportunity and oppose gender based violence with such pomp and conviction. It is really sickening at times

Not taken as seriously by staff

I want more ordinary people including women but if I describe what happens, it turns people off

Abolish political party voting on party policy and assess all matters from the communities perspective!

I would like more people to run and get rid of the ones that bully

I would recommend them to stand but they need to be aware we have some angry men that will make disrespectful comments. We need Councillors including women who will make change

I would still recommend that women run for Council but also remind them that it's a job, like any other. It is grass roots government and we need to work collaboratively as a team. It's not state or federal Parliament - we have to come together, regardless of difference, to make decisions as a group. Not caucus behind the scenes

The possibility of females becoming mayor is so limited that women are often the bridesmaid but never the bride

In a rural area, it's very hard to get quality candidates to run for council. Most won't and the kind that are keen to do so are often the ones least suitable for public office. Anyone contemplating standing for council should be adequately trained beforehand so they can hit the ground running and be effective representatives. Something as simple as a mandatory 12 month TAFE course would be a start. How can any one be expected to adequately perform the role of a councillor when most people who stand don't understand what council does or does not do and they have no idea how to adequately represent residents and ratepayers. Being a councillor is a serious role and should be treated as such. The idea that any one off the street with a smile and maybe good intentions can do the job is laughable

Despite my experience I would advise women to run for council , we need to be there to encourage those changes

General feeling of discrimination

Q20. Would you stand for re-election?



20% of respondents chose to skip this question

“
I will run again when my children are older, it's very prohibitive to mothers who carry the child rearing load
”

Almost three quarters of respondents indicate they will stand for re-election. There are a number of respondents who indicate they are 'standing up to the bullies' by seeking re-election.

Key factors that would influence a decision for re-election include:

1. The remuneration associated with the role;
2. The impact of being an elected councillor on their mental wellbeing;
3. The desire to give back to the community; and
4. Weighing up the work-life balance.

Responses

I've given twenty years for minimal financial return and would like a life

Because the Council has a new General Manager. I would not have sought re-election under the previous GM

I love what we get to do but it deserves more time than I can give it

I won't because the pay doesn't cover child care adequately and I have to work full time hours outside of being a Councillor to keep up with the cost of living and raising a family, I will run again when my children are older, it's very prohibitive to mothers who carry the child rearing load, the need to work to pay for the cost of living and manage the heavy work load of Council

Yes - but only if I can secure childcare and employment that works around council commitments

This is my second term, I have enjoyed the experience and would like to spend more time with partner and travel

I love being on council & am looking forward to the election

Don't know. Only suckers do all this work for an unfair remuneration

Unsure. Whilst I still would like to add value to my community, being a Councillor and Deputy Mayor requires many sacrifices for my career and family (I am a 41 year old mother of three)

When the culture of the council is so toxic, and I cannot see a way to affect change, then I cannot remain due to my own personal wellbeing

I have served 2 terms - time to let younger generation take on the role

I have found it to be very fulfilling and I like to speak up about issues that need addressing

I'm now strong enough to re run but it's taken two years. Fellow male Councilors and community that are against me are bullies to the point I had depression, ruined my business and I was at one point suicidal due to social media abuse

Only because I have only had 2 years as a Councillor

Thinking about it. It's often unpleasant. Have voiced my concerns to the GM at times, GM came back with "you're reading too much into it"

While challenging want to encourage other women by leading from example. We need our voices and perspectives as part of the mix and find ways to be courageous

I love what I do for my communities and I have learned not to sweat the little stuff

Unless there is more rapid culture change, contributions by people who do not support the current conservative and closed mindset will be discounted

I would like to consolidate my role for another term and want to be there for the community and for the future.

I am saying yes to make a difference but I should be saying no for my mental health and well-being as I feel I'm in a toxic environment and it's not worth impacting on my health

I was 45 when I was elected. For the financial/ time reasons stated above I stood down at the end of my five year term and will stand again when I get to the age where I can wind back my work hours

My age is my only problem

This has been a challenging and lonely role. The other women councillors (2) on my council don't respond to my emails on women's issues, in general other councillors don't respond to my emails showing a notice of motion I am preparing and asking for feedback. I feel like the lack of support for councillors would not be tolerated in any other workplace

I remain unsure given the lack of respect, collegiality and cooperation

Most definitely, I stand up against bullies I won't put up with it that's why I'm filling a survey

I have suffered through 3 terms and things are worse now than when I started

This is my dream role

Believe in turnover and younger candidates

I will have served 25 years and I am not standing for re-election

I have community support because I represent the communities' interests. It suits me to support community and piss off those who are self interested and committed to party politics and self interested, self serving developers

Hopefully the bullies do not re run

Probably. Not immediately after a meeting!

If it could be guaranteed that a certain CR was not going to run, I would run again. Due to this person's toxic nature. I will not run

There is no way I am leaving the staff to be victims to this ongoing poor behaviour. It has been nasty, spiteful and relentless and I just thank my lucky stars that they haven't left yet. This Council can return to being the "Can Do Council" it was prior to the last elections. Because organisational culture is set at the top, being the elected body, the relationship between Councillors, staff and subsequently the community have once again broken down. I will not allow this to continue and will continue to be a voice for those who are too afraid to say anything because we have narcissistic, organisational sociopaths who refuse to own their behaviour and work together more productively. We were there before, we can be there again

Not at this stage. The gain isn't worth the pain. Sociopathic narcissists for councillors who are only in it for what they can get out of it in combination with a community with diametrically opposed views on a range of subjects means that you can never please everyone and unfortunately when people don't get what they want when they want it, it becomes very personal and very nasty very quick. I think there needs to be a lot more truth told about what the role of a councillor is really like so people are better prepared and able to make an informed choice

Part 4: Nature of Bullying Harassment & Intimidation

Q21. Do you feel comfortable to lodge a complaint if you would not be supported by your council?



16% of respondents chose to skip this question

“

You would be targeted and excluded

”

Key findings include:

1. 21% of respondents feel the GM / CEO is a road block in progressing complaints;
2. There is a lack of action from OLG on complaints which are lodged;
3. There is concern about the repercussions following lodgement of a complaint;
4. Complaints are not taken seriously or actioned at council level; and
5. Councillors indicate it is difficult to lodge a complaint when it concerns the CEO / GM and / or mayor.

Responses

How could you do something like that currently through the council if you don't have support by your council? This is why the code of conduct system needs to be taken out of the hands of the council

I have ticked yes, however have not needed to lodge a complaint

Just have trouble with the CEO. Would rather it be to an independent assessor

You would be targeted and excluded

Depending on the nature of the complaint and who I was reporting to. I think it should be mandatory for a senior female staff member to be available for confidential discussion and reporting of any concerns. This information of who to contact should be readily available and easy to find by all staff

But I dont know where to lodge a complaint to

I did once and response was deal with it you're a girl in a man's world

But there's no point. OLG don't act.

There are no repercussions for intimidatory behaviour

I have not received support in the past

I have lodged a complaint

I have to live in this place!

I have read too many case laws, and the person lodging the claim receive so much criticism and ridicule

The process is emotionally challenging and has mental health consequences

I made contact with LGNSW requesting information on the process, which has not been followed up on by them

Don't expect support from my council

Depends on the nature of the complaint

I dont know how to though

When council has lodged official complaints to OLG and there is no action, there is no point to lodge again. Behaviour of a particular 1-3 councillors receiving No consequences reinforces their behaviour is acceptable. In a normal workforce or workplace, this behaviour is not tolerated and most would be terminated. It so so disappointing to see that this behaviour is allowed to continue. From these particular councillors, they bully/continually nit pick other councillors to get a reaction, then make official complaints regarding the reaction to "play the victim" in the public eye. There is also an example of a councillor being a developer - who also has said "as per this definition, I am a developer" the definition of developer has not changed. This has been investigated by OLG and nothing has happened. The financial cost to council and time of council employees with no action, it seems there is no point to make more complaints

I'd worry about the financial implications and the amount of time of work to fight it

There is no point. It only leads to more frustrations

It's my GM and the previous female Mayor so ...no

I have lodged a number of complaints. I also suggest that you check out the Parramatta City Council case where they were formally warned for failing to provide a psychologically safe work place, following complaints about councillor behaviour, including yelling, ridicule and intimidation. Please see

<https://lgnewsroundup.com/council-warned-over-alleged-psychologically-unsafe-workplace/>

Not sure this question is written as intended. I would feel supported by the organisation

I have lodged for clear breach of Code of conduct, but the GM filed it

The GM is the main perpetrator of toxic behaviour

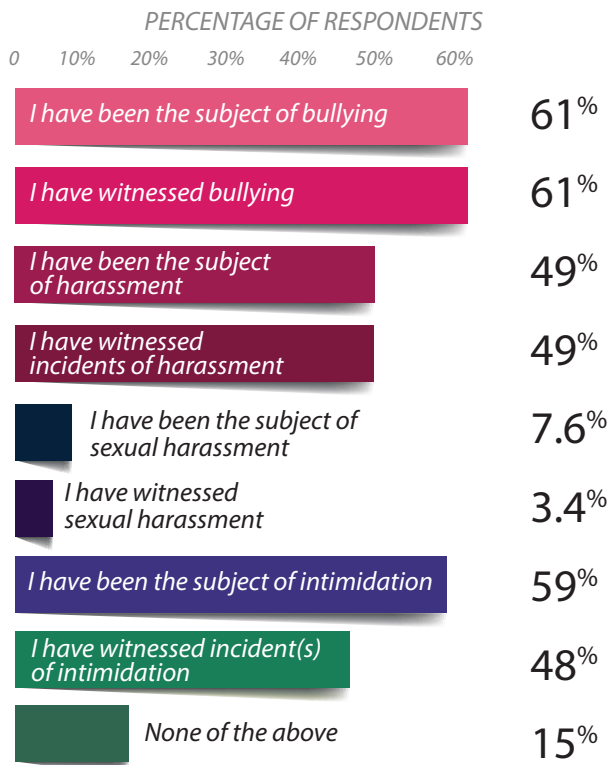
I always consider the evidence carefully and poor behaviour needs to be recorded, especially if there is a certain pattern of behaviour

It is encouraged by the executive staff and GM

Ive complained to our GM Ive taken it up with mayor, I dont feel anything is taken serious, ive been made fun of by another councillor because I'm aboriginal but white, he poked fun at my parents and grandparent, and friends, ive had councillors cause a director to leave over constant attacks and defamation, ive had my mayor yell at me shake go red clench fists, shut down in informal briefings, but others can go on over and over

Q22. Have you been the subject of or witnessed bullying, harassment and intimidation?

16% of respondents chose to skip this question



Responses

Jokes about women and aboriginal people between the men is common and is annoying

The internal processes of my party make the process too long and stressful, and leaves me with the stigma of not being tough enough to handle an elected leadership role

Not by crs or staff but by public

I have not experienced harassment as a Councillor, I have several occasions in my past private life and uncomfortable as it was at the time, I stood up for myself

(1) From the public. (2) I experience sexism, ageism and gender bias

By the public, not by council

I have been bullied by a resident who has also raised a vexatious Code of Conduct against me. I don't believe the poor treatment and work environment have constituted bullying and harassment, however they are far from safe conditions

It was behaviour between two other sitting Councillors towards each other

Over the years a couple of Councillors were subject to threats in regards to a decision of Council one fizzled out the other resulted in a Councillor being charged

Going on a tour and eating on my own because everyone else sat at a different table

All from one person on Council. Even though we have put in Code of Conducts on this individual and Council has investigated and the person censured on the Council floor we are unable to do anything as the OLG just sit on a decision

Isolation from information and civic duties. Physical assault by a Councillor's husband

Bullying of community members who are too scared to report

Council meetings can be the worst - they don't seem to mind being on camera - in fact it's like they are performing for an audience

Respondents were asked to tick as many options which were applicable.

On average, half of the respondents have experienced or witnessed incidents of bullying, harassment and / or intimidation. Of the incidents, respondents indicated:

1. 61% of incidents involved another councillor;
2. 39% of incidents involved a member of the public.

I am regularly bullied by branch members of my party and have previously been subjected to horrendous bullying by a fellow councillor

The bullying harassment especially gender and age racism is very apparent. This is from a particular councillor to other councillors and also to executive staff. No one deserves this and the councillor knows nothing can get done and even encourages them "put in a code of conduct complaint" and they know nothing happens. I also feel when a councillor resigns or does not join any council committees is also a form of bullying as they know this makes other councillors have to pick up the slack with no extra remuneration

Both sorts of harrassment come from members of the public, not staff or other councillors

I have had members of the public call me and express their extreme views and threaten my business, I've had constant criticism on social media and name calling, I've been told I'll never get re-elected

By two female councillors

Q23. If you have experienced or witnessed bullying, harassment or intimidation in your role as councillor, did you report it?



“
Nothing happens when you report so why bother
”

Where respondents indicated they did not report the matter, reasons cited include:

1. There is a lack of confidence the matter would be actioned - either by Council or OLG;
2. There is concern about the repercussions following lodgement of a complaint;
3. The matter concerned the General Manager / CEO or mayor or a councillor who is friends with the mayor; and
4. Complainants would be perceived as weak or not resilient if they lodged a complaint.

Responses

Not sure of the process

I have reported when it is against someone else but not when it was against me personally. I have found that the general attitude is "If you cant stand the heat get out of the kitchen" if you want to stand for council

It was a colleague. I am aware that this person had recently changed medication

Yes to my party not to Council

Nothing happens when you report so why bother

I did raise it with staff, I felt dismissed and my concerns were minimised, I did raise it with one of the perpetrators directly

Pointless complaining to the mayor as he is best friends with the GM

Thought a female colleague was copping pressure as she asked questions, a few other councillors male and female felt she should be supported and not to attend one on one meetings alone.

I raised this issue with the General Manager

I dealt with the person on an individual level

It would fall on deaf ears

The GM would have sided with the senior official and it was in front of all Councillors, Mayor, GM etc

The previous mayor did nothing about it as he is mates with them

You need to pick your battles

It was enacted in full view of the Mayor and the relevant staff members who took action. I believe that the Councillor involved progressed his own complaint additionally and an Senior HR executive came along to observe subsequent meetings

Yes, to the GM. She told me i was reading too much into things. I was most definitely not. In the same email I told her I was on the verge of tears. She didn't even acknowledge that, didn't even enquire if I was OK to this date.

I addressed the matter at the time

I have lodged one code of conduct due the persistent and inappropriate behaviour and comments from another Councillor. There have been many other occasions where i have witnessed bullying, but have not felt empowered to report it, because the Councillors have behaved like this for many years. Their behaviour is totally unacceptable and would never be allowed on a Board of Management. However it seems you can get away with it in local government

I called it out at a council meeting and indicated to the GM and Councillors I would not standby and allow it to continue as doing nothing is as bad as doing the bullying and intimidation

What is the point? Apparently nothing can be done about it

The culture says this bullying by residents just comes with the job

The 2 individuals were verbally reprimanded after the event by staff and councillors

I did not have confidence it would be dealt with appropriately

Was already reported

Reported to ICAC

As if! What would happen? Nothing except that you would leave yourself open to being a target - 'too soft' and 'not hard enough to withstand normal debate' etc

The Mayor was aware

Just felt it was part of the role

However I never feel that the OLG will take appropriate or timely action

Because it likely would have only made the matter worse

I could only report it to the GM who is one of the perpetrators

A powerful councillor had control of council. Worried i would lose pre selection.

And even though it is bullying and/or harrassment and text message evidence of intimidation, there is no disciplinary action

I've been bullied by Cr xxxx prior to local government elections. And as per my quote above I've read too much case law.

I have witnessed the above from a group of aligned councillors directed at senior staff and the mayor and raised it informally

To the GM

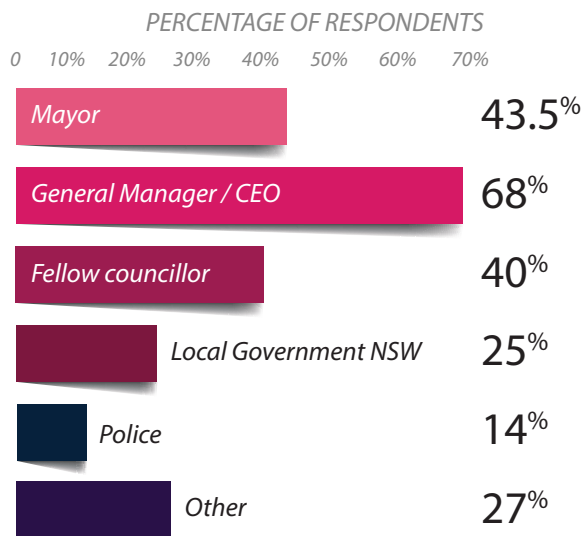
As it's the normal. The perpetrators would use it as a badge of honour. Code of conduct holds no weight

I was embarassed and didn't think I would be supported

There was no clear path to report it especially if it was coming from the Mayor and GM

I'm inoculated and proving it isn't worth re-living it

Q24. Who did you report this behaviour to?



Comments

Complaint was investigated and I believe, is now with OLG. Have not heard back from them and it's been over 3 months now

I received excellent and affirming support from a LGNSW mentor

The full process was implemented and followed through

It was a Councillor using a carriageway to "threaten" us but it was easy to trace

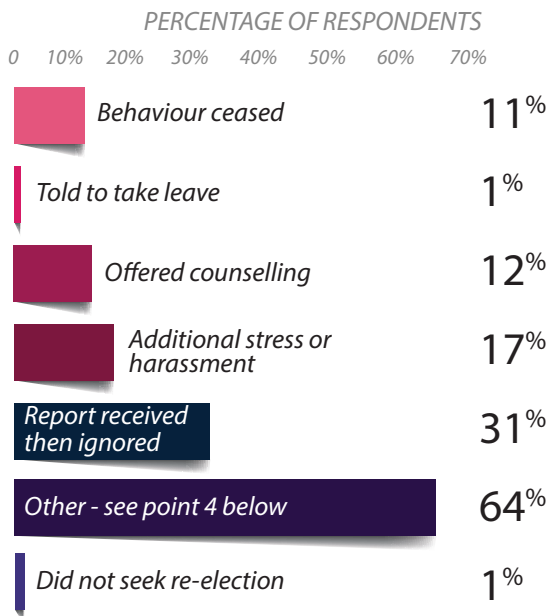
Was perpetrated by then GM

The majority of reports were lodged with the General Manager / CEO, mayor or fellow councillors.

Where respondents cited 'Other', this included:

1. Political party office or legal representative;
2. An independent performance reviewer;
3. A member of council staff.

Q25. What was the outcome of you reporting bullying, harassment or intimidation?



Key findings among the responses include:

1. Many respondents believe there are no ramifications for perpetrators;
2. Several individuals who reported the incident(s) commented they do not know the outcome of their report;
3. Seven respondents indicated their reports are still being investigated. These include reports lodged to council, OLG and police;
4. 'Other' includes respondents which indicated their complaint was still in progress; unresolved / dismissed; or no action was taken.

Comments

The community behaviour is continuing. I did not stand for mayor position

Report related to bullying of someone else and I don't know what the outcome was

I asked the Mayor not to take any action

Independent assessor recommended mediation with Mayor. Advised Mayor's behaviour did not breach the Code of Conduct. I believe there have been several breaches of the Code of Conduct by the Mayor, as clearly outlined in my complaint. Advised this behaviour is not 'sufficiently serious to warrant further investigation'. I disagree with findings that the behaviour was not 'deliberate and undertaken with reckless intent and negligence'

Until I continued to pursue it in court

My colleague found her confidence and we are still here to support her if needed

Not yet resolved

Discussed ways forward

Nothing happened

A court case, which we won

Councillors worked together with GM to remove the staff member

I don't know, it was bullying observed by me and dealt with by that Councillor and staff

No action

GM told me I was reading too much into things. That the Mayor was referring to everyone despite his email addressing me personally and he elected to copy all my colleagues and senior staff in

There are no ramifications for bullying by councillors of other councillors or staff

CEO had a meeting with resident

The behaviour was not as aggressive and this was mainly from other female councillors not men

Don't know of outcome of investigation, yet

I was told the Mayor would speak to the persons involved, never heard back?!?!?!?

I did not lodge a formal complaint. I worked with supporters and my mentor and received advice from LGNSW

Initially, advice to Councillor was simply ignored. Follow up report is still underway

It was a state of intent and example not a formal complaint

I was fully supported by the general manager mayor and other councillors

Just kept doing what I enjoyed doing as a Councillor it does make you stronger or it does me

They ignore it mostly and refuse to do anything about it

Codes of conduct issued & training required for perpetrator

Just moved on due to being nearly elected

My complaint is still being investigated

GM discussed the matter directly with the victim. I was told not to discuss the matter further with the victim due to possible referral to OLG

Sympathy and support but no real action is possible

Isolated from information pertinent to my role and civic duties

Censure of perpetrator

The councillors subject to the complaint were found guilty of breaching council's code of conduct. They laughed it off and considered it a joke as there are virtually no meaningful penalties under the said code. The Office of Local Government has been derelict in its duties as confirmed by a recent report by the Auditor-General. See <https://www.audit.nsw.gov.au/our-work/reports/regulation-and-monitoring-of-local-government>

In progress

I was censored by the council

The GM conducted an investigation but then the bullying didn't stop.

The extra pressure and stress did not come from GM, senior staff or the majority of councillors. It comes from the individual and their business partner in the community (who had already had defamation cases from previous council members and found guilty in these).

Staff took action to restrict member of public's access to me

Unofficial mediation by another Councillor.

Several councillors (not politically aligned) have worked towards improving the situation

External review outcome was that bullying is part of the "cut & thrust of politics"

This was in relation to a community member in the lead up to the last election. I was supported by Mayor councillors and Council staff

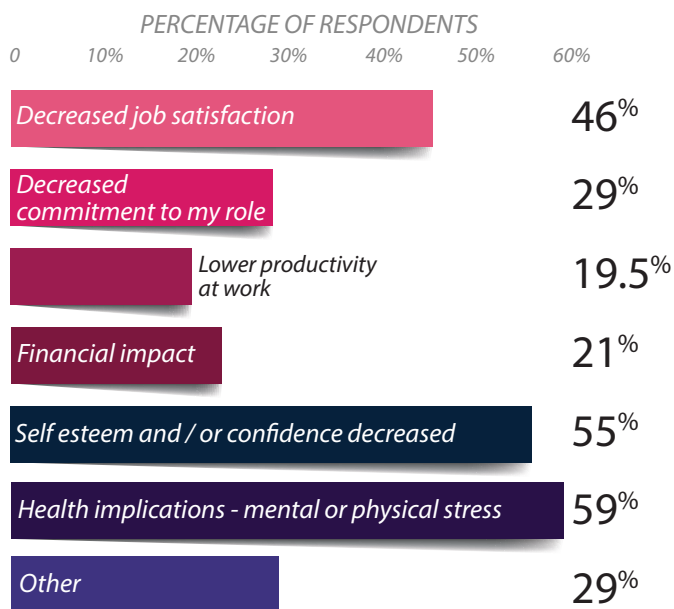
Mediation but amounted to nothing

I was consoled and encouraged to stick it out

I don't intend to resign

The police are looking into the person harassing me

Q26. As a result of the incident/s (victim or witness), have you experienced any of the following?



Other reported results of the incident(s) include:

1. A decrease in the level of trust placed in fellow councillors and council staff;
2. Dissatisfaction with local government in general;
3. Seeking professional care to assist with stress and anxiety;
4. The incident(s) also impacted family members of the councillor;
5. Decline in interest in standing for re-election;
6. Increasing levels of stress or difficulty experienced in their role as a councillor following their report of the incident(s).

Comments

It's made me more determined to press on and not to give the bullies the satisfaction of walking away

The second term in council has been much better as the perpetrator is the subject of an APVO but that will end in April

We have mainly men on the Council, it is still very much a boys club, it needs to change

As we find our way as new councillors our confidence builds. Training, workshops help us to understand what is required from us and the staff

I installed a filter on my council email to delete all emails from one particular councillor, so I never see them unless I look in the deleted list

Increased commitment to improve the workplace, working with GM to change the culture

Felt my integrity was questioned

The mental health of a number of Councillors, including myself, has steadily declined

This was with continual criticism and threats of COC till eventually have to defend myself on a Code of Conduct

My adverse effects from the incidents were recognised and supported. I was able to work through the situation and the perpetrator was not able to continue the behaviour due to support of the council staff and elected councillors

I have a theory that I live by and that is if the person gets angry or insulting I have won. This really old school thinking I assume as I do come from the older generation and I am really good at negotiating

It has put a lot of pressure on me, to learn everything on my own. I have had to work everything out on my own

I am seriously considering legal remedies to address the situation

I was part of an independent team who supported me. If I didn't have that, I would've left

Further comments regarding bullying, harassment, and intimidation experienced or witnessed in your role as a councillor

I was an elected councillor from 1999 to 2008 at start of my term i was the only female councillor and 10 yrs younger then the youngest male councillor. Experienced a lot criticism from candidates about standing for council when I had school aged children, wife and full timemanagement job. As a councillor in this period was very different to now. I worked strongly with the community and social media did not exist

2022 - 2023. Different environment. The social media environment and councillor behaviour affect staff and councillors. As a female councillor and if you are strong and very vocal you are targeted. In my case this has extended to attacking my family. There is a need for stronger safeguards for councillors and staff in relation to social media bullying, harassment, defamation, slander and assault

Some Councillors appear unaware of the behaviour they exhibit. I am unsure as how to deal with this

Due to a code of conduct against me, which was deemed no action, created a lot of stress for me. Unnecessary interviews with independent investigators. All over not replying to an email and blocking bullies on facebook. How petty does that all sound? So I was being "investigated" for protecting myself and my own mental health

Repeated foreshadowing of motions. Voting me off two committees for no reason. Repeatedly speaking about irrelevant matters when debating a Notice of Motion. Using debate to personally attack me and undermine my reputation. Not applying Code of Meeting practice consistently and fairly

I have been subjected to systematic bullying. I have witnessed bullying and intimidation at many council meetings

I have received comments that are gender related, such as being told my response to a motion was just "maternal instinct", or "too emotional", that my concerns were nothing and I just needed to "harden up"

I find that the current councillor team and staff are respectful of each other. That said I have seen inappropriate behaviour from my fellow councillors and feel some etiquette lessons would be beneficial

Most of my experiences were issues that the OLG should have dealt with in a timely manner. This is particularly true of one case of bullying that I witnessed

I have witnessed a female councillor bully and harass another female staff member, our GM. It happens constantly and OLG seems not to be able to do anything or support our GM. Big code of conducts are done there is no action and the female councillor continues her behaviour

Most of my experiences were issues that the OLG should have dealt with in a timely manner. This is particularly true of one case of bullying that I witnessed

Intimidation, dismissing information that a female has said even if it's true

Infrastructure and financial exec tried often to intimidate Councillors, GM did nothing. We changed GM, many staff left as they were now going to be managed and not allowed to intimidate Councillors, other staff, community members. It's a great place now however this took a great deal of work by Councillors

Senior staff also need to be accountable and there should be a process to deal with issues arising

Code of conduct & meeting practice depend on self regulation by councillors-if some choose to ignore disciplinary actions are unenforceable

My treatment was by union delegates encouraging staff to lodge a complaint

Social media bullying, as an Aboriginal woman, the bullying was encouraged on social media and female councillors commented to rise the racism debates in particular when motions were coming up in the business papers

It is hard to work constructively as a Councillor when the culture of the organisation is led by people who continue to allow inappropriate behaviour to be accepted. I understood that there would be differing political values, but the backroom deals and collusion to exclude and shutdown robust debate is totally abhorrent

There have been ongoing snide comments that I am a minority on the council, and I should not bring motions to council or speak in meetings as I am supposedly 'wasting everyone's time'. Recently things have become worse, and a Councillor yelled at me to 'come here, bitch' and he wanted me to enter the corridor, but I was too scared so I stayed in my seat. After the meeting another Councillor began yelling at me in front of staff and other Councillors so I left

Further comments regarding bullying, harassment, and intimidation experienced or witnessed in your role as a councillor

After extreme pressure and intimidation I collapsed with heart palpitations and an ambulance had to be called

I received private and public apologies. The GM resigned for other reasons. This GM is known in LG recruitment circles for having a "problem with strong women" yet continues in the LG sector across a number of states. LG NSW are to be commended for having an excellent mentoring system. This should be promoted at the Council level but democracy prevails and if the majority of councillors wish to pursue a narrow or hostile agenda it is difficult to navigate

As I previously noted, female Councillors also do bullying and harassment. This can't be unacceptable from males, but ok from females. We are supposed to be equal in status. People should not complain when they give what they get (sometimes the female Councillor starts the 'bullying/harassment' comments which then starts the scene and gets the return reply - and the female Councillor then puts in a complaint about). All Councillors have to be fair, reasonable and equal - not just be a complainant if they've been a 'victim', yet they've also been actively bullying or harassing other Councillors

I believe there needs to be protections for councillors and stop the misuse of the OLG guidelines to make councillors compliant so the senior staff take the ability for the Councillor to perform their duties working together for better community outcomes

Women who are not strong would potentially find the local government environment difficult at times. Younger professional women with beneficial skills do not run for council due to the inadequate remuneration. Many women that I have discussed council nomination with have stated that if financially they could swap out two days per week of paid employment for council duties and financially be paid at an adequate rate they would definitely stand

While truthfully there have been occasions when I've been afraid I do not show this and it's in my nature to keep challenging and fighting against the forces of evil

I would like the local government actual investigate my council, because the GM does whatever the mayor says and the mayor is one of the bullies

The bullying councillor was a woman. She received several codes of conduct but these mean little. It should be 3 strikes and you are out ie expelled from council

LG doesn't take Code Of Conduct breaches seriously. the GM doesn't want to bring their Council into disrepute so does not report incidences. When reported, often no proof is given, the vast majority have no action taken at all. It is the fact that no support is given which is so disheartening.

I felt the Cr in question was going to physically assault me for no good reason. I was merely watching him walk out of the Chamber. Thankfully, there were 2 other Councillors in between me and the attacker. I am appalled the OLG has not taken serious action against this repeat offender who is escalating. The Minister for OLG needs to Man Up and empower the OLG and councils to punish Councillors for his repeated bad behaviour. The Councillor in question deserves to be suspended if not permanently expelled. His behaviour is unacceptable, unreasonable, and very inappropriate under any circumstance. The behaviour is abusive. It is beyond reprehensible the Minister for Local Government is so weak and unwilling to implement actions to curtail this escalating abusive behaviour

The Code of Conduct is a toothless tiger. Even when the Council puts in complaints which are formally investigated the OLG sit on their hands and don't make decisions.

I have seen a Councillor colleague collude with community members to harass and bully another community member. It was awful to witness, and included physical intimidation. I am frustrated at not knowing the outcome of the complaint after it was taken over by the GM

There is a vast power imbalance between senior staff and councillors in a rural council. We have few resources and are largely kept out of the building, our role is minimised and dismissed by the GM, who sees elected reps as a nuisance to be managed, getting in the way of the efficient running of Council

Councillors guilty of these behaviours either deny them, despite extensive training, flat out lie or project their own behaviours on to other Councillors. The Code of Conduct offers zero protection and more punitive action is required to see real change in this space. I think I have seen it all this term

I am more than often bullied by residents who don't get outcomes they want

It's like the wild Wild West in local council no one protects councillors, the mayor or a CEO actually

Constant 'of the cuff' comments regarding individuals performance, commitment, ability and integrity

Further comments regarding bullying, harassment, and intimidation experienced or witnessed in your role as a councillor

This has occurred because of the lack of suitably qualified and trained candidates for council and the misleading information provided to encourage persons unqualified and unsuitable for public office to stand. Until the local government sector is taken seriously rather than the lapdog of state government, its effectiveness will be impeded and the only people it will attract are the very ones who should never hold public office of any kind. I wish I could say that my experience is unique but I know of many other council where similar experiences have occurred and until the punishment is made to fit the crime, instances of this nature will continue unabated

Bullying and harassment will not cease when it's in the hands of political parties. I have reported incidents to OLG who did not do anything

I love representing my community but the behaviour in various parts of the organisation can make me feel disrespected and unheard

There is a culture of bullying within the organisation that is perpetuated by those at the top. The majority of Councillors turn a blind eye. The Council promotes and markets a rosy positive picture to the outside world. While this is what we should be striving towards, it is sickening at times

The code of conduct process failed me. I stood up to the bullying using the only recourse I had but when it came to the decision the majority of Councillors voted it down. The Code of Conduct needs to be taken out of Councillors hands for determination and should be determined independently

We have a section with extremely high turnover of staff, even when the person leaves the bullying and intimidation continues of both the worker and partner continues in a small country town. I have sought support for these workers to no avail

Some councillors know the system and use it in the harassment and bullying. No consequences for their actions

Repeatedly told that ALGWA is not important. "Why isn't there a ALGMA [Men's Association]?" Complaints dismissed. Told I am the problem. Told I am too "passionate" about issues

There is repeated harassment of the GM by a group of councillors and one councillor's husband

It is very disappointing that those main 2-3 bullying harassing and intimidating fellow councillors and senior staff see no ramifications and they know (by past local government experience) that code of conduct complaints cost council money and time and OLG response is not helpful, no disciplinary action and general response is that the local council needs to deal with the issue and not help

In my full time role currently and in the past, their behaviour would not be tolerated and would have been terminated for their actions. It is sad Local Government still allows this behaviour and should really be able to "terminate" an elected councillor for bullying and harassing others. The other big thing is victims can not talk to others about the behaviour to let the community know the councillor behaves in this manner. This then leads the councillor being re-elected as our community doesn't know the behind door actions

A lot of harassment occurs on social media as well, where there does not seem to be any consequences. I tend to avoid Facebook in order to avoid the trolling, which is not useful if you want to communicate with your residents

I have experienced bullying from 3 opposition councillors over the 12 years. The first belittled and mocked me relentlessly in Council meetings continually verbally attacking me personally during debate in the chamber. Within the code of conduct process you have to prove bullying within a 3 month period so it is impossible to show a sustained attack over time. I found the Code of Conduct process time-consuming and demoralizing so have not wasted my time to make a complaint again. The second Councillor took over after the first moved on and he only stopped bullying me after I found that we had a mutual friend and told him about this behaviour. In this case it was loud groaning every time I spoke and verbally attacking me personally during debate in the chamber. I continue to experience bullying by the current Mayor who will not recognise me to move or second a motion and my notices of motion are not supported

Members of the community noticed the targeted bullying and asked the person to stop also. The behaviour intimidated the rest of the council and my job is ineffective.

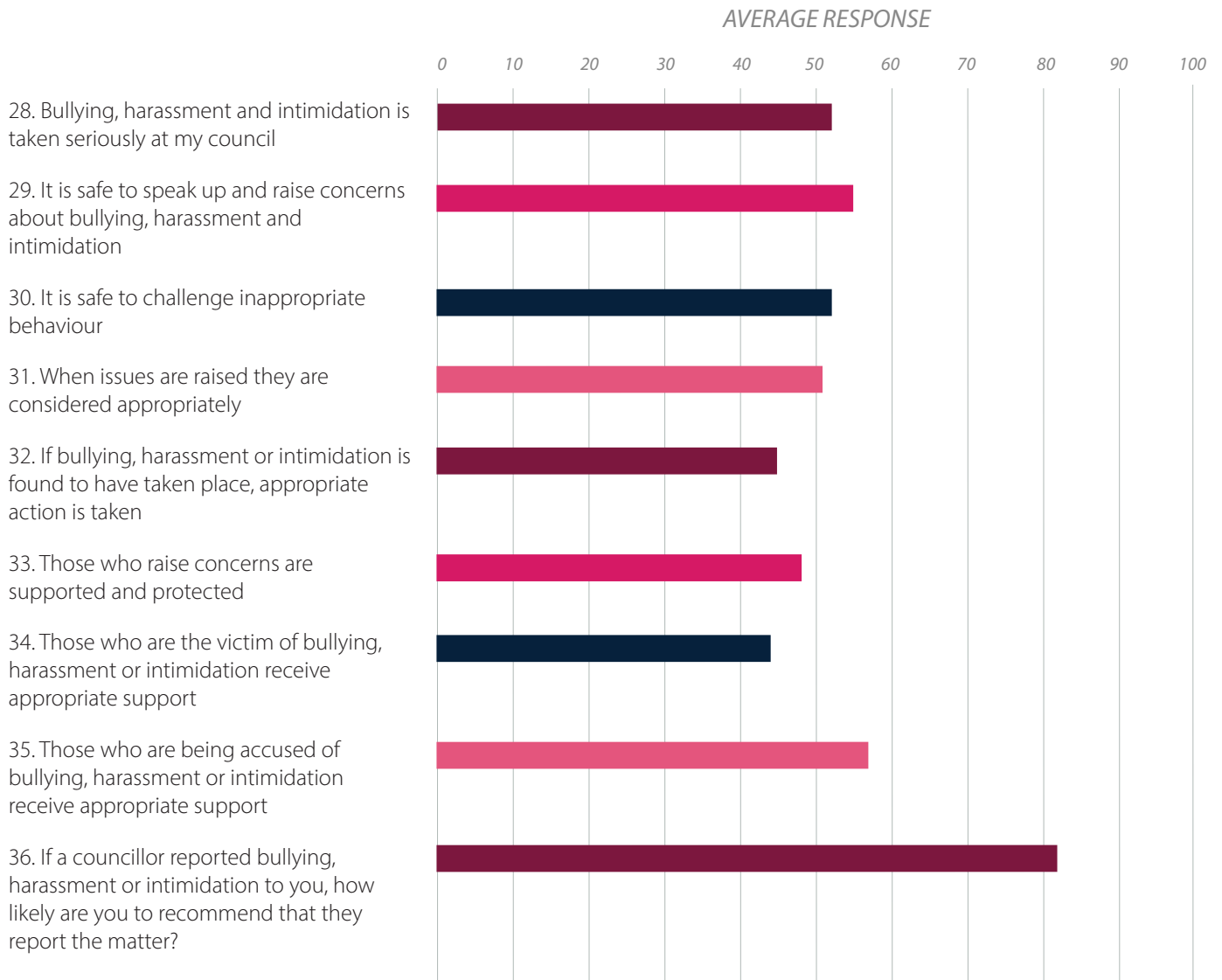
GM, previous Mayor and her husband. No support from GM.

On many occasions I have had to pull off the road and compose myself before driving home as I was so upset. I live almost an hour from my home

In my case it was consistent harassment by members of the public on social media

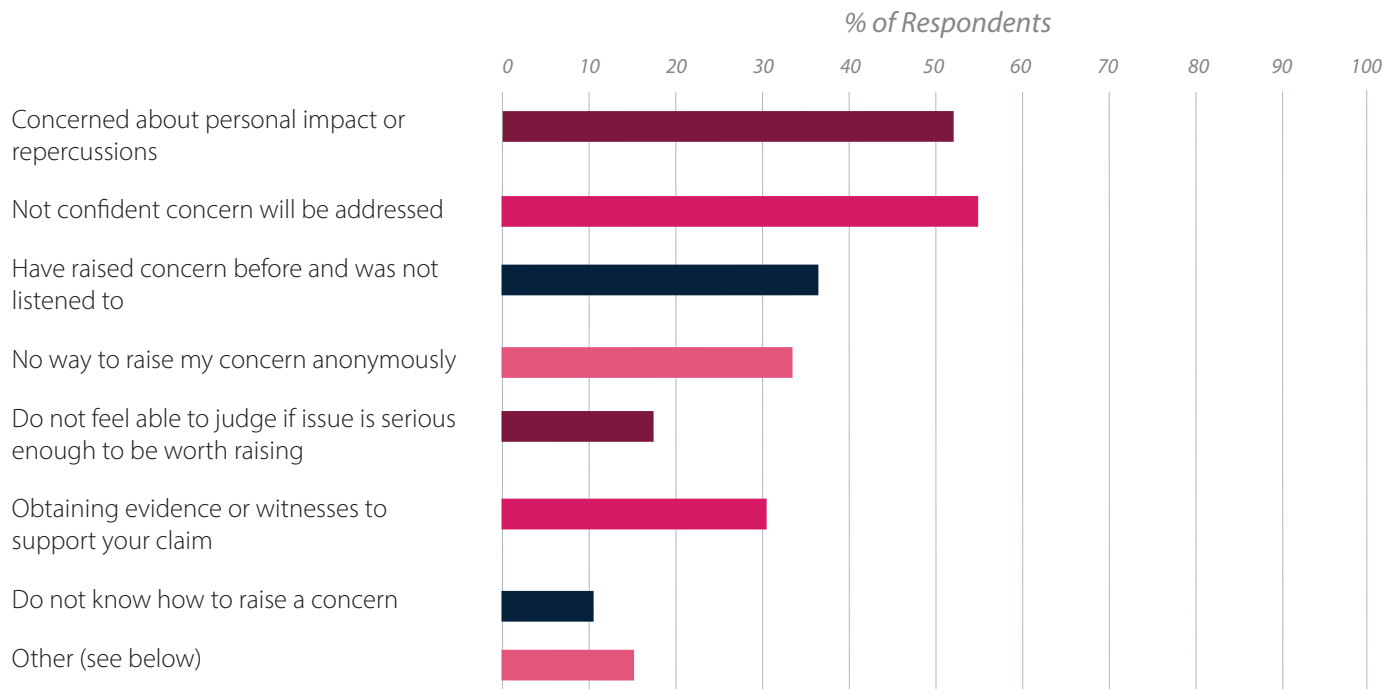
Part 5: Knowledge & Confidence in Reporting

Respondents were asked to score the following statements *(each statement scored out of 100)*



Q37. Do you view any of the following factors listed below as a barrier to reporting bullying, harassment, intimidation, and other misconduct?

21% of respondents chose to skip this question



Comments

There is no such thing as anonymity and confidentiality in a small council

The bullies know how to 'walk a fine line' regarding bullying, this makes it hard to report as hard to prove

Not confident the concern will be addressed appropriately at the OLG level

When councils can't or won't take action, the OLG should have the resources to remedy the problem

Certain persons are protected and any complaints are swept under the carpet

No or little information was provided for raising a concern. Had to search for it

The GM doesn't listen

No external party who will deliberate and no need for person to change their behaviour

Code of Conduct is not a deterrent

This survey assumes that I am being bullied. It is the staff who are being bullied

No external party who will deliberate and no need for person to change their behaviour

Confident that Council will take it seriously but not confident in OLG allowing the Council to take action. The system is broken.

Our Code of Conduct investigator has notified us that the Councillors aren't going to change and all we can do is kick it up the ladder to OLG. These Councillors should be held up as an example of what not to be, if elected to Council. For them, it is about personal vendettas, instead of community service.

Cost to rate payer

Happy to report now, less so when I first became a councillor

Concern will be dismissed. I am overreacting.

The Code of Conduct process doesn't work and Council General Managers have no ability to enforce Councillor behaviour

OLG Code of conduct has no teeth. It's a waste of time reporting any issues

Further comments regarding knowledge and confidence to report bullying, harassment, and intimidation

When I contacted the Mayor regarding my complaint he mentioned the Procedures for Administration of the Code of Conduct. I had to look this up. I also inquired about Workplace Health and Safety Policy and how that covered councillors

I am now confident in reporting but it took too long before it was taken seriously

Women often feel intimidated and bullied in Council meetings by male councillors. Male and female Directors also face intimidation, rude comments, and aggressive questioning in Council meetings. As a Councillor it is uncomfortable to watch and very difficult to control. I often leave Council meetings feeling upset with the debate style of older long serving male Councillors at the domineering, aggressive attitude towards those who disagree with their opinion. Meetings are often used for personal agendas and grandstanding for the public, this leads to misconceptions of the public towards Councils and the decisions it makes

Staff were sympathetic, though it seemed they were more concerned with offering a card for me to seek support than to escalate the matter of the bully and their inappropriate behaviour

A fellow female Councillor reported inappropriate behaviour & subsequently put a code of conduct of the male Councillor. A pathetic, half arsed "sorry" was offered, cost the Council thousands & that was it. Code of Conduct is meaningless

I have not responded through reporting to a particular Councillor, as I consider I can manage the situation. However, I know I could report if needed

In one case where a Code of Conduct reviewer provided a report to the OLG, the elected council couldn't deal with the problem because they weren't told about it. Consequently, the problem persisted instead of being dealt with appropriately. Clause 9.11 of the Code of Conduct states: "You must not make allegations about, or disclose information about, suspected breaches of this code at council, committee or other meetings, whether open to the public or not, or in any other forum, whether public or not."

So what happens if the complaint is upheld? Who is responsible for reporting the results after they are provided to the OLG? If no one but the OLG and the parties involved in the complaint know about them, everyone suffers unless the findings are disclosed so that the issues can be dealt with

I have just started reporting incidents. I do not know if my concerns will be addressed

6 months ago my answers would have been all 0, now I am confident that staff, Councillors, community members are fairly treated at all times

People who are bullied or intimidated usually find it easier to just leave rather than have their concerns acted on. There should also be a survey on ex employees

I have been constantly told "careful what you say as it will not go well for you and they are very good at covering up"

I think this should be included as part of the induction to Council which, in all due respects, particularly for those not in major parties - as detail is less likely to be known to those groups/independents.

I understand the process but I am not confident that the process will not be manipulated I have trust issues with the process as I believe the Minister for LG NSW should be review the OLG rules and regulations in respect to councillors roles and rules that govern how they perform their duties as sn elected officer in LG

When I had to use the reporting process it was made very clear to me how to do it and who would support and be involved in the process. I did feel very supported and protected by the process in my council. If a councillor had a difficult relationship with the general manager or mayor they may find the process very challenging to navigate. However that was not my experience

I approached LGNSW for information on the process and was not provided with information

I am very confident to report

No idea how to raise a concern

Everyone is different and quite often I have found younger Councillors find it difficult. My advice is always to negotiate if not ignore them I do not speak to one Councillor as he signed a StatDec and lied about where he lived to be elected to our Council it is my choice and the said Councillor just tells you he lives at X but he should say Y which is another Council area

All depends on the people involved

I have reported and been brushed off

It's quite obvious as the meetings are recorded. Other people sometimes comment how disrespectful, rude, angry etc some councillors are but what can be done?

The staff are great. It is the system that is broken

Further comments regarding knowledge and confidence to report bullying, harassment, and intimidation

Not being able to discuss codes of conduct with fellow councillors is unrealistic and isolating to a complainant

The Office of LG needs to take these complaints much more seriously and send someone to Council to give training to Councillors as a compulsory training lesson and GM's MUST report complaints to OLG

My Council was very supportive of my complaint against the Councillor who almost assaulted me. I was confident in making my report. I am unimpressed how very little power the OLG and my Council have to implement a punishment strong enough to curtail this councillor's bad behaviour. In fact he wears it as a badge of honour how many complaints have been filed against him and the worst punishment is that he is censured which does not curtail his bad behaviour. He will not change and will continue his behaviour. How scary is that?

Extremely disappointed in the OLG. By not allowing the Council to take appropriate action the bad behaviour and harassment from one individual continues unabated

It is safe to report to the staff who remain unbiased and pointless taking it up with a Mayor who does not wish to engage with us

Having reported issues and having an independent investigator deliver a finding that flagrant and serious breaches of the code of conduct had occurred and seen no meaningful action taken to address the situation, you have to seriously ask yourself what's the point if no change occurs

People don't report in the early stages because it seems miscellaneous. It has to get to really bad before anyone will report it. It is just a cultural expectation that there is bullying

Tacit training from external body to meet obligations only. Bullies reverted to type immediately on completion of session

Now have more confidence in the system which I didn't have 10 years ago

Evidence that I provided in a confidential OLG interview regarding serious code of conduct breaches by a fellow councillor were leaked to the media, including my name and the comments that I made. This led to my being threatened with defamation by the councillor I had made the code of conduct complaint about. I feel the media outlet involved here also behaved unethically and in collusion with the councillor

Staff (female) were knowingly bullied by a particular councillor. The same senior councillor bragged how he bullied and got rid of the former general manager

It should be noted GM, senior staff and most councillors are supportive and 100% agree this behaviour occurs. The issue is there hands are tied and OLG advise and investigation are minimal meaning no disciplinary action can be done through the act

Code of conduct complaints are the only way we can make a complaint against another Councillors behaviour in council meetings. The process is flawed because the external reviewers consider that bullying and harassment is part of the cut and thrust of politics. If a complaint is upheld then the Council would vote on any action being taken which is not an appropriate way to remedy the situation as it can create closing of ranks to protect the perpetrator. Any action resolved to be taken is not enforced so is meaningless

The systems under code of conduct are inadequate . WHS needs to be upgraded and used more

Even when reported to the police text messages aren't proof because the accused can just say someone else sent them off their phone, in my experience

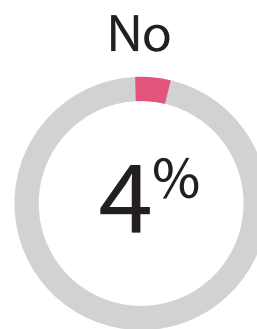
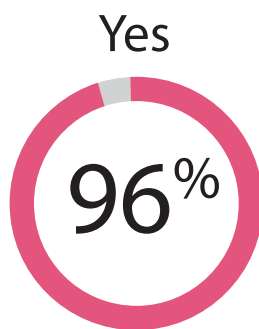
***The position of
internal Ombudsman
was made redundant.
I do not have
confidence in council
investing allegations***

Part 6: Governance and Policies

Q39. I have read and understood my council's Code of Conduct



Q40. Do you feel all councillors should have to attend a compulsory training session on the Code of Conduct?



Respondents expressed support for compulsory training for Code of Conduct training for councillors. Key feedback included:

1. Previous information sessions on Code of Conduct have been beneficial;
2. An external trainer is preferred;
3. Respondents expressed doubt that training would curb incidents of poor behaviour;
4. Training is required for new councillors and also refresher sessions for longer term councillors

Comments

They should also attend refreshers as the Code is often updated and some councillors just need reminding of what's in it.

Councillors should be given more information about how to raise a Code of Conduct. There should be more serious repercussions for Bullying and Harrassment.

Doesn't mean they listen

Also regular ongoing training including face to face not just online or a not just a short briefing

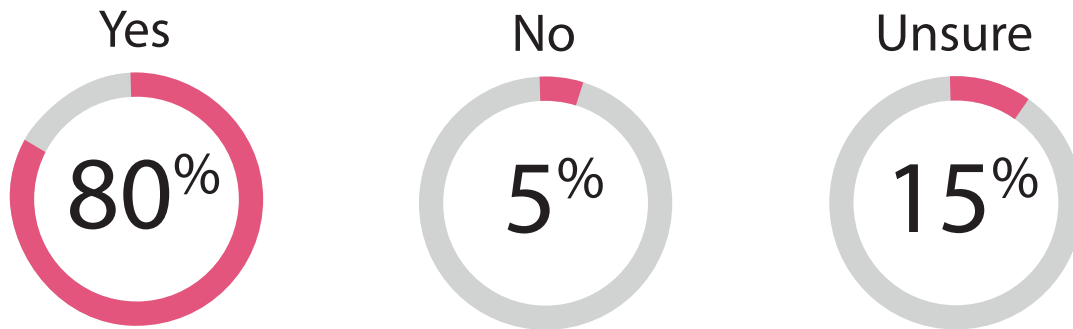
It doesn't make any difference if there aren't any consequences

Some think they are above the Code of Conduct

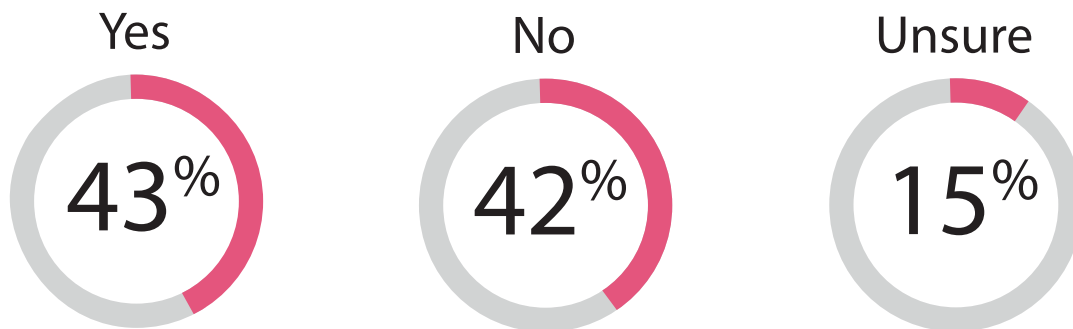
Our council has provide code of conduct training consistently

It needs to be given a higher level of importance and include WHS issues for staff

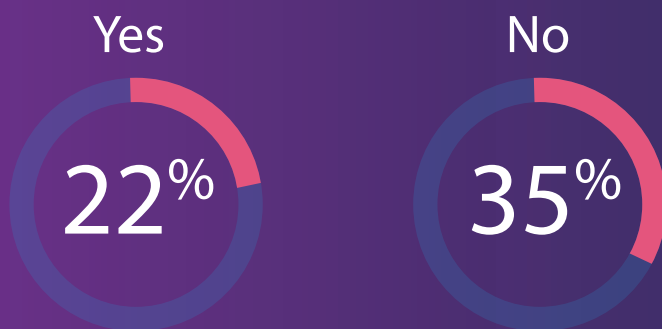
Q41. I am aware of how to report issues regarding bullying, harassment and / or intimidation in local government



Q42. Adequate information and training is available for local government councillors about bullying, harassment and / or intimidation



Q43. Do you have any concerns about whether your council's Code of Conduct is adhered to?



43% of respondents provided comments below

“
The position of internal Ombudsman was made redundant. I do not have confidence in council investing allegations
”

In total, 84 people responded to this question. Of the people who responded, 22% stated they were concerned about their council adhering to the Code of Conduct; 35% did not have concerns.

Key feedback included:

1. There are calls from respondents to complaints regarding workplace bullying, harassment and intimidation out of the hands of the General Manager / CEO and mayor;
2. The Code of Conduct does not seem to deter bad behaviour;
3. The Code of Conduct can be weaponised by some councillors for political gain;
4. In cases where the Code is not adhered to, there is concern OLG does not take these reports seriously;
5. There needs to be greater penalties imposed on those that do not adhere to the Code.

Comments

Codes of conduct have no teeth. you can raised the issue it will be investigated with no recourse

Yes. I regularly see breaches of the Code but no one is confident to make a formal complaint.

I don't believe the Code of Conduct is consistently adhered to

The code of conduct can be manipulated as some councillors know how to 'walk a fine line' when it comes to bullying and harassment

Code of conduct is vague and open to different interpretations. Eg I experienced exclusion and intimidation by a councillor at what I see as two work related events - but the GM said these events were not work related even though a council staff member, mayor and other ward councillors were in attendance.

It's not at all and no consequences

Yes. The position of internal Ombudsman was made redundant. I do not have confidence in council investing allegations

Yes - especially by councillors still acting in an adversarial & aggressive outdated role - don't have any regard for self regulation

No In some cases the code of conduct is used against councillors by Management to get even and use its power

The code of conduct and code of meeting practice is weaponised to achieve the outcomes of those in power to shut down valid lines of enquiry

The code of conduct is used against minority councillors and weaponised for political gain. The GM is always on the side of councillors from the majority block on council, and I would be surprised if a complaint against any of them was referred to an investigator

Code is used as a weapon or threat for spurious reasons

I feel it's being manipulated to keep female councillors who do not always agree with the SLT or other male councillors

Nepotism is rife in our local council with a distinct boys club

Information to Councillors is not forthcoming. The restrictions of privacy are a limiting factor though I realise some Councillors either don't understand or don't adhere to the principle of confidentiality

It is not adhered to, and administered politically

It is used against me, but this one party can do what they like and bully me and nothing is done

It's not. But what can be done? We have other things to worry about and no time or energy or money to spend on rabbit holes. The only time I have heard of it being actioned, it impacted negatively on the victim and produced no positive outcome. Maybe the behaviour is less but it hasn't gone away and in fact has possibly made them a target - just quiet undermining, nothing blatant

Completely ignored and weaponized

Yes, it is when Councillors feel aggrieved that disrespectful behaviour occurs

Our Code is not adhered to by one Councillor in particular. He continually denigrates Council and other Councillors

As stated previously the Council takes it seriously but the OLG does not

Yes, I would like people to stop using it as a political tactic and to intimidate others from speaking their views and making decisions in the best interests of their communities

Our Code of Conduct have no real implications other than a public censure. Some Councillors wear them as badges of honour

The OLG is a toothless tiger and referring breaches to them is time consuming and they are basically powerless to do anything about it

You're joking right? It's ignored and treated as a joke because there are no meaningful penalties for breaches of the code

It's not strongly implemented

It's not. It is used as a tool for bullying. Not for ensuring that bullying doesn't occur. This would be a serious cultural shift to do this

It is adhered to selectively. A blind eye is turned for many instances of bullying. I have seen it used as a political 'weapon' to discredit councillors who have different view that some want to silence

On a number of occasions it is not adhered to

There is a lack of adherence

This current term is better than the last term but I do feel new councillors are sometimes wilfully ignorant

Yes. Varying interpretation of appropriate staff: Councillor interaction and influence. Have also had a vexatious claim which should have been nipped in the bud but caused great stress. I have not received formal advice that it has been dismissed but I believe it has been

Councillors use the Code of Conduct as a weapon

Don't know what to do if the GM is the perpetrator. To whom do I take the complaint. I have mentioned it to the mayor but he feels unable to do anything about it. The GM is a bully.

Yes. It is not enforced and a senior councillor is never made accountable for his behaviour. The code of conduct is useless and not backed up by meaningful action.

There is no real penalty for breaches

When codes of conduct go to external review as there's no repercussions

Yes, and it is usually long-term councillors who ignore it

Yes, I know the Code of Conduct is not adhered to

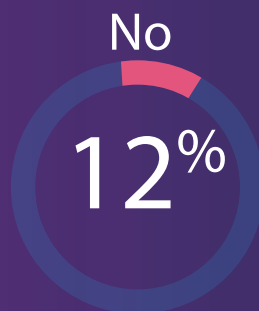
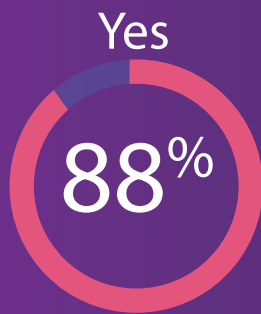
There is inadequate pathways to report bullying and harassment if it is not able you go through the Mayor or GM

It only applies to Councillors not staff apparently

Yes, it is seen as a toothless tiger by offending councillors

There are councillors I know break the code of conduct regularly and nobody does anything about it

Q44. I know how to find a copy of the current policies relating to workplace bullying, harassment and/or intimidation for my council



Q45. Please provide any further comments in relation to Governance and Policies as your role as a councillor.

Council policies do not support councillors well. I know I have been sadly let down in the process

These are examples of the problem. The whole system needs to be reformed to make it fit for purpose. Would training have helped in any of the cases reported in the NSW Parliament by Dr Amanda Cohn on 19 Oct 2023

All Councillors should have a good understand of the governance of their Shire and within their term should ensure that policies, procedures and guidelines will be updated as required

Policies only work if they can be enforced

I believe the current code of conduct needs to be revised

The Code is used to try to control people

I find governance at my council are not doing the role at arms length from the SLT and being independent in their investigations of a number of issues including the bullying and harassment I personally have been stopped from getting independent advice from our solicitor who had been someone who would give me advice in Confidentiality which had been most helpful in the beginning of my role as a councillor

We have a very good Governance team always have had

I dont even know who works at my council unless they attend a council meeting. And then I have to try and talk to them, they dont speak to me

Policies are available on the council website

There are policies but they aren't adhered to

There should be compulsory reporting of breaches of the code of conduct by the Mayor and GM/CEO

The governance and related policies aren't the problem - you have repeat offenders who aren't really being held to account

We have 1 Councillor that frightens me. I feel they are mentally unstable & I really don't know what they are capable of. I try to minimise contact and try not to engage in conversation because i feel my words will be twisted & used against me. The person has had code of conduct findings but it does nothing

There is no point in training if there isn't any cultural shift. it is considered an expectation that you go into politics and get bullied. I just never believed that it would be so bad.

Governance seems to be perfunctory to comply with outdated guidelines and OLG were ill equipped to manage concerns and complaints

A high focus on Governance and Policies now

If you want women to take on these roles then be serious about these issues. I don't know any councillor who feels that a complaint to the OLG will be of any real use

Bullying and harassment is a huge problem and is not being addressed sufficiently. The current processes for complaints do not support the victim and provide no penalties or discourage poor behaviour

Councillors frequently don't understand how policy works and how it is used by staff to do their job

Part 7: Additional Information

Q46. Is there a survey topic you think ALGWA should cover?

Social media nastiness and how to manage the nastiness as a councillor

Reducing emissions in Council in the home and community

Relationships between councillors and senior staff

Yes. I represent a very diverse CALD community so ensuring participation and access to all CALD women is vitally important to me

Coersive control, dealing with the public

Encouraging more women to join politics

Dealing with different personality types in the chamber

Amount of hours spent as a Councillor and associated duties/responsibilities

Individual support for dealing with cases of harassment & bullying

Remuneration for councillors

Group training via zoom at reduced rates eg, Social Media, Meeting Protocol, How to be Effective and Assertive

Information on how councils can work to improve the safety of women and girls eg Keeping female only toilets

Information and advice on how women can move from local government to state and federal politics eg As an Independent

Manipulating the current legislation and Codes to disadvantage Councillors who push back against inappropriate behaviour

Encouraging of younger groups into civic life through school education and youth groups. Mentoring and support outside of political discourse

Yes. Women generally stay quite and take the men jokes and jibes, but some are hurtful and rude

Good Governance and oversight - navigating trust sensitivities while still questioning and verifying advice and information provided to Councillors in a respectful way

What works for day to day combatting of bullying, harassment and intimidation - without having to report it. Just to make it stop!

Racism Cultural Responsive Training for all councillors and staff

Councillors financial stability and whether such things as rising rent and cost of living is making councillors reconsider standing for election

There needs to be a deep dive into the misuse of the OLG guidelines on code of conduct by some Councils which allow intimidation of our female councillors

YES , New councillors, conflict pecuniary and operational as this is lost on many new councillors

Mentoring and education for new and prospective female or LGBTI councillors. So many amazing people have said to me that they would never run for Council because of the way they have seen me be treated

This survey should be extended to all Councillors and Staff currently employed and previously employed

Do you feel gender is an issue in local government?

Impediments to women becoming mayors

This is a good start. I'd like to suggest training and suitable screening of candidates before they are allowed to stand for council to ensure that we don't end up with the infirmed ormentally unbalanced. Councillors need to be fit for office and so far there's very little that disbars them from standing. Not age, infirmity, criminal activity, mental illness, etc.

Improving regional remuneration for mayors and councillors

Truth telling

Staying calm

Reporting harassment

Changing the bullying culture

Dealing with GMs

Work health and safety and sanctions that can be applied

Harassment by members of the community and what councillors can do when this happens

I also would like AGLWA to be more inclusive of LGBTQIA+ people in the language they use and keep them in mind as part of their advocacy

Reporting nsw electoral commission

Q47. Please provide any general comments/feedback in relation to bullying, harassment and intimidation you may have experienced or witnessed in your role as councillor

Women need to stand for and be encouraged to stand for their local council

Some of the behaviours exhibited or allowed in council do not necessarily constitute bullying or harassment, but can be rude, dismissive and cranky. This is not an appropriate way to communicate in a professional environment

Bullying particularly of female Mayors and male and female directors when an outcome does not favour a bully mainly happens in Council meetings. Meetings are the cause of most of the anxiety as bullies usually use meetings as the opportunity to undermine, Council, Staff and fellow Councillors. This often occurs when their are personal agendas or issues such as de-mergers

I have seen female Councillors harassed by public in the street

I have experienced harassment by public

I have been spoken to inappropriately by male Councillors

It is not an equal work place

Our Council is has two female Councillors, seven men who all talk over you and are dismissive in their manner. We are in a time warp - envisage the 70's, I should be at home cooking dinner. I fear no amount of training will ever "fix" these men harassment and intimidation - without having to report it. Just to make it stop!

Perhaps ALGWA could provide some response to the cases raised by Dr Cohn and what should have happened and how to prevent similar cases in future

Particular councillors have been intimidating, however on the whole, the group has worked well

The old boys club is alive and strong - especially in rural and regional Aus

Sometimes senior staff are protected, need more women in higher managerial roles and better safety for whistle blowers

Bullying is not fully understood by many councillors - especially as it relates to the subtleties of stance tone of voice use of sarcasm & derogatory comments - attacking the person rather than the issue

Biggest issue is social media and people who are hiding behind false identities in order to attack. Such cowards - but very difficult to deal with and difficult to get evidence / meet tests for defamation etc.

My understanding is that harassment has now been extended to include 'sex' harassment, not just 'sexual'... this now allows for comments that are 'sexual innuendo' to be picked up. I had a sexual innuendo comment made to me on the day we were sworn in, by another new councillor! At that point, I was so flabbergasted that I didn't do anything about it. It pre-dated any education on Code of Conduct or on other policies. In hindsight, I should have called it out on the spot. But like in so many other situations, women are just blindsided and taken offguard in this sort of situation. Holistically, the time on Council has been quite distressing. I am a strong woman, highly qualified and articulate, who has served time on other corporate Boards. I have now sought support through my work's Employee Assistance Provider (EAP). I don't even know if a Councillor could access the Council's EAP

Thanks for the opportunity to provide feedback. It's really important for the future of women who wish to contribute to their community and society

I feel as a woman I have been a subject of inappropriate comments about my hair or looks. If you do not vote how some people want you to vote, you fall out of grace and then you are targeted.

It would be interesting to know if bullying was experienced more often by councillors who are not in the dominant political party on that council.

The mentoring system is crucial and should be very widely publicised. All new councillors should be individually invited to avail themselves of the scheme.

Treat everyone with respect. Recognition that things go two ways. Yes, I have seen male Councillors bully / harass / intimidate female Councillors - but equally, I've seen that from the female Councillors - sometimes at the outset toward male Councillors, and then the female puts in a complaint re the response from the male. The intent of this survey is admirable and important, but it should be made clear to female Councillors that respect and decency cannot be one sided - it is a two-way street

The lack of any real support from OLG when a code of conduct is written

A fellow councillor female had been reduced to tears and frustration on the bullying she had been experiencing for a number of years and has put in a formal complaint and has been waiting for months after having a meeting with the mediator to be given any response as to what is being done about inappropriate behaviour by a fellow councillor

I have concerns that unless some this can be addressed, Councils will be less diverse, as those who are not white and male, will not feel strong enough to give it a go, and put themselves out there

Over the years I suppose I have had some incidents of bullying. One particular Mayor was mainly to me but I was not concerned as it was in the Chamber at a council meeting and once again when he lost his cool I had won. I realise that this might seem a bit odd but I am from an older generation and extremely stubborn and do try to help the newer Councillors to guide them past any obstacle.

I have been yelled at, told to shut the F up, that I'm stupid, stop asking questions, who writes your paper work, you're a puppet, your anti fun, conspiracy theorist, anti climate denier, racist, all because I ask questions.

It is the dismissive comments, the outright rude and disrespectful comments, the intimation of untrue motives for actions, the throw away lines that are irrelevant and rude that are hard to keep hearing. It makes it hard to work constructively to get the best outcomes. Without an external third party, any complaint just becomes fodder for next time. The older man who touched/spoke inappropriately etc (not sexual touching) but is genuinely just an old fashioned nice guy, responded favourably to comments to change their behaviour and we haven't had any other issues.

There has been in current term scant collaboration between female councillors which did exist in my first term.

The Mayors should take a much more proactive role in controlling disrespectful behaviour in Chambers. The GM's must also take those complaints to the OLG.

The OLG and Councils need to be empowered to hold Councillors accountable for their abusive behaviour whether that is a financial punishment or to be suspended or even expelled should be up to the individual Councils.

I have also witnessed other female councillors being bullied by other Councillors and have stood up for them. Unfortunately the cr only needs to withdraw their comments and apologise so the behaviour continues to occur.

In my 30 years of working life in the corporate world I have never experienced the behaviour that I have experienced in the past 18 months in local government.

Women can be some of the biggest bullies in local government. That's a pickle, when you want to encourage more women to run for local council.

I think I've said it all. It happens everywhere it's just worse in some councils than others. The only thing that surprises me is that anyone who actually knew what council was like and what they were in for would ever willingly stand for election. Many of our brightest and best won't and have told me so directly.

It's inherent in the culture. There are too many politicians that are more interested in their own personal gain, their own friends or finances. There has to be a sincere intent at a senior level of political parties to ensure that bullying is not accepted, regardless if it means losing a seat.

I have witnessed bullying in the past terms but the current term is much better- we have majority women on council and I suspect that helps.

I have worked in male dominated and political offices, yet I have never felt as disrespected as I do in this role by some Councillors and senior staff.

Harassment if you don't vote a certain way and rude remarks after the meeting, or smart comments when in public.

I don't think it is taken seriously enough at the state level. The relationship between the Mayor & GM can be fraught and/or used to perpetuate /cover-up bullying behaviour. There needs to be a mechanism where Councillors can (with justification) by-pass the Mayor and GM.

There is a lack of individuals to own their mistakes when caught out this then leads to the undermining of these individuals to cover up if they are ratepayers these people are then continually ridiculed during discussions.

I believe additional support should be provided to younger Councillors and those from a minority background, especially Aboriginal Australians.

I was bullied in regards to supporting a mayoral candidate. I was forced to support the election of a Deputy Mayor who was both a bully and also very lax in his councillor duties to honor a political deal.

They also overload the staff with excessive emails and show no understanding of staff's time limitations.

If I did not have family to support me financially and emotionally I would not be able to be a councillor. It is a privilege to serve the community but people cannot serve the community to the best of their ability when they receive extremely low remuneration and experience harassment. Councillors don't have a team of staff to support them like state and federal representatives do, but we do a similar amount of work in terms of hours and receive a tenth of their pay.



**AUSTRALIAN LOCAL
GOVERNMENT WOMEN'S
ASSOCIATION
NEW SOUTH WALES BRANCH**

NSW Local Government Survey: Bullying, Harassment & Intimidation in your role as councillor

Part 1 - General Information

Australian Local Government Women's Association (ALGWA) survey on bullying, harassment, including sexual harassment, and intimidation is about your experiences in Local Government.

The Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW sets the minimum standards of conduct for council officials (staff & councillors). This survey is an independent review as to whether the minimum standards are being met by all councils.

We need your information to inform us of the amount of disrespectful behaviour and possible breaches of the Code of Conduct occurring. We are also looking at what actions were taken by you and the persons to whom you reported the incident/s to resolve the matter. The survey should take approximately 10 minutes.

Our aim is to take the collated and graphed information to the Minister of LG so we can advocate for better standards of behaviour, training, and improved policies to offer meaningful support for all female Councillors. Anecdotal evidence is not good enough. This survey is open to female councillors and former elected female councillors.

Please do not name individuals. This survey is confidential and no personal information is obtained.

1. Which council area do you currently serve as a councillor (or formerly served)?
(if you are not a female councillor, currently elected or previously elected, in NSW Local Government, you are not eligible to complete this survey)

- In a metropolitan council (greater Sydney, Newcastle, Wollongong)
- In a regional council (population greater than 20,000)
- In a rural council (population 20,000 or less)
- None of the above

2. When were you elected in NSW Local Government as a councillor?

Between December 2021 to present

Between January 2016 to present

Between January 2012 to present

Between January 2008 to present

Pre 2008



**AUSTRALIAN LOCAL
GOVERNMENT WOMEN'S
ASSOCIATION
NEW SOUTH WALES BRANCH**

NSW Local Government Survey: Bullying, Harassment & Intimidation in your role as councillor

Part 2 – Pre-Election

This section refers to Bullying, Harassment and Intimidation witnessed or experienced during the pre-election stage.

Definitions under the Fair Work Act, Fair Work Amendment Act, Work Health and Safety Act 2011, SafeWork NSW and the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth):

Workplace bullying & harassment - repeated unreasonable behavior by an individual directed towards a worker which creates a risk to health and safety. Examples include, but not limited to, yelling, screaming or offensive language, intimidation, overloading a person with unrealistic expectations relating to their work, excluding or isolating employees.

Sexual harassment – any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favours or conduct of a sexual nature in relation to the person harassed in circumstances where a reasonable person would have anticipated the possibility that the person harassed would be offended, humiliated or intimidated. Sexual harassment doesn't have to be repeated or continuous. It can be a one-off incident. Examples include, but not limited to, telling insulting jokes about particular racial groups, making derogatory comments about a person's disability, asking intrusive questions about someone's personal life, unwanted touching, patting or pinching, or making offensive comments or compliments about someone's body or appearance.

3. Did you experience bullying, harassment, or intimidation during the election process ie. At the polling booths, from fellow candidates/community members regarding political differences?

Yes

No

Comment:

4. During the election process, did you feel comfortable to advertise your residential address?

Yes

No

Comment:

5. Please provide any further comments in relation to Bullying Harassment, and Intimidation witnessed or experienced in the pre-election stage.

Reminder: DO NOT provide any names or information that can identify an individual.



**AUSTRALIAN LOCAL
GOVERNMENT WOMEN'S
ASSOCIATION**
NEW SOUTH WALES BRANCH

NSW Local Government Survey: Bullying, Harassment & Intimidation in your role as councillor

Part 3 – Elected Councillor

This section refers to Bullying, Harassment and Intimidation witnessed or experienced during your term/s as an elected councillor.

Definitions under the Fair Work Act, Fair Work Amendment Act, Work Health and Safety Act 2011, SafeWork NSW and the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth):

Workplace bullying & harassment - repeated unreasonable behavior by an individual directed towards a worker which creates a risk to health and safety. Examples include, but not limited to, yelling, screaming or offensive language, intimidation, overloading a person with unrealistic expectations relating to their work, excluding or isolating employees.

Sexual harassment – any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favours or conduct of a sexual nature in relation to the person harassed in circumstances where a reasonable person would have anticipated the possibility that the person harassed would be offended, humiliated or intimidated. Sexual harassment doesn't have to be repeated or continuous. It can be a one-off incident. Examples include, but not limited to, telling insulting jokes about particular racial groups, making derogatory comments about a person's disability, asking intrusive questions about someone's personal life, unwanted touching, patting or pinching, or making offensive comments or compliments about someone's body or appearance.

6. In your first term as an elected councillor, do/did you feel you were supported by fellow councillors, and senior council staff members?

(support includes being provided all relevant information and given assistance to understand all aspects of being a new councillor ie. Parking, entry etc)

Yes

No

Comment:

7. Do you feel any information/details were neglected at your induction?

Yes

No

Comment:

8. Do you feel the remuneration you receive is adequate?

Yes

No

Comment:

9. Throughout your term/s as a councillor, do you feel relevant resources and/or information is provided to attend meetings, photo opportunities, events or conferences? eg. Laptops, vehicles, WHS/PPE requirements for site visits etc

Yes

No

Comment:

10. Would it be beneficial if all councillors were provided opportunities to represent their community by attending events, openings etc?

Yes

No

Comment:

11. Do you think it should be mandatory for all councils in NSW to video record, as well as audio record, Council and Committee meetings?

Yes

No

Comment:

12. Do you feel adequate notification or notice of training information is forwarded to councillors in relation to training and development opportunities?

Yes

No

Comment:

13. Do you feel there is an adequate budget available for councillors' training and development needs?

Yes

No

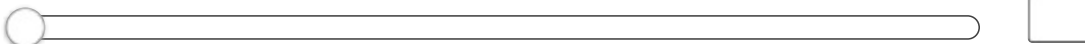
Comment:

14. When you were first elected, how confident were you to speak up and ask questions regarding your role?

Instructions: Move the marker along the scale between not very confident and very confident to indicate how confident you felt.

Not very confident

Very Confident

A horizontal scale for a Likert-type question. It consists of a horizontal line with a circular marker at the left end and a square box at the right end. The text "Not very confident" is positioned above the left end of the line, and "Very Confident" is positioned above the right end of the line.

15. Are there any areas in your council workplace where you feel unsafe?
eg. Meeting spaces, car park areas

Yes

No

Comment:

16. Have you experienced or witnessed bullying, harassment or intimidation when you have voiced your preferences for training, committee selections and/or conference interests?

Yes

No

Comment:

17. Since you have become a councillor, are you aware of the litigation risks associated with being a serving councillor?

Yes

No

Comment:

18. Do you think free legal / financial re-imburement and / or support should be available to alleviate the need for councillors to cover their own legal expenses?

Yes

No

Comment:

19. If you would not recommend another woman running for council, please outline why. Tick all that apply

- Remuneration not adequate
- Bullying, harassment and/or intimidation concerns
- Lack of equal opportunities for female councillors
- Work environment does not have suitable facilities for female councillors eg. Child minding, pumping room
- Lack of flexible meeting options eg. Zoom meetings
- There is no support from my fellow councillors
- Not applicable, I would recommend women to run for council
- Other (please specify):

20. Would you stand for re-election?

- Yes
- No

Comment:



**AUSTRALIAN LOCAL
GOVERNMENT WOMEN'S
ASSOCIATION
NEW SOUTH WALES BRANCH**

NSW Local Government Survey: Bullying, Harassment & Intimidation in your role as councillor

Part 4 - Nature of Bullying, Harassment, and Intimidation

Everyone has the right to work in an environment free from bullying, harassment, intimidation and violence.

Definitions under the Fair Work Act, Fair Work Amendment Act, Work Health and Safety Act 2011, SafeWork NSW and the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth):

Workplace bullying & harassment - repeated unreasonable behavior by an individual directed towards a worker which creates a risk to health and safety. Examples include, but not limited to, yelling, screaming or offensive language, intimidation, overloading a person with unrealistic expectations relating to their work, excluding or isolating employees.

Sexual harassment - any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favours of conduct of a sexual nature in relation to the person harassed in circumstances where a reasonable person would have anticipated the possibility that the person harassed would be offended, humiliated or intimidated. Sexual harassment doesn't have to be repeated or continuous. It can be a one-off incident. Examples include, but not limited to, telling insulting jokes about particular racial groups, making derogatory comments about a person's disability, asking intrusive questions about someone's personal life, unwanted touching, patting or pinching, or making offensive comments or compliments about someone's body or appearance.

21. Do you feel comfortable to lodge a complaint if you would not be supported by your council?

Yes

No

Comment:

22. Which of the following situations have you experienced?

Tick all that apply

- I have been the subject of bullying
- I have witnessed incident(s) of bullying
- I have been the subject of harassment
- I have witnessed incident(s) of harassment
- I have been the subject of sexual harassment
- I have witnessed incident(s) of sexual harassment
- I have been the subject of intimidation
- I have witnessed incident(s) of intimidation
- None of the above
- Other (please specify)

23. If you have experienced or witnessed bullying, harassment or intimidation in your role as councillor, did you report it?

- Yes
- No, why not? (Go to Section 5)

24. Who did you report this behaviour to?

Tick all that apply

- Mayor
- General Manager / CEO
- Fellow councillor
- Local Government NSW
- Police
- Other (please specify)

25. What was the outcome of you reporting bullying, harassment or intimidation?

Tick all that apply

- The behaviour ceased
- Told to take leave
- Were offered counselling
- Experienced additional pressure, stress or harassment for lodging a complaint
- Did not seek re-election
- Report politely received, then ignored
- Resigned from role as a councillor
- Other (please specify)

26. As a result of the incident/s (victim or witness), have you experienced any of the following?

Tick all that apply

- Decreased job satisfaction
- Decreased commitment to your role as a councillor
- Lower productivity at work
- Financial impact
- Self-esteem and/or confidence decreased
- Health implications, eg. Mental / physical stress
- Other (please specify)

27. Please provide any further comments in relation to Nature of Bullying Harassment, and Intimidation you may have experienced or witnessed in your role as a councillor.

Reminder: DO NOT provide any names or information that can identify an individual.



**AUSTRALIAN LOCAL
GOVERNMENT WOMEN'S
ASSOCIATION
NEW SOUTH WALES BRANCH**

NSW Local Government Survey: Bullying, Harassment & Intimidation in your role as councillor

Part 5 - Knowledge and Confidence in Reporting

These statements refer to bullying, harassment and intimidation in your role as a councillor.

Instructions: Indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the statements by moving the mark along the scale between strongly disagree and strongly agree. If you don't agree or disagree with a statement, place your check mark in the middle space.

28. Bullying, harassment & intimidation is taken seriously at my council

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

29. It is safe to speak up and raise concerns about bullying, harassment and intimidation

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

30. It is safe to challenge inappropriate behaviour

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

31. When issues are raised they are considered appropriately

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

37. Do you view any of the following factors listed below as a barrier to reporting bullying, harassment, intimidation, and other misconduct?

Tick all that apply

- Concerned about personal impact or repercussions
- Not confident concern will be addressed
- Have raised concern before and was not listened to
- No way to raise concern anonymously
- Do not feel able to judge if issue is serious enough to be worth raising
- Obtaining evidence or witnesses to support your claim
- Do not know how to raise a concern
- None of these
- Other (please specify)

38. Please provide any further comments in relation to Knowledge and Confidence in Reporting.

Reminder: DO NOT provide any names or information that can identify an individual.



**AUSTRALIAN LOCAL
GOVERNMENT WOMEN'S
ASSOCIATION
NEW SOUTH WALES BRANCH**

NSW Local Government Survey: Bullying, Harassment & Intimidation in your role as councillor

Part 6 – Governance and Policies

39. I have read and understood my council's Code of Conduct.

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

40. Do you feel all councillors should have to attend a compulsory training session on the Code of Conduct?

- Yes
- No

Comment:

41. I am aware of how to report issues regarding bullying, harassment and / or intimidation in local government.

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

42. There is adequate information and training available for local government councillors about bullying, harassment and / or intimidation.

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

43. Do you have any concerns about whether your council's Code of Conduct is adhered to?

44. I know how to find a copy of the current policies relating to workplace bullying, harassment and/or intimidation for my council.

- Yes
- No

45. Please provide any further comments in relation to Governance and Policies as your role as a councillor.

Reminder: DO NOT provide any names or information that can identify an individual



**AUSTRALIAN LOCAL
GOVERNMENT WOMEN'S
ASSOCIATION
NEW SOUTH WALES BRANCH**

NSW Local Government Survey: Bullying, Harassment & Intimidation in your role as councillor

Part 7 – Additional Information

46. Is there a survey topic you think ALGWA should cover?

47. Please provide any general comments/feedback in relation to bullying, harassment and intimidation you may have experienced or witnessed in your role as councillor.

Reminder: DO NOT provide any names or information that can identify an individual

Australian Local Government Women's Association (ALGWA) survey on bullying, harassment, including sexual harassment, and intimidation within NSW Local Government (LG), initiated by the ALGWA NSW Board.

If you are having a tough time and need someone to talk to right now, the following services are there to listen and help you out. They are confidential and available 24/7. They are:

Lifeline- 13 11 14

Beyond Blue - 1300 224 636

Suicide Call Back Service – 1300 659 467.

If you're concerned about your own or someone else's mental health you can call NSW Mental Health on 1800 011 511. ALGWA NSW will publish the results of this survey. If you would like a copy of this report, please email ALGWA NSW President Cr Dianna Baker on dibakerplan4u@gmail.com.

